

thee, your General gave me a breakfast, which, I think, will serve me one while, if I am ever able to digest it. By the mass, it lay so heavy on my conscience, that I carried it to church to see if I could digest it there with my other sins. But not a whit."

"To church!—to the door of the church, thou meanest," said Everard. "I know thy way—thou art ever wont to pull thy hat off reverently at the threshold; but for crossing it, that day seldom comes."

"Well," replied Wildrake, "and if I do pull off my castor and kneel, is it not seemly to show the same respects in a church which we offer in a palace? It is a dainty matter, is it not, to see your Anabaptists, and Brownists, and the rest of you, gather to a sermon with as little ceremony as hogs to a trough! But here comes food, and now for a grace, if I can remember one."

Everard was too much interested about the fate of his uncle and his fair cousin, and the prospect of restoring them to their quiet home, under the protection of that formidable truncheon which was already regarded as the leading-staff of England, to remark, that certainly a great alteration had taken place in the manners and outward behavior at least of his companion. His demeanor frequently evinced a sort of struggle betwixt old habits of indulgence, and some newly-formed resolutions of abstinence; and it was almost ludicrous to see how often the hand of the neophyte directed itself naturally to a large black leathern jack, which contained two double flagons of strong ale, and how often, diverted from its purpose by the better reflections of the reformed toper, it seized, instead, upon a large ewer of salubrious and pure water.

It was not difficult to see that the task of sobriety was not yet become easy, and that, if it had the recommendation of the intellectual portion of the party who had resolved upon it, the outward man yielded a reluctant and restive compliance. But honest Wildrake had been dreadfully frightened at the course proposed to him by Cromwell, and, with a feeling not peculiar to the Catholic religion, had formed a solemn resolution within his own mind, that, if he came off safe and with honor from this dangerous interview, he would show his sense of Heaven's favor, by renouncing some of the sins which most easily beset him, and especially that of intemperance, to which, like many of his wild companions, he was too much addicted.

This resolution, or vow, was partly prudential as well as religious, for it occurred to him as very possible, that some matters of a difficult and delicate nature might be thrown into his hands at the present emergency, during the conduct of which it would be fitting for him to act by some better oracle than that of the Bottle, celebrated by Rabelais. In full compliance with this prudent determination, he touched neither the ale nor the brandy which were placed before him,

and declined peremptorily the sack with which his friend would have garnished the board. Nevertheless, just as the boy removed the trenchers and napkins, together with the large black-jack which we have already mentioned, and was one or two steps on his way to the door, the sinewy arm of the cavalier, which seemed to elongate itself on purpose (as it extended far beyond the folds of the threadbare jacket), arrested the progress of the retiring Ganymede, and seizing on the black-jack, conveyed it to the lips, which were gently breathing forth the aspiration, "D—n—I mean, Heaven forgive me—we are poor creatures of clay—one modest slip must be permitted to our frailty."

So murmuring, he glued the huge flagon to his lips, and as the head was slowly and gradually inclined backwards, in proportion as the right hand elevated the bottom of the pitcher, Everard had great doubts whether the drinker and the cup were likely to part until the whole contents of the latter had been transferred to the person of the former. Roger Wildrake stinted, however, when, by a moderate computation, he had swallowed at one draught about a quart and a half.

He then replaced it on the salver, fetched a long breath to refresh his lungs, bade the boy get him gone with the rest of the liquors, in a tone which inferred some dread of his constancy, and then, turning to his friend Everard, he expatiated in praise of moderation, observing, that the mouthful which he had just taken had been of more service to him than if he had remained quaffing healths at table for four hours together.

His friend made no reply, but could not help being privately of opinion that Wildrake's temperance had done as much execution on the tankard in his single draught, as some more moderate toppers might have effected if they had sat sipping for an evening. But the subject was changed by the entrance of the landlord, who came to announce to his honor Colonel Everard, that the worshipful Mayor of Woodstock, with the Rev. Master Holdenough, were come to wait upon him.

CHAPTER X.

—Here we have one head
Upon two bodies—your two-headed bullock
Is but an ass to such a prodigy.
These two have but one meaning, thought, and counsel;
And, when the single noddle has spoke out,
The four legs scrape assent to it.

OLD PLAY.

In the goodly form of the honest Mayor, there was a bustling mixture of importance and embarrassment, like the deportment of a man who was conscious that he had an important part to act, if he could but exactly discover what that part was. But both were mingled with much pleasure at seeing Everard, and he frequently repeated his welcomes and all-hails before he could

be brought to attend to what that gentleman said in reply.

"Good, worthy Colonel, you are indeed a desirable sight to Woodstock at all times, being, as I may say, almost our townsman, as you have dwelt so much and so long at the palace. Truly, the matter begins almost to pass my wit, though I have transacted the affairs of this borough for many a long day; and you are come to my assistance like, like—"

"*Tanquam Deus ex machina*, as the Ethnic poet hath it," said Master Holdenough, "although I do not often quote from such books.—Indeed, Master Markham Everard,—or worthy Colonel, as I ought rather to say—you are simply the most welcome man who has come to Woodstock since the days of old King Harry."

"I had some business with you, my good friend," said the Colonel, addressing the Mayor; "I shall be glad if it should so happen at the same time, that I may find occasion to pleasure you or your worthy pastor."

"No question you can do so, good sir," interposed Master Holdenough; "you have the heart, sir, and you have the hand; and we are much in want of good counsel, and that from a man of action. I am aware, worthy Colonel, that you and your worthy father have ever borne yourselves in these turmoils like men of a truly Christian and moderate spirit, striving to pour oil into the wounds of the land, which some would rub with vitriol and pepper; and we know you are faithful children of that church which we have reformed from its papistical and prelatial tenets."

