

posed conspirators might be driven to; and in the meanwhile, the King, withdrawing with Arlington, Ormond, and a few other counsellors, into the cabinet where the Countess of Derby had had her audience, resumed the examination of the little discoverer. His declaration, though singular, was quite coherent; the strain of romance intermingled with it, being in fact a part of his character, which often gained him the fate of being laughed at, when he would otherwise have been pitied, or even esteemed.

He commenced with a flourish about his sufferings for the Plot, which the impatience of Ormond would have cut short, had not the King reminded his Grace, that a top, when it is not flogged, must needs go down of itself at the end of a definite time, while the application of the whip may keep it up for hours.

Geoffrey Hudson was, therefore, allowed to exhaust himself on the subject of his prison-house, which he informed the King was not without a beam of light—an emanation of loveliness—a mortal angel—quick of step and beautiful of eye, who had more than once visited his confinement with words of cheering and comfort.

"By my faith," said the King, "they fare better in Newgate than I was aware of. Who would have thought of the little gentleman being solaced with female society in such a place?"

"I pray your Majesty," said the dwarf, after the manner of a solemn protest, "to understand nothing amiss. My devotion to this fair creature is rather like what we poor Catholics pay to the blessed saints, than mixed with any grosser quality. Indeed, she seems rather a sylphid of the Rosicrucian system, than aught more carnal; being slighter, lighter, and less than the females of common life, who have something of that coarseness of make which is doubtless derived from the sinful and gigantic race of the antediluvians."

"Well, say on, man," quoth Charles. "Didst thou not discover this sylph to be a mere mortal wench after all?"

"Who?—I, my liege?—O, fie!"

"Nay, little gentleman, do not be so particularly scandalized," said the King; "I promise you I suspect you of no audacity of gallantry."

"Time wears fast," said the Duke of Ormond, impatiently, and looking at his watch. "Chiffinch hath been gone ten minutes, and ten minutes will bring him back."

"True," said Charles, gravely. "Come to the point, Hudson; and tell us what this female has to do with your coming hither in this extraordinary manner."

"Every thing, my lord," said little Hudson. "I saw her twice during my confinement in Newgate, and, in my thought, she is the very angel who guards my life and welfare; for, after my acquittal, as I walked towards the city with two tall gentlemen, who had been in trouble along with me, and just while we stood to our defence against a rascally mob, and just as I had taken possession

of an elevated situation, to have some vantage against the great odds of numbers, I heard a heavenly voice sound, as it were, from a window behind me, counselling me to take refuge in a certain house; to which measure I readily persuaded my gallant friends the Peverils, who have always shown themselves willing to be counselled by me."

"Showing therein their wisdom at once and modesty," said the King. "But what chanced next? Be brief—be like thyself, man."

"For a time, sire," said the dwarf, "it seemed as if I were not the principal object of attention. First, the younger Peveril was withdrawn from us by a gentleman of venerable appearance, though somewhat smacking of a Puritan, having boots of neat's leather, and wearing his weapon without a sword-knot. When Master Julian returned, he informed us, for the first time, that we were in the power of a body of armed fanatics, who were, as the poet says, prompt for direful act. And your Majesty will remark, that both father and son were in some measure desperate, and disregarding from that moment of the assurances which I gave them, that the star which I was bound to worship, would, in her own time, shine forth in signal of our safety. May it please your Majesty, in answer to my hilarious exhortations to confidence, the father did but say *tush*, and the son *pehavo*, which showed how men's prudence and manners are disturbed by affliction. Nevertheless, these two gentlemen, the Peverils, forming a strong opinion of the necessity there was to break forth, were it only to convey a knowledge of these dangerous passages to your Majesty, commenced an assault on the door of the apartment, I also assisting with the strength which Heaven hath given, and some threescore years have left me. We could not, as it unhappily proved, manage our attempt so silently, but that our guards overheard us, and, entering in numbers, separated us from each other, and compelled my companions, at point of pike and poniard, to go to some other and more distant apartment, thus separating our fair society. I was again enclosed in the now solitary chamber, and I will own that I felt a certain depression of soul. But when bale is at highest, as the poet singeth, boot is at highest, for a door of hope was suddenly opened—"

"In the name of God, my liege," said the Duke of Ormond, "let this poor creature's story be translated into the language of common sense by some of the scribblers of romances about Court, and we may be able to make meaning of it."

Geoffrey Hudson looked with a frowning countenance of reproof upon the impatient old Irish nobleman, and said, with a very dignified air, "That one Duke upon a poor gentleman's hand was enough at a time, and that, but for his present engagement and dependency with the Duke of Buckingham, he would have endured no such terms from the Duke of Ormond."

"Aate your valor, and diminish your choler, at our request, most puissant Sir Geoffrey Hudson," said the King; "and forgive the Duke of Ormond for my sake; but at all events go on with your story."

Geoffrey Hudson laid his hand on his bosom, and bowed in proud and dignified submission to his Sovereign; then waved his forgiveness gracefully to Ormond, accompanied with a horrible grin, which he designed for a smile of gracious forgiveness and conciliation. "Under the Duke's favor, then," he proceeded, "when I said a door of hope was opened to me, I meant a door behind the tapestry, from whence issued that fair vision—yet not so fair as lustrously dark, like the beauty of a continental night, where the cloudless azure sky shrouds us in a veil, more lovely than that of day!—but I note your Majesty's impatience;—enough. I followed my beautiful guide into an apartment, where there lay, strangely intermingled, warlike arms and musical instruments. Amongst these I saw my own late place of temporary obscurity—a violoncello. To my astonishment, she turned around the instrument, and opening it behind by pressure of a spring, showed that it was filled with pistols, daggers, and ammunition made up in bandoleers. 'These,' she said, 'are this night destined to surprise the Court of the unwary Charles'—your Majesty must pardon my using her own words; 'but if thou darest go in their stead, thou mayest be the savior of king and kingdoms; if thou art afraid, keep secret, I will myself try the adventure.' Now may Heaven forbid, that Geoffrey Hudson were craven enough, said I, to let thee run such a risk! You know not—you cannot know, what belongs to such ambuscades and concealments—I am accustomed to them—have lurked in the pocket of a giant, and have formed the contents of a pasty. 'Get in then,' she said, 'and lose no time.' Nevertheless, while I prepared to obey, I will not deny that some cold apprehensions came over my hot valor, and I confessed to her, if it might be so, I would rather find my way to the palace on my own feet. But she would not listen to me, saying hastily, 'I would be intercepted, or refused admittance, and that I must embrace the means she offered me of introduction into the presence, and when there, tell the King to be on his guard—little more is necessary; for once the scheme is known, it becomes desperate.' Rashly and boldly, I bade adieu to the daylight which was then fading away. She withdrew the contents of the instrument destined for my concealment, and having put them behind the chimney-board, introduced me in their room. As she clasped me in, I implored her to warn the men who were to be intrusted with me, to take heed and keep the neck of the violoncello uppermost; but ere I had completed my request, I found I was left alone, and in darkness. Presently, two or three fellows entered, whom by their language, which I in some sort understood, I perceived to be Germans, and under the influence of the Duke of Buckingham.

