

I do not shrink before my changes of fortune. I shall wear coarser clothes,—I shall feed on more ordinary food,—men will not doff their cap to me as they were wont, when I was the great and the wealthy. What of that? Old Harry Lee loved his honor better than his title, his faith better than his land and lordship. Have I not seen the 30th of January? I am neither phillomath nor astrologer; but old Will teaches me, that when green leaves fall winter is at hand, and that darkness will come when the sun sets."

"Bethink you, sir," said Colonel Everard, "if without any submission asked, any oath taken, any engagement imposed, express or tacit, excepting that you are not to excite disturbances in the public peace, you can be restored to your residence in the Lodge, and your usual fortunes and perquisites there—I have great reason to hope this may be permitted, if not expressly, at least on sufferance."

"Yes, I understand you. I am to be treated like the royal coin, marked with the ensign of the Rump to make it pass current, although I am too old to have the royal insignia grinded off from me. Kinsman, I will have none of this. I have lived at the Lodge too long; and let me tell you, I had left it in scorn long since, but for the orders of one whom I may yet live to do service to. I will take nothing from the usurpers, be their name Rump or Cromwell—be they one devil or legion—I will not take from them an old cap to cover my gray hairs—a cast cloak to protect my frail limbs from the cold. They shall not say they have, by their unwilling bounty, made Abraham rich—I will live, as I will die, the Loyal Lee."

"May I hope you will think of it, sir; and that you will, perhaps, considering what slight submission is asked, give me a better answer?"

"Sir, if I retract my opinion, which is not my wont, you shall hear of it.—And now, cousin, have you more to say? We keep that worthy clergyman in the outer room."

"Something I had to say—something touching my cousin Alice," said Everard, with embarrassment; "but I fear that the prejudices of both are so strong against me—"

"Sir, I dare turn my daughter loose to you—I will go join the good doctor in dame Joan's apartment. I am not unwilling that you should know that the girl hath, in all reasonable sort, the exercise of her free will."

He withdrew, and left the cousins together.

Colonel Everard advanced to Alice, and was about to take her hand. She drew back, and took the seat which her father had occupied, and pointed out to him one at some distance.

"Are we then so much estranged, my dearest Alice?" he said.

"We will speak of that presently," she replied. "In the first place, let me ask the cause of your visit here at so late an hour."

"You heard," said Everard, "what I stated to your father?"

"I did; but that seems to have been only part of your errand—something there seemed to be which applied particularly to me."

"It was a fancy—a strange mistake," answered Everard. "May I ask if you have been abroad this evening?"

"Certainly not," she replied. "I have small temptation to wander from my present home, poor as it is; and whilst here, I have important duties to discharge. But why does Colonel Everard ask so strange a question?"

"Tell me in turn, why your cousin Markham has lost the name of friendship and kindred, and even of some nearer feeling, and then I will answer you, Alice."

"It is soon answered," she said. "When you drew your sword against my father's cause—almost against his person—I studied, more than I should have done, to find excuse for you. I knew, that is, I thought I knew, your high feelings of public duty—I knew the opinions in which you had been bred up; and I said, I will not even for this, cast him off—he opposes his King because he is loyal to his country. You endeavored to avert the great and concluding tragedy of the 30th of January; and it confirmed me in my opinion, that Markham Everard might be misled, but could not be base or selfish."

"And what has changed your opinion, Alice? or who dare?" said Everard, reddening, "attach such epithets to the name of Markham Everard?"

"I am no subject," she said, "for exercising your valor, Colonel Everard, nor do I mean to offend. But you will find enough of others who will avow, that Colonel Everard is truckling to the usurper Cromwell, and that all his fair pretexts of forwarding his country's liberties, are but a screen for driving a bargain with the successful encroacher, and obtaining the best terms he can for himself and his family."

"For myself—Never!"

"But for your family you have—Yes, I am well assured that you have pointed out to the military tyrant, the way in which he and his satraps may master the government. Do you think my father or I would accept an asylum purchased at the price of England's liberty, and your honor?"

"Gracious Heaven, Alice, what is this? You accuse me of pursuing the very course which so lately had your approbation!"

"When you spoke with authority of your father, and recommended our submission to the existing government, such as it was, I own I thought—that my father's gray head might, with out dishonor, have remained under the roof where it had so long been sheltered. But did your father sanction your becoming the adviser of yonder ambitious soldier to a new course of innovation, and his abettor in the establishment of a new species of tyranny?—It is one thing to submit to oppression, another to be the agent of tyrants—and oh, Markham—their bloodhound!"

"How! bloodhound?—what mean you?—I own it is true I could see with content the wounds of this bleeding country stanch'd, even at the expense of beholding Cromwell, after his matchless rise, take a yet farther step to power—but to be his bloodhound! What is your meaning?"

"It is false, then?—I thought I could swear it had been false."

"What, in the name of God, is it you ask?"

"It is false that you are engaged to betray the young King of Scotland?"

"Betray him! I betray him, or any fugitive? Never! I would he were well out of England—I would lend him my aid to escape, were he in the house at this instant; and think in acting so I did his enemies good service, by preventing their soiling themselves with his blood—but betray him, never!"

"I knew it—I was sure it was impossible. Oh, be yet more honest; disengage yourself from yonder gloomy and ambitious soldier! Shun him and his schemes, which are formed in injustice, and can only be realized in yet more blood!"

"Believe me," replied Everard, "that I choose the line of policy best befitting the times."

"Choose that," she said, "which best befits duty, Markham—which best befits truth and honor. Do your duty, and let Providence decide the rest.—Farewell! we tempt my father's patience too far—you know his temper—farewell, Markham."

She extended her hand, which he pressed to his lips, and left the apartment. A silent bow to his uncle, and a sign to Wildrake, whom he found in the kitchen of the cabin, were the only tokens of recognition exhibited, and leaving the hut, he was soon mounted, and, with his companion, advanced on his return to the Lodge.

CHAPTER XIV.

—Deeds are done on earth,
Which have their punishment ere the earth closes
Upon the perpetrators. Be it the working
Of the remorse-stirr'd fancy, or the vision,
Distinct and real, of unearthly being,
All ages witness, that beside the couch
Of the fell homicide oft stalks the ghost
Of him he slew, and shows the shadowy wound.

OLD PLAY.

EVERARD had come to Joceline's hut as fast as horse could bear him, and with the same impetuosity of purpose as of speed. He saw no choice in the course to be pursued, and felt in his own imagination the strongest right to direct, and even reprove, his cousin, beloved as she was, on account of the dangerous machinations with which she appeared to have connected herself. He returned slowly, and in a very different mood.

Not only had Alice, prudent as beautiful, appeared completely free from the weakness of

conduct which seemed to give him some authority over her, but her views of policy, if less practicable, were so much more direct and noble than his own, as led him to question whether he had not compromised himself too rashly with Cromwell, even although the state of the country was so greatly divided and torn by faction, that the promotion of the General to the possession of the executive government seemed the only chance of escaping a renewal of the Civil War. The more exalted and purer sentiments of Alice lowered him in his own eyes; and though unshaken in his opinion, that it were better the vessel should be steered by a pilot having no good title to the office, than that she should run upon the breakers, he felt that he was not espousing the most direct, manly, and disinterested side of the question.

As he rode on, immersed in these unpleasant contemplations, and considerably lessened in his own esteem by what had happened, Wildrake, who rode by his side, and was no friend to long silence, began to enter into conversation. "I have been thinking, Mark," said he, "that if you and I had been called to the bar—as, by the by, has been in danger of happening to me in more senses than one—I say, had we become barristers, I would have had the better oiled tongue of the two—the fairer art of persuasion."

"Perhaps so," replied Everard, "though I never heard thee use any, save to induce an usurer to lend thee money, or a taverner to abate a reckoning."

"And yet this day, or rather night, I could have, as I think, made a conquest which baffled you."

