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WOODSTOCK

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WOODSTOCK.

CHAPTER I.

Some were for gospel ministers,
And some for red-coat seculars,
As men most fit t' hold forth the word,
And wield the one and th' other sword.

BUTLER'S HUDIBRAS.

THERE is a handsome parish church in the town of Woodstock,—I am told so, at least, for I never saw it, having scarce time, when at the place, to view the magnificence of Blenheim, its painted halls and tapestried bowers, and then return in due season to dine in hall with my learned friend, the provost of —; being one of those occasions on which a man wrongs himself extremely, if he lets his curiosity interfere with his punctuality. I had the church accurately described to me, with a view to this work; but, as I have some reason to doubt whether my informant had ever seen the inside of it himself, I shall be content to say that it is now a handsome edifice, most part of which was rebuilt forty or fifty years since, although it still contains some arches of the old chantry, founded, it is said, by King John. It is to this more ancient part of the building that my story refers.

On a morning in the end of September, or beginning of October, in the year 1652, being a day appointed for a solemn thanksgiving for the decisive victory at Worcester, a respectable audience was assembled in the old chantry, or chapel of King John. The condition of the church and character of the audience both bore witness to the rage of civil war, and the peculiar spirit of the times. The sacred edifice showed many marks of dilapidation. The windows, once filled with stained glass, had been dashed to pieces with pikes and muskets, as matters of and pertaining to idolatry. The carving on the reading-desk was damaged, and two fair screens of beautiful sculptured oak had been destroyed, for the same pithy and conclusive reason. The high altar had been removed, and the gilded railing, which was once around it, was broken down and carried off. The effigies of several tombs were mutilated, and now lay scattered about the church,

Torn from their destined niche,—unworthy meed
Of knightly counsel or heroic deed!

The autumn wind piped through empty aisles, in which the remains of stakes and trevisses of rough-hewn timber, as well as a quantity of scattered hay and trampled straw, seemed to inti-

mate that the hallowed precincts had been, upon some late emergency, made the quarters of a troop of horse.

The audience, like the building, was abated in splendor. None of the ancient and habitual worshippers during peaceful times, were now to be seen in their carved galleries, with hands shadowing their brows, while composing their minds to pray where their fathers had prayed, and after the same mode of worship. The eye of the yeoman and peasant sought in vain the tall form of old Sir Henry Lee of Ditchley, as, wrapped in his laced cloak, and with beard and whiskers duly composed, he moved slowly through the aisles, followed by the faithful mastiff, or blood-hound, which in old time had saved his master by his fidelity, and which regularly followed him to church. Bevis, indeed, fell under the proverb which avers, "He is a good dog which goes to church;" for, bating an occasional temptation to warble along with the accord, he behaved himself as decorously as any of the congregation, and returned as much edified, perhaps, as most of them. The damsels of Woodstock looked as vainly for the laced cloaks, jingling spurs, slashed boots, and tall plumes, of the young cavaliers of this and other high-born houses, moving through the streets and the churchyard with the careless ease, which indicates perhaps rather an overweening degree of self-confidence, yet shows graceful when mingled with good-humor and courtesy. The good old dames, too, in their white hoods and black velvet gowns—their daughters, "the cyrenose of neighboring eyes,"—where were they all now, who, when they entered the church, used to divide men's thoughts between them and Heaven? "But, ah! Alice Lee—so sweet, so gentle, so condescending in thy loveliness—[thus proceeds a contemporary annalist, whose manuscript we have deciphered] why is my story to turn upon thy fallen fortunes? and why not rather to the period when, in the very dismounting from your palfrey, you attracted as many eyes as if an angel had descended,—as many blessings as if the benignant being had come fraught with good tidings? No creature wert thou of an idle romancer's imagination—no being fantastically bedizened with inconsistent perfections;—thy merits made me love thee well—and for thy faults—so well did they show amid thy good qualities, that I think they made me love thee better."

With the house of Lee had disappeared from

the chantry of King John others of gentle blood and honored lineage,—Freemantles, Winklecombes, Drycotts, &c.; for the air that blew over the towers of Oxford was unfavorable to the growth of Puritanism, which was more general in the neighboring counties. There were among the congregation, however, one or two that, by their habits and demeanor, seemed country gentlemen of consideration, and there were also present some of the notables of the town of Woodstock, cutlers or glovers chiefly, whose skill in steel or leather had raised them to a comfortable livelihood. These dignitaries wore long black cloaks, plaited close at the neck, and, like peaceful citizens, carried their Bibles and memorandum-books at their girdles, instead of knife or sword.* This respectable, but least numerous part of the audience, were such decent persons as had adopted the Presbyterian form of faith, renouncing the liturgy and hierarchy of the Church of England, and living under the tuition of the Rev. Nehemiah Holdenough, much famed for the length and strength of his powers of predication. With these grave seniors sate their goodly dames in ruff and gorget, like the portraits which in catalogues of paintings are designed "wife of a burgomaster;" and their pretty daughters, whose study, like that of Chaucer's physician, was not always in the Bible, but who were, on the contrary, when a glance could escape the vigilance of their honored mothers, inattentive themselves, and the cause of inattention in others.

But, besides these dignified persons, there were in the church a numerous collection of the lower orders, some brought thither by curiosity, but many of them unwashed artificers, bewildered in the theological discussions of the time, and of as many various sects as there are colors in the rainbow. The presumption of these learned Thebans being in exact proportion to their ignorance, the last was total and the first boundless. Their behavior in the church was anything but reverential or edifying. Most of them affected a cynical contempt for all that was only held sacred by human sanction—the church was to these men but a steeple-house, the clergyman, an ordinary person; her ordinances, dry bran and sapless pottage, † unfitted for the spiritualized palates of the saints, and the prayer, an address to Heaven, to which each acceded or not as in his too critical judgment he conceived fit.

The elder amongst them sate or lay on the benches, with their high steeple-crowned hats pulled over their severe and knitted brows, waiting for the Presbyterian parson, as mastiffs sit in dumb expectation of the bull that is to be brought to the stake. The younger mixed, some of them, a bolder license of manners with their

* This custom among the Puritans is mentioned often in old plays, and among others in the *Widow of Wailing Street*.

† See a curious vindication of this indecent simile here for the *Common Prayer*, in Note, p. 22.

heresies; they gazed round on the women, yawned, coughed, and whispered, ate apples, and cracked nuts, as if in the gallery of a theatre ere the piece commences.

Besides all these, the congregation contained a few soldiers, some in corsets and steel caps, some in buff, and others in red coats. These men of war had their bandeliers, with ammunition, slung round them, and rested on their pikes and muskets. They, too, had their peculiar doctrines on the most difficult points of religion, and united the extravagances of enthusiasm with the most determined courage and resolution in the field. The burghers of Woodstock looked on these military saints with no small degree of awe; for though not often sullied with deeds of plunder or cruelty, they had the power of both absolutely in their hands, and the peaceful citizens had no alternative, save submission to whatever the ill-regulated and enthusiastic imaginations of their martial guides might suggest.

After some time spent in waiting for him, Mr. Holdenough began to walk up the aisles of the chapel, not with the slow and dignified carriage with which the old Rector was of yore wont to maintain the dignity of the surplice, but with a hasty step, like one who arrives too late at an appointment, and bustles forward to make the best use of his time. He was a tall thin man, with an adust complexion, and the vivacity of his eye indicated some irascibility of temperament. His dress was brown, not black, and over his other vestments he wore, in honor of Calvin, a Geneva cloak of a blue color, which fell backwards from his shoulders as he posted on to the pulpit. His grizzled hair was cut as short as shears could perform the feat, and covered with a black silk scullcap, which stuck so close to his head, that the two ears expanded from under it as if they had been intended as handles by which to lift the whole person. Moreover, the worthy divine wore spectacles, and a long grizzled peaked beard, and he carried in his hand a small pocket-bible with silver clasps. Upon arriving at the pulpit, he paused a moment to take breath, then began to ascend the steps by two at a time.

