

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 archtymbes-tere.

"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

conscious that they prayed, but their silence was thought, and the thought was worship.

Amidst the grief and solitude of the pure, there comes, at times, a strange and rapt serenity—a sleep-awake—over which the instinct of life beyond the grave glides like a noiseless dream; and ever that heaven that the soul yearns for is coloured by the fancies of the fond human heart,—each fashioning the above from the desires unsatisfied below.

“There,” thought the musing maiden, “cruelty and strife shall cease—there, vanish the harsh differences of life—there, those whom we have loved and lost are found, and through the Son, who tasted of mortal sorrow, we are raised to the home of the Eternal Father!”

“And there,” thought the aspiring sage, “the mind, dungeoned and chained below, rushes free into the realms of space—there, from every mystery falls the veil—there, the Omniscient smiles on those who, through the darkness of life, have fed that lamp—the soul—there, Thought, but the seed on earth, bursts into the flower, and ripens to the fruit!”

And on the several hope of both maid and sage the eyes of the angel stars smiled with a common promise.

At last, insensibly, and while still musing, so that slumber but continued the reverie into visions, father and daughter slept.

The night passed away; the dawn came slow and grey; the antlers of the deer stirred above the fern; the song of the nightingale was hushed; and just as the morning star waned back, while the reddening east announced the sun, and labour and trouble resumed their realm of day, a fierce band halted before those sleeping forms.

These men had been Lancastrian soldiers, and, re-

duced to plunder for a living, had, under Sir Geoffrey Gates, formed the most stalwart part of the wild disorderly force whom Hilyard and Coniers had led to Olney. They had heard of the new outbreak, headed by their ancient captain, Sir Geoffrey (who was supposed to have been instigated to his revolt by the gold and promises of the Lancastrian chiefs), and were on their way to join the rebels; but as war for them was but the name for booty, they felt the wonted instinct of the robber, when they caught sight of the old man and the fair maid.

Both Adam and his daughter wore, unhappily, the dresses in which they had left the court, and Sibyll's especially was that which seemed to betoken a certain rank and station.

“Awake—rouse ye!” said the captain of the band, roughly shaking the arm which encircled Sibyll's slender waist. Adam started, opened his eyes, and saw himself begirt by figures in rusty armour, with savage faces peering under their steel sallets.

“How came ye hither? Yon oak drops strange acorns,” quoth the chief.

“Valiant sir!” replied Adam, still seated, and drawing his gown instinctively over Sibyll's face, which nestled on his bosom in slumber so deep and heavy, that the gruff voice had not broken it. “Valiant sir! we are forlorn and houseless—an old man and a simple girl. Some evil-minded persons invaded our home—we fled in the night—and—”

“Invaded your house! ha, it is clear,” said the chief. “We know the rest.”

At this moment Sibyll woke, and starting to her feet in astonishment and terror at the sight on which her eyes opened, her extreme beauty made a sensible effect upon the braves.

"Do not be daunted, young demoiselle," said the captain, with an air almost respectful,—“it is necessary thou and Sir John should follow us, but we will treat you well, and consult later on the ransom ye will pay us. Jock, discharge the young sumpter mule; put its load on the black one. We have no better equipment for thee, lady—but the first *haquenée* we find shall replace the mule, and meanwhile my knaves will heap their cloaks for a pillion.”

“But what mean you!—you mistake us!” exclaimed Sibyll—“we are poor; we cannot ransom ourselves.”

“Poor!—tut!” said the captain, pointing significantly to the costly robe of the maiden—“moreover his worship’s wealth is well known. Mount in haste—we are pressed.”

And without heeding the expostulations of Sibyll and the poor scholar, the rebel put his troop into motion, and marched himself at their head, with his lieutenant.

Sibyll found the subalterns sterner than their chief; for as Warner offered to resist, one of them lifted his gisarme, with a frightful oath, and Sibyll was the first to persuade her father to submit. She mildly, however, rejected the mule, and the two captives walked together in the midst of the troop.

“*Pardie!*” said the lieutenant, “I see little help to Sir Geoffrey in these recruits, captain!”

“Fool!” said the chief, disdainfully,—“if the rebellion fail, these prisoners may save our necks. Will Somers last night was to break into the house of Sir John Bouchier, for arms and moneys, of which the knight hath a goodly store. Be sure, Sir John slinked off in the siege, and this is he and his daughter. Thou

knowest he is one of the greatest knights, and the richest, whom the Yorkists boast of;—and we may name our own price for his ransom.”

“But where lodge them, while we go to the battle?”

“Ned Porpustone hath a hostelry not far from the camp, and Ned is a good Lancastrian, and a man to be trusted.”

“We have not searched the prisoners,” said the lieutenant;—“they may have some gold in their pouches.”

“Marry, when Will Somers storms a hive, little time does he leave to the bees to fly away with much honey! Natheless, thou mayest search the old knight, but civilly, and with gentle excuses.”

“And the damsel?”