"Indeed?" said the Colonel, becoming attentive.

"Why, look you," said Wildrake, "it was a main object with you to induce Mistress Alice Lee—By Heaven, she is an exquisite creature—I approve of your taste, Mark—I say, you desire to persuade her, and the stout old Trojan her father, to consent to return to the Lodge, and live there quietly, and under connivance, like gentle folk, instead of lodging in a hut hardly fit to harbor a Tom of Bedlam."

"Thou art right; such, indeed, was a great part of my object in this visit," answered Everard.

"But perhaps you also expected to visit there yourself, and so keep watch over pretty Mistress Lee—eh?"

"I never entertained so selfish a thought," said Everard; "and if this nocturnal disturbance at the mansion were explained and ended, I would instantly take my departure."

"Your friend Noll would expect something more from you," said Wildrake; "he would expect, in case the knight's reputation for loyalty should draw any of our poor exiles and wanderers about the Lodge, that you should be on the watch and ready to snap them. In a word, as far as I can understand his long-winded speeches,

he would have Woodstock a trap, your uncle and his pretty daughter the bait of toasted cheese—craving your Chloe's pardon for the comparison—you the spring-fall which should bar their escape, his Lordship himself being the great grimalkin to whom they are to be given over to be devoured."

"Dared Cromwell mention this to thee in express terms?" said Everard, pulling up his horse, and stopping in the midst of the road.

"Nay, not in express terms, which I do not believe he ever used in his life; you might as well expect a drunken man to go straight forward; but he insinuated as much to me, and indicated that you might deserve well of him—Gadzo, the damnable proposal sticks in my throat—by betraying our noble and rightful King [here he pulled off his hat], whom God grant in health, and wealth long to reign, as the worthy clergyman says, though I fear just now his majesty is both sick and sorry, and never a penny in his pouch to boot."

"This tallies with what Alice hinted," said Everard; "but how could she know it? didst thou give her any hint of such a thing?"

"I" replied the cavalier, "I, who never saw Mistress Alice in my life till to-night, and then only for an instant—zooks, man, how is that possible?"

"True," replied Everard, and seemed lost in thought. At length he spoke—"I should call Cromwell to account for his bad opinion of me; for, even though not seriously expressed, but, as I am convinced it was, with the sole view of proving you, and perhaps myself, it was, nevertheless, a misconstruction to be resented."

"I'll carry a cartel for you, with all my heart and soul," said Wildrake; "and turn out with his godliness's second, with as good will as I ever drank a glass of sack."

"Pshaw," replied Everard, "those in his high place fight no single combats. But tell me, Roger Wildrake, didst thou thyself think me capable of the falsehood and treachery implied in such a message?"

"I" exclaimed Wildrake.—"Markham Everard, you have been my early friend, my constant benefactor. When Colchester was reduced, you saved me from the gallows, and since that thou hast twenty times saved me from starving. But, by Heaven, if I thought you capable of such villainy as your General recommended,—by yonder blue sky, and all the works of creation which it bends over, I would stab you with my own hand!"

"Death," replied Everard, "I should indeed deserve, but not from you, perhaps; but fortunately, I cannot, if I would, be guilty of the treachery you would punish. Know that I had this day secret notice, and from Cromwell himself, that the young Man has escaped by sea from Bristol."

"Now, God Almighty be blessed, who protected him through so many dangers!" ex-

claimed Wildrake. "Huzza!—Up hearts, cavaliers!—Hey for cavaliers!—God bless King Charles!—Moons and stars, catch my hat!"—and he threw it up as high as he could into the air. The celestial bodies which he invoked did not receive the present dispatched to them; but, as in the case of Sir Henry Lee's scabbard, an old gnarled oak became a second time the receptacle of a waif and stray of loyal enthusiasm. Wildrake looked rather foolish at the circumstance, and his friend took the opportunity of admonishing him.

"Art thou not ashamed to bear thee so like a schoolboy?"

"Why," said Wildrake, "I have but sent a Puritan's hat upon a loyal errand. I laugh to think how many of the schoolboys thou talk'st of will be cheated into climbing the pollard next year, expecting to find the nest of some unknown bird in yonder unmeasured margin of felt."

"Hush now, for God's sake, and let us speak calmly," said Everard. "Charles has escaped, and I am glad of it. I would willingly have seen him on his father's throne by composition, but not by the force of the Scottish army, and the incensed and vengeful royalists."

"Master Markham Everard," began the cavalier, interrupting him—

"Nay, hush, dear Wildrake," said Everard; "let us not dispute a point on which we cannot agree, and give me leave to go on.—I say, since the young Man has escaped, Cromwell's offensive and injurious stipulation falls to the ground; and I see not why my uncle and his family should not again enter their own house, under the same terms of connivance as many other royalists. What may be incumbent on me is different, nor can I determine my course until I have an interview with the General, which, as I think, will end in his confessing that he threw in this offensive proposal to sound us both. It is much in his manner; for he is blunt, and never sees or feels the punctilious honor which the gallants of the day stretch to such delicacy."

"I'll acquit him of having any punctilio about him," said Wildrake, "either touching honor or honesty. Now, to come back to where we started. Supposing you were not to reside in person at the Lodge, and to forbear even visiting there, unless on invitation, when such a thing can be brought about, I tell you frankly, I think your uncle and his daughter might be induced to come back to the Lodge, and reside there as usual. At least the clergyman, that worthy old cock, gave me to hope as much."

"He had been hasty in bestowing his confidence," said Everard.

"True," replied Wildrake; "he confided in me at once; for he instantly saw my regard for the Church. I thank Heaven I never passed a clergyman in his canonicals without pulling my hat off—and thou knowest, the most desperate duel I ever fought was with young Grayless of the Inner Temple, for taking the wall of the Rev-

erend Dr. Bunce)—Ah, I can gain a chaplain's ear instantly. Gadzooks, they know whom they have to trust to in such a one as I."

"Dost thou think, then," said Colonel Everard, "or rather does this clergyman think, that if they were secure of intrusion from me, the family would return to the Lodge, supposing the intruding Commissioners gone, and this nocturnal disturbance explained and ended?"

"The old Knight," answered Wildrake, "may be wrought upon by the Doctor to return, if he is secure against intrusion. As for disturbances, the stout old boy, so far as I can learn in two minutes' conversation, laughs at all this turmoil as the work of mere imagination, the consequence of the remorse of their own evil consciences; and says that goblin or devil was never heard of at Woodstock, until it became the residence of such men as they, who have now usurped the possession."

"There is more than imagination in it," said Everard. "I have personal reason to know there is some conspiracy carrying on, to render the house untenable by the Commissioners. I acquit my uncle of accession to such a silly trick; but I must see it ended ere I can agree to his and my cousin's residing where such a confederacy exists; for they are likely to be considered as the contrivers of such pranks, be the actual agent who he may."

"With reverence to your better acquaintance with the gentleman, Everard, I should rather suspect the old father of Puritans (I beg your pardon again) has something to do with the business; and if so, Lucifer will never look near the true old Knight's beard, nor abide a glance of yonder maiden's innocent blue eyes. I will uphold them as safe as pure gold in a miser's chest."

"Sawest thou aught thyself, which makes thee think thus?"

"Not a quill of the devil's pinjon saw I," replied Wildrake. "He supposes himself too secure of an old cavalier, who must steal, hang, or drown, in the long run, so he gives himself no trouble to look after the assured booty. But I heard the serving-fellows prate of what they had seen and heard; and though their tales were confused enough, yet if there was any truth among them at all, I should say the devil must have been in the dance.—But, holla! here comes some one upon us.—Stand, friend—who art thou?"

"A poor day laborer in the great work of England—Joseph Tomkins by name—Secretary to a godly and well-endowed leader in this poor Christian army of England, called General Harrison."

"What news, Master Tomkins?" said Everard; "and why are you on the road at this late hour?"