But his course was arrested by a strong hand, which seized his cloak. It was that of one who had detached himself from the group of soldiery. He was a stout man of middle stature, with a quick eye, and a countenance, which, though plain, yet an expression that fixed the attention. His dress, though not strictly military, partook of that character. He wore large hose made of calves-leather, and a tuck, as it was then called, or rapier, of tremendous length, balanced on the other side by a dagger. The belt was morocco, garnished with pistols.

The minister, thus intercepted in his duty, faced round upon the party who had seized him, and demanded, in no gentle tone, the meaning of the interruption.

"Friend," quoth the intruder, "is it thy purpose to hold forth to these good people?"

"Ay, marry is it," said the clergyman, "and such is my bounden duty. Woe to me if I preach not the gospel—Prithee, friend, let me not in my labor—"

"Nay," said the man of warlike mien, "I am myself minded to hold forth; therefore, do thou desist, or if thou wilt do by mine advice, remain and fructify with those poor goslings, to whom I am presently about to shake forth the crumbs of comfortable doctrine."

"Give place, thou man of Satan," said the priest, waxing wroth, "respect mine order—my cloth."

"I see no more respect in the cut of thy cloak, or in the cloth of which it is fashioned," said the other, "than thou didst in the Bishop's rochets—they were black and white, thou art blue and brown. Sleeping dogs every one of you, lying down, loving to slumber—shepherds that starve the flock but will not watch it, each looking to his own gain—hum."

Scenes of this indecent kind were so common at the time, that no one thought of interfering; the congregation looked on in silence, the better class scandalized, and the lower orders, some laughing, and others backing the soldier or minister as their fancy dictated. Meantime the struggle waxed fiercer; Mr. Holdenough clamored for assistance.

"Master Mayor of Woodstock," he exclaimed, "wilt thou be among those wicked magistrates who bear the sword in vain?—Citizens, will you not help your pastor?—Worthy Aldermen, will you see me strangled on the pulpit stairs by this man of buff and Belial?—But lo, I will overcome him, and cast his cords from me."

As Holdenough spoke, he struggled to ascend the pulpit stairs, holding hard on the banisters. His tormentor held fast by the skirts of the cloak, which went nigh to the choking of the wearer, until, as he spoke the words last mentioned, in a half-strangled voice, Mr. Holdenough dexterously slipped the string which tied it round his neck, so that the garment suddenly gave way; the soldier fell backwards down the steps, and the liberated divine skipped into the pulpit, and began to give forth a psalm of triumph over his prostrate adversary. But a great hubbub in the church marred his exultation, and although he and his faithful clerk continued to sing the hymn of victory, their notes were only heard by fits, like the whistle of a curlew during a gale of wind.

The cause of the tumult was as follows:—The Mayor was a zealous Presbyterian, and witnessed the intrusion of the soldier with great indignation from the very beginning, though he hesitated to interfere with an armed man while on his legs and capable of resistance. But no sooner did he behold the champion of independence sprawling on his back, with the divine's Geneva cloak fluttering in his hands, than the magistrate rushed for-

ward, exclaiming that such insolence was not to be endured, and ordered his constables to seize the prostrate champion, proclaiming in the magnanimity of wrath, "I will commit every red-coat of them all—I will commit him were he Noll Cromwell himself!"

The worthy Mayor's indignation had overmastered his reason when he made this mistimed vaunt; for three soldiers, who had hitherto stood motionless like statues, made each a stride in advance, which placed them betwixt the municipal officers and the soldier, who was in the act of rising; then making at once the movement of resting arms according to the manual as then practised, their musket-butts rang on the church pavement, within an inch of the gouty toes of Master Mayor. The energetic magistrate, whose efforts in favor of order were thus checked, cast one glance on his supporters, but that was enough to show him that force was not on his side. All had shrunk back on hearing that ominous clatter of stone and iron. He was obliged to descend to expostulation.

"What do you mean, my masters?" said he; "is it like a decent and god-fearing soldiery, who have wrought such things for the land as have never before been heard of, to brawl and riot in the church, or to aid, abet, and comfort a profane fellow, who hath, upon a solemn thanksgiving, excluded the minister from his own pulpit?"

"We have nought to do with thy church, as thou call'st it," said he who, by a small feather in front of his morion, appeared to be the corporal of the party;—"we see not why men of gifts should not be heard within these citadels of superstition, as well as the voice of the men of crape of old, and the men of cloak now. Wherefore, we will pluck you Jack Presbyter out of his wooden sentinel-box, and our own watchman shall relieve the guard, and mount thereon, and cry aloud and spare not."

"Nay, gentlemen," said the Mayor, "if such be your purpose, we have not the means to withstand you, being, as you see, peaceful and quiet men.—But let me first speak with this worthy minister, Nehemiah Holdenough, to persuade him to yield up his place for the time without farther scandal."

The peace-making Mayor then interrupted the quavering of Holdenough and the clerk, and prayed both to retire, else there would, he said, be certainly strife.

"Strife!" replied the Presbyterian divine, with scorn; "no fear of strife among men that dare not testify against this open profanation of the Church and daring display of heresy. Would your neighbors of Banbury have brooked such an insult?"

"Come, come, Master Holdenough," said the Mayor, "put us not to mutiny and cry Clubs. I tell you once more, we are not men of war or blood."

"Not more than may be drawn by the point of a needle," said the preacher scornfully.—"Yo

tallors of Woodstock!—for what is a glover but a tailor working on kidskin?—I forsake you, in scorn of your faint hearts and feeble hands, and will seek me elsewhere a flock which will not fly from their shepherd at the braying of the first wild ass which cometh from out the great desert.”

So saying, the aggrieved divine departed from his pulpit, and shaking the dust from his shoes, left the church as hastily as he had entered it, though with a different reason for his speed. The citizens saw his retreat with sorrow, and not without a compunctious feeling, as if conscious that they were not playing the most courageous part in the world. The Mayor himself and several others left the church, to follow and appease him.

The Independent orator, late prostrate, was now triumphant, and inducting himself into the pulpit without farther ceremony, he pulled a Bible from his pocket, and selected his text from the forty-fifth psalm,—“Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty; and in thy majesty ride prosperously.”—Upon this theme, he commenced one of those wild declamations common at that period, in which men were accustomed to wrest and pervert the language of Scripture, by adapting it to modern events.* The language which, in its

* See “Vindication of the Book of Common Prayer, against the contumelious Slanders of the Fanatic Party terming it Porridge.”

The author of this singular and rare tract indulges in the allegorical style till he fairly hunts down the allegory.