"My good and reverend friend," said Everard, "I respect the piety and learning of many of your teachers; but I am also for liberty of conscience to all men. I neither side with sectaries, nor do I desire to see them the object of suppression by violence."

"Sir, sir," said the Presbyterian, hastily, "all this hath a fair sound; but I would you should think what a fine country and church we are like to have of it, amidst the errors, blasphemies, and schisms, which are daily introduced into the church and kingdom of England, so that worthy Master Edwards, in his *Gangrena*, declareth, that our native country is about to become the very sink and cess-pool of all schisms, heresies, blasphemies, and confusions, as the army of Hannibal was said to be the refuse of all nations—*Collocies omnium gentium*.—Believe me, worthy Colonel, that they of the Honorable House view all this over lightly, and with the winking connivance of old Eli. These instructors, the schismatics, shoulder the orthodox ministers out of their pulpits, thrust themselves into families, and break up the peace thereof, stealing away men's hearts from the established faith."

"My good Master Holdenough," replied the Colonel, interrupting the zealous preacher, "there is ground of sorrow for all these un-

happy discords; and I hold with you, that the fiery spirits of the present time have raised men's minds at once above sober-minded and sincere religion, and above decorum and common sense. But there is no help save patience. Enthusiasm is a stream that may foam off in its own time, whereas it is sure to bear down every barrier which is directly opposed to it.—But what are these schismatical proceedings to our present purpose?"

"Why, partly this, sir," said Holdenough, "although perhaps you may make less of it than I should have thought before we met.—I was myself—I, Nehemiah Holdenough [he added consequentially], was forcibly expelled from my own pulpit, even as a man should have been thrust out of his own house, by an alien, and an intruder—a wolf who was not at the trouble even to put on sheep's clothing, but came in his native wolfish attire of buff and bandalier, and held forth in my stead to the people, who are to me as a flock to the lawful shepherd. It is too true, sir—Master Mayor saw it, and strove to take such order to prevent it as man might, though," turning to the Mayor, "I think still you might have striven a little more."

"Good now, good Master Holdenough, do not let us go back on that question," said the Mayor. "Guy of Warwick, or Bevis of Hampton, might do something with this generation; but truly, they are too many and too strong for the Mayor of Woodstock."

"I think Master Mayor speaks very good sense," said the Colonel; "if the Independents are not allowed to preach, I fear me they will not fight;—and then if you were to have another rising of cavaliers?"

"There are worse folks may rise than cavaliers," said Holdenough.

"How, sir?" replied Colonel Everard. "Let me remind you, Master Holdenough, that is no safe language in the present state of the nation."

"I say," said the Presbyterian, "there are worse folk may rise than cavaliers; and I will prove what I say. The devil is worse than the worst cavalier that ever drank a health, or swore an oath—and the devil has arisen at Woodstock Lodge!"

"Ay, truly hath he," said the Mayor, "bodily and visibly, in figure and form—An awful time we live in!"

"Gentlemen, I really know not how I am to understand you," said Everard.

"Why, it was even about the devil we came to speak with you," said the Mayor; "but the worthy minister is always so hot upon the sectaries—"

"Which are the devil's brats, and nearly akin to him," said Master Holdenough. "But true it is, that the growth of these sects has brought up the Evil One even upon the face of the earth, to look after his own interest, where he finds it most thriving."

"Master Holdenough," said the Colonel, "if

you speak figuratively, I have already told you that I have neither the means nor the skill sufficient to temper these religious heats. But if you design to say that there has been an actual apparition of the devil, I presume to think that you, with your doctrine and your learning, would be a fitter match for him than a soldier like me."

"True, sir; and I have that confidence in the commission which I hold, that I would take the field against the foul fiend without a moment's delay," said Holdenough; "but the place in which he hath of late appeared, being Woodstock, is filled with those dangerous and impious persons, of whom I have been but now complaining; and though, confident in my own resources, I dare venture in disputation with their Great Master himself; yet without your protection, most worthy Colonel, I see not that I may with prudence trust myself with the tossing and goring ox Desborough, or the bloody and devouring bear Harrison, or the cold and poisonous snake Bletson—all of whom are now at the Lodge, doing license and taking spoil as they think meet; and, as all men say, the devil has come to make a fourth with them."

"In good truth worthy and noble sir," said the Mayor, "it is even as Master Holdenough says—our privileges are declared void, our cattle seized in the very pastures. They talk of cutting down and disparking the fair Chase, which has been so long the pleasures of so many kings, and making Woodstock of as little note as any paity village. I assure you we heard of your arrival with joy, and wondered at your keeping yourself so close in your lodgings. We know no one save your father or you, that are like to stand the poor burgesses' friend in this extremity, since almost all the gentry around are malignant, and under sequestration. We trust, therefore, you will make strong intercession in our behalf."

"Certainly, Master Mayor," said the Colonel, who saw himself with pleasure anticipated; "it was my very purpose to have interfered in this matter; and I did but keep myself alone until I should be furnished with some authority from the Lord General."

"Powers from the Lord General!" said the Mayor, thrusting the clergyman with his elbow—"Dost thou hear that?—What cock will fight that cock? We shall carry it now over their necks, and Woodstock shall be brave Wookstock still!"

"Keep thine elbow from my side, friend," said Holdenough, annoyed by the action which the Mayor had suited to his words; "and may the Lord send that Cromwell prove not as sharp to the people of England as thy bones against my person! Yet I approve that we should use his authority to stop the course of these men's proceedings."

"Let us set out, then," said Colonel Everard; "and I trust we shall find the gentlemen reasonable and obedient."

The functionaries, laic and clerical assented

with much joy; and the Colonel required and received Wildrake's assistance in putting on his cloak and rapier, as if he had been the dependant whose part he acted. The cavalier contrived, however, while doing him these menial offices, to give his friend a shrewd pinch, in order to maintain the footing of secret equality betwixt them.