"I speak to the worthy Colonel Everard, as I judge?" said Tomkins; "and truly I am glad of meeting your honor. Heaven knows I need such assistance as yours.—Oh, worthy Master Everard!—Here has been a sounding of trumpets,

and a breaking of vials, and a pouring forth, and—"

"Prithee, tell me in brief, what is the matter—where is thy master—and, in a word, what has happened?"

"My master is close by, parading it in the little meadow, beside the huge oak, which is called by the name of the late Man; ride but two steps forward, and you may see him walking swiftly to and fro, advancing all the while the naked weapon."

Upon proceeding as directed, but with as little noise as possible, they descried a man, whom of course they concluded must be Harrison, walking to and fro beneath the King's oak, as a sentinel under arms, but with more wildness of demeanor. The tramp of the horses did not escape his ear; and they heard him call out, as if at the head of the brigade—"Lower pikes against cavalry!—Here comes Prince Rupert—Stand fast, and you shall turn them aside, as a bull would toss a cur-dog.—Lower your pikes still, my hearts, the end secured against your foot—down on your right knee, front rank—spare not for the spoiling of your blue aprons.—Ha—Zerobabel—ay, that is the word!"

"In the name of Heaven, about whom or what is he talking!" said Everard; "wherefore does he go about with his weapon drawn?"

"Truly, sir, when aught disturbs my master, General Harrison, he is something rapt in the spirit, and conceives that he is commanding a reserve of pikes at the great battle of Armageddon—and for his weapon, slack, worthy sir, wherefore should he keep Sheffield steel in calves' leather, when there are fiends to be combated—incarnate fiends on earth and raging infernal fiends under the earth?"

"This is intolerable," said Everard. "Listen to me, Tomkins. Thou art not now in the pulpit, and I desire none of thy preaching language. I know thou canst speak intelligibly when thou art so minded. Remember, I may serve or harm thee; and as you hope or fear anything on my part, answer straight-forward—What has happened to drive out thy master to the wild wood at this time of night?"

"Forsooth, worthy and honored sir, I will speak with the precision I may. True it is, and of verity, that the breath of man, which is in his nostrils, goeth forth and returneth—"

"Hark you, sir," said Colonel Everard, "take care where you ramble in your correspondence with me. You have heard how at the great battle of Dunbar in Scotland, the General himself held a pistol to the head of Lieutenant Hewcreed, threatening to shoot him through the brain if he did not give up holding forth, and put his squadron in line to the front. Take care, sir."

"Verily, the Lieutenant then charged with an even and unbroken order," said Tomkins, "and bore a thousand plaids and bonnets over the beach before him into the sea. Neither shall I pre-empt or postpone your honor's commands, but

speedily obey them, and that without delay."

"Go to, fellow; thou knowest what I would have," said Everard; "speak at once—I know thou canst if thou wilt. Trusty Tomkins is better known than he thinks for."

"Worthy sir," said Tomkins, in a much less periphrastic style, "I will obey your worship as far as the spirit will permit. Truly, it was not an hour since, when my worshipful master being at table with Master Bibbet and myself, not to mention the worshipful Master Bletson and Colonel Desborough, and behold there was a violent knocking at the gate, as of one in haste. Now, of a certainty, so much had our household been harassed with witches and spirits, and other objects of sound and sight, that the sentinels could not be brought to abide upon their posts without doors, and it was only by a provision of beef and strong liquors that we were able to maintain a guard of three men in the hall, who nevertheless ventured not to open the door, lest they should be surprised with some of the goblins where-with their imaginations were overwhelmed. And they heard the knocking, which increased until it seemed that the door was well-nigh about to be beaten down. Worthy Master Bibbet was a little overcome with liquor (as is his fashion, good man, about this time of the evening), not that he is in the least given to ebriety, but simply, that since the Scottish campaign he hath had a perpetual ague, which obliges him so to nourish his frame against the damps of the night; wherefore, as it is well known to your honor that I discharge the office of a faithful servant, as well to Major-General Harrison, and the other Commissioners, as to my just and lawful master, Colonel Desborough—"

"I know all that.—And now that thou art trusted by both, I pray to Heaven thou mayst merit the trust," said Colonel Everard.

"And devoutly do I pray," said Tomkins, "that your worshipful prayers may be answered with favor; for certainly to be, and to be called and entitled, Honest Joe, and Trusty Tomkins, is to me more than ever would be an Earl's title, were such things to be granted anew in this regenerated government."

"Well, go on—go on—or if thou dalliest much longer, I will make bold to dispute the article of your honesty. I like short tales, sir, and doubt what is told with a long unnecessary train of words."

"Well, good sir, be not hasty. As I said before, the doors rattled till you would have thought the knocking was reiterated in every room of the Palace. The bell rung out for company, though we could not find that any one tolled the clapper, and the guards let off their firelocks, merely because they knew not what better to do. So, Master Bibbet being, as I said, unsusceptible of his duty, I went down with my poor rapier to the door, and demanded who was there; and I was answered in a voice which, I must say, was

much like another voice, that it was one wanting Major-General Harrison. So, as it was then late, I answered mildly, that General Harrison was taking himself to his rest, and that any who wished to speak to him must return on the morrow morning, for that after nightfall the door of the Palace, being in the room of a garrison, would be opened to no one. So the voice replied, and bid me open directly, without which he would blow the folding leaves of the door into the middle of the hall. And therewithal the noise recommenced, that we thought the house would have fallen; and I was in some measure constrained to open the door; even like a besieged garrison which can hold out no longer."

"By my honor, and it was stoutly done of you, I must say," said Wildrake, who had been listening with much interest. "I am a bold dare-devil enough, yet when I had two inches of oak plank between the actual fiend and me, hang him that would demolish the barrier between us, say I—I would as soon, when aboard, bore a hole in the ship, and let in the waves; for you know we always compare the devil to the deep sea."

"Prithee, peace, Wildrake," said Everard, "and let him go on with his history.—Well, and what saw'st thou when the door was opened?—the great Devil with his horns and claws thou wilt say, no doubt."

"No, sir, I will say nothing but what is true. When I undid the door, one man stood there, and he, to seeming, a man of no extraordinary appearance. He was wrapped in a taffeta cloak, of a scarlet color, and with a red lining. He seemed as if he might have been in his time a very handsome man, but there was something of paleness and sorrow in his face—a long love-lock and long hair he wore, even after the abomination of the cavaliers, and the unloveliness, as learned Master Prynne well termed it, of love-locks—a jewel in his ear—a blue scarf over his shoulder, like a military commander for the King, and a hat with a white plume, bearing a peculiar hatband."

"Some unhappy officer of cavaliers, of whom so many are in hiding, and seeking shelter through the country," briefly replied Everard.

"True, worthy sir—right as a judicious exposition. But there was something about this man (if he was a man) whom I, for one, could not look upon without trembling; nor the musketeers, who were in the hall, without betraying much alarm, and swallowing, as they themselves will aver, the very bullets which they had in their mouths for loading their carabines and muskets. Nay, the wolf and deer dogs, that are the fiercest of their kind, fled from this visitor, and crept into holes and corners, moaning and wailing in a low and broken tone. He came into the middle of the Hall, and still he seemed no more than an ordinary man, only somewhat fantastically dressed, in a doublet of black velvet pinked upon scarlet satin under his cloak, a jewel in his ear, with large roses in his shoes, and a kerchief in his

band, which he sometimes pressed against his left side."

"Gracious Heavens!" said Wildrake, coming close up to Everard, and whispering in his ear, with accents which terror rendered tremulous (a mood of mind most unusual to the daring man, who seemed now overcome by it)—"it must have been poor Dick Robison the player, in the very dress in which I have seen him play Philaster—ay, and drunk a jolly bottle with him after it at the Mermaid! I remember how many frolics we had together, and all his little fantastic fashions. He served for his old master, Charles, in Mohun's troop, and was murdered by this butcher's dog, as I have heard, after surrender, at the battle of Naseby-field."