“Nay! that were unmannerly, and the milder our conduct, the larger the ransom—when we have great folks to deal with.”

The lieutenant accordingly fell back to search Adam’s gipsire, which contained only a book and a file, and then rejoined his captain, without offering molestation to Sibyll.

The mistake made by the bravo was at least so far not wholly unfortunate, that the notion of the high quality of the captives—for Sir John Bouchier was indeed a person of considerable station and importance (a notion favoured by the noble appearance of the scholar, and the delicate and high-born air of Sibyll)—procured for them all the respect compatible with the circumstances. They had not gone far before they entered a village, through which the ruffians marched with the most perfect impunity; for it was a strange feature in those civil wars, that the mass of the population, except in the northern districts, remained per-

fectly supine and neutral: and as the little band halted at a small inn to drink, the gossips of the village collected round them, with the same kind of indolent, careless curiosity, which is now evinced, in some hamlet, at the halt of a stage-coach. Here the captain learned, however, some intelligence important to his objects—viz., the night march of the troop under Lord Hastings, and the probability that the conflict was already begun. "If so," muttered the rebel, "we can see how the tide turns, before we endanger ourselves; and at the worst, our prisoners will bring something of prize-money."

While thus soliloquising, he spied one of those cumbersome vehicles of the day called *whirlicotes** standing in the yard of the hostelry; and seizing upon it, *vi et armis*, in spite of all the cries and protestations of the unhappy landlord, he ordered his captives to enter, and recommenced his march. As the band proceeded farther on their way, they were joined by fresh troops, of the same class as themselves, and they pushed on gaily, till, about the hour of eight, they halted before the hostelry the captain had spoken of. It stood a little out of the high road, not very far from the village of Hadley, and the heath or chase of Gladsmoor, on which was fought, some time afterwards, the battle of Barnet. It was a house of good aspect, and considerable size, for it was much frequented by all caravanserais and travellers from the north to the metropolis. The landlord, at heart a stanch Lancastrian, who had served in the French wars, and contrived, no one knew how, to save moneys in the course of an adventurous

* Whirlicotes were in use from a very early period, but only among the great, till, in the reign of Richard II., his queen, Anne, introduced side-saddles, when the whirlicote fell out of fashion, but might be found at different hostelries on the main roads, for the accommodation of the infirm or aged.

life, gave to his hostelry the appellation and sign of the Talbot, in memory of the old hero of that name; and, hiring a tract of land, joined the occupation of a farmer to the dignity of a host. The house, which was built round a spacious quadrangle, represented the double character of its owner, one side being occupied by barns and a considerable range of stabling, while cows, oxen, and ragged colts, grouped amicably together, in a space railed off in the centre of the yard. At another side ran a large wooden staircase, with an open gallery, propped on wooden columns, conducting to numerous chambers, after the fashion of the Tabard, in Southwark, immortalised by Chaucer. Over the archway, on entrance, ran a labyrinth of sleeping lofts, for foot passengers and muleteers, and the side facing the entrance was nearly occupied by a vast kitchen, the common hall, and the bar, with the private parlour of the host, and two or three chambers in the second story. The whirlicote jolted and rattled into the yard. Sibyll and her father were assisted out of the vehicle, and, after a few words interchanged with the host, conducted by Master Porpustone himself up the spacious stairs into a chamber, well furnished and fresh littered, with repeated assurances of safety, provided they maintained silence, and attempted no escape.

"Ye are in time," said Ned Porpustone to the captain—"Lord Hastings made proclamation at daybreak that he gave the rebels two hours to disperse."

"Pest! I like not those proclamations. And the fellows stood their ground?"

"No; for Sir Geoffrey, like a wise soldier, *mended* the ground by retreating a mile to the left, and placing the wood between the Yorkists and himself. Hastings, by this, must have remarshalled his men. But to pass

the wood is slow work, and Sir Geoffrey's cross-bows are no doubt doing damage in the covert. Come in, while your fellows snatch a morsel without; five minutes are not thrown away on filling their bellies."

"Thanks, Ned—thou art a good fellow! and if all else fail, why Sir John's ransom shall pay the reckoning. Any news of bold Robin?"

"Ay! he has 'scaped with a whole skin, and gone back to the north," answered the host, leading the way to his parlour, where a flask of strong wine and some cold meats awaited his guest. "If Sir Geoffrey Gates can beat off the York troopers, tell him, from me, not to venture to London, but to fall back into the marches. He will be welcome there, I foreguess; for every northman is either for Warwick or for Lancaster; and the two must unite now, I trow."

"But Warwick is flown!" quoth the captain.

"Tush! he has only flown, as the falcon flies when he has a heron to fight with—wheeling and soaring. Woe to the heron when the falcon swoops! But you drink not!"