The Colonel was saluted, as they passed through the streets, by many of the anxious inhabitants, who seemed to consider his intervention as affording the only chance of saving their fine Park, and the rights of the corporation, as well as of individuals, from ruin and confiscation.

As they entered the Park, the Colonel asked his companions, "What is this you say of apparitions being seen amongst them?"

"Why, Colonel," said the clergyman, "you know yourself that Woodstock was always haunted?"

"I have lived therein many a day," said the Colonel; "and I know that I never saw the least sign of it, although idle people spoke of the house as they do of all old mansions, and gave the apartments ghosts and spectres to fill up the places of as many of the deceased great, as had ever dwelt there."

"Nay, but, good Colonel," said the clergyman, "I trust you have not reached the prevailing sin of the times, and become indifferent to the testimony in favor of apparitions, which appears so conclusive to all but atheists, and advocates for witches?"

"I would not absolutely disbelieve what is so generally affirmed," said the Colonel; "but my reason leads me to doubt most of the stories which I have heard of this sort, and my own experience never went to confirm any of them."

"Ay, but trust me," said Holdenough, "there was always a demon of one or the other species about this Woodstock. Not a man or woman in the town but has heard stories of apparitions in the forest, or about the old castle. Sometimes it is a pack of hounds, that sweep along, and the whoops and hollows of the huntsmen, and the winding of horns and the galloping of horse, which is heard as if first more distant, and then close around you—and then anon it is a solitary huntsman, who asks if you can tell him which way the stag has gone. He is always dressed in green; but the fashion of his clothes is some five hundred years old. This is what we call Demon Meridianum—the noonday spectre."

"My worthy and reverend sir," said the Colonel, "I have lived at Woodstock many seasons, and have traversed the Chase at all hours. Trust me, what you hear from the villagers is the growth of their idle folly and superstition."

"Colonel," replied Holdenough, "a negative proves nothing. What signifies, craving your pardon, that you have not seen any thing, be it earthly or be it of the other world, to detract from the evidence of a score of people who have?—And besides, there is the Demon Nocturnum—the being that walketh by night; he has been

among these Independents and schismatics last night. Ay, Colonel, you may stare; but it is even so—they may try whether he will mend their gifts, as they profanely call them, of exposition and prayer. No, sir, I trow, to master the foul fiend there goeth some competent knowledge of the theology, and an acquaintance of the humane letters, ay, and a regular clerical education and clerical calling."

"I do not in the least doubt," said the Colonel, "the efficacy of your qualifications to lay the devil; but still I think some odd mistake has occasioned this confusion amongst them, if there has any such in reality existed. Desborough is a blockhead, to be sure; and Harrison is fanatic enough to believe any thing. But there is Bletson, on the other hand, who believes nothing.—What do you know of this matter, good Master Mayor?"

"In sooth, and it was Master Bletson who gave the first alarm," replied the magistrate; "or, at least, the first distinct one. You see, sir, I was in bed with my wife, and no one else; and I was as fast asleep as a man can desire to be at two hours after midnight, when, behold you, they came knocking at my bedroom door, to tell me there was an alarm in Woodstock, and that the bell of the Lodge was ringing at that dead hour of the night as hard as ever it rung when it called the court to dinner."

"Well, but the cause of this alarm?" said the Colonel.

"You shall hear, worthy Colonel, you shall hear," answered the Mayor, waving his hand with dignity; for he was one of those persons who will not be hurried out of their own pace. "So Mrs. Mayor would have persuaded me, in her love and affection, poor wretch, that to rise at such an hour out of my own warm bed, was like to bring on my old complaint the lumbago, and that I should send the people to Alderman Dutton.—Alderman Devil, Mrs. Mayor, said, I—I beg your reverence's pardon for using such a phrase—Do you think I am going to lie a-bed when the town is on fire, and the cavaliers up, and the devil to pay?—I beg pardon again, parson.—But here we are before the gate of the Palace; will it not please you to enter?"

"I would first hear the end of your story," said the Colonel; "that is, Master Mayor, if it happens to have an end."

"Every thing hath an end," said the Mayor, "and that which we call a pudding hath two.—Your worship will forgive me for being facetious. Where was I?—Oh, I jumped out of bed, and put on my red plush breeches, with the blue nether stocks, for I always make a point of being dressed suitably to my dignity, night and day, summer or winter, Colonel Everard; and I took the Constable along with me, in case the alarm should be raised by night-walkers or thieves, and called up worthy Master Holdenough out of his bed, in case it should turn out to be the devil. And so I thought I was provided for the worst,

and so away we came; and, by and by, the soldiers who came to the town with Master Tomkins, who had been called to arms, came marching down to Woodstock as fast as their feet would carry them; so I gave our people the sign to let them pass us, and outmarch us, as it were, and this for a twofold reason."

"I will be satisfied," interrupted the Colonel, "with one good reason. You desired the red-coats should have the first of the fray?"

"True, sir, very true;—and also that they should have the last of it, in respect that fighting is their especial business. However, we came on at a slow pace, as men who are determined to do their duty without fear or favor, when suddenly we saw something white haste away up the avenue towards the town, when six of our constables and assistants fled at once, as conceiving it to be an apparition called the White Woman of Woodstock."

"Look you there, Colonel," said Master Holdenough, "I told you there were demons of more kinds than one, which haunt the ancient scenes of royal debauchery and cruelty."

"I hope you stood your own ground, Master Mayor?" said the Colonel.

"I—yes—most assuredly—that is, I did not, strictly speaking, keep my ground; but the town-clerk and I retreated—retreated, Colonel, and without confusion or dishonor, and took post behind worthy Master Holdenough, who, with the spirit of a lion, threw himself in the way of the supposed spectre, and attacked it with such a siserary of Latin as might have scared the devil himself, and thereby plainly discovered that it was no devil at all, nor white woman, neither woman of any color, but worshipful Master Bletson, a member of the House of Commons, and one of the commissioners sent hither upon this unhappy sequestration of the Wood, Chase, and Lodge of Woodstock."