I heard them receive from the leader a charge how they were to deport themselves, when they should assume the concealed arms—and—for I will do the Duke no wrong—I understood their orders were precise, not only to spare the person of the King, but also those of the courtiers, and to protect all who might be in the presence against an irruption of the fanatics. In other respects, they had charge to disarm the Gentle men-pensioners in the guard-room, and, in fine, to obtain the command of the Court."

The King looked disconcerted and thoughtful at this communication, and bade Lord Arlington see that Selby quietly made search into the contents of the other cases which had been brought as containing musical instruments. He then signed to the dwarf to proceed in his story, asking him again and again, and very solemnly, whether he was sure that he heard the Duke's name mentioned, as commanding or approving this action.

The dwarf answered in the affirmative.

"This," said the King, "is carrying the frolic somewhat far."

The dwarf proceeded to state, that he was carried after his metamorphosis into the chapel, where he heard the preacher seemingly about the close of his harangue, the tenor of which he also mentioned. Words, he said, could not express the agony which he felt when he found that his bearer, in placing the instrument in the corner, was about to invert its position, in which case, he said, human frailty might have proved too great for love, for loyalty, for true obedience, nay, for the fear of death, which was like to ensue on discovery; and he concluded, that he greatly doubted he could not have stood on his head for many minutes without screaming aloud.

"I could not have blamed you," said the King; "placed in such a posture in the royal oak, I must needs have roared myself.—Is this all you have to tell us of this strange conspiracy?" Sir Geoffrey Hudson replied in the affirmative, and the King presently subjoined—"Go, my little friend, your services shall not be forgotten. Since thou hast crept into the bowels of a fiddle for our service, we are bound, in duty and conscience, to find you a more roomy dwelling in future."

"It was a violoncello, if your Majesty is pleased to remember," said the little jealous man, "not a common fiddle; though, for your Majesty's service, I would have crept even into a kit."

"Whatever of that nature could have been performed by any subject of ours, thou wouldst have enacted in our behalf—of that we hold ourselves certain. Withdraw for a little; and hark ye, for the present, beware what you say about this matter. Let your appearance be considered—do you mark me—as a frolic of the Duke of Buckingham; and not a word of conspiracy."

"Were it not better to put him under some restraint, sire?" said the Duke of Ormond, when Hudson had left the room.

"It is unnecessary," said the King. "I re-

member the little wretch of old. Fortune, to make him the model of absurdity, has closed the most lofty soul within that little miserable carcass. For wielding his sword and keeping his word, he is a perfect Don Quixote in decimo-octavo. He shall be taken care of.—But, oddsfish, my lords, is not this freak of Buckingham too villainous and ungrateful?"

"He had not had the means of being so, had your Majesty," said the Duke of Ormond, "been less lenient on other occasions."

"My lord, my lord," said Charles, hastily—"your lordship is Buckingham's known enemy—we will take other and more impartial counsel.—Arlington, what think you of all this?"

"May it please your Majesty," said Arlington, "I think the thing is absolutely impossible, unless the Duke has had some quarrel with your Majesty, of which we know nothing. His Grace is very flighty, doubtless, but this seems actual insanity."

"Why, faith," said the King, "some words passed betwixt us this morning—his Duchess it seems is dead—and to lose no time, his Grace had cast his eyes about for means of repairing the loss, and had the assurance to ask our consent to woo my niece Lady Anne."

"Which your Majesty of course rejected?" said the statesman.

"And not without rebuking his assurance," added the King.

"In private, sire, or before any witnesses?" said the Duke of Ormond.

"Before no one," said the King,—"excepting, indeed, little Chiffinch; and he, you know, is no one."

"*Hinc ille lachrymae*," said Ormond. "I know his Grace well. While the rebuke of his aspiring petulance was a matter betwixt your Majesty and him, he might have let it pass by; but a check before a fellow from whom it was likely enough to travel through the Court, was a matter to be revenged."

Here Selby came hastily from the other room, to say, that his Grace of Buckingham had just entered the presence-chamber.

The King rose. "Let a boat be in readiness, with a party of the yeomen," said he. "It may be necessary to attach him of treason, and send him to the Tower."

"Should not a Secretary of State's warrant be prepared?" said Ormond.

"No, my Lord Duke," said the King, sharply. "I still hope that the necessity may be avoided."

CHAPTER XLVII.

High-reaching Buckingham grows circumspect.

RICHARD III.

BEFORE giving the reader an account of the meeting betwixt Buckingham and his injured Sovereign, we may mention a trifling circumstance or two which took place betwixt his

Grace and Chiffinch, in the short drive betwixt York-Place and Whitehall.

In the outset, the Duke endeavored to learn from the courtier the special cause of his being summoned so hastily to the Court. Chiffinch answered, cautiously, that he believed there were some gambols going forward, at which the King desired the Duke's presence.

This did not quite satisfy Buckingham, for, conscious of his own rash purpose, he could not but apprehend discovery. After a moment's silence, "Chiffinch," he said, abruptly, "did you mention to any one what the King said to me this morning touching the Lady Anne?"

"My Lord Duke," said Chiffinch, hesitating, "surely my duty to the King—my respect to your Grace—"

"You mentioned it to no one, then?" said the Duke, sternly.

"To no one," replied Chiffinch, faintly, for he was intimidated by the Duke's increasing severity of manner.

"Ye lie, like a scoundrel," said the Duke—"You told Christian!"

"Your Grace," said Chiffinch—"your Grace—your Grace ought to remember that I told you Christian's secret; that the Countess of Derby was come up."

"And you think the one point of treachery may balance for the other? But no. I must have a better atonement. Be assured I will blow your brains out, ere you leave this carriage, unless you tell me the truth of this message from Court."

As Chiffinch hesitated what reply to make, a man, who, by the blaze of the torches, then always borne, as well by the lackeys who hung behind the carriage, as by the footmen who ran by the side, might easily see who sat in the coach, approached, and sung in a deep manly voice, the burden of an old French song on the battle of Marignan, in which is imitated the German-French of the defeated Swiss.

*"Tout est verlore
La tintelore,
Tout est verlore
Bel Got."*

"I am betrayed," said the Duke, who instantly conceived that this chorus, expressing "all is lost," was sung by one of his faithful agents, as a hint to him that their machinations were discovered.

He attempted to throw himself from the carriage, but Chiffinch held him with a firm, though respectful grasp. "Do not destroy yourself, my lord," he said, in a tone of deep humility—"there are soldiers and officers of the peace around the carriage, to enforce your Grace's coming to Whitehall, and to prevent your escape. To attempt it would be to confess guilt; and I advise you strongly against that—the King is your friend—be your own."

The Duke, after a moment's consideration, said sullenly, "I believe you are right. Why

should I fly, when I am guilty of nothing but sending some fireworks to entertain the Court, instead of a concert of music?"