“But as for what you call porridge, who hatched the name I know not, neither is it worth the enquiring after, for I hold porridge good food. It is better to a sick man than meat, for a sick man will sooner eat pottage than meat. Pottage will digest with him when meat will not; pottage will nourish the blood, fill the veins, run into every part of a man, make him warmer; so will these prayers do, set our soul and body in a heat, warm our devotion, work fervency in us, lift up our soul to God. For there be herbs of God’s own planting in our pottage as you call it—the Ten Commandments, dainty herbs to season any pottage in the world; there is the Lord’s Prayer, and that is a most sweet pot-herb, cannot be denied; then there is also David’s herbs, his prayers and psalms, helps to make our pottage relish well; the psalm of the blessed Virgin, a good pot-herb. Though they be, as some term them, *cool-crowned* pottage, yet they are as sweet, as good, as dainty, and as fresh as they were at the first. The sun hath not made them sour with its heat, neither hath the cold water taken away their vigor and strength. Compare them with the Scriptures, and see if they be not as well seasoned and crumbed. If you find anything in them that is either too salt, too fresh, or too bitter, that herb shall be taken out and better put in, if it can be got, or none. And as in kitchen pottage there are many good herbs, so there is likewise in this church pottage, as you call it. For first, there is in kitchen pottage good water to make them so; on the contrary, in the other pottage there is the water of life. 2. There is salt to season them; so in the other is a prayer of grace to season their hearts. 3. There is oatmeal to nourish the body, in the other is the bread of life. 4. There is thyme in them to relish them, and it is very wholesome—in the other is the wholesome exhortation not to harden our heart while it is called to-day. This relisheth well. 5. There is a small onion to give a taste—in the other is a good herb, called Lord have mercy on us. These, and many other holy herbs are contained in it, all boiling in the heart of man, will make as good pottage as the world can afford, especially if you use these herbs for digestion,—the herb repentance, the herb grace, the herb faith, the herb love, the herb hope, the herb good

literal sense, was applied to King David, and typically referred to the coming of the Messiah, was, in the opinion of the military orator, most properly to be interpreted of Oliver Cromwell, the victorious general of the infant Commonwealth, which was never destined to come of age. “Gird on thy sword!” exclaimed the preacher, emphatically; “and was not that a pretty bit of steel as ever dangled from a corslet, or rung against a steel saddle? Ay, ye prick up your ears now, ye cutlers of Woodstock, as if ye should know something of a good fox broadsword—Did you forge it, I trow?—was the steel quenched with water from Rosamond’s well, or the blade blessed by the old cuckoldy priest of Godstow? You would have us think, I warrant me, that you wrought it and welded it, grinded and polished it, and all the while it never came on a Woodstock stithy! You were all too busy making whittles for the lazy crape-men of Oxford, bouncing priests, whose eyes were so closed up with fat, that they could not see Destruction till she had them by the throat. But I can tell you where the sword was forged, and tempered, and welded, and grinded, and polished. When you were, as I said before, making whittles for false priests, and daggers for dissolute G-d d-n-me cavaliers, to cut the people of England’s throat with—it was forged at Long Marston Moor, where blows went faster than ever rung hammer on anvil—and it was tempered at Naseby, in the best blood of the cavaliers—and it was welded in Ireland against the walls of Drogheda—and it was grinded on Scottish lives at Dunbar—and now of late it was polished in Worcester, till it shines as bright as the sun in the middle heaven, and there is no light in England that shall come nigh unto it.”

Here the military part of the congregation raised a hum of approbation, which, being a sound like the “hear, hear,” of the British House of Commons, was calculated to heighten the enthusiasm of the orator, by intimating the sympathy of the audience. “And then,” resumed the preacher, rising in energy as he found that his audience partook in these feelings, “what saith the text?—Ride on prosperously—do not stop—do not call a halt—do not quit the saddle—pursue the scattered fiends—sound the trumpet—not a levant or a flourish, but a point of war—sound, boot and saddle—to horse and away—a charge!—follow after the young Man!—what part have we in him?—Slay, take, destroy, divide the spoil! Blessed art thou, Oliver, on account of thine honor—thy cause is clear, thy call is undoubted—never has defeat come near thy leading-staff, nor disaster attended thy banner. Ride on, flower of England’s soldiers! ride on, chosen leader of God’s champions!—gird up the loins of thy res-

olves, the herb feeling, the herb zeal, the herb fervency, the herb ardency, the herb constancy, with many more of this nature, most excellent for digestion.” *Oho! Jam satia.* In this manner the learned divine hunts his metaphor at a very cold scent, through a pamphlet of six mortal quarto pages.

olution, and be steadfast to the mark of thy high calling!”

Another deep and stern hum, echoed by the ancient embowed arches of the old chantry, gave him an opportunity of an instant’s repose; when the people of Woodstock heard him, and not without anxiety, turn the stream of his oratory into another channel.

“But wherefore, ye people of Woodstock, do I say these things to you, who claim no portion in our David, no interest in England’s son of Jesse?—You, who were fighting as well as your might could (and it was not very formidable) for the late Man, under that old bloodthirsty papist Sir Jacob Aston—are you not now plotting, or ready to plot, for the restoring, as ye call it, of the young Man, the unclean son of the slaughtered tyrant—the fugitive after whom the true hearts of England are now following, that they may take and slay him?—Why should your rider turn his bridle our way? say you in your hearts; ‘we will none of him; if we may help ourselves, we will rather turn us to wallow in the mire of monarchy, with the sow that was washed but newly.’ Come, men of Woodstock, I will ask, and do you answer me. Hunger ye still after the flesh-pots of the monks of Godstow? and ye will say, Nay;—but wherefore, except that the pots are cracked and broken, and the fire is extinguished wherewith thy oven used to boil? And again, I ask, drink ye still of the well of the fornications of the fair Rosamond?—ye will say, Nay;—but wherefore?—”

Here the orator, ere he could answer the question in his own way, was surprised by the following reply, very pithily pronounced by one of the congregation:—“Because you, and the like of you, have left us no brandy to mix with it.”

All eyes turned to the audacious speaker, who stood beside one of the thick sturdy Saxon pillars, which he himself somewhat resembled, being short of stature, but very strongly made, a squat broad Little John sort of figure, leaning on a quarter-staff, and wearing a jerkin, which, though now sorely stained and discolored, had once been of the Lincoln green, and showed remnants of having been leced. There was an air of careless, good-humored audacity about the fellow; and, though under military restraint, there were some of the citizens who could not help crying out,—“Well said, Joceline Joliffe!”

“Jolly Joceline, call ye him?” proceeded the preacher, without showing either confusion or displeasure at the interruption,—“I will make him Joceline of the jail, if he interrupts me again. One of your park-keepers, I warrant, that can never forget they have borne C. R. upon their badges and bugle-horns, even as a dog bears his owner’s name on his collar—a pretty emblem for Christian men! But the brute beast hath the better of him,—the brute weareth his own coat, and the catif thrall wears his master’s. I have seen such a wag make a rope’s end

wag ere now.—Where was I?—Oh, rebuking you for your backslidings, men of Woodstock.—Yes, then ye will say ye have renounced Popery, and ye have renounced Prelacy, and then ye wipe your mouth like Pharisees, as ye are; and who but you for purity of religion! But, I tell you, ye are but like Jehu the son of Nimshi, who broke down the house of Baal, yet departed not from the sins of Jeroboam. Even so ye eat not fish on Friday with the blinded Papists, nor minced-pies on the 25th day of December, like the slothful Prelatists; but ye will gorge on sack-posset each night in the year with your blind Presbyterian guide, and ye will speak evil of dignities, and revile the Commonwealth; and ye will glorify yourselves in your park of Woodstock, and say, ‘Was it not walled in first of any other in England, and that by Henry, son of William called the Conqueror?’ And ye have a princely Lodge therein, and call the same a Royal Lodge; and ye have an oak which ye call the King’s Oak; and ye steal and eat the venison of the park, and ye say, ‘This is the king’s venison, we will wash it down with a cup to the king’s health—better we eat it than those round-headed commonwealth knaves.’ But listen unto me, and take warning. For these things come we to controversy with you. And our name shall be a cannon shot, before which your Lodge, in the pleasantness whereof ye take pastime, shall be blown into ruins; and we will be as a wedge to split asunder the King’s Oak into billets to heat a brown baker’s oven; and we will dispart your park, and slay your deer, and eat them ourselves, neither shall you have any portion thereof, whether in neck or haunch. Ye shall not haft a tenpenny knife with the horns thereof, neither shall ye cut a pair of breeches out of the hide, for all ye be cutlers and glovers; and ye shall have no comfort or support neither from the sequestered traitor Henry Lee, who called himself Ranger of Woodstock, nor from any on his behalf; for they are coming hither who shall be called Maher-shalal-hash-baz, because he maketh haste to the spoil.”