"Hush! I have heard of the deed," said Everard; "for God's sake hear the man to an end.—Did this visitor speak to thee, my friend?"

"Yes, sir, in a pleasing tone of voice, but somewhat fanciful in the articulation, and like one who is speaking to an audience as from a bar or a pulpit, more than in the voice of ordinary men on ordinary matters. He desired to see Major-General Harrison."

"He did!—and you," said Everard, infected by the spirit of the time, which, as is well known, leaned to credulity upon all matters of supernatural agency,— "what did you do?"

"I went up to the parlor, and related that such a person inquired for him. He started when I told him, and eagerly desired to know the man's dress; but no sooner did I mention his dress, and the jewel in his ear, than he said, 'Begone! tell him I will not admit him to speech of me. Say that I defy him, and will make my defiance good at the great battle in the valley of Armageddon, when the voice of the angel shall call all fowls which fly under the face of heaven to feed on the flesh of the captain and the soldier, the war-horse and his rider. Say to the Evil One, I have power to appeal our conflict even till that day, and that in the front of that fearful day he will again meet with Harrison.' I went back with this answer to the stranger, and his face was writhed into such a deadly frown as a mere human brow hath seldom worn. 'Return to him,' he said, 'and say it is MY HOUR, and that if he come not instantly down to speak with me, I will mount the stairs to him. Say that I COMMAND him to descend, by the token, that, on the field of Naseby, he did not the work negligently.'"

"I have heard," whispered Wildrake—who felt more and more strongly the contagion of superstition—"that these words were blasphemously used by Harrison when he shot my poor friend Dick?"

"What happened next?" said Everard. "See that thou speakest the truth."

"As gospel unexpounded by a steeple-man," said the Independent; "yet truly it is but little I have to say. I saw my master come down, with a blank, yet resolved air; and when he entered the hail and saw the stranger, he made a pause.

The other waved on him as if to follow, and walked out at the portal. My worthy patron seemed as if he were about to follow, yet again paused, when this visitant, be he man or fiend re-entered, and said, 'Obey thy doom.'

'By pathless march, by greenwood tree,
It is thy weird to follow me—
To follow me through the ghastly moonlight—
To follow me through the shadows of night—
To follow me, comrade, still art thou bound:
I conjure thee by the unshaken word—
I conjure thee by the last words I spoke,
When the body slept and the spirit awoke,
In the very last pangs of the deadly stroke!'

So saying, he stalked out, and my master followed him into the wood.—I followed also at a distance. But when I came up, my master was alone, and bearing himself as you now behold him."

"Thou hast had a wonderful memory, friend," said the Colonel, coldly, "to remember these rhymes in a single recitation—there seems something of practice in all this."

"A single recitation, my honored sir?" exclaimed the Independent—"alack, the rhyme is seldom out of my poor master's mouth, when, as sometimes haps, he is less triumphant in his wrestles with Satan. But it was the first time I ever heard it uttered by another; and, to say truth, he ever seems to repeat it unwillingly, as a child after his pedagogue, and as it was not indited by his own head, as the Psalmist saith."

"It is singular," said Everard;—"I have heard and read that the spirits of the slaughtered have strange power over the slayer; but I am astonished to have it insisted upon that there may be truth in such tales. Roger Wildrake—what art thou afraid of, man—why dost thou shift thy place thus?"

"Fear? it is not fear—it is hate, deadly hate.—I see the murderer of poor Dick before me, and—see, he throws himself into a posture of fence—Sa—sa—say'st thou, brood of a butcher's mastiff? thou shalt not want an antagonist."

Ere any one could stop him, Wildrake threw aside his cloak, drew his sword, and almost with a single bound cleared the distance betwixt him and Harrison, and crossed swords with the latter, as he stood brandishing his weapon, as if in immediate expectation of an assailant. Accordingly, the Republican General was not for an instant taken at unawares, but the moment the swords clashed, he shouted, "Ha! I feel thee now, thou hast come in body at last.—Welcome! welcome!—the sword of the Lord and of Gideon!"

"Part them, part them," cried Everard, as he and Tomkins, at first astonished at the suddenness of the affray, hastened to interfere. Everard, seizing on the cavalier, drew him forcibly backwards, and Tomkins contrived, with risk and difficulty, to master Harrison's sword, while the General exclaimed, "Ha! two to one—two to one!—thus fight demons." Wildrake, on his

side, swore a dreadful oath, and added, "Markham, you have cancelled every obligation I owed you—they are all out of sight—gone, d—n me!"

"You have indeed acquitted these obligations rarely," said Everard. "Who knows how this affair shall be explained and answered?"

"I will answer it with my life," said Wildrake.

"Good now, be silent," said Tomkins, "and let me manage. It shall be so ordered that the good General shall never know that he hath encountered with a mortal man; only let that man of Moab put his sword into the scabbard's rest, and be still."

"Wildrake, let me entreat thee to sheathe thy sword," said Everard, "else, on my life, thou must turn it against me."

"No, fore George, not so mad as that neither, but I'll have another day with him."

"Thou, another day!" exclaimed Harrison, whose eye had still remained fixed on the spot where he found such palpable resistance. "Yes, I know thee well; day by day, week by week, thou makest the same idle request, for thou knowest that my heart quivers at thy voice. But my hand trembles not when opposed to thine—the spirit is willing to the combat, if the flesh be weak when opposed to that which is not of the flesh."

"Now, peace all, for Heaven's sake,"—said the steward Tomkins; then added, addressing his master, "there is no one here, if it please your Excellence, but Tomkins and the worthy Colonel Everard."

General Harrison, as sometimes happens in cases of partial insanity (that is, supposing his to have been a case of mental delusion), though firmly and entirely persuaded of the truth of his own visions, yet was not willing to speak on the subject of those who, he knew, would regard them as imaginary. Upon this occasion, he assumed the appearance of perfect ease and composure, after the violent agitation he had just manifested, in a manner which showed how anxious he was to disguise his real feelings from Everard, whom he considered as unlikely to participate them.

He saluted the Colonel with profound ceremony, and talked of the fineness of the evening, which had summoned him forth of the Lodge, to take a turn in the park, and enjoy the favorable weather. He then took Everard by the arm, and walked back with him towards the Lodge, Wildrake and Tomkins following close behind and leading the horses. Everard, desirous to gain some light on these mysterious incidents, endeavored to come on the subject more than once, by a mode of interrogation, which Harrison (for madmen are very often unwilling to enter on the subject of their mental delusion) parried with some skill, or addressed himself for aid to his steward Tomkins, who was in the habit of being voucher for his master upon all occasions, which

led to Desborough's ingenious nickname of Fib bet.

"And wherefore had you your sword drawn, my worthy General," said Everard, "when you were only on an evening walk of pleasure?"

"Truly, excellent Colonel, these are times when men must watch with their loins girded, and their lights burning, and their weapons drawn. The day draweth nigh, believe me or not as you will, that men must watch lest they be found naked and unarmed, when the seven trumpets shall sound, Boot and saddle; and the pipes of Jezer shall strike up, Horse and away."

"True, good General; but methought I saw you making passes, even now, as if you were fighting," said Everard.

"I am of a strange fantasy, friend Everard," answered Harrison; "and when I walk alone, and happen, as but now, to have my weapon drawn, I sometimes for exercise' sake, will practise a thrust against such a tree as that. It is a silly pride men have in the use of weapons. I have been accounted a master of fence, and have fought prizes when I was unregenerated, and before I was called to do my part in the great work, entering as a trooper into our victorious General's first regiment of horse."

"But methought," said Everard, "I heard a weapon clash with yours?"

"How? a weapon clash with my sword?—How could that be, Tomkins?"

"Truly, sir," said Tomkins, "it must have been a bough of the tree; they have them of all kinds here, and your honor may have pushed against one of them, which the Brazilians call iron-wood, a block of which, being struck with a hammer, saith Purchas in his Pilgrimage, ringeth like an anvil."