"And the dwarf, who came so unexpectedly out of the bass-viol—"

"Was a masking device of my own, Chiffinch," said the Duke, though the circumstance was then first known to him. "Chiffinch, you will bind me for ever, if you will permit me to have a minute's conversation with Christian."

"With Christian, my lord?—Where could you find him?—You are aware we must go straight on to the Court."

"True," said the Duke, "but I think I cannot miss finding him; and you, Master Chiffinch, are no officer, and have no warrant either to detain me prisoner, or prevent my speaking to whom I please."

Chiffinch replied, "My Lord Duke, your genius is so great, and your escapes so numerous, that it will be from no wish of my own if I am forced to hurt a man so skilful and so popular."

"Nay, then, there is life in it yet," said the Duke, and whistled; when, from beside the little cutler's booth, with which the reader is acquainted, appeared, suddenly, Master Christian, and was in a moment at the side of the coach. "*Ganz ist verlore*," said the Duke.

"I know it," said Christian; "and all our godly friends are dispersed upon the news. Lucky the Colonel and these German rascals gave a hint. All is safe—You go to Court—Hark ye, I will follow."

"You, Christian? that would be more friendly than wise."

"Why, what is there against me?" said Christian. "I am innocent as the child unborn—so is your Grace. There is but one creature who can bear witness to our guilt; but I trust to bring her on the stage in our favor—besides, if I went not, I should presently be sent for."

"The familiar of whom I have heard you speak, I warrant?"

"Hark in your ear again."

"I understand," said the Duke, "and will delay Master Chiffinch,—for he, you must know, is my conductor—no longer.—Well, Chiffinch, let them drive on.—*Vogue la Galère!*" he exclaimed, as the carriage went onward; "I have sailed through worse perils than this yet."

"It is not for me to judge," said Chiffinch; "your Grace is a bold commander; and Christian hath the cunning of a devil for a pilot; but—However, I remain your Grace's poor friend, and will heartily rejoice in your extrication."

"Give me a proof of your friendship," said the Duke. "Tell me what you know of Christian's familiar, as he calls her."

"I believe it to be the same dancing wench who came with Empson to my house on the morning that Mistress Alice made her escape from us. But you have seen her, my lord?"

"I," said the Duke; "when did I see her?"

"She was employed by Christian, I believe to set his niece at liberty, when he found himself obliged to gratify his fanatical brother-in-law, by restoring his child; besides being prompted by a private desire, as I think, of bantering your Grace."

"Umph! I suspected so much. I will repay it," said the Duke. "But first to get out of this dilemma.—That little Numidian witch, then, was his familiar; and she joined in the plot to tantalize me?—But here we reach Whitehall.—Now, Chiffinch, be no worse than thy word, and—now, Buckingham, be thyself!"

But ere we follow Buckingham into the presence, where he had so difficult a part to sustain, it may not be amiss to follow Christian after his brief conversation with him. On re-entering the house, which he did by a circuitous passage, leading from a distant alley, and through several courts, Christian hastened to a low matted apartment, in which Bridgenorth sat alone, reading the Bible by the light of a small brazen lamp, with the utmost serenity of countenance.

"Have you dismissed the Peverils?" said Christian hastily.

"I have," said the Major.

"And upon what pledge—that they will not carry information against you to Whitehall!"

"They gave me their promise voluntarily, when I showed them our armed friends were dismissed. To-morrow, I believe, it is their purpose to lodge informations."

"And why not to-night, I pray you?" said Christian.

"Because they allow us that time for escape."

"Why, then, do you not avail yourself of it? Wherefore are you here?" said Christian.

"Nay, rather, why do you not fly?" said Bridgenorth. "Of a surety, you are as deeply engaged as I."

"Brother Bridgenorth, I am the fox, who knows a hundred modes of deceiving the hounds; you are the deer, whose sole resource is in hasty flight. Therefore lose no time—begone to the country—or rather, Zedekiah Fish's vessel, the Good Hope, lies in the river, bound for Massachusetts—take the wings of the morning, and begone—she can fall down to Gravesend with the tide."

"And leave to thee, brother Christian," said Bridgenorth, "the charge of my fortune and my daughter? No, brother; my opinion of your good faith must be reestablished ere I again trust thee."

"Go thy ways, then, for a suspicious fool," said Christian, suppressing his strong desire to use language more offensive; "or rather stay where thou art, and take thy chance of the gallows!"

"It is appointed to all men to die once," said Bridgenorth; "my life hath been a living death. My fairest boughs have been stripped by the axe of the forester—that which survives must, if it shall blossom, be grafted elsewhere, and at a distance from my aged trunk. The sooner, then, the root

feels the axe, the stroke is more welcome. I had been pleased, indeed, had I been called to bringing yonder licentious Court to a purer character, and relieving the yoke of the suffering people of God. That youth too—son to that precious woman, to whom I owe the last tie that feebly links my wearied spirit to humanity—could I have travelled with *him* in the good cause!—But that, with all my other hopes, is broken for ever; and since I am not worthy to be an instrument in so great a work, I have little desire to abide longer in this vale of sorrow."

"Farewell, then, desponding fool!" said Christian, unable, with all his calmness, any longer to suppress his contempt for the resigned and hopeless predestinarian. "That fate should have clogged me with such confederates!" he muttered, as he left the apartment—"this bigoted fool is now nearly irreclaimable—I must to Zarah; for she, or no one, must carry us through these straits. If I can but soothe her sullen temper, and excite her vanity to action,—betwixt her address, the King's partiality for the Duke, Buckingham's matchless effrontery, and my own hand upon the helm, we may yet weather the tempest that darkens around us. But what we do must be hastily done."

In another apartment he found the person he sought—the same who visited the Duke of Buckingham's harem, and, having relieved Alice Bridgenorth from her confinement there, had occupied her place as been already narrated, or rather intimated. She was now much more plainly attired than when she had tantalized the Duke with her presence; but her dress had still something of the Oriental character, which corresponded with the dark complexion and quick eye of the wearer. She had the kerchief at her eyes as Christian entered the apartment, but suddenly withdrew it, and, flashing on him a glance of scorn and indignation, asked him what he meant by intruding where his company was alike unsought for and undesired.

"A proper question," said Christian, "from a slave to her master!"

"Rather say, a proper question, and of all questions the most proper, from a mistress to her slave! Know you not, that from the hour in which you discovered your ineffable baseness, you have made me mistress of your lot? While you seemed but a demon of vengeance, you commanded terror, and to good purpose; but such a foul fiend as thou hast of late shown thyself—such a very worthless, base trickster of the devil—such a sordid grovelling imp of perdition, can gain nothing but scorn from a soul like mine."

"Gallantly mouthed," said Christian, "and with good emphasis."

"Yes," answered Zarah, "I can speak—sometimes—I can also be mute; and that no one knows better than thou."

"Thou art a spoiled child, Zarah, and dost but abuse the indulgence I entertain for your freak-

ish humor," replied Christian; "thy wits have been disturbed since ever you landed in England, and all for the sake of one who cares for thee no more than for the most worthless object who walks the streets, amongst whom he left you to engage in a brawl for one he loved better."