Here ended this wild effusion, the latter part of which fell heavy on the souls of the poor citizens of Woodstock, as tending to confirm a report of an unpleasing nature which had been lately circulated. The communication with London was indeed slow, and the news which it transmitted were uncertain; no less uncertain were the times themselves, and the rumors which were circulated, exaggerated by the hopes and fears of so many various factions. But the general stream of report, so far as Woodstock was concerned, had of late run uniformly in one direction. Day after day they had been informed, that the fatal fiat of Parliament had gone out, for selling the park of Woodstock, destroying its lodge, disparting its forest, and erasing, as far as they could be erased, all traces of its ancient fame. Many of the citizens were likely to be sufferers on this occasion, as several of them on

joyed, either by sufferance or right, various convenient privileges of pasturage, cutting firewood and the like, in the royal chase; and all the inhabitants of the little borough were hurt to think, that the scenery of the place was to be destroyed, its edifices ruined, and its honors rent away. This is a patriotic sensation often found in such places, which ancient distinctions and long-cherished recollections of former days, render so different from towns of recent date. The natives of Woodstock felt it in the fullest force. They had trembled at the anticipated calamity; but now, when it was announced by the appearance of those dark, stern, and at the same time omnipotent soldiers—now that they heard it proclaimed by the mouth of one of their military preachers—they considered their fate as inevitable. The causes of disagreement among themselves were for the time forgotten, as the congregation, dismissed without psalmody or benediction, went slowly and mournfully homeward, each to his own place of abode.

CHAPTER II.

Come forth, old man.—Thy daughter's side
Is now the fitting place for thee
When Time hath quell'd the oak's bold pride,
The youthful tendril yet may hide
The ruins of the parent tree.

WHEN the sermon was ended, the military orator wiped his brow; for, notwithstanding the coolness of the weather, he was heated with the vehemence of his speech and action. He then descended from the pulpit, and spoke a word or two to the corporal who commanded the party of soldiers, who, replying by a sober nod of intelligence, drew his men together, and marched them in order to their quarters in the town.

The preacher himself, as if nothing extraordinary had happened, left the church and sauntered through the streets of Woodstock, with the air of a stranger who was viewing the town without seeming to observe that he was himself in his his turn anxiously surveyed by the citizens, whose furtive yet frequent glances seemed to regard him as something alike suspected and dreadful, yet on no account to be provoked. He heeded them not, but stalked on in the manner affected by the distinguished fanatics of the day; a stiff solemn pace, a severe and at the same time a contemplative look, like that of a man discomposed at the interruptions which earthly objects forced upon him, obliging him by their intrusion to withdraw his thoughts for an instant from celestial things. Innocent pleasures of what kind soever they held in suspicion and contempt, and innocent mirth they abominated. It was, however, a cast of mind that formed men for great and manly actions, as it adopted principle, and that of an unselfish character, for the ruling motive, instead of the gratification of passion. Some of these men were indeed hypocrites, using the cloak of religion only as a covering for their

ambition; but many really possessed the devotional character, and the severe republican virtue, which others only affected. By far the greater number hovered between these extremes, felt to a certain extent the power of religion, and complied with the times in affecting a great deal.

The individual, whose pretensions to sanctity, written as they were upon his brow and gait, have given rise to the above digression, reached at length the extremity of the principal street, which terminates upon the park of Woodstock. A battlemented portal of Gothic appearance defended the entrance to the avenue. It was of mixed architecture, but on the whole, though composed of the styles of the different ages when it had received additions, had a striking and imposing effect. An immense gate, composed of rails of hammered iron, with many a flourish and scroll displaying as its uppermost ornament the ill-fated cipher of C. R., was now decayed, being partly wasted with rust, partly by violence.

The stranger paused as if uncertain whether he should demand or essay entrance. He looked through the grating down an avenue skirted by majestic oaks, which led onward with a gentle curve, as if into the depths of some ample and ancient forest. The wicket of the large iron gate being left unwittingly open, the soldier was tempted to enter, yet with some hesitation, as he that intrudes upon ground which he conjectures may be prohibited—indeed his manner showed more reverence for the scene than could have been expected from his condition and character. He slackened his stately and consequential pace, and at length stood still, and looked around him.

Not far from the gate, he saw rising from the trees one or two ancient and venerable turrets, bearing each its own vane of rare device glittering in the autumn sun. These indicated the ancient hunting-seat, or Lodge, as it was called, which had, since the time of Henry II., been occasionally the residence of the English monarchs, when it pleased them to visit the woods of Oxford, which then so abounded with game, that, according to old Fuller, huntsmen and falconers were nowhere better pleased. The situation which the Lodge occupied was a piece of flat ground, now planted with sycamores, not far from the entrance to that magnificent spot where the spectator first stops to gaze upon Blenheim, to think of Marlborough's victories, and to applaud or criticise the cumbrous magnificence of Vanbrugh's style.

There, too, paused our military preacher, but with other thoughts, and for other purpose, than to admire the scene around him. It was not long afterwards when he beheld two persons, a male and a female, approaching slowly, and so deeply engaged in their own conversation that they did not raise their eyes to observe that there stood a stranger in the path before them. The soldier took advantage of their state of abstraction, and, desirous at once to watch their motions, and

avoid their observation, he glided beneath one of the huge trees which skirted the path, and whose boughs, sweeping the ground on every side, ensured him against discovery, unless in case of an actual search.

In the mean time, the gentleman and lady continued to advance, directing their course to a rustic seat, which still enjoyed the sunbeams, and was placed adjacent to the tree where the stranger was concealed.

The man was elderly, yet seemed bent more by sorrow and infirmity than by the weight of years. He wore a mourning cloak, over a dress of the same melancholy color, cut in that picturesque form which Vandycck has rendered immortal. But although the dress was handsome, it was put on and worn with a carelessness which showed the mind of the wearer ill at ease. His aged, yet still handsome countenance, had the same air of consequence which distinguished his dress and his gait. A striking part of his appearance was a long white beard, which descended far over the breast of his slashed doublet, and looked singular from its contrast in color with his habit.

The young lady, by whom this venerable gentleman seemed to be in some degree supported as they walked arm in arm, was a slight and sylphlike form, with a person so delicately made, and so beautiful in countenance, that it seemed the earth on which she walked was too grossly massive a support for a creature so aerial. But mortal beauty must share human sorrows. The eyes of the beautiful being showed tokens of tears; her color was heightened as she listened to her aged companion; and it was plain, from his melancholy yet displeased look, that the conversation was as distressing to himself as to her. When they sat down on the bench we have mentioned, the gentleman's discourse could be distinctly overheard by the eavesdropping soldier, but the answers of the young lady reached his ear rather less distinctly.

"It is not to be endured!" said the old man, passionately; "it would stir up a paralytic wretch to start up a soldier. My people have been thinned, I grant you, or have fallen off from me in these times—I owe them no grudge for it, poor knaves; what should they do waiting on me when the pantry has no bread and the butlery no ale? But we have still about us some rugged foresters of the old Woodstock breed—old as myself most of them—what of that? old wood seldom warps in the wetting;—I will hold out the old house, and it will not be the first time that I have held it against ten times the strength that we hear of now."

"Alas! my dear father!"—said the young lady in a tone which seemed to intimate his proposal of defence to be altogether desperate.

"And why, alas?" said the gentleman, angrily; "is it because I shut my door against a score or two of these bloodthirsty hypocrites?"

"But their masters can as easily send a regiment or an army, if they will," replied the lady; "and what good would your present defence do, excepting to exasperate them to your utter destruction?"