"And this was all you saw of the demon?" said the Colonel.

"Truly, yes," answered the Mayor; "and I had no wish to see more. However, we conveyed Master Bletson, as in duty bound, back to the Lodge, and he was ever manndering by the way how that he met a party of scarlet devils incarnate marching down to the Lodge; but, to my poor thinking, it must have been the Independent dragoons who had just passed us."

"And more incarnate devils I would never wish to see," said Wildrake, who could remain silent no longer. His voice, so suddenly heard, showed how much the Mayor's nerves were still alarmed, for he started and jumped aside with an alacrity of which no one would at first sight suppose a man of his portly dignity to have been capable. Everard imposed silence on his intrusive attendant; and, desirous to hear the conclusion of this strange story, requested the Mayor to tell him how the matter ended, and whether they stopped the supposed spectre.

"Truly, worthy sir," said the Mayor, "Mas

ter Holdenough was quite venturous upon confronting, as it were, the devil, and compelling him to appear under the real form of Master Joshua Bletson, member of Parliament for the borough of Littlefaith."

"In sooth, Master Mayor," said the divine, "I were strangely ignorant of my own commission and its immunities, if I were to value opposing myself to Satan, or any Independent in his likeness, all of whom, in the name of Him I serve, I do defy, spit at, and trample under my feet; and because Master Mayor is something tedious, I will briefly inform your honor that we saw little of the Enemy that night, save what Master Bletson said in the first feeling of his terrors, and save what we might collect from the disordered appearance of the Honorable Colonel Desborough and Major-General Harrison."

"And what plight were they in, I pray you?" demanded the Colonel.

"Why, worthy sir, every one might see with half an eye that they had been engaged in a fight wherein they had not been honored with perfect victory; seeing that General Harrison was stalking up and down the parlor, with his drawn sword in his hand, talking to himself, his doublet unbuttoned, his points untrussed, his garters loose, and like to throw him down as he now and then trode on them, and gaping and grinning like a mad player. And yonder sate Desborough with a dry pottle of sack before him, which he had just emptied, and which, though the element in which he trusted, had not restored him sense enough to speak, or courage enough to look over his shoulder. He had a Bible in his hand, forsooth, as if it would of itself make battle against the Evil One; but I peered over his shoulder, and, alas! the good gentleman held the bottom of the page uppermost. It was as if one of your musketeers, noble and valved sir, were to present the butt of his piece at the enemy instead of the muzzle—ha, ha, ha! it was a sight to judge of schismatics by; both in point of head, and in point of heart, in point of skill, and in point of courage.—Oh! Colonel, then was the time to see the true character of an authorized pastor of souls over those unhappy men, who leap into the fold without due and legal authority, and will, forsooth, preach, teach, and exhort, and blasphemously term the doctrine of the Church saltless porridge and dry chips!"

"I have no doubt you were ready to meet the danger, reverend sir; but I would fain know of what nature it was, and from whence it was to be apprehended?"

"Was it for me to make such inquiry?" said the clergyman, triumphantly. "Is it for a brave soldier to number his enemies, or inquire from what quarter they are to come? No, sir, I was there with match lighted, bullet in my mouth, and my harquebuss shouldered, to encounter as many devils as hell could pour in, were they countless as motes in the sunbeam, and although they came from all points of the compass. The

Papists talk of the temptation of St. Anthony—pshaw! let them double all the myriads which the brain of a crazy Dutch painter hath invented, and you will find a poor Presbyterian divine—I will answer for one at least,—who, not in his own strength, but his Master's, will receive the assault in such sort, that far from returning against him as against yonder poor hound, day after day, and night after night, he will at once pack them off as with a vengeance to the uttermost parts of Assyria!"

"Still," said the Colonel, "I pray to know whether you saw any thing upon which to exercise your pious learning?"

"Saw?" answered the divine; "no, truly, I saw nothing, nor did I look for any thing. Thieves will not attack well-armed travellers, nor will devils or evil spirits come against one who bears in his bosom the word of truth, in the very language in which it was first dictated. No, sir, they shun a divine who can understand the holy text, as a crow is said to keep wide of a gun loaded with hail-shot."

They had walked a little way back upon their road, to give time for this conversation; and the Colonel, perceiving it was about to lead to no satisfactory explanation of the real cause of alarm on the preceding night, turned round, and observing it was time they should go to the Lodge, began to move in that direction with his three companions.

It had now become dark, and the towers of Woodstock arose high above the umbrageous shroud which the forest spread around the ancient and venerable mansion. From one of the highest turrets, which could still be distinguished as it rose against the clear blue sky, there gleamed a light like that of a candle within the building. The Mayor stopped short, and catching fast hold of the divine, and then of Colonel Everard, exclaimed, in a trembling and hasty, but suppressed tone,

"Do you see yonder light?"

"Ay, marry do I," said Colonel Everard; "and what does that matter?—a light in a garret-room of such an old mansion as Woodstock is no subject for wonder, I trow."

"But a light from Rosamond's Tower is surely so," said the Mayor.

"True," said the Colonel, something surprised, when, after a careful examination, he satisfied himself that the worthy magistrate's conjecture was right. "That is indeed Rosamond's Tower; and as the drawbridge by which it was accessible has been destroyed for centuries, it is hard to say what chance could have lighted a lamp in such an inaccessible place."

"That light burns with no earthly fuel," said the Mayor; "neither from whale nor olive oil, nor beeswax, nor mutton-suet either. I dealt in these commodities, Colonel, before I went into my present line; and I can assure you I could distinguish the sort of light they give, one from another, at a greater distance than yonder turret

—Look you, that is no earthly flame.—See you not something blue and reddish upon the edges?—that bodes full well where it comes from.—Colonel, in my opinion, we had better go back to sup at the town, and leave the devil and the red-coats to settle their matters together for to-night; and then, when we come back the next morning, we will have a pull with the party that chanches to keep a-field."