"It is no matter," said Zarah, obviously repressing very bitter emotion; "it signifies not that he loves another better; there is none—no, none—that ever did, or can, love him so well."

"I pity you, Zarah!" said Christian, with some scorn.

"I deserve your pity," she replied, "were your pity worth my accepting. Whom have I to thank for my wretchedness but you?—You bred me up in thirst of vengeance, ere I knew that good and evil were any thing better than names;—to gain your applause, and to gratify the vanity you had excited, I have for years undergone a penance, from which a thousand would have shrunk."

"A thousand, Zarah!" answered Christian; "ay, a hundred thousand, and a million to boot; the creature is not on earth, being mere mortal woman, that would have undergone the thirtieth part of thy self-denial."

"I believe it," said Zarah, drawing up her slight but elegant figure; "I believe it—I have gone through a trial that few indeed could have sustained. I have renounced the dear intercourse of my kind; compelled my tongue only to utter, like that of a spy, the knowledge which my ear had only collected as a base eavesdropper. This I have done for years—for years—and all for the sake of your private applause—and the hope of vengeance on a woman, who, if she did ill in murdering my father, has been bitterly repaid by nourishing a serpent in her bosom, that had the tooth, but not the deafened ear, of the adder."

"Well—well—well," reiterated Christian; "and had you not your reward in my approbation—in the consciousness of your own unequalled dexterity—by which, superior to any thing of thy sex that history has ever known, you endured what woman never before endured, insolence without notice, admiration without answer, and sarcasm without reply?"

"Not without reply?" said Zarah, fiercely. "Gave not Nature to my feelings a course of expression more impressive than words? and did not those tremble at my shrieks, who would have little minded my entreaties or my complaints? And my proud lady, who sanced her charities with the taunts she thought I heard not—she was justly paid by the passing of her dearest and most secret concerns into the hands of her mortal enemy; and the vain Earl—yet he was a thing as insignificant as the plume that nodded in his cap;—and the maidens and ladies who taunted me—I had, or can easily have, my revenge upon them. But there is *one*," she added, looking upward, "who never taunted me; one whose generous feelings could treat the poor dumb girl even as his sister; who never spoke word of her but it was to excuse or defend—and you tell me I must not love

him, and that it is madness to love him!—I *will* be mad then, for I will love him till the latest breath of my life!"

"Think but an instant, silly girl—silly but in one respect, since in all others thou mayst brave the world of women. Think what I have proposed to thee, for the loss of this hopeless affection, a career so brilliant!—Think only that it rests with thyself to be the wife—the wedded wife—of the princely Buckingham! With my talents—with thy wit and beauty—with his passionate love of these attributes—a short space might rank you among England's princesses.—Be but guided by me—he is now at a deadly pass—needs every assistance to retrieve his fortunes—above all, that which we alone can render him. Put yourself under my conduct, and not fate itself shall prevent your wearing a Duchess's coronet."

"A coronet of thistle-down, entwined with thistle-leaves," said Zarah.—"I know not a slighter thing than your Buckingham! I saw him at your request—saw him when, as a man, he should have shown himself generous and noble—I stood the proof at your desire, for I laugh at those dangers from which the poor blushing wailers of my sex shrink and withdraw themselves. What did I find him?—a poor wavering voluptuary—his nearest attempt to passion like the fire on a wretched stubble-field, that may singe, indeed, or smoke, but can neither warm nor devour. Christian! were his coronet at my feet this moment, I would sooner take up a crown of gilded gingerbread, than extend my hand to raise it."

"You are mad, Zarah—with all your taste and talent, you are utterly mad! But let Buckingham pass—Do you owe me nothing on this emergency?—Nothing to one who rescued you from the cruelty of your owner, the posture-master, to place you in ease and affluence?"

"Christian," she replied, "I owe you much. Had I not felt I did so, I would, as I have been often tempted to do, have denounced thee to the fierce Countess, who would have gibbeted you on her feudal walls of Castle-Rushin, and bid your family seek redress from the eagles, that would long since have thatched their nest with your hair, and fed their young ospreys with your flesh."

"I am truly glad you have had so much forbearance for me," answered Christian.

"I have it, in truth and in sincerity," replied Zarah,—"not for your benefits to me—such as they were, they were every one interested, and conferred from the most selfish considerations. I have overpaid them a thousand times by the devotion to your will, which I have displayed at the greatest personal risk. But till of late I respected your powers of mind—your inimitable command of passion—the force of intellect which I have ever seen you exercise over all others, from the bigot Bridgenorth to the debauched Buckingham—in that, indeed, I have recognised my master."

"And those powers," said Christian, "are unlimited as over; and with thy assistance, thou shalt see the strongest meshes that the laws of civil society ever wove to limit the natural dignity of man, broke asunder like a spider's web."

She paused and answered, "While a noble motive fired thee—ay, a noble motive, though irregular—for I was born to gaze on the sun which the pale daughters of Europe shrink from—I could serve thee—I could have followed, while revenge or ambition had guided thee—but love of *wealth*, and by what means acquired!—What sympathy can I hold with that?—Wouldst thou not have pandered to the lust of the King, though the object was thine own orphan niece?—You smile?—Smile again when I ask you whether you meant not my own prostitution, when you charged me to remain in the house of that wretched Buckingham?—Smile at that question, and by Heaven I stab you to the heart!" And she thrust her hand into her bosom, and partly showed the hilt of a small poniard.

"And if I smile," said Christian, "it is but in scorn of so odious an accusation. Girl, I will not tell thee the reason, but there exists not on earth the living thing over whose safety and honor I would keep watch as over thine. Buckingham's wife, indeed, I wished thee; and, through thy own beauty and thy wit, I doubted not to bring the match to pass."

"Vain flatterer," said Zarah, yet seeming soothed even by the flattery which she scoffed at, "you would persuade me that it was honorable love which you expected the Duke was to have offered me. How durst you urge so gross a deception, to which time, place, and circumstance, gave the lie?—How dare you now again mention it, when you well know, that at the time you mention, the Duchess was still in life?"

"In life, but on her deathbed," said Christian; "and for time, place, and circumstance, had your virtue, my Zarah, depended on these, how couldst thou have been the creature thou art?—I knew thee all-sufficient to bid him defiance—else—for thou art dearer to me than thou thinkest—I had not risked thee to win the Duke of Buckingham; ay, and the kingdom of England to boot.—So now, wilt thou be ruled and go on with me?"