"Be it so, Alice," replied her father; "I have lived my time, and beyond it. I have outlived the kindest and most princelike of masters. What do I do on the earth since the dismal thirtieth of January? The parricide of that day was a signal to all true servants of Charles Stewart to avenge his death, or die as soon after as they could find a worthy opportunity."

"Do not speak thus, sir," said Alice Lee; "it does not become your gravity and your worth to throw away that life which may yet be of service to your king and country,—it will not and cannot always be thus. England will not long endure the rulers which these bad times have assigned her. In the meanwhile—[here a few words escaped the listener's ears]—and beware of that impatience, which makes bad worse."

"Worse?" exclaimed the impatient old man, "What can be worse? Is it not at the worst already? Will not these people expel us from the only shelter we have left—dilapidate what remains of royal property under my charge—make the palace of princes into a den of thieves, and then wipe their mouths and thank God, as if they had done an alms-deed?"

"Still," said his daughter, "there is hope behind, and I trust the King is ere this out of their reach—We have reason to think well of my brother Albert's safety."

"Ay, Albert! there again," said the old man, in a tone of reproach; "had it not been for thy entreaties I had gone to Worcester myself; but I must needs lie here like a worthless hound when the hunt is up, when who knows what service I might have shown? An old man's head is sometimes useful when his arm is but little worth. But you and Albert were so desirous that he should go alone—and now, who can say what has become of him?"

"Nay, nay, father," said Alice, "we have good hope that Albert escaped from that fatal day; young Abney saw him a mile from the field."

"Young Abney lied, I believe," said the father, in the same humor of contradiction—"Young Abney's tongue seems quicker than his hands, but far slower than his horse's heels when he leaves the roundheads behind him. I would rather Albert's dead body were laid between Charles and Cromwell, than hear he fled as early as young Abney."

"My dearest father," said the young lady, weeping as she spoke, "what can I say to comfort you?"

"Comfort me, say'st thou, girl? I am sick of comfort—an honorable death, with the ruins of Woodstock for my monument, were the only comfort to old Henry Lee. Yes, by the memory of my fathers! I will make good the Lodge against these rebellious robbers."

"Yet be ruled, dearest father," said the maiden, "and submit to that which we cannot gainsay. My uncle Everard—"

Here the old man caught at her unfinished words. "Thy uncle Everard, wench!—Well, get on.—What of thy precious and loving uncle Everard?"

"Nothing, sir," she said, "if the subject displeases you."

"Displeases me?" he replied, "why should it displease me? or if it did, why shouldst thou, or any one, affect to care about it? What is it that hath happened of late years—what is it can be thought to happen that astrologer can guess at, which can give pleasure to us?"

"Fate," she replied, "may have in store the joyful restoration of our banished Prince."

"Too late for my time, Alice," said the knight. "If there be such a white page in the heavenly book, it will not be turned until long after my day.—But I see thou wouldst escape me.—In a word, what of thy uncle Everard?"

"Nay, sir," said Alice, "God knows I would rather be silent for ever, than speak what might, as you would take it, add to your present distemperature."

"Distemperature!" said her father. "Oh, thou art a sweet-lipped physician, and wouldst, I warrant me, drop nought but sweet balm, and honey, and oil, on my distemperature—if that is the phrase for an old man's ailment, when he is well-nigh heart-broken.—Once more, what of thy uncle Everard?"

His last words were uttered in a high and peevish tone of voice, and Alice Lee answered her father in a trembling and submissive tone.

"I only meant to say, sir, that I am well assured that my uncle Everard, when we quit this place—"

"That is to say, when we are kicked out of it by crop-eared canting villains like himself.—But on with thy bountiful uncle—what will he do?—will he give us the remains of his worshipful and economical house-keeping, the fragments of a thrice-sacked capon twice a-week, and a plentiful fast on the other five days?—Will he give us beds beside his half-starved nags, and put them under a short allowance of straw, that his sister's husband—I that should have called my deceased angel by such a name!—and his sister's daughter, may not sleep on the stones? Or will he send us a noble each, with a warning to make it last, for he had never known the ready-penny so hard to come by? Or what else will your uncle Everard do for us? Get us a furlough to beg? Why, I can do that without him."

"You misconstrue him much," answered Alice, with more spirit than she had hitherto displayed; "and would you but question your own heart, you would acknowledge—I speak with reverence—that your tongue utters what your better judgment would disown. My uncle Everard is neither a miser nor a hypocrite—neither so fond of the goods of this world that he would not sup-

ply our distresses amply, nor so wedded to fanatic opinions as to exclude charity for other sects beside his own."

"Ay, ay, the Church of England is a sect with him, I doubt not, and perhaps with thee too, Alice," said the knight. "What is a Muggletonian, or a Ranter, or a Brownist, but a sectary? and thy phrase places them all, with Jack Presbyter himself, on the same footing with our learned prelates and religious clergy! Such is the cant of the day thou livest in, and why shouldst thou not talk like one of the wise virgins and psalm-singing sisters, since, though thou hast a profane old cavalier for a father, thou art own niece to pious uncle Everard?"

"If you speak thus, my dear father," said Alice, "what can I answer you? Hear me but one patient word, and I shall have discharged my uncle Everard's commission."

"Oh, it is a commission, then? Surely, I suspected so much from the beginning—nay, have some sharp guess touching the ambassador also.—Come, madam, the mediator, do your errand, and you shall have no reason to complain of my patience."

"Then, sir," replied his daughter, "my uncle Everard desires you would be courteous to the commissioners, who come here to sequester the parks and the property; or, at least, heedfully to abstain from giving them obstacle or opposition: it can, he says, do no good, even on your own principles, and it will give a pretext for proceeding against you as one in the worst degree of malignity, which he thinks may otherwise be prevented. Nay, he has good hope, that if you follow his counsel, the committee may, through the interest he possesses, be inclined to remove the sequestration of your estate on a moderate fine. Thus says my uncle; and having communicated his advice, I have no occasion to urge your patience with farther argument."

"Is it well thou dost not, Alice," answered Sir Henry Lee, in a tone of suppressed anger; "for, by the blessed Rood, thou hast well-nigh led me into the heresy of thinking thee no daughter of mine.—Ah! my beloved companion, who art now far from the sorrows and cares of this weary world, couldst thou have thought that the daughter thou didst clasp to thy bosom, would, like the wicked wife of Job, become a temptress to her father in the hour of affliction, and recommend to him to make his conscience truckle to his interest, and to beg back at the bloody hands of his master's, and perhaps his son's murderers, a wretched remnant of the royal property he has been robbed of!—Why, wench, if I must beg, think'st thou I will sue to those who have made me a mendicant? No. I will never show my grey beard, worn in sorrow for my sovereign's death, to move the compassion of some proud sequestrator, who perhaps was one of the paricides. No. If Henry Lee must sue for food, it shall be of some sound loyalist like myself, who, having but half a loaf remaining, will not nevertheless

refuse to share it with him. For his daughter, she may wander her own way, which leads her to a refuge with her wealthy roundhead kinsfolk; but let her no more call him father, whose honest indignance she has refused to share!"

"You do me injustice, sir," answered the young lady, with a voice animated yet faltering, "cruel injustice. God knows, your way is my way, though it lead to ruin and beggary; and while you tread it, my arm shall support you while you will accept an aid so feeble."

"Thou word'st me, girl," answered the old cavalier, "thou word'st me, as Will Shakespeare says—thou speakest of lending me thy arm: but thy secret thought is thyself to hang upon Markham Everard's."

"My father, my father," answered Alice, in a tone of deep grief, "what can thus have altered your clear judgment and kindly heart!—Accursed be these civil commotions! not only do they destroy men's bodies, but they pervert their souls; and the brave, the noble, the generous, become suspicious, harsh, and mean! Why upbraid me with Markham Everard? Have I seen or spoke to him since you forbid him my company, with terms less kind—I will speak it truly—than was due even to the relationship betwixt you? Why think I would sacrifice to that young man my duty to you? Know, that were I capable of such criminal weakness, Markham Everard were the first to despise me for it."