"You will do as you please, Master Mayor," said Everard, "but my duty requires me that I should see the Commissioners to-night."

"And mine requires me to see the foul Fiend," said Master Holdenough, "if he dare make himself visible to me. I wonder not that, knowing who is approaching, he betakes himself to the very citadel, the inner and the last defences of this ancient and haunted mansion. He is dainty, I warrant you, and must dwell where is a relish of luxury and murder about the walls of his chamber. In yonder turret sinned Rosamond, and in yonder turret she suffered; and there she sits, or more likely, the Enemy in her shape, as I have heard true men of Woodstock tell.—I wait on you, good Colonel—Master Mayor will do as he pleases. The strong man hath fortified himself in his dwelling-house, but, lo, there cometh another stronger than he."

"For me," said the Mayor, "who am as unlearned as I am unwarlike, I will not engage either with the Powers of the Earth, or the Prince of the Powers of the Air, and I would we were again at Woodstock;—and hark ye, good fellow," slapping Wildrake on the shoulder, "I will bestow on thee a shilling wet and a shilling dry if thou wilt go back with me."

"Gadzookers, Master Mayor," said Wildrake, neither flattered by the magistrate's familiarity of address, nor captivated by his munificence—"I wonder who the devil made you and me fellows? and, besides, do you think I would go back to Woodstock with your worshipful cod's-head, when, by good management, I may get a peep of fair Rosamond, and see whether she was that choice and incomparable piece of ware, which the world has been told of by rhymers and ballad-makers?"

"Speak less lightly and wantonly, friend," said the divine; "we are to resist the devil that he may flee from us, and not to tamper with him, or enter into his counsels, or traffic with the merchandise of his great Vanity Fair."

"Mind what the good man says, Wildrake," said the Colonel; "and take heed another time how thou dost suffer thy wit to outrun discretion."

"I am beholden to the reverend gentleman for his advice," answered Wildrake, upon whose tongue it was difficult to impose any curb whatever, even when his own safety rendered it most desirable. "But, gadzookers, let him have had what experience he will in fighting with the devil, he never saw one so black as I had a tussle with—not a hundred years ago."

"How, friend," said the clergyman, who understood every thing literally when apparitions were mentioned, "have you had so late a visitation of Satan? Believe me, then, that I wonder why thou darrest to entertain his name so often and so lightly, as I see thou dost use it in thy ordinary discourse. But when and where didst thou see the Evil One?"

Everard hastily interposed, lest by something yet more strongly alluding to Cromwell, his imprudent squire should, in mere wantonness, betray his interview with the General. "The young man raves," he said, "of a dream which he had the other night, when he and I slept together in Victor Lee's chamber, belonging to the Ranger's apartments at the Lodge."

"Thanks for help at a pinch, good patron," said Wildrake, whispering into Everard's ear, who in vain endeavored to shake him off,— "a fib never failed a fanatic."

"You, also, spoke something too lightly of these matters, considering the work which we have in hand, worthy Colonel," said the Presbyterian divine. "Believe me, the young man thy servant, was more likely to see visions than to dream merely idle dreams in that apartment; for I have always heard, that, next to Rosamond's Tower, in which, as I said, she played the wanton, and was afterwards poisoned by Queen Eleanor, Victor Lee's chamber was the place in the Lodge of Woodstock more peculiarly the haunt of evil spirits.—I pray you, young man, tell me this dream or vision of yours."

"With all my heart, sir," said Wildrake—then addressing his patron, who began to interfere, he said, "Tush, sir, you have had the discourse for an hour, and why should not I hold forth in my turn? By this darkness, if you keep me silent any longer, I will turn Independent preacher, and stand up in your despite, for the freedom of private judgment.—And so, reverend sir, I was dreaming of a carnal diversion called a bull-baiting; and methought they were venturing dogs at head, as merrily as e'er I saw them at Tutbury bull-running; and methought I heard some one say, there was the devil come to have a sight of the bull-ring. Well, I thought that, gadswoons, I would have a peep at his Infernal Majesty. So I looked, and there was a butcher in greasy woollen, with his steel by his side; but he was none of the devil. And there was a drunken cavalier, with his mouth full of oaths, and his stomach full of emptiness, and a gold-laced waistcoat in a very dilapidated condition, and a ragged hat, with a piece of a feather in it; and he was none of the devil neither. And here was a miller, his hands dusty with meal, and every atom of it stolen; and there was a vintner, his green apron stained with wine, and every drop of it sophisticated, but neither was the old gentleman I looked for to be detected among these artisans of iniquity. At length, sir, I saw a grave person with cropped hair, a pair of longish and projecting ears, a band as broad as a slob

bering bib under his chin, a brown coat surmounted by a Geneva cloak, and I had old Nicholas at once in his genuine paraphernalia, by—"

"Shame, shame!" said Colonel Everard. "What! behave thus to an old gentleman and a divine!"

"Nay, let him proceed," said the minister, with perfect equanimity, "if thy friend, or secretary, is gibing, I must have less patience than becomes my profession, if I could not bear an idle jest, and forgive him who makes it. Or if, on the other hand, the Enemy has really presented himself to the young man in such a guise as he intimates, wherefore should we be surprised that he, who can take upon him the form of an angel of light, should be able to assume that of a frail and peccable mortal, whose spiritual calling and profession ought, indeed, to induce him to make his life an example to others; but whose conduct, nevertheless, such is the imperfection of our unassisted nature, sometimes rather presents us with a warning of what we should shun?"