Zarah, or Fenella, for our readers must have been long aware of the identity of these two personages, cast down her eyes, and was silent for a long time. "Christian," she said at last, in a solemn voice, "if my ideas of right and of wrong be wild and incoherent, I owe it, first, to the wild fever which my native sun communicated to my veins; next, to my childhood, trained amidst the shifts, tricks, and feats of jugglers and mountebanks; and then, to a youth of fraud and deception, through the course thou didst prescribe me, in which, I might, indeed, hear every thing, but communicate with no one. The last cause of my wild errors, if such they are, originates, O Christian, with you alone; by whose intrigues

was placed with yonder lady, and who taught me, that to revenge my father's death, was my first great duty on earth, and that I was bound by nature to hate and injure her by whom I was fed and fostered, though as she would have fed and caressed a dog, or any other mute animal. I also think—for I will deal fairly with you—that you had not so easily detected your niece, in the child whose surprising agility was making yonder brutal mountebank's fortune; nor so readily induced him to part with his bond-slave, had you not, for your own purposes, placed me under his charge, and reserved the privilege of claiming me when you pleased. I could not, under any other tuition, have identified myself with the personage of a mute, which it has been your desire that I should perform through life."

"You do me injustice, Zarah," said Christian—"I found you capable of discharging, to an uncommon degree, a task necessary to the avenging of your father's death—I consecrated you to it, as I consecrated my own life and hopes; and you held the duty sacred, till these mad feelings towards a youth who loves your cousin—"

"Who—loves—my—cousin," repeated Zarah (for we will continue to call her by her real name), slowly, and as if the words dropped unconsciously from her lips. "Well—be it so!—Man of many wiles, I will follow thy course for a little, a very little farther; but take heed—tease me not withemonstrances against the treasure of my secret noughts—I mean my most hopeless affection to Julian Peveril—and bring me not as an assistant to any snare which you may design to cast around him. You and your Duke shall rue the hour most bitterly, in which you provoke me. You may suppose you have me in your power; but remember, the snakes of my burning climate are never so fatal as when you grasp them."

"I care not for these Peverils," said Christian—"I care not for their fate a poor straw, unless where it bears on that of the destined woman, whose hands are red in your father's blood. Believe me, I can divide her fate and theirs. I will explain to you how. And for the Duke, he may pass among men of the town for wit, and among soldiers for valor, among courtiers for manners and for form; and why, with his high rank and immense fortune, you should throw away an opportunity, which, as I could now improve it—"

"Speak not of it," said Zarah, "if thou wouldst have our truce—remember it is no peace—if, I say, thou wouldst have our truce grow to be an hour old!"

"This, then," said Christian, with a last effort to work upon the vanity of this singular being, "is she who pretended such superiority to human passion, that she could walk indifferently and unmoved through the halls of the prosperous, and the prison cells of the captive, unknowing and unknown, sympathizing neither with the pleasures of the one, nor the woes of the other, but advancing with sure, though silent steps, her own plans in despite and regardless of either!"

"My own plans!" said Zarah—"Thy plans, Christian—thy plans of extorting from the surprised prisoners, means whereby to convict them—thine own plans, formed with those more powerful than thyself, to sound men's secrets, and, by using them as matter of accusation, to keep up the great delusion of the nation."

"Such access was indeed given you as my agent," said Christian, "and for advancing a great national change. But how did you use it?—to advance your own insane passion?"

"Insane!" said Zarah—"Had he been less than insane whom I addressed, he and I had ere now been far from the toils which you have pitched for us both. I had means prepared for every thing; and ere this, the shores of Britain had been lost to our sight for ever."

"The miserable dwarf, too," said Christian—"Was it worthy of you to delude that poor creature with flattering visions—lull him asleep with drugs! Was that my doing?"

"He was my destined tool," said Zarah, haughtily. "I remembered your lessons too well not to use him as such. Yet scorn him not too much. I tell you, that you very miserable dwarf, whom I made my sport in the prison—yon wretched abortion of nature, I would select for a husband, ere I would marry your Buckingham;—the vain and imbecile pigmy has yet the warm heart and noble feelings, that a man should hold his highest honor."

"In God's name, then, take your own way," said Christian; "and, for my sake, let never man hereafter limit a woman in the use of her tongue, since he must make it amply up to her, in allowing her the privilege of her own will. Who would have thought it? But the colt has slipped the bridle, and I must needs follow, since I cannot guide her."

Our narrative returns to the Court of King Charles at Whitehall.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

—But O!

What shall I say to thee, Lord Scroop; thou cruel,
Ingrateful, savage, and inhuman creature!
Thou that didst bear the key of all my counsels,
That knew'st the very bottom of my soul,
That almost might'st have coined me into gold,
Wouldst thou have practised on me for thy use!

HENRY V.

At no period of his life, not even when that life was in imminent danger, did the constitutional gaiety of Charles seem more overclouded, than when waiting for the return of Chiffinch with the Duke of Buckingham. His mind revolted at the idea, that the person to whom he had been so particularly indulgent, and whom he had selected as the friend of his lighter hours and amusements, should prove capable of having tampered with a plot apparently directed against his liberty and life. He more than once examined the dwarf anew, but could extract nothing more than his first narrative contained. The ap-

partition of the female to him in the cell of Newgate, he described in such fanciful and romantic colors, that the King could not help thinking the poor man's head a little turned; and, as nothing was found in the kettledrum, and other musical instruments brought for the use of the Duke's band of foreigners, he nourished some slight hope that the whole plan might be either a mere jest, or that the idea of an actual conspiracy was founded in mistake.

The persons who had been dispatched to watch the motions of Mr. Weiver's congregation, brought back word that they had quietly dispersed. It was known, at the same time, that they had met in arms, but this augured no particular design of aggression, at a time when all true Protestants conceived themselves in danger of immediate massacre; when the fathers of the city had repeatedly called out the Train-Bands, and alarmed the citizens of London, under the idea of an instant insurrection of the Catholics; and when, to sum the whole up, in the emphatic words of an alderman of the day, there was a general belief that they would all waken some unhappy morning with their throats cut. Who was to do these dire deeds, it was more difficult to suppose; but all admitted the possibility that they might be achieved, since one Justice of the Peace was already murdered. There was, therefore, no inference of hostile intentions against the State, to be decidedly derived from a congregation of Protestants *par excellence*, military from old associations, bringing their arms with them to a place of worship, in the midst of a panic so universal.

Neither did the violent language of the minister, supposing that to be proved, absolutely infer meditated violence. The favorite parables of the preachers, and the metaphors and ornaments which they selected, were at all times of a military cast; and the taking the kingdom of heaven by storm, a strong and beautiful metaphor, when used generally as in Scripture, was detailed in their sermons in all the technical language of the attack and defence of a fortified place. The danger, in short, whatever might have been its actual degree, had disappeared as suddenly as a bubble upon the water, when broken by a casual touch, and had left as little trace behind it. It became, therefore, matter of much doubt, whether it had ever actually existed.

While various reports were making from without, and while their tenor was discussed by the King, and such nobles and statesmen as he thought proper to consult on the occasion, a gradual sadness and anxiety mingled with, and finally silenced, the mirth of the evening. All became sensible that something unusual was going forward; and the unwonted distance which Charles maintained from his guests, while it added greatly to the dulness that began to predominate in the presence-chamber, gave intimation that something unusual was laboring in the King's mind.