She put her handkerchief to her eyes, but she could not hide her sobs, nor conceal the distress they intimated. The old man was moved.

"I cannot tell," he said, "what to think of it. Thou seem'st sincere, and wert ever a good and kindly daughter—how thou hast let that rebel youth creep into thy heart I wot not; perhaps it is a punishment on me, who thought the loyalty of my house was like undefiled ermine. Yet here is a damned spot, and on the fairest gem of all—my own dear Alice. But do not weep—we have enough to vex us. Where is it that Shakspeare hath it:—

Gentle daughter,
Give even way unto my rough affairs;
Put you not on the temper of the times,
Nor be, like them, to Percy troublesome."

"I am glad," answered the young lady, "to hear you quote your favorite again, sir. Our little jars are ever well-nigh ended when Shakspeare comes in play."

"His book was the closet companion of my blessed master," said Sir Henry Lee; "after the Bible (with reverence for naming them together), he felt more comfort in it than in any other; and as I have shared his disease, why, it is natural I should take his medicine. Albeit, I pretend not to my master's art in explaining the dark passages; for I am but a rude man, and rustically brought up to arms and hunting."

"You have seen Shakspeare yourself, sir?"

asked the young lady.

"Silly wench," replied the knight, "he died

when I was a mere child—thou hast heard me say so twenty times; but thou wouldst lead the old man away from the tender subject. Well, though I am not blind, I can shut my eyes and follow. Ben Jonson I knew, and could tell thee many a tale of our meetings at the Mermaid, where, if there was much wine, there was much wit also. We did not sit blowing tobacco in each other's faces, and turning up the whites of our eyes as we turned up the bottom of the wine-pot. Old Ben adopted me as one of his sons in the muses. I have shown you, have I not, the verses, 'To my much beloved son, the worshipful Sir Henry Lee of Ditchley, Knight and Baronet?'"

"I do not remember them at present, sir," replied Alice.

"I fear ye lie, wench," said her father; "but no matter—thou canst not get any more fooling out of me just now. The Evil Spirit hath left Saul for the present. We are now to think what is to be done about leaving Woodstock—or defending it?"

"My dearest father," said Alice, "can you still nourish a moment's hope of making good the place?"

"I know not, wench," replied Sir Henry; "I would fain have a parting blow with them, 'tis certain—and who knows where a blessing may alight? But then, my poor knaves that must take part with me in so hopeless a quarrel—that thought hampers me, I confess."

"Oh, let it do so, sir," replied Alice; "there are soldiers in the town, and there are three regiments at Oxford!"

"Ah, poor Oxford!" exclaimed Sir Henry, whose vacillating state of mind was turned by a word to any new subject that was suggested.—"Seat of learning and loyalty! these rude soldiers are unfit inmates for thy learned halls and poetical bowers; but thy pure and brilliant lamps shall defy the foul breath of a thousand churls, were they to blow at it like Boreas. The burning bush shall not be consumed, even by the heat of this persecution."

"True, sir," said Alice, "and it may not be useless to recollect, that any stirring of the royalists at this unpropitious moment will make them deal yet more harshly with the University, which they consider as being at the bottom of everything which moves for the King in these parts."

"It is true, wench," replied the knight; "and small cause would make the villains sequester the poor remains which the civil wars have left to the colleges. That, and the risk of my poor fellows—Well! thou hast disarmed me, girl. I will be as patient and calm as a martyr."

"Pray God you keep your word, sir!" replied his daughter; "but you are ever so much moved at the sight of any of these men, that—"

"Would you make a child of me, Alice?" said Sir Henry. "Why, know you not that I can look upon a viper, or a toad, or a bunch of engendering adders, without any worse feeling than a litt-

disgust? and though a roundhead, and especially a red-coat, are in my opinion more poisonous than vipers, more loathsome than toads, more hateful than knotted adders, yet can I overcome my nature so far, that should one of them appear at this moment, thyself should see how civilly I would entreat him."

As he spoke, the military preacher abandoned his leafy screen, and stalking forward, stood unexpectedly before the old cavalier, who stared at him, as if he had thought his expressions had actually raised a devil.

"Who art thou?" at length said Sir Henry, in a raised and angry voice, while his daughter clung to his arm in terror, little confident that her father's pacific resolutions would abide the shock of this unwelcome apparition.

"I am one," replied the soldier, "who neither fear nor shame to call myself a poor day-laborer in the great work of England—umph!—Ay, a simple and sincere upholder of the good old cause."

"And what the devil do you seek here?" said the old knight fiercely.

"The welcome due to the steward of the Lords Commissioners," answered the soldier.

"Welcome art thou as salt would be to sore eyes," said the cavalier; "but who be your Commissioners, man?"

The soldier with little courtesy held out a scroll, which Sir Henry took from him betwixt his finger and thumb, as if it were a letter from a pest-house; and held it at as much distance from his eyes, as his purpose of reading it would permit. He then read aloud, and as he named the parties one by one, he added a short commentary on each name, addressed, indeed, to Alice, but in such a tone that showed he cared not for its being heard by the soldier.

"Desborough—the ploughman Desborough—as grovelling a clown as is in England—a fellow that would be best at home like an ancient Scythian, under the tilt of a waggon—d—n him. Harrison—a bloody-minded, ranting enthusiast, who read the Bible to such purpose, that he never lacked a text to justify a murder—d—n him too. Bletson—a true-blue Commonwealth's man, one of Harrison's Rota Club, with his noddle full of new-fangled notions about government, the clearest object of which is to establish the tail upon the head; a fellow who leaves you the statues and law of old England, to prate of Rome and Greece—sees the Areopagus in Westminster-Hall, and takes old Noll for a Roman consul—Adad, he is like to prove a dictator amongst them instead. Never mind—d—n Bletson too."

"Friend," said the soldier, "I would willingly be civil, but it consists not with my duty to hear these godly men, in whose service I am, spoken of after this irreverent and unbecoming fashion. And albeit I know that you malignants think you have a right to make free with that damnation, which you seem to use as your own portion, yet it is superfluous to invoke it against others, who

have better hopes in their thoughts, and better words in their mouths."

"Thou art but a canting varlet," replied the knight; "and yet thou art right in some sense—for it is superfluous to curse men who already are damned as black as the smoke of hell itself."

"I prithee forbear," continued the soldier, "for manners' sake, if not for conscience—grisly oaths suit ill with gray beards."

"Nay, that is truth, if the devil spoke it," said the knight; "and I thank Heaven I can follow good counsel, though old Nick gives it. And so, friend, touching these same commissioners, bear them this message: that Sir Henry Lee is keeper of Woodstock Park, with right of waif and stray, vert and venison, as complete as any of them have to their estate—that is, if they possess any estate but what they have gained by plundering honest men. Nevertheless, he will give place to those who have made their might their right, and will not expose the lives of good and true men, where the odds are so much against them. And he protests that he makes this surrender, neither as acknowledging of these so termed Commissioners, nor as for his own individual part fearing their force, but purely to avoid the loss of English blood, of which so much hath been spilt in these late times."

"It is well spoken," said the steward of the Commissioners; "and therefore, I pray you, let us walk together into the house, that thou may'st deliver up unto me the vessels, and gold and silver ornaments, belonging unto the Egyptian Pharaoh, who committed them to thy keeping."

"What vessels?" exclaimed the fiery old knight; "and belonging to whom? Unbaptized dog, speak civil of the Martyr in my presence, or I will do a deed misbecoming of me on that calliff corpse of thine!"—And shaking his daughter from his right arm, the old man laid his hand on his rapier.