"Now, by the mass, honest dominie—I mean reverend sir—I crave you a thousand pardons," said Wildrake, penetrated by the quietness and patience of the presbyter's rebuke. "By St. George, if quiet patience will do it, thou art fit to play a game at foils with the devil himself, and I would be contented to hold stakes."

As he concluded an apology, which was certainly not uncalled for, and seemed to be received in perfectly good part, they approached so close to the exterior door of the Lodge, that they were challenged with the emphatic *Stand*, by a sentinel who mounted guard there. Colonel Everard replied, *A friend*; and the sentinel repeating his command, "Stand, friend," proceeded to call the corporal of the guard. The corporal came forth, and at the same time turned out his guard. Colonel Everard gave his name and designation, as well as those of his companions, on which the corporal said, "he doubted not there would be orders for his instant admission; but, in the first place, Master Tomkins must be consulted, that he might learn their honors' mind."

"How, sir!" said the Colonel, "do you, knowing who I am, presume to keep me on the outside of your post?"

"Not if your honor pleases to enter," said the corporal, "and undertakes to be my warranty; but such are the orders of my post."

"Nay, then, do your duty," said the Colonel; "but are the cavaliers up, or what is the matter, that you keep so close and strict a watch?"

The fellow gave no distinct answer, but muttered between his mustaches something about the Enemy, and the roaring Lion, who goeth about seeking whom he may devour. Presently afterwards Tomkins appeared, followed by two servants, bearing lights in great standing brass candlesticks. They marched before Colonel Everard and his party, keeping as close to each

other as two cloves of the same orange, and starting from time to time; and shouldering as they passed through sundry intricate passages, they led up a large and ample wooden staircase, the banisters, rail, and lining of which were executed in black oak, and finally into a long saloon, or parlor, where there was a prodigious fire, and about twelve candles of the largest size distributed in sconces against the wall. There were seated the Commissioners, who now held in their power the ancient mansion and royal domain of Woodstock.

CHAPTER XI.

The bloody bear, an independent beast,
Unlik'd to forms, in groans his hate express'd—

* * * * *
Next him the buffoon ape, as atheists use,
Mimick'd all sects, and had his own to choose.

HIND AND PANTHER.

THE strong light in the parlor which we have described, served to enable Everard easily to recognise his acquaintances, Desborough, Harrison, and Bletson, who had assembled round an oak table of large dimensions, placed near the blazing chimney, on which were arranged wine, and ale, and materials for smoking, then the general indulgence of the time. There was a species of movable cupboard set betwixt the table and the door, calculated originally for a display of plate upon grand occasions, but at present only used as a screen; which purpose it served so effectually, that, ere he had coasted around it, Everard heard the following fragment of what Desborough was saying, in his strong coarse voice:—"Sent him to share with us, I see warrant ye—it was always his Excellency my brother-in-law's way—if he made a treat for five friends, he would invite more than the table could hold—I have known him ask three men to eat two eggs."

"Hush, hush," said Bletson; and the servants, making their appearance from behind the tall cupboard announced Colonel Everard. It may not be uninteresting to the reader to have a description of the party into which he now entered.

Desborough was a stout, bull-necked man, of middle-size, with heavy vulgar features, grizzled bushy eyebrows, and wall eyes. The flourish of his powerful relative's fortunes had burst forth in the finery of his dress, which was much more ornamented than was usual among the round-heads. There was embroidery on his cloak, and lace upon his band; his hat displayed a feather with a golden clasp, and all his habiliments were those of a cavalier, or follower of the court, rather than the plain dress of a Parliamentary officer. But, Heaven knows, there was little of courtlike grace or dignity in the person or demeanor of the individual, who became his fine suit as the hog on the sign-post does his gilded

armor. It was not that he was positively deformed, or misshaped, for, taken in detail, the figure was well enough. But his limbs seemed to act upon different and contradictory principles. They were not, as the play says, in a concatenation accordingly:—the right hand moved as if it were upon bad terms with the left, and the legs showed an inclination to foot it in different and opposite directions. In short, to use an extravagant comparison, the members of Colonel Desborough seemed rather to resemble the disputatious representatives of a federative congress, than the well-ordered union of the orders of the state, in a firm and well-compacted monarchy, where each holds his own place, and all obey the dictates of a common head.

General Harrison, the second of the Commissioners, was a tall, thin, middle-aged man, who had risen into his high situation in the army, and his intimacy with Cromwell, by his danutless courage in the field, and the popularity he had acquired by his exalted enthusiasm amongst the military saints, sectaries, and Independents, who composed the strength of the existing army. Harrison was of mean extraction, and bred up to his father's employment of a butcher. Nevertheless, his appearance, though coarse, was not vulgar, like that of Desborough, who had so much the advantage of him in birth and education. He had a masculine height and strength of figure, was well made, and in his manner announced a rough military character, which might be feared, but could not easily become the object of contempt or ridicule. His aquiline nose and dark black eyes set off to some advantage a countenance otherwise irregular, and the wild enthusiasm that sometimes sparkled in them as he dilated on his opinions to others, and often seemed to slumber under his long dark eyelashes as he mused upon them himself, gave something strikingly wild, and even noble to his aspect. He was one of the chief leaders of those who were called Fifth-Monarchy men, who, going even beyond the general fanaticism of the age, presumptuously interpreted the Book of the Revelations after their own fancies, considered that the second Advent of the Messiah, and the Millennium, or reign of the Saints upon earth, was close at hand, and that they themselves, illuminated, as they believed, with the power of foreseeing these approaching events, were the chosen instruments for the establishment of the New Reign, or Fifth Monarchy, as it was called, and were fated also to win its honors, whether celestial or terrestrial.