Thus play was neglected—the music was si-

lent, or played without being heard—gallants ceased to make compliments, and ladies to expect them; and a sort of apprehensive curiosity pervaded the circle. Each asked the others why they were grave; and no answer was returned, any more than could have been rendered by a herd of cattle instinctively disturbed by the approach of a thunder-storm.

To add to the general apprehension, it began to be whispered, that one or two of the guests, who were desirous of leaving the palace, had been informed no one could be permitted to retire until the general hour of dismissal. And these, gliding back into the hall, communicated in whispers that the sentinels at the gates were doubled, and that there was a troop of the Horse Guards drawn up in the Court—circumstances so unusual, as to excite the most anxious curiosity.

Such was the state of the Court, when wheels were heard without, and the bustle which took place denoted the arrival of some person of consequence.

"Here comes Chiffinch," said the King, "with his prey in his clench."

It was indeed the Duke of Buckingham; nor did he approach the royal presence without emotion. On entering the court, the flambeaux which were borne around the carriage gleamed on the scarlet coats, laced hats, and drawn broadswords of the Horse Guards—a sight unusual, and calculated to strike terror into a conscience which was none of the clearest.

The Duke alighted from the carriage, and only said to the officer, whom he saw upon duty, "You are late under arms to-night, Captain Carleton."

"Such are our orders, sir," answered Carleton, with military brevity; and then commanded the four dismounted sentinels at the outer gate to make way for the Duke of Buckingham. His Grace had no sooner entered, than he heard behind him the command, "Move close up, sentinels—closer yet to the gate." And he felt as if all chance of rescue were excluded by the sound.

As he advanced up the grand staircase, there were other symptoms of alarm and precaution. The Yeomen of the Guard were mustered in unusual numbers, and carried carbines instead of their halberds; and the Gentlemen Pensioners, with their partisans, appeared also in proportional force. In short, all that sort of defence which the royal household possesses within itself, seemed, for some hasty and urgent reason, to have been placed under arms, and upon duty.

Buckingham ascended the royal staircase with an eye attentive to these preparations, and a step steady and slow, as if he counted each step on which he trode. "Who," he asked himself, "shall ensure Christian's fidelity? Let him but stand fast and we are secure. Otherwise—"

As he shaped the alternative, he entered the presence-chamber.

The King stood in the midst of the apartment, surrounded by the personages with whom he had

been consulting. The rest of the brilliant assembly, scattered into groups, looked on at some distance. All were silent when Buckingham entered, in hopes of receiving some explanation of the mysteries of the evening. All bent forward, though etiquette forbade them to advance, to catch, if possible, something of what was about to pass betwixt the King and his intriguing statesman. At the same time, those counsellors who stood around Charles, drew back on either side, so as to permit the Duke to pay his respects to his Majesty in the usual form. He went through the ceremonial with his accustomed grace, but was received by Charles with much unwonted gravity.

"We have waited for you for some time, my Lord Duke. It is long since Chiffinch left us, to request your attendance here. I see you are elaborately dressed. Your toilette was needless on the present occasion."

"Needless to the splendor of your Majesty's Court," said the Duke, "but not needless on my part. This chanced to be Black Munday at York-Place, and my club of *Pendables* were in full glee when your Majesty's summons arrived. I could not be in the company of Ogle, Maniduc, Dawson, and so forth, but what I must needs make some preparation and some ablution ere entering the circle here."

"I trust the purification will be complete," said the King, without any tendency to the smile which always softened features, that, ungilded by its influence, were dark, harsh, and even severe. "We wished to ask your Grace concerning the import of a sort of musical mask which you designed us here, but which miscarried, as we are given to understand."

"It must have been a great miscarriage indeed," said the Duke, "since your Majesty looks so serious on it. I thought to have done your Majesty a pleasure (as I have seen you condescend to be pleased with such passages), by sending the contents of that bass-viol; but I fear the jest has been unacceptable—I fear the fireworks may have done mischief."

"Not the mischief they were designed for, perhaps," said the King, gravely; "you see, my lord, we are all alive, and unsinged."

"Long may your Majesty remain so," said the Duke; "yet I see there is something misconstrued on my part—it must be a matter unpardonable, however little intended, since it hath displeased so indulgent a master."

"Too indulgent a master, indeed, Buckingham," replied the King; "and the fruit of my indulgence has been to change loyal men into traitors."

"May it please your Majesty, I cannot understand this," said the Duke.

"Follow us, my lord," answered Charles, "and we will endeavor to explain our meaning."

Attended by the same lords who stood around him, and followed by the Duke of Buckingham, on whom all eyes were fixed, Charles retired into

the same cabinet which had been the scene of repeated consultations in the course of the evening. There, leaning with his arms crossed on the back of an easy-chair, Charles proceeded to interrogate the suspected nobleman.

"Let us be plain with each other. Speak out, Buckingham. What, in ore word, was to have been the regale intended for us this evening?"

"A petty mask, my lord. I had destined a little dancing-girl to come out of that instrument, who, I thought, would have performed to your Majesty's liking—a few Chinese fireworks there were, which, thinking the entertainment was to have taken place in the marble hall, might, I hoped, have been discharged with good effect, and without the slightest alarm, at the first appearance of my little sorceress, and were designed to have masked, as it were, her entrance upon the stage. I hope there have been no perukes singed—no ladies frightened—no hopes of noble descent interrupted by my ill-fancied jest."

"We have seen no such fireworks, my lord; and your female dancer, of whom we now hear for the first time, came forth in the form of our old acquaintance Geoffrey Hudson, whose dancing days are surely ended."

"Your Majesty surprises me! I beseech you, let Christian be sent for—Edward Christian—he will be found lodging in a large old house near Sharper the cutler's, in the Strand. As I live by bread, sire, I trusted him with the arrangement of this matter, as indeed the dancing-girl was his property. If he has done aught to dishonor my concert, or disparage my character, he shall die under the baton."

"It is singular," said the King, "and I have often observed it, that this fellow Christian bears the blame of all men's enormities—he performs the part which, in a great family, is usually assigned to that mischief-doing personage, Nobody. When Chiffinch blunders, he always quotes Christian. When Sheffield writes a lampoon, I am sure to hear of Christian having corrected, or copied, or dispersed it—he is the *dame damnée* of every one about my Court—the scapegoat, who is to carry away all their iniquities; and he will have a cruel load to bear into the wilderness. But for Buckingham's sins, in particular, he is the regular and uniform sponsor; and I am convinced his Grace expects Christian should suffer every penalty which he has incurred, in this world or the next."

"Not so," with the deepest reverence replied the Duke. "I have no hope of being either hanged or damned by proxy; but it is clear some one hath tampered with and altered my device. If I am accused of aught, let me at least hear the charge, and see my accuser."

"That is but fair," said the King. "Bring our little friend from behind the chimney-board. [Hudson being accordingly produced, he continued.] There stands the Duke of Buckingham. Repeat before him the tale you told us. Let him hear what were those contents of the bass-viol

which were removed that you might enter it. Be not afraid of any one, but speak the truth boldly."

"May it please your Majesty," said Hudson, "fear is a thing unknown to me."