His antagonist, on the contrary, kept his temper completely, and waving his hand to add impression to his speech, he said, with a calmness which aggravated Sir Henry's wrath, "Nay, good friend, I prithee be still, and brawl not—it becomes not gray hairs and feeble arms to rail and rant like draykards. Put me not to use the carnal weapon in mine own defence, but listen to the voice of reason. See'st thou not that the Lord hath decided this great controversy in favor of us and ours against thee and thine? Wherefore, render up thy stewardship peacefully, and deliver up to me the chattels of the Man, Charles Stewart."

"Patience is a good nag, but she will bolt," said the knight, unable longer to rein in his wrath. He plucked his sheathed rapier from his side struck the soldier a severe blow with it, and instantly drawing it, and throwing the scabbard over the trees, placed himself in a posture of defence, with his sword's point within half a yard of the steward's body. The latter stepped back with activity, threw his long cloak from his

shoulders, and drawing his long tuck, stood upon his guard. The swords clashed smartly together, while Alice, in her terror, screamed wildly for assistance. But the combat was of short duration. The old cavalier had attacked a man as cunning of fence as he himself, or a little more so, and possessing all the strength and activity of which time had deprived Sir Henry, and the calmness which the other had lost in his passion. They had scarce exchanged three passes ere the sword of the knight flew up in the air, as if it had gone in search of the scabbard; and, burning with shame and anger, Sir Henry stood disarmed, at the mercy of his antagonist. The republican showed no purpose of abusing his victory; nor did he, either during the combat, or after the victory was won, in any respect alter the sour and grave composure which reigned upon his countenance—a combat of life and death seemed to him a thing as familiar, and as little to be feared, as an ordinary bout with foils.

"Thou art delivered into my hands," he said, "and by the law of arms I might smite thee under the fifth rib, even as Asahel was struck dead by Abner, the son of Ner, as he followed the chase on the hill of Ammah, that lieth before Giah, in the way of the wilderness of Gibeon; but far be it from me to spill thy remaining drops of blood. True it is, thou art the captive of my sword and of my spear; nevertheless, seeing that there may be a turning from thine evil ways, and a returning to those which are good, if the Lord enlarge thy date for repentance and amendment, wherefore should it be shortened by a poor sinful mortal, who is, speaking truly, but thy fellow-worm?"

Sir Henry Lee remained still confused, and unable to answer, when there arrived a fourth person, whom the cries of Alice had summoned to the spot. This was Joceline Joliffe, one of the under-keepers of the walk, who, seeing how matters stood, brandished his quarter-staff, a weapon from which he never parted, and having made it describe the figure of eight in a flourish through the air, would have brought it down with a vengeance upon the head of the steward, had not Sir Henry interposed.

"We must trail bats now, Joceline—our time of shouldering them is past. It skills not striving against the stream—the devil rules the roast, and makes our slaves our tutors."

At this moment another auxiliary rushed out of the thicket to the knight's assistance. It was a large wolf-dog, in strength a mastiff, in form and almost in fleetness a greyhound. Bevis was the noblest of the kind which ever pulled down a stag, tawny-colored like a lion, with a black muzzle and black feet, just edged with a line of white round the toes. He was as tractable as he was strong and bold. Just as he was about to rush upon the soldier, the words, "Peace, Bevis!" from Sir Henry, converted the lion into a lamb, and instead of pulling the soldier down, he walked round and round, and sniffed, as if using

all his sagacity to discover who the stranger could be, towards whom, though of so questionable an appearance, he was enjoined forbearance. Apparently he was satisfied, for he laid aside his doubtful and threatening demonstrations, lowered his ears, smoothed down his bristles, and wagged his tail.

Sir Henry, who had great respect for the sagacity of his favorite, said in a low voice to Alice, "Bevis is of thy opinion, and counsels submission. There is the finger of Heaven in this to punish the pride, ever the fault of our house.—Friend," he continued, addressing the soldier, "thou hast given the finishing touch to a lesson, which ten years of constant misfortune have been unable fully to teach me. Thou hast distinctly shown me the folly of thinking that a good cause can strengthen a weak arm. God forgive me for the thought, but I could almost turn infidel, and believe that Heaven's blessing goes ever with the longest sword; but it will not be always thus. God knows his time.—Reach me my Toledo, Joceline, yonder it lies; and the scabbard, see where it hangs on the tree.—Do not pull at my cloak, Alice, and look so miserably frightened; I shall be in no hurry to betake me to bright steel again, I promise thee.—For thee, good fellow, I thank thee, and will make way for thy masters without farther dispute or ceremony. Joceline Joliffe is nearer thy degree than I am, and will make surrender to thee of the Lodge and household stuff.—Withhold nothing, Joliffe—let them have all. For me, I will never cross the threshold again—but where to rest for a night? I would trouble no one in Woodstock—hum—ay—it shall be so. Alice and I, Joceline, will go down to thy hut by Rosamond's well; we will borrow the shelter of thy roof for one night at least; thou wilt give us welcome, wilt thou not?—How now—a clouded brow?"

Joceline certainly looked embarrassed, directed first a glance to Alice, then looked to Heaven, then to earth, and last to the four quarters of the horizon, and then murmured out, "Certainly—without question—might he but run down to put the house in order."

"Order enough—order enough—for those that may soon be glad of clean straw in a barn," said the knight; "but if thou hast an ill-will to harbor any obnoxious or malignant persons, as the phrase goes, never shame to speak it out, man. 'Tis true, I took thee up when thou wert but a ragged Robin,* made a keeper of thee, and so forth. What of that? Sailors think no longer of the wind than when it forwards them on the voyage—thy betters turn with the tide, why should not such a poor knave as thou?"

"God pardon your honor for your harsh judgment," said Joliffe. "The hut is yours, such as it is, and should be were it a king's palace, as I wish it were even for your honor's sake, and

*The keeper's followers in the New Forest are called in popular language ragged Robins.

Mistress Alice's—only I could wish your honor would condescend to let me step down before, in case any neighbor be there—or—or—just to put matters something into order for Mistress Alice and your honor—just to make things something seemly and shapely."

"Not a whit necessary," said the knight, while Alice had much trouble in concealing her agitation. "If thy matters are unseemly, they are fitter for a defeated knight—if they are unshapely, why, the liker to the rest of a world, which is all unshaped. Go thou with that man.—What is thy name, friend?"

"Joseph Tomkins is my name in the flesh," said the steward. "Men call me Honest Joe, and Trusty Tomkins."

"If thou hast deserved such names, considering what trade thou hast driven, thou art a jewel indeed," said the knight; "yet if thou hast not, never blush for the matter, Joseph, for if thou art not in truth honest, thou hast all the better chance to keep the fame of it—the title and the thing itself have long walked separate ways. Farewell to thee,—and farewell to fair Woodstock!"

So saying, the old knight turned round, and pulling his daughter's arm through his own, they walked onward into the forest, in the same manner in which they were introduced to the reader.

CHAPTER III.

Now, ye wild blades, that make loose lads your stage,
To vapor forth the acts of this sad age,
Stout Edgell fight, the Newberries and the West,
And northern clashes, where you still fought best;
Your strange escapes, your dangers void of fear,
When bullets flew between the head and ear,
Whether you fought by Damme or the Spirit,
Of you I speak.

LEGEND OF CAPTAIN JONES.

JOSEPH TOMKINS and Joliffe the keeper remained for some time in silence, as they stood together looking along the path in which the figures of the knight of Ditchley and pretty Mistress Alice had disappeared behind the trees. They then gazed on each other in doubt, as men who scarce knew whether they stood on hostile or on friendly terms together, and were at a loss how to open a conversation. They heard the knight's whistle summon Bevis; but though the good hound turned his head and pricked his ears at the sound, yet he did not obey the call, but continued to snuff around Joseph Tomkins's cloak.