"Truly, it may be so," said Harrison; "for those rulers who are gone, assembled in this their abode of pleasure many strange trees and plants, though they gathered not of the fruit of that tree which beareth twelve manner of fruits, or of those leaves which are for the healing of the nations."

Everard pursued his investigation; for he was struck with the manner in which Harrison evaded his questions, and the dexterity with which he threw his transcendental and fanatical notions, like a sort of veil, over the darker visions excited by remorse and conscious guilt.

"But," said he, "if I may trust my eyes and ears, I cannot but still think that you had a real antagonist—Nay, I am sure I saw a fellow, in a dark-colored jerkin, retreat through the wood."

"Did you?" said Harrison, with a tone of surprise, while his voice faltered in spite of him—"Who could he be?—Tomkins, did you see the fellow Colonel Everard talks of with the napkin in his hand—the bloody napkin which he always pressed to his side?"

This last expression, in which Harrison gave a mark different from that which Everard had assigned, but corresponding to Tomkins's original

description of the supposed spectre, had more effect on Everard in confirming the steward's story, than anything he had witnessed or heard. The voucher answered the draft upon him as promptly as usual, that he had seen such a fellow glide past them into the thicket—that he dared to say he was some deer-stealer, for he had heard they were become very audacious.

"Look ye there now, Master Everard," said Harrison, hurrying from the subject—"Is it not time now that we should lay aside our controversies, and join hand in hand to repairing the breaches of our Zion? Happy and contented were I, my excellent friend, to be a treader of mortar, or a bearer of a hod, upon this occasion, under our great leader, with whom Providence has gone forth in this great national controversy; and truly, so devoutly do I hold by our excellent and victorious General Oliver, whom Heaven long preserve—that were he to command me, I should not scruple to pluck forth of his high place the man whom they call Speaker, even as I lent a poor hand to pluck down the man whom they call King.—Wherefore, as I know your judgment holdeth with mine on this matter, let me urge unto you lovingly, that we may act as brethren, and build up the breaches, and re-establish the bulwarks of our English Zion, whereby we shall be doubtless chosen as pillars and buttresses, under our excellent Lord General, for supporting and sustaining the same, and endowed with proper revenues and incomes, both spiritual and temporal, to serve as a pedestal, on which we may stand, seeing that otherwise our foundation will be on the loose sand.—Nevertheless," continued he, his mind again diverging from his views of temporal ambition into his visions of the Fifth Monarchy, "these things are but vanity in respect of the opening of the book which is sealed; for all things approach speedily towards lightning and thundering, and unloosing of the great dragon from the bottomless pit, wherein he is chained."

With this mingled strain of earthly politics, and fanatical prediction, Harrison so overpowered Colonel Everard, as to leave him no time to urge him farther on the particular circumstances of his nocturnal skirmish, concerning which it is plain he had no desire to be interrogated. They now reached the Lodge of Woodstock.

CHAPTER XV.

Now the wasted brands do glow,
While the screech-owl, sounding loud,
Puts the wretch that lies in woe,
In remembrance of a shroud.
Now it is the time of night
That the graves, all gaping wide,
Every one lets out its sprite,
In the church-way paths to glide.

MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

BEFORE the gate of the palace the guards were now doubled. Everard demanded the reason of this from the corporal, whom he found in the

hall with his soldiers, sitting or sleeping around a great fire, maintained at the expense of the carved chairs and benches, with fragments of which it was furnished.

"Why, verily," answered the man, "the *corps-de-garde*, as your worship says, will be harassed to pieces by such duty; nevertheless, fear hath gone abroad among us, and no man will mount guard alone. We have drawn in, however, one or two of our outposts from Banbury and elsewhere, and we are to have a relief from Oxford to-morrow."

Everard continued minute inquiries concerning the sentinels that were posted within as well as without the Lodge; and found that, as they had been stationed under the eye of Harrison himself, the rules of prudent discipline had been exactly observed in the distribution of the posts. There remained nothing therefore for Colonel Everard to do, but, remembering his own adventure of the evening, to recommend that an additional sentinel should be placed, with a companion, if judged indispensable, in that vestibule, or anteroom, from which the long gallery where he had met with the rencontre, and other suites of apartments, diverged. The corporal respectfully promised all obedience to his orders. The serving-men being called, appeared also in double force. Everard demanded to know whether the Commissioners had gone to bed, or whether he could get speech with them?

"They are in their bedrooms, forsooth," replied one of the fellows; "but I think they be not yet undressed."

"What!" said Everard, "are Colonel Desborough and Master Bletson both in the same sleeping apartment?"

"Their honors have so chosen it," said the man; "and their honors' secretaries remain upon guard all night."

"It is the fashion to double guards all over the house," said Wildrake. "Had I a glimpse of a tolerably good-looking housemaid now, I should know how to fall into the fashion."

"Peace, fool!" said Everard.—"And where are the Mayor and Master Holdenough?"

"The Mayor is returned to the borough on horseback, behind the trooper, who goes to Oxford for the reinforcement; and the man of the steeple-house hath quartered himself in the chamber which Colonel Desborough had last night, being that in which he is most likely to meet the—your honor understands. The Lord pity us, we are a harassed family!"

"And where be General Harrison's knaves," said Tomkins, "that they do not marshal him to his apartment?"

"Here—here—here, Master Tomkins," said three fellows, pressing forward, with the same consternation on their faces which seemed to pervade the whole inhabitants of Woodstock.

"Away with you, then," said Tomkins;—"speak not to his worship—you see he is not in the humor."

"Indeed," observed Colonel Everard, "he looks singularly wan—his features seem written as by a palsy-stroke; and though he was talking so fast while we came along, he hath not opened his mouth since we came to the light."

"It is his manner after such visitations," said Tomkins—"Give his honor your arms, Zedekiah and Jonathan, to lead him off—I will follow instantly.—You, Nicodemus, tarry to wait upon me—it is not well walking alone in this mansion."

"Master Tomkins," said Everard, "I have heard of you often as a sharp, intelligent man—tell me fairly, are you in earnest afraid of anything supernatural haunting this house?"

"I would be loth to run the chance, sir," said Tomkins very gravely; "by looking on my worshipful master, you may form a guess how the living look after they have spoken with the dead." He bowed low, and took his leave. Everard proceeded to the chamber which the two remaining Commissioners had, for comfort's sake, chosen to inhabit in company. They were preparing for bed as he went into their apartment. Both started as the door opened—both rejoiced when they saw it was only Everard who entered.

"Hark ye hither," said Bletson, pulling him aside, "sawest thou ever ass equal to Desborough?—the fellow is as big as an ox, and as timorous as a sheep. He has insisted on my sleeping here, to protect him. Shall we have a merry night on't, ha? We will, if thou wilt take the third bed, which was prepared for Harrison; but he has gone out, like a mooncalf, to look for the valley of Armageddon in the Park of Woodstock."

"General Harrison has returned with me but now," said Everard.

"Nay but, as I shall live, he comes not into our apartment," said Desborough, overhearing his answer. "No man that has been supping, for aught I know, with the Devil, has a right to sleep among Christian folk."

"He does not propose so," said Everard; "he sleeps, as I understand, apart—and alone."

"Not quite alone, I dare say," said Desborough; "for Harrison hath a sort of attraction for goblins—they fly round him like moths about a candle. But, I prithee, good Everard, do thou stay with us. I know not how it is, but although thou hast not thy religion always in thy mouth, nor speakest many hard words about it, like Harrison—nor makest long preachments, like a certain most honorable relation of mine who shall be nameless, yet somehow I feel myself safer in thy company than with any of them. As for this Bletson, he is such a mere blasphemer, that I fear the Devil will carry him away ere morning."