"His body has no room to hold such a passion; or there is too little of it to be worth fearing for," said Buckingham.—"But let him speak."

Ere Hudson had completed his tale, Buckingham interrupted him by exclaiming, "Is it possible that I can be suspected by your Majesty on the word of this pitiful variety of the baboon tribe?"

"Villain-Lord, I appeal thee to the combat!" said the little man, highly offended at the appellation thus bestowed on him.

"La you there now!" said the Duke.—"The little animal is quite crazed, and defies a man who need ask no other weapon than a corking-pin to run him through the lungs, and whose single kick could hoist him from Dover to Calais without yacht or wherry. And what can you expect from an idiot, who is *engoué* of a common rope-dancing girl, that capered on a packthread at Ghent in Flanders, unless they were to club their talents to set up a booth at Bartholomew-Fair?—Is it not plain, that supposing the little animal is not malicious, as indeed his whole kind bear a general and most cankered malice against those who have the ordinary proportions of humanity?—Grant, I say, that this were not a malicious falsehood of his, why, what does it amount to?—That he has mistaken squibs and Chinese crackers for arms! He says not he himself touched or handled them; and judging by the sight alone, I question if the infirm old creature, when any whim or preconception hath possession of his noddle, can distinguish betwixt a blunderbuss and a black-pudding."

The horrible clamor which the dwarf made so soon as he heard this disparagement of his military skill—the haste with which he blundered out a detail of his warlike experiences—and the absurd grimaces which he made in order to enforce his story, provoked not only the risibility of Charles, but even of the statesmen around him, and added absurdity to the motley complexion of the scene. The King terminated this dispute, by commanding the dwarf to withdraw.

A more regular discussion of his evidence was then resumed, and Ormond was the first who pointed out, that it went farther than had been noticed, since the little man had mentioned a certain extraordinary and treasonable conversation held by the Duke's dependants, by whom he had been conveyed to the palace.

"I am sure not to lack my lord of Ormond's good word," said the Duke, scornfully; "but I defy him alike, and all my other enemies, and shall find it easy to show that this alleged conspiracy, if any grounds for it at all exist, is a mere sham-plot, got up to turn the odium justly attached to the Papists upon the Protestants. Here is a half-hanged creature, who, on the very day he escapes from the gallows, which many believe was

his most deserved destiny, comes to take away the reputation of a Protestant Peer—and, on what!—on the treasonable conversation of three or four German fiddlers, heard through the sound-holes of a violoncello, and that, too, when the creature was incased in it, and mounted on a man's shoulders! The urchin, too, in repeating their language, shows he understands German as little as my horse does; and if he did rightly hear, truly comprehend, and accurately report what they said, still, is my honor to be touched by the language held by such persons as these are, with whom I have never communicated, otherwise than men of my rank do with those of their calling and capacity?—Pardon me, sire, if I presume to say, that the profound statesmen who endeavored to stifle the Popish conspiracy by the pretended Meal-tub Plot, will take little more credit by their figments about fiddles and concertos."

The assistant counsellors looked at each other; and Charles turned on his heel, and walked through the room with long steps.

At this period the Peverils, father and son, were announced to have reached the palace, and were ordered into the royal presence.

These gentlemen had received the royal mandate at a moment of great interest. After being dismissed from their confinement by the elder Bridgenorth, in the manner and upon the terms which the reader must have gathered from the conversation of the latter with Christian, they reached the lodgings of Lady Peveril, who awaited them with joy, mingled with terror and uncertainty. The news of the acquittal had reached her by the exertions of the faithful Lance Outram, but her mind had been since harassed by the long delay of their appearance, and rumors of disturbances which had taken place in Fleet Street and in the Strand.

When the first rapturous meeting was over, Lady Peveril, with an anxious look towards her son, as if recommending caution, said she was now about to present to him the daughter of an old friend, whom he had *never* (there was an emphasis on the word) seen before. "This young lady," she continued, "was the only child of Colonel Mitford, in North Wales, who had sent her to remain under her guardianship for an interval, finding himself unequal to attempt the task of her education."

"Ay, ay," said Sir Geoffrey, "Dick Mitford must be old now—beyond the threescore and ten, I think. He was no chicken, though a cock of the game, when he joined the Marquis of Hertford at Namptwich with two hundred wild Welshmen.—Before George, Julian, I love that girl as if she was my own flesh and blood! Lady Peveril would never have got through this work without her; and Dick Mitford sent me a thousand pieces, too, in excellent time, when there was scarce a cross to keep the devil from dancing in our pockets, much more for these law-doings. I used it with out scruple, for there is wood ready to be cut at Martindale when we get down there, and Dick

Mitford knows I would have done the like for him. Strange that he should have been the only one of my friends to reflect I might want a few pieces."

Whilst Sir Geoffrey thus ran on, the meeting betwixt Alice and Julian Peveril was accomplished, without any particular notice on his side, except to say, "Kiss her, Julian—kiss her. What the devil! is that the way you learned to accost a lady at the Isle of Man, as if her lips were a red-hot horseshoe?—And do not you be offended, my pretty one; Julian is naturally bashful, and has been bred by an old lady, but you will find him, by and by, as gallant as thou hast found me, my princess.—And now, Dame Peveril, to dinner, to dinner! the old fox must have his belly-timber, though the hounds have been after him the whole day."

Lance, whose joyous congratulations were next to be undergone, had the consideration to cut them short, in order to provide a plain but hearty meal from the next cook's shop, at which Julian sat like one enchanted, betwixt his mistress and his mother. He easily conceived that the last was the confidential friend to whom Bridgenorth had finally committed the charge of his daughter, and his only anxiety now was, to anticipate the confusion that was likely to arise when her real parentage was made known to his father. Wisely, however, he suffered not these anticipations to interfere with the delight of his present situation, in the course of which, many slight but delightful tokens of recognition were exchanged, without censure, under the eye of Lady Peveril, under cover of the boisterous mirth of the old Baronet, who spoke for two, ate for four, and drank wine for half a dozen. His progress in the latter exercise might have proceeded rather too far, had he not been interrupted by a gentleman bearing the King's orders, that he should instantly attend upon the presence at Whitehall, and bring his son along with him.

Lady Peveril was alarmed, and Alice grew pale with sympathetic anxiety; but the old Knight, who never saw more than what lay straight before him, set it down to the King's hasty anxiety to congratulate him on his escape; an interest on his Majesty's part which he considered by no means extravagant, conscious that it was reciprocal on his own side. It came upon him, indeed, with the more joyful surprise that he had received a previous hint, ere he left the court of justice, that it would be prudent in him to go down to Martindale before presenting himself at Court,—a restriction which he supposed as repugnant to his Majesty's feelings as it was to his own.

While he consulted with Lance Outram about cleaning his buff-belt and sword-hilt, as well as time admitted, Lady Peveril had the means to give Julian more distinct information, that Alice was under her protection by her father's authority, and with his consent to their union, if it could be accomplished. She added that it was her determination to employ the mediation of the Countess of Derby, to overcome the obstacles

which might be foreseen on the part of Sir Geoffrey.