"Thou art a rare one, I fear me," said the keeper, looking to his new acquaintance. "I have heard of men who have charms to steal both dogs and deer."

"Trouble not thyself about my qualities, friend," said Joseph Tomkins, "but bethink thee of doing thy master's bidding."

Joceline did not immediately answer, but at length, as if in sign of truce, stuck the end of his quarterstaff upright in the ground, and leaned upon it as he said gruffly,—“So, my tough old

knight and you were at drawn bilbo, by way of afternoon service, sir preacher—Well for you I came not up till the blades were done jingling, or I had rung even-song upon your pate."

The Independent smiled grimly as he replied, "Nay, friend, it is well for thyself, for never should sexton have been better paid for the knell he tolled. Nevertheless, why should there be war betwixt us, or my hand be against thine? Thou art but a poor knave, doing thy master's order, nor have I any desire that my own blood or thine should be shed touching this matter.—Thou art, I understand, to give me peaceful possession of the Palace of Woodstock, so called—though there is now no palace in England, nor shall be in the days that come after, until we shall enter the palace of the New Jerusalem, and the reign of the Saints shall commence on earth."

"Pretty well begun already, friend Tomkins," said the keeper; "you are little short of being kings already upon the matter as it now stands; and for your Jerusalem I wot not, but Woodstock is a pretty nest-egg to begin with.—Well, will you shog—will you on—will you take sarsaparilla and livery?—You heard my orders."

"Umph—I know not," said Tomkins. "I must beware of ambushes, and I am alone here. Moreover, it is the High Thanksgiving appointed by Parliament, and owned to by the army—also the old man and the young woman may want to recover some of their clothes and personal property, and I would not that they were balked on my account. Wherefore, if thou wilt deliver me possession to-morrow morning, it shall be done in personal presence of my own followers, and of the Presbyterian man the Mayor, so that the transfer may be made before witnesses; whereas, wert there none with us but thou to deliver, and I to take possession, the men of Belial might say, Go to, Trusty Tomkins hath been an Edomite—Honest Joe hath been as an Ishmaelite, rising up early and dividing the spoil with them that served the Man—yea, they that wore beards and green jerkins, as in remembrance of the Man and of his government."

Joceline fixed his keen dark eyes upon the soldier as he spoke, as if in design to discover whether there was fair play in his mind or not. He then applied his five fingers to scratch a large shock head of hair, as if that operation was necessary to enable him to come to a conclusion. "This is all fair sounding, brother," said he; "but I tell you plainly, there are some silver mugs, and platters, and flagons, and so forth, in yonder house, which have survived the general sweep that sent all our plate to the smelting-pot, to put our knight's troop on horseback. Now, if thou takest not these off my hand, I may come to trouble, since it may be thought I have diminished their numbers.—Whereas, I being as honest a fellow—"

"As ever stole venison," said Tomkins—"nay, I do owe thee an interruption."

"Go to, then," replied the keeper; "if a stag may have come to mischance in my walk, it was no way in the course of dishonesty, but merely to keep my old dame's pan from rusting; but for silver porringers, tankards, and such like, I would as soon have drunk the melted silver, as stolen the vessel made out of it. So that I would not wish blame or suspicion fell on me in this matter. And, therefore, if you will have the things rendered even now,—why so—and if not, hold me blameless."

"Ay, truly?" said Tomkins; "and who is to hold me blameless, if they should see cause to think any thing minished? Not the right worshipful Commissioners, to whom the property of the estate is as their own; therefore, as thou say'st, we must walk warily in the matter. To lock up the house and leave it, were but the work of simple ones. What say'st thou to spend the night there, and then nothing can be touched without the knowledge of us both?"

"Why, concerning that," answered the keeper, "I should be at my hut to make matters somewhat conformable for the old knight and Mistress Alice, for my old dame Joan is something dunny, and will scarce know how to manage—and yet, to speak the truth, by the mass I would rather not see Sir Henry to-night, since what has happened to-day hath roused his spleen, and it is a peradventure he may have met something at the hut which will scarce tend to cool it."

"It is a pity," said Tomkins, "that being a gentleman of such grave and goodly presence, he should be such a malignant cavalier, and that he should, like the rest of that generation of vipers, have clothed himself with curses as with a garment."

"Which is as much as to say, the tough old knight hath a habit of swearing," said the keeper, grinning at a pun, which has been repeated since his time; "but who can help it? it comes of use and wont. Were you now, in your bodily self, to light suddenly on a Maypole, with all the blithe morris-dancers prancing around it to the merry pipe and tabor, with bells jingling, ribands fluttering, lads frisking and laughing, lasses leaping till you might see where the scarlet garter fastened the light blue hose, I think some feeling, resembling either natural sociality, or old use and wont, would get the better, friend, even of thy gravity, and thou wouldst fling the cuckoldy steeple-hat one way, and that bloodthirsty long sword another, and trip, like the noodles of Hogs-Norton, when the pigs play on the organ."

The Independent turned fiercely round on the keeper, and replied, "How now, Mr. Green-Jerkin? what language is this to one whose hand is at the plough? I advise thee to put curb on thy tongue, lest thy ribs pay the scold."

"Nay, do not take the high tone with me, brother," answered Joceline; "remember thou hast not the old knight of sixty-five to deal with, but a fellow as bitter and prompt as thyself—it

may be a little more so—younger, at all events—and prithie, why shouldst thou take such umbrage at a Maypole? I would thou hadst known one Phil Hazeldine of these parts—He was the best morris-dancer betwixt Oxford and Burford."

"The more shame to him," answered the Independent; "and I trust he has seen the error of his ways, and made himself (as, if a man of action, he easily might) fit for better company than wood-hunters, deer-stealers, Maid Marions, swash-bucklers, deboshed revellers, bloody brawlers, maskers, and mummers, lewd men and light women, fools and fiddlers, and carnal self-pleasers of every description."

"Well," replied the keeper, "you are out of breath in time; for here we stand before the famous Maypole of Woodstock."

They paused in an open space of meadowland, beautifully skirted by large oaks and sycamores, one of which, as king of the forest, stood a little detached from the rest, as if scorning the vicinity of any rival. It was scathed and gnarled in the branches, but the immense trunk still showed to what gigantic size the monarch of the forest can attain in the groves of merry England.

"That is called the King's Oak," said Joceline; "the oldest men of Woodstock know not how old it is; they say Henry used to sit under it with fair Rosamond, and see the lasses dance, and the lads of the village run races, and wrestle for belts or bonnets."

"I nothing doubt it, friend," said Tomkins; "a tyrant and a harlot were fitting patron and patroness for such vanities."

"Thou may'st say thy say, friend," replied the keeper, "so thou lettest me say mine. There stands the Maypole, as thou seest, half a flight-shot from the King's Oak, in the midst of the meadow. The King gave ten shillings from the customs of Woodstock to make a new one yearly, besides a tree fitted for the purpose out of the forest. Now it is warped, and withered and twisted, like a wasted brier-rod. The green, too, used to be close-shaved, and rolled till it was smooth as a velvet mantle—now it is rough and overgrown."

"Well, well, friend Joceline," said the Independent, "but where was the edification of all this?—what use of doctrine could be derived from a pipe and tabor? as was there ever aught like wisdom in a bagpipe?"

"You may ask better scholars that," said Joceline; "but methinks men cannot be always grave, and with the hat over their brow. A young maiden will laugh as a tender flower will blow—ay, and a lad will like her the better for it; just as the same blithe Spring that makes the young birds whistle, bids the blithe fawns skip. There have come worse days since the jolly old times have gone by:—I tell thee, that in the holidays which you, Mr. Longsword, have put down, I have seen this greensward alive with merry