When this spirit of enthusiasm, which operated like a partial insanity, was not immediately affecting Harrison's mind, he was a shrewd worldly man, and a good soldier, one who missed no opportunity of mending his fortune, and who, in expecting the exaltation of the Fifth Monarchy, was, in the meanwhile, a ready instrument for the establishment of the Lord General's supremacy. Whether it was owing to his early oc-

cupation, and habits of indifference to pain or bloodshed acquired in the shambles, to natural disposition and want of feeling, or, finally, to the awakened character of his enthusiasm, which made him look upon those who opposed him, as opposing the Divine will, and therefore meriting no favor or mercy, is not easy to say; but all agreed, that after a victory, or the successful storm of a town, Harrison was one of the most cruel and pitiless men in Cromwell's army; always urging some misapplied text to authorize the continued execution of the fugitives, and sometimes even putting to death those who had surrendered themselves prisoners. It was said, that at times the recollection of some of those cruelties troubled his conscience, and disturbed the dreams of beatification in which his imagination indulged.

When Everard entered the apartment, this true representative of the fanatical soldiers of the day, who filled those ranks and regiments which Cromwell had politically kept on foot, while he procured the reduction of those in which the Presbyterian interest predominated, was seated a little apart from the others, his legs crossed, and stretched out at length towards the fire, his head resting on his elbow, and turned upwards, as if studying, with the most profound gravity, the half-seen carving of the Gothic roof.

Bletson remains to be mentioned, who, in person and figure was diametrically different from the other two. There was neither foppery nor slovenliness in his exterior, nor had he any marks of military service or rank about his person. A small walking rapier seemed merely worn as a badge of his rank as a gentleman, without his hand having the least purpose of becoming acquainted with the hilt, or his eye with the blade. His countenance was thin and acute, marked with lines which thought rather than age had traced upon it; and a habitual sneer on his countenance, even when he least wished to express contempt on his features, seemed to assure the individual addressed, that in Bletson he conversed with a person of intellect far superior to his own. This was a trial of intellect only, however; for on all occasions of difference respecting speculative opinions, and indeed on all controversies whatever, Bletson avoided the ultimate *ratio* of blows and knocks.

Yet this peaceful gentleman had found himself obliged to serve personally in the Parliamentary army at the commencement of the Civil War, till happening unluckily to come in contact with the fiery Prince Rupert, his retreat was judged so precipitate, that it required all the shelter his friends could afford, to keep him free of an impeachment or a court-martial. But as Bletson spoke well, and with great effect in the House of Commons, which was his natural sphere, and was on that account high in the estimation of his party, his behavior at Edgehill was passed over, and he continued to take an active share in all the political events of that bustling period,

though he faced not again the actual front of war.

Bletson's theoretical politics had long inclined him to espouse the opinions of Harrington and others, who adopted the visionary idea of establishing a pure democratical republic in so extensive a country as Britain. This was a rash theory, where there is such an infinite difference betwixt ranks, habits, education, and morals—where there is such an immense disproportion betwixt the wealth of individuals—and where a large portion of the inhabitants consists of the inferior classes of the large towns and manufacturing districts—men unfitted to bear that share in the direction of a state, which must be exercised by the members of a republic in the proper sense of the word. Accordingly, as soon as the experiment was made, it became obvious that no such form of government could be adopted with the smallest chance of stability; and the question came only to be, whether the remnant, or, as it was vulgarly called, the Rump of the Long Parliament, now reduced by the seclusion of so many of the members to a few scores of persons, should continue, in spite of their unpopularity, to rule the affairs of Britain? Whether they should cast all loose by dissolving themselves, and issuing writs to convoke a new Parliament, the composition of which no one could answer for, any more than for the measures they might take when assembled? Or lastly, Whether Cromwell, as actually happened, was not to throw the sword into the balance, and boldly possess himself of that power which the remnant of the Parliament were unable to hold, and yet afraid to resign?

Such being the state of parties, the Council of State, in distributing the good things in their gift, endeavored to soothe and gratify the army, as a beggar flings crusts to a growling mastiff. In this view, Desborough had been created a Commissioner in the Woodstock matter to gratify Cromwell, Harrison to soothe the fierce Fifth-Monarchy men, and Bletson as a sincere republican, and one of their own leaven.

But if they supposed Bletson had the least intention of becoming a martyr to his republicanism, or submitting to any serious loss on account of it, they much mistook the man. He entertained their principles sincerely, and not the less that they were found impracticable; for the miscarriage of his experiment no more converts the political speculator, than the explosion of a retort undecives an alchemist. But Bletson was quite prepared to submit to Cromwell, or any one else who might be possessed of the actual authority.

He was a ready subject in practice to the powers existing, and made little difference betwixt various kinds of government, holding in theory all to be nearly equal in imperfection so soon as they diverged from the model of Harrington's Oceana. Cromwell had already been tampering with him, like wax between his finger and thumb, and which he was ready shortly to sea, with, smiling at the

same time to himself when he beheld the Council of State giving rewards to Bletson, as their faithful adherent, while he himself was secure of his allegiance, how soon soever the expected change of government should take place.

But Bletson was still more attached to his metaphysical than his political creed, and carried his doctrines of the perfectibility of mankind as far as he did those respecting the conceivable perfection of a model of government; and as in the one case he declared against all power which did not emanate from the people themselves, so, in his moral speculations, he was unwilling to refer any of the phenomena of nature to a final cause. When pushed, indeed, very hard, Bletson was compelled to mutter some inarticulate and unintelligible doctrines concerning an *Animus Mundi*, or Creative Power in the works of Nature, by which she originally called into existence, and still continues to preserve, her works. To this power, he said, some of the purest metaphysicians rendered a certain degree of homage; nor was he himself inclined absolutely to censure those, who, by the institution of holidays, choral dances, songs, and harmless feasts and libations, might be disposed to celebrate the great goddess Nature; at least dancing, singing, feasting, and sporting, being comfortable things to both young and old, they might as well sport, dance, and feast, in honor of such appointed holidays, as under any other pretext. But then this moderate show of religion was to be practised under such exceptions as are admitted by the Highgate oath; and no one was to be compelled to dance, drink, sing, or feast, whose taste did not happen to incline them to such diversions; nor was any one to be obliged to worship the creative power, whether under the name of the *Animus Mundi*, or any other whatsoever. The interference of the Deity in the affairs of mankind he entirely disowned, having proven to his own satisfaction that the idea originated entirely in priestcraft. In short, with the shadowy metaphysical exception aforesaid, Mr. Joshua Bletson of Darlington, member for Littlecreed, came as near the predicament of an atheist, as it is perhaps possible for a man to do. But we say this with the necessary salvo; for we have known many like Bletson, whose curtains have been shrewdly shaken by superstition, though their fears were unsanctioned by any religious faith. The devils, we are assured, believe and tremble; but on earth there are many, who, in worse plight than even the natural children of perdition, tremble without believing, and fear even while they blaspheme.