CHAPTER XLIX.

In the King's name,
Let fall your swords and daggers!
CRITIC.

WHEN the father and son entered the cabinet of audience, it was easily visible that Sir Geoffrey had obeyed the summons as he would have done the trumpet's call to horse; and his dishevelled gray locks and half-arranged dress, though they showed zeal and haste, such as he would have used when Charles I. called him to attend a council of war, seemed rather indecorous in a pacific drawing-room. He paused at the door of the cabinet, but when the King called on him to advance, came hastily forward, with every feeling of his earlier and later life afloat and contending in his memory, threw himself on his knees before the King, seized his hand, and without even an effort to speak, wept aloud. Charles, who generally felt deeply so long as an impressive object was before his eyes, indulged for a moment the old man's rapture.—"My good Sir Geoffrey," he said, "you have had some hard measure; we owe you amends, and will find time to pay our debt."

"No suffering—no debt," said the old man; "I cared not what the rogues said of me—I knew they could never get twelve honest fellows to believe a word of their most damnable lies. I did long to beat them when they called me traitor to your Majesty—that I confess—But to have such an early opportunity of paying my duty to your Majesty, overpays it all. The villains would have persuaded me I ought not to come to court—aha!"

The Duke of Ormond perceived that the King colored much; for in truth it was from the Court that the private intimation had been given to Sir Geoffrey to go down to the country, without appearing at Whitehall; and he, moreover, suspected that the jolly old Knight had not risen from his dinner altogether dry-lipped, after the fatigues of a day so agitating.—"My old friend," he whispered, "you forget that your son is to be presented—permit me to have that honor."

"I crave your Grace's pardon humbly," said Sir Geoffrey, "but it is an honor I design for myself, as I apprehend no one can so utterly surrender and deliver him up to his Majesty's service as the father that begot him is entitled to do.—Julian, come forward, and kneel.—Here he is, please your Majesty—Julian Peveril—a chip of the old block—as stout, though scarce so tall a tree, as the old trunk, when at the freshest. Take him to you, sir, for a faithful servant, *à vendre et à pendre*, as the French say; if he fears fire or steel, axe or gallows, in your Majesty's service, I renounce him—he is no son of mine—I disown him, and he may go to the Isle of Man, the Isle of Dogs, or the Isle of Devils, for what I care."

Charles winked to Ormond, and having, with

his wonted courtesy, expressed his thorough conviction that Julian would imitate the loyalty of his ancestors, and especially of his father, added, that he believed his Grace of Ormond had something to communicate which was of consequence to his service. Sir Geoffrey made his military reverence at this hint, and marched off in the rear of the Duke, who proceeded to inquire of him concerning the events of the day. Charles, in the meanwhile, having, in the first place, ascertained that the son was not in the same genial condition with the father, demanded and received from him a precise account of all the proceedings subsequent to the trial.

Julian, with the plainness and precision which such a subject demanded, when treated in such a presence, narrated all that had happened down to the entrance of Bridgenorth; and his Majesty was so much pleased with his manner, that he congratulated Arlington on their having gained the evidence of at least one man of sense to these dark and mysterious events. But when Bridgenorth was brought upon the scene, Julian hesitated to bestow a name upon him; and although he mentioned the chapel which he had seen filled with men in arms, and the violent language of the preacher, he added, with earnestness, that, notwithstanding all this, the men departed without coming to any extremity, and had all left the place before his father and he were set at liberty.

"And you retired quietly to your dinner in Fleet Street, young man," said the King, severely, "without giving a magistrate notice of the dangerous meeting which was held in the vicinity of our palace, and who did not conceal their intention of proceeding to extremities?"

Peveril blushed, and was silent. The King frowned, and stepped aside to communicate with Ormond, who reported that the father seemed to have known nothing of the matter.

"And the son, I am sorry to say," said the King, "seems more unwilling to speak the truth than I should have expected. We have all variety of evidence in this singular investigation—a mad witness like the dwarf, a drunken witness like the father, and now a dumb witness.—Young man," he continued, addressing Julian, "your behavior is less frank than I expected from your father's son. I must know who this person is with whom you held such familiar intercourse—you know him, I presume?"

Julian acknowledged that he did, but, kneeling on one knee, entreated his Majesty's forgiveness for concealing his name; "he had been freed," he said, "from his confinement, on promising to that effect."

"That was a promise made, by your own account, under compulsion" answered the King, "and I cannot authorize your keeping it; it is your duty to speak the truth—if you are afraid of Buckingham, the Duke shall withdraw."

"I have no reason to fear the Duke of Buckingham," said Peveril; "that I had an affair with

one of his household, was the man's own fault and not mine."

"Oddsfish!" said the King, "the light begins to break in on me—I thought I remembered thy physiognomy. Wert thou not the very fellow whom I met at Chiffinch's yonder morning?—The matter escaped me since; but now I recollect thou saidst then, that thou wert the son of that jolly old three-bottle Baronet yonder."

"It is true," said Julian, "that I met your Majesty at Master Chiffinch's, and I am afraid had the misfortune to displease you; but—"

"No more of that, young man—no more of that—But I recollect you had with you that beautiful dancing siren.—Buckingham, I will hold you gold to silver, that she was the intended tenant of that bass-fiddle?"

"Your Majesty has rightly guessed it," said the Duke; "and I suspect she has put a trick upon me, by substituting the dwarf in her place; for Christian thinks—"

"Damn Christian!" said the King hastily—"I wish they would bring him hither, that universal referee."—And as the wish was uttered Christian's arrival was announced. "Let him attend," said the King. "But hark—a thought strikes me.—Here, Master Peveril—yonder dancing maiden that introduced you to us by the singular agility of her performance, is she not, by your account, a dependant on the Countess of Derby?"

"I have known her such for years," answered Julian.

"Then will we call the Countess hither," said the King. "It is fit we should learn who this little fairy really is; and if she be now so absolutely at the beck of Buckingham, and this Master Christian of his—why I think it would be but charity to let her ladyship know so much, since I question if she will wish, in that case, to retain her in her service. Besides," he continued, speaking apart, "this Julian, to whom suspicion attaches in these matters from his obstinate silence, is also of the Countess's household. We will sift this matter to the bottom, and do justice to all."

The Countess of Derby, hastily summoned, entered the royal closet at one door, just as Christian and Zarah, or Fenella, were ushered in by the other. The old Knight of Martindale, who had ere this returned to the presence, was scarce controlled, even by the signs which she made, so much was he desirous of greeting his old friend; but as Ormond laid a kind restraining hand upon his arm, he was prevailed on to sit still.

The Countess, after a deep reverence to the King, acknowledged the rest of the nobility present by a slighter reverence, smiled to Julian Peveril, and looked with surprise at the unexpected apparition of Fenella. Buckingham bit his lip, for he saw the introduction of Lady Derby was likely to confuse and embroil every preparation which he had arranged for his defence; and he stole a glance at Christian, whose eye, when fixed