"Did you ever hear such a paltry coward?" said Bletson, apart to Everard. "Do tarry, however, mine honored Colonel—I know your zeal to assist the distressed, and you see Desborough is

in that predicament, that he will require near him more than one good example to prevent him thinking of ghosts and fiends."

"I am sorry I cannot oblige you, gentlemen," said Everard; "but I have settled my mind to sleep in Victor Lee's apartment, so I wish you good-night; and if you would repose without disturbance, I would advise that you commend yourselves during the watches of the night, to Him unto whom night is even as mid-day. I had intended to have spoke with you this evening on the subject of my being here; but I will defer the conference till to-morrow, when, I think, I will be able to show you excellent reasons for leaving Woodstock."

"We have seen plenty such already," said Desborough. "For one, I came here to serve the estate, with some moderate advantage doubtless to myself for my trouble; but if I am set upon my head again to-night, as I was the night before, I would not stay longer to gain a king's crown; for I am sure my neck would be unfitted to bear the weight of it."

"Good-night," exclaimed Everard; and was about to go, when Bletson again pressed close, and whispered to him, "Hark thee, Colonel—you know my friendship for thee—I do implore thee to leave the door of thy apartment open, that if thou meetest with any disturbance, I may hear thee call, and be with thee upon the very instant. Do this, dear Everard, my fears for thee will keep me awake else; for I know that, notwithstanding your excellent sense, you entertain some of those superstitious ideas which we suck in with our mother's milk, and which constitute the ground of our fears in situations like the present; therefore, leave thy door open, if you love me, that you may have ready assistance from me in case of need."

"My master," said Wildrake, "trusts, first, in his Bible, sir, and then in his good sword. He has no idea that the Devil can be baffled by the charm of two men lying in one room, still less that the foul fiend can be argued out of existence by the Nullifidians of the Rota."

Everard seized his imprudent friend by the collar, and dragged him off as he was speaking, keeping fast hold of him till they were both in the chamber of Victor Lee, where they had slept on a former occasion. Even then he continued to hold Wildrake, until the servant had arranged the lights, and was dismissed from the room; then letting him go, addressed him with the upbraiding question, "Art thou not a prudent and sagacious person, who in times like these seek'st every opportunity to argue yourself into a broil, or embroil yourself in an argument? Out on you!"

"Ay, out on me indeed," said the cavalier; "out on me for a poor tame-spirited creature, that submits to be banded about in this manner, by a man who is neither better born nor better bred than myself. I tell thee, Mark, you make an unfair use of your advantages over me. Why

will you not let me go from you, and live and die after my own fashion?"

"Because before we have been a week separate, I should hear of your dying after the fashion of a dog. Come, my good friend, what madness was it in thee to fall foul on Harrison, and then to enter into useless argument with Bletson?"

"Why, we are in the Devil's house, I think, and I would willingly give the landlord his due wherever I travel. To have sent him Harrison, or Bletson now, just as a lunch to stop his appetite, till Crom—"

"Hush! stone walls have ears," said Everard, looking around him. "Here stands thy night-drink. Look to thy arms, for we must be as careful as if the Avenger of Blood were behind us. Yonder is thy bed—and I, as thou seest, have one prepared in the parlor. The door only divides us."

"Which I will leave open, in case thou should'st holla for assistance, as yonder Nullifidian hath it.—But how hast thou got all this so well put in order, good patron?"

"I gave the steward Tomkins notice of my purpose to sleep here."

"A strange fellow that," said Wildrake, "and, as I judge, has taken measure of every one's foot—all seems to pass through his hands."

"He is, I have understood," replied Everard, "one of the men formed by the times—has a ready gift of preaching and expounding, which keeps him in high terms with the Independents; and recommends himself to the more moderate people by his intelligence and activity."

"Has his sincerity ever been doubted?" said Wildrake.

"Never, that I heard of," said the Colonel; "on the contrary, he has been familiarly called Honest Joe, and Trusty Tomkins. For my part, I believe his sincerity has always kept pace with his interest.—But come, finish thy cup, and to bed.—What, all emptied at one draught!"

"Adzookers, yes—my vow forbids me to make two on't; but, never fear—the nightcap will only warm my brain, not clog it. So, man or devil, give me notice if you are disturbed, and rely on me in a twinkling." So saying, the cavalier retreated into his separate apartment, and Colonel Everard, taking off the most cumbersome part of his dress, lay down in his hose and doubt, and composed himself to rest."

He was awakened from sleep by a slow and solemn strain of music, which died away as at a distance. He started up, and felt for his arms, which he found close beside him. His temporary bed being without curtains, he could look around him without difficulty; but as there remained in the chimney only a few red embers of the fire which he had arranged before he went to sleep, it was impossible he could discern any thing. He felt, therefore, in spite of his natural courage, that undefined and thrilling species of tremor which attends a sense that danger is near, and an uncertainty concerning its cause and char-

acter. Reluctant as he was to yield belief to supernatural occurrences, we have already said he was not absolutely incredulous; as perhaps, even in this more sceptical age, there are many fewer complete and absolute infidels on this particular than give themselves out for such. Uncertain whether he had not dreamed of these sounds, which seemed yet in his ears, he was unwilling to risk the raillery of his friend by summoning him to his assistance. He sat up, therefore, in his bed, not without experiencing that nervous agitation to which brave men as well as cowards are subject; with this difference, that the one sinks under it, like the vine under the hail-storm, and the other collects his energies to shake it off, as the cedar of Lebanon is said to elevate its boughs to disperse the snow which accumulates upon them.

The story of Harrison, in his own absolute despite, and notwithstanding a secret suspicion which he had of trick or connivance, returned on his mind at this dead and solitary hour. Harrison, he remembered, had described the vision by a circumstance of its appearance different from that which his own remark had been calculated to suggest to the mind of the visionary;—that bloody napkin, always pressed to the side, was then a circumstance present either to his bodily eye, or to that of his agitated imagination. Did, then, the murdered revisit the living haunts of those who had forced them from the stage with all their sins unaccounted for? And if they did, might not the same permission authorize other visitations of a similar nature, to warn—to instruct—to punish? Rash are they, was his conclusion, and credulous, who receive as truth every tale of the kind; but no less rash may it be, to limit the power of the Creator over the works which he has made, and to suppose that, by the permission of the Author of Nature, the laws of Nature may not, in peculiar cases, and for high purposes, be temporarily suspended.

While these thoughts passed through Everard's mind, feelings unknown to him, even when he stood first on the rough and perilous edge of battle, gained ground upon him. He feared he knew not what; and where an open and discernible peril would have drawn out his courage, the absolute uncertainty of his situation increased his sense of the danger. He felt an almost irresistible desire to spring from his bed and heap fuel on the dying embers, expecting by the blaze to see some strange sight in his chamber. He was also strongly tempted to awaken Wildrake; but shame, stronger than fear itself, checked these impulses. What! should it be thought that Markham Everard, held one of the best soldiers who had drawn a sword in this sad war—Markham Everard, who had obtained such distinguished rank in the army of the Parliament, though so young in years, was afraid of remaining by himself in a twilight-room at midnight? It never should be said.

This was, however, no charm for his unpleas-

ant current of thought. There rushed on his mind the various traditions of Victor Lee's chamber, which, though he had often despised them as vague, unauthenticated, and inconsistent rumors, engendered by ancient superstition, and transmitted from generation to generation by loquacious credulity, had yet something in them which did not tend to allay the present unpleasant state of his nerves. Then, when he recollected the events of that very afternoon, the weapon pressed against his throat, and the strong arm which threw him backward on the floor—if the remembrance served to contradict the idea of fitting phantoms, and unreal daggers, it certainly induced him to believe that there was in some part of this extensive mansion a party of cavaliers, or malignants, harbored, who might arise in the night, overpower the guards, and execute upon them all, but on Harrison in particular, as one of the regicide judges, that vengeance, which was so eagerly thirsted for by the attached followers of the slaughtered monarch.