"No; I must keep the head cool to-day. For Hastings is a perilous captain. Thy fist, friend!—If I fall, I leave you Sir John and his girl, to wipe off old scores; if we beat off the Yorkists, I vow to Our Lady of Walsingham an image of wax, of the weight of myself." The marauder then started up, and strode to his men, who were snatching a hasty meal on the space before the hostel. He paused a moment or so, while his host whispered—

"Hastings was here before daybreak; but his men only got the sour beer; yours fight upon huff-cap."

"Up, men!—To your pikes!—Dress to the right!" thundered the captain, with a sufficient pause between

each sentence. "The York lozels have starved on stale beer—shall they beat huff-cap and Lancaster? Frisk and fresh—up with the Antelope* banner, and long live Henry the Sixth!"

The sound of the shout that answered this harangue shook the thin walls of the chamber in which the prisoners were confined, and they heard with joy the departing tramp of the soldiers. In a short time, Master Porpustone himself, a corpulent, burly fellow, with a face by no means unprepossessing, mounted to the chamber, accompanied by a comely housekeeper, linked to him, as scandal said, by ties less irksome than Hymen's, and both bearing ample provisions, with rich pigment and lucid clary,† which they spread with great formality on an oak table before their involuntary guests.

"Eat, your worship, eat!" cried mine host, heartily. "Eat, lady bird!—nothing like eating to kill time and banish care. Fortune of war, Sir John—fortune of war—never be daunted! Up to-day—down to-morrow. Come what may—York or Lancaster—still a rich man always falls on his legs. Five hundred marks or so to the captain; a noble or two, out of pure generosity, to Ned Porpustone (I scorn extortion), and you and the fair young dame may breakfast at home to-morrow, unless the captain or his favourite lieutenant is taken prisoner; and then, you see, they will buy off their necks by letting you out of the bag. Eat, I say—eat!"

"Verily," said Adam, seating himself solemnly, and preparing to obey, "I confess I'm a hungered, and the

*The antelope was one of the Lancastrian badges. The special cognisance of Henry VI. was two feathers in saltire.

†Clary was wine clarified.

pasty hath a savoury odour; but I pray thee to tell me why I am called Sir John?—Adam is my baptismal name.”

“Ha! ha! good—very good, your honour—to be sure, and your father’s name before you. We are all sons of Adam, and every son, I trow, has a just right and a lawful to his father’s name.”

With that, followed by the housekeeper, the honest landlord, chuckling heartily, rolled his goodly bulk from the chamber, which he carefully locked.

“Comprehendest thou yet, Sibyll?”

“Yes, dear sir and father—they mistake us for fugitives of mark and importance; and when they discover their error, no doubt we shall go free. Courage, dear father!”

“Me seemeth,” quoth Adam, almost merrily, as the good man filled his cup from the wine flagon—“me seemeth that, if the mistake could continue, it would be no weighty misfortune—ha! ha!”—he stopped abruptly in the unwonted laughter, put down the cup—his face fell. “Ah, heaven forgive me!—and the poor Eureka and faithful Madge!”

“Oh, father! fear not; we are not without protection. Lord Hastings is returned to London—we will seek him; he will make our cruel neighbours respect thee. And Madge—poor Madge will be so happy at our return, for they could not harm her;—a woman—old and alone; no—no, man is not fierce enough for that!”

“Let us so pray; but thou eatest not, child!”

“Anon, father—anon; I am sick and weary. But, nay—nay, I am better now—better. Smile again, father. I am hungered, too; yes, indeed and in sooth, yes.—Ah, sweet St. Mary, give me life and strength, and hope and patience, for His dear sake!”

The stirring events which had within the last few weeks diversified the quiet life of the scholar had somewhat roused him from his wonted abstraction, and made the actual world a more sensible and living thing than it had hitherto seemed to his mind; but now, his repast ended, the quiet of the place (for the inn was silent and almost deserted) with the fumes of the wine—a luxury he rarely tasted—operated soothingly upon his thought and fancy, and plunged him into those reveries, so dear alike to poet and mathematician. To the thinker, the most trifling external object often suggests ideas, which, like Homer’s chain, extend, link after link, from earth to heaven. The sunny notes, that in a glancing column came through the lattice, called Warner from the real day—the day of strife and blood, with thousands hard by driving each other to the Hades—and led his scheming fancy into the ideal and abstract day—the theory of light itself; and the theory suggested mechanism, and mechanism called up the memory of his oracle—old Roger Bacon; and that memory revived the great friar’s hints in the *Opus magus*—hints which outlined the grand invention of the telescope: and so, as over some dismal precipice a bird swings itself to and fro upon the airy bough, the schoolman’s mind played with its quivering fancy, and folded its calm wings above the verge of terror.

Occupied with her own dreams, Sibyll respected those of her father; and so in silence, not altogether mournful, the morning and the noon passed, and the sun was sloping westward, when a confused sound below called Sibyll’s gaze to the lattice, which looked over the balustrade of the staircase, into the vast yard. She saw several armed men—their harness hewed and battered—quaffing ale or wine in haste, and heard one of them say to the landlord—