It follows, of course, that nothing could be treated with more scorn by Mr. Bletson, than the debates about Prelacy and Presbytery, about Presbytery and Independency, about Quakers and Anabaptists, Muggletonians and Brownists, and all the various sects with which the Civil War had commenced, and by which its dissensions were still continued. "It was," he said "as if

beasts of burden should quarrel amongst themselves about the fashion of their halters and pack-saddles, instead of embracing a favorable opportunity of throwing them aside." Other witty and pithy remarks he used to make when time and place suited; for instance, at the club called the Rota, frequented by St. John, and established by Harrington, for the free discussion of political and religious subjects.

But when Bletson was out of this academy, or stronghold of philosophy, he was very cautious how he carried his contempt of the general prejudice in favor of religion and Christianity further than an implied objection or a sneer. If he had an opportunity of talking in private with an ingenuous and intelligent youth, he sometimes attempted to make a proselyte, and showed much address in bribing the vanity of inexperience, by suggesting that a mind like his ought to spurn the prejudices impressed upon it in childhood; and when assuming the *latus clavus* of reason, assuring him that such as he, laying aside the *bullæ* of juvenile incapacity, as Bletson called it, should proceed to examine and decide for himself. It frequently happened, that the youth was induced to adopt the doctrines in whole, or in part, of the sage who had seen his natural genius, and who had urged him to exert it in examining, detecting, and declaring for himself; and thus flattery gave proselytes to infidelity, which could not have been gained by all the powerful eloquence or artful sophistry of the infidel.

These attempts to extend the influence of what was called free-thinking and philosophy, were carried on, as we have hinted, with a caution dictated by the timidity of the philosopher's disposition. He was conscious his doctrines were suspected, and his proceedings watched, by the two principal sects of Prelatists and Presbyterians, who, however inimical to each other, were still more hostile to one who was an opponent, not only to a church establishment of any kind, but to every denomination of Christianity. He found it more easy to shroud himself among the Independents, whose demands were for a general liberty of conscience, or an unlimited toleration, and whose faith, differing in all respects and particulars, was by some pushed into such wild errors, as to get totally beyond the bounds of every species of Christianity, and approach very near to infidelity itself, as extremes of each kind are said to approach each other. Bletson mixed a good deal among those sectaries; and such was his confidence in his own logic and address, that he is supposed to have entertained hopes of bringing to his opinions in time the enthusiastic Vane, as well as the no less enthusiastic Harrison, provided he could but get them to resign their visions of a Fifth Monarchy, and induce them to be contented with a reign of Philosophers in England for the natural period of their lives, instead of the reign of the Saints during the Millennium.

Such was the singular group into which Everard was now introduced; showing, in their vari-

ous opinions, upon how many devious coasts human nature may make shipwreck, when she has once let go her hold on the anchor which religion has given her to lean upon; the acute self-conceit and worldly learning of Bletson—the rash and ignorant conclusions of the fierce and under-bred Harrison, leading them into the opposite extremes of enthusiasm and infidelity, while Desborough, constitutionally stupid, thought nothing about religion at all; and while the others were active in making sail on different but equally erroneous courses, he might be said to perish like a vessel, which springs a leak and founders in the roadstead. It was wonderful to behold what a strange variety of mistakes and errors, on the part of the King and his Ministers, on the part of the Parliament and their leaders, on the part of the allied kingdoms of Scotland and England towards each other, had combined to rear up men of such dangerous opinions and interested characters among the arbiters of the destiny of Britain.

Those who argue for party's sake, will see all the faults on the one side, without deigning to look at those on the other; those who study history for instruction, will perceive that nothing but the want of concession on either side, and the deadly height to which the animosity of the King's and Parliament's parties had arisen, could have so totally overthrown the well-poised balance of the English constitution. But we hasten to quit political reflections, the rather that ours, we believe, will please neither Whig nor Tory.

CHAPTER XII.

Three form a College—an you give us four,
Let him bring his share with him.

BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER.

MR. BLETSON arose and paid his respects to Colonel Everard, with the ease and courtesy of a gentleman of the time; though on every account grieved at his intrusion, as a religious man who held his free-thinking principles in detestation, and would effectually prevent his conversion of Harrison, and even of Desborough, if any thing could be moulded out of such a clod, to the worship of the *Animus Mundi*. Moreover, Bletson knew Everard to be a man of steady probity, and by no means disposed to close with a scheme on which he had successfully sounded the other two, and which was calculated to assure the Commissioners of some little private indemnification for the trouble they were to give themselves in the public business. The philosopher was yet less pleased, when he saw the magistrate and the pastor who had met him in his flight of the preceding evening, when he had been seen, *parma non bene relicta*, with cloak and doublet left behind him.

The presence of Colonel Everard was unpleasing to Desborough as to Bletson; but the former having no philosophy in him, nor an idea that it was possible for any man to resist helping himself out of untold money, was chiefly embar-