He endeavored to console himself on this subject by the number and position of the guards, yet still was dissatisfied with himself for not having taken yet more exact precautions, and for keeping an extorted promise of silence, which might consign so many of his party to the danger of assassination. These thoughts, connected with his military duties, awakened another train of reflections. He bethought himself, that all he could now do, was to visit the sentries, and ascertain that they were awake, alert, on the watch, and so situated, that in time of need they might be ready to support each other.—“This better befits me,” he thought, “than to be here like a child, frightening myself with the old woman's legend, which I have laughed at when a boy. What although old Victor Lee was a sacrilegious man, as common report goes, and brewed ale in the font which he brought from the ancient palace of Holyrood, while church and building were in flames? And what although his eldest son was when a child scalded to death in the same vessel? How many churches have been demolished since his time? How many fonts desecrated? So many indeed, that were the vengeance of Heaven to visit such aggressions in a supernatural manner, no corner in England, no, not the most petty parish church, but would have its apparition.—Tush, these are idle fancies, unworthy, especially, to be entertained by those educated to believe that sanctity resides in the intention and the act, not in the buildings or fonts, or the form of worship.”

As thus he called together the articles of his Calvinistic creed, the bell of the great clock (a token seldom silent in such narratives) tolled three, and was immediately followed by the hoarse call of the sentinels through vault and gallery, up-stairs and beneath, challenging and answering each other with the usual watchword, “All's well.” Their voices mingled with the deep boom of the bell, yet ceased before that was

silent, and when they had died away, the tingling echo of the prolonged knell was scarcely audible. Ere yet that last distant tingling had finally subsided into silence, it seemed as if it again was awakened; and Everard could hardly judge at first whether a new echo had taken up the falling cadence, or whether some other and separate sound was disturbing anew the silence to which the deep knell had, as its voice ceased, consigned the ancient mansion and the woods around it.

But the doubt was soon cleared up. The musical tones which had mingled with the dying echoes of the knell, seemed at first to prolong and afterwards to survive them. A wild strain of melody, beginning at a distance, and growing louder as it advanced, seemed to pass from room to room, from cabinet to gallery, from hall to bower, through the deserted and dishonored ruins of the ancient residence of so many sovereigns; and, as it approached, no soldier gave alarm, nor did any of the numerous guests of various degrees, who spent an unpleasant and terrified night in that ancient mansion, seem to dare to announce to each other the inexplicable cause of apprehension.

Everard's excited state of mind did not permit him to be so passive. The sounds approached so nigh, that it seemed they were performing, in the very next apartment, a solemn service for the dead, when he gave the alarm, by calling loudly to his trusty attendant and friend Wildrake, who slumbered in the next chamber with only a door betwixt them, and even that ajar.

“Wildrake—Wildrake!—Up—up! Dost thou not hear the alarm?”

There was no answer from Wildrake, though the musical sounds, which now rung through the apartment, as if the performers had actually been within its precincts, would have been sufficient to awaken a sleeping person, even without the shout of his comrade and patron.

“Alarm—Roger Wildrake—alarm!” again called Everard, getting out of bed, and grasping his weapons.—“Get a light, and cry alarm!”

There was no answer. His voice died away as the sound of the music seemed also to die; and the same soft sweet voice, which still to his thinking resembled that of Alice Lee, was heard in his apartment, and, as he thought, at no distance from him.

“Your comrade will not answer,” said the low soft voice. “Those only hear the alarm whose consciences feel the call!”

“Again this mummery!” said Everard. “I am better armed than I was of late; and but for the sound of that voice, the speaker had bought his trifling dear.”

It was singular, we may observe in passing that the instant the distinct sounds of the human voice were heard by Everard, all idea of supernatural interference was at an end, and the charm by which he had been formerly fettered appeared to be broken; so much is the influence of imaginary or superstitious terror dependent (so far

as respects strong judgments at least) upon what is vague or ambiguous; and so readily do distinct tones, and express ideas, bring such judgments back to the current of ordinary life.—The voice returned answer, as addressing his thoughts as well as his words.

“We laugh at the weapons thou thinkest should terrify us—over the guardians of Woodstock they have no power. Fire, if thou wilt, and try the effect of thy weapons. But know, it is not our purpose to harm thee—thou art of a falcon breed, and noble in thy disposition, though, unreclaimed and ill-nurtured, thou hauntest with kites and carrion crows. Wing thy flight from hence on the morrow, for if thou tarriest with the bats, owls, vultures, and ravens, which have thought to nestle here, thou wilt inevitably share their fate. Away then, that these halls may be swept and garnished for the reception of those who have a better right to inhabit them.”

Everard answered in a raised voice.—“Once more I warn you, think not to defy me in vain. I am no child to be frightened by goblins' tales; and no coward, armed as I am, to be alarmed at the threats of banditti. If I give you a moment's indulgence, it is for the sake of dear and misguided friends, who may be concerned with this dangerous gambol. Know, I can bring a troop of soldiers round the castle, who will search its most inward recesses for the author of this audacious frolic; and if that search should fail, it will cost but a few barrels of gunpowder to make the mansion a heap of ruins, and bury under them the authors of such an ill-judged pastime.”

“You speak proudly, Sir Colonel,” said another voice, similar to that harsher and stronger tone by which he had been addressed in the gallery; “try your courage in this direction.”

“You should not dare me twice,” said Colonel Everard, “had I a glimpse of light to take aim by.”

As he spoke, a sudden gleam of light was thrown with a brilliancy which almost dazzled the speaker, showing distinctly a form somewhat resembling that of Victor Lee, as represented in his picture, holding in one hand a lady completely veiled, and in the other his leading-staff, or truncheon. Both figures were animated, and, as it appeared, standing within six feet of him.

“Were it not for the woman,” said Everard, “I would not be thus mortally dared.”

“Spare not for the female form, but do your worst,” replied the same voice. “I defy you.”

“Repeat your defiance when I have counted thrice,” said Everard, “and take the punishment of your insolence. Once—I have cocked my pistol—Twice—I never missed my aim—By all that is sacred, I fire if you do not withdraw. When I pronounce the next number, I will shoot you dead where you stand. I am yet unwilling to shed blood—I give you another chance of flight—once—twice—THREE!”

Everard aimed at the bosom, and discharged

his pistol. The figure waved its arm in an attitude of scorn; and a loud laugh arose, furling which the light, as gradually growing weaker, danced and glimmered upon the apparition of the aged knight, and then disappeared. Everard's life-blood ran cold to his heart.—“Had he been of human mould,” he thought, “the bullet must have pierced him—but I have neither will nor power to fight with supernatural beings.”

The feeling of oppression was now so strong as to be actually sickening. He groped his way, however, to the fireside, and flung on the embers which were yet gleaming, a handful of dry fuel. It presently blazed, and afforded him light, to see the room in every direction. He looked cautiously, almost timidly, around, and half expected some horrible phantom to become visible. But he saw nothing save the old furniture, the reading-desk, and other articles, which had been left in the same state as when Sir Henry Lee departed. He felt an uncontrollable desire, mingled with much repugnance, to look at the portrait of the ancient knight, which the form he had seen so strongly resembled. He hesitated betwixt the opposing feelings, but at length snatched, with desperate resolution, the taper which he had extinguished, and relighted it, ere the blaze of the fuel had again died away. He held it up to the ancient portrait of Victor Lee, and gazed on it with eager curiosity, not unmingled with fear. Almost the childish terrors of his earlier days returned, and he thought the severe pale eye of the ancient warrior followed him, and menaced him with its displeasure. And although he quickly argued himself out of such an absurd belief, yet the mixed feelings of his mind were expressed in words that seemed half addressed to the ancient portrait.

“Soul of my mother's ancestor,” he said, “be it for weal or for woe, by designing men, or by supernatural beings, that these ancient halls are disturbed, I am resolved to leave them on the morrow.”

“I rejoice to hear it, with all my soul,” said a voice behind him.

“He turned, saw a tall figure in white, with a sort of turban upon its head, and dropping the candle in the exertion, instantly grappled with it.

“Thou at least art palpable,” he said.

“Palpable?” answered he whom he grasped so strongly—“Sdeath, methinks you might know that without the risk of choking me; and if you loose me not, I'll show that two can play at the game of wrestling.”

“Roger Wildrake!” said Everard, letting the cavalier loose, and stepping back.

“Roger Wildrake? ay, truly. Did you take me for Roger Bacon, come to help you to raise the devil?—for the place smells of sulphur com-
sumedly.”

“It is the pistol I fired—Did you not hear it?”

“Why, yes, it was the first thing waked me

—for that nightcap which I pulled on, made me sleep like a dormouse—Pshaw, I feel my brains giddy with it yet.”

“And wherefore came you not on the instant?—I never needed help more.”

“I came as fast as I could,” answered Wildrake; “but it was some time ere I got my senses collected, for I was dreaming of that cursed field at Naseby—and then the door of my room was shut, and hard to open, till I played the locksmith with my foot.”

“How! it was open when I went to bed,” said Everard.

“It was locked when I came out of bed, though,” said Wildrake. “and I marvel you heard me not when I forced it open.”

“My mind was occupied otherwise,” said Everard.

“Well,” said Wildrake, “but what has happened?—Here am I bolt upright, and ready to fight, if this yawning fit will give me leave—Mother Redcap’s mightiest is weaker than I drank last night by a bushel to a barleycorn—I have quaffed the very elixir of malt—Ha—yaw.”

“And some opiate besides, I should think,” said Everard.

“Very like—very like—less than the pistol-shot would not waken me; even me, who with but an ordinary grace-cup, sleep as lightly as a maiden on the first of May, when she watches for the earliest beam to go to gather dew. But what are you about to do next?”

“Nothing,” answered Everard.

“Nothing?” said Wildrake in surprise.

“I speak it,” said Colonel Everard, “less for your information, than for that of others who may hear me, that I will leave the Lodge this morning, and, if it is possible, remove the Commissioners.”

“Hark,” said Wildrake, “do you not hear some noise like the distant sound of the applause of a theatre? The goblins of the place rejoice in your departure.”

“I shall leave Woodstock,” said Everard, “to the occupation of my uncle Sir Henry Lee, and his family, if they choose to resume it; not that I am frightened into this as a concession to the series of artifices which have been played off on this occasion, but solely because such was my intention from the beginning. But let me warn” (he added, raising his voice), “let me warn the parties concerned in this combination, that though it may pass off successfully on a fool like Desborough, a visionary like Harrison, a coward like Bletson—”

Here a voice distinctly spoke, as standing near them—“or a wise, moderate, and resolute person, like Colonel Everard.”

“By Heaven, the voice came from the picture,” said Wildrake, drawing his sword; “I will pink his plaited armor for him.”

“Offer no violence,” said Everard, startled at the interruption, but resuming with firmness what he was saying.—“Let those engaged be

aware, that however this string of artifices may be immediately successful, it must, when closely looked into, be attended with the punishment of all concerned—the total demolition of Woodstock, and the irremediable downfall of the family of Lee. Let all concerned think of this, and desist in time.”

He paused, and almost expected a reply, but none such came.

“It is a very hard thing,” said Wildrake; “but yaw-ha—my brain cannot compass it just now; it whirls round like a toast in a bowl of muscadine; I must sit down—ha-yaw—and discuss it at leisure—Gramercy, good elbow-chair.”

So saying, he threw himself, or rather sank gradually down on a large easy-chair which had been often pressed by the weight of stout Sir Henry Lee, and in an instant was sound asleep. Everard was far from feeling the same inclination for slumber, yet his mind was relieved of the apprehension of any farther visitation that night; for he considered his treaty to evacuate Woodstock as made known to, and accepted in all probability by, those whom the intrusion of the Commissioners had induced to take such singular measures for expelling them. His opinion, which had for a time bent towards a belief in something supernatural in the disturbances, had now returned to the more rational mode of accounting for them by a dexterous combination, for which such a mansion as Woodstock afforded so many facilities.

He heaped the hearth with fuel, lighted the candle, and examining poor Wildrake’s situation, adjusted him as easily in the chair as he could, the cavalier stirring his limbs no more than an infant. His situation went far, in his patron’s opinion, to infer trick and confederacy, for ghosts have no occasion to drug men’s posets. He threw himself on the bed, and while he thought these strange circumstances over, a sweet and low strain of music stole through the chamber, the words “Good-night—good-night—good-night,” thrice repeated, each time in a softer and more distant tone, seeming to assure him that the goblins and he were at truce, if not at peace, and that he had no more disturbance to expect that night. He had scarcely the courage to call out a “good-night;” for, after all his conviction of the existence of a trick, it was so well performed as to bring with it a feeling of fear, just like what an audience experience during the performance of a tragic scene, which they know to be unreal, and which yet affects their passions by its near approach to nature. Sleep overtook him at last, and left him not till broad daylight on the ensuing morning.

CHAPTER XVI.

And yonder shines Aurora’s harbinger,
At whose approach ghosts, wandering here and there,
Troop home to churchyard—

MIDSUMMER NIGHT’S DREAM.

WITH the fresh air and the rising of morning, every feeling of the preceding night had passed away from Colonel Everard’s mind, excepting wonder how the effects which he had witnessed could be produced. He examined the whole room, sounding bolt, floor, and wainscot with his knuckles and cane, but was unable to discern any secret passages; while the door, secured by a strong cross bolt, and the lock besides, remained as firm as when he had fastened it on the preceding evening. The apparition resembling Victor Lee next called his attention. Ridiculous stories had been often circulated, of this figure, or one exactly resembling it, having been met with by night among the waste apartments and corridors of the old palace; and Markham Everard had often heard such in his childhood. He was angry to recollect his own deficiency of courage, and the thrill which he felt on the preceding night, when by confederacy, doubtless, such an object was placed before his eyes.

“Surely,” he said, “this fit of childish folly could not make me miss my aim—more likely that the bullet had been withdrawn clandestinely from my pistol.”

He examined that which was undischarged—he found the bullet in it. He investigated the apartment opposite to the point at which he had fired, and, at five feet from the floor in a direct line between the bedside and the place where the appearances had been seen, a pistol-ball had recently buried itself in the wainscot. He had little doubt, therefore, that he had fired in a just direction; and indeed to have arrived at the place where it was lodged, the bullet must have passed through the appearance at which he aimed, and proceeded point blank to the wall beyond. This was mysterious, and induced him to doubt whether the art of witchcraft or conjuration had not been called in to assist the machinations of those daring conspirators, who, being themselves mortal, might, nevertheless, according to the universal creed of the times, have invoked and obtained assistance from the inhabitants of another world.

His next investigation respected the picture of Victor Lee itself. He examined it minutely as he stood on the floor before it, and compared its pale, shadowy, faintly-traced outlines, its faded colors, the stern repose of the eye, and death-like pallidness of the countenance, with its different aspect on the preceding night, when illuminated by the artificial light which fell upon it while it left every other part of the room in comparative darkness. The features seemed then to have an unnatural glow, while the rising and falling of the flame in the chimney gave the head and limbs something which resembled the

appearance of actual motion. Now, seen by day, it was a mere picture of the hard and ancient school of Holbein; last night, it seemed for the moment something more. Determined to get to the bottom of this contrivance if possible, Everard, by the assistance of a table and chair, examined the portrait still more closely, and endeavored to ascertain the existence of any private spring, by which it might be slipped aside—a contrivance not unfrequent in ancient buildings, which usually abounded with means of access and escape, communicated to none but the lords of the castle or their immediate confidants. But the panel on which Victor Lee was painted was firmly fixed in the wainscoting of the apartment, of which it made a part, and the Colonel satisfied himself that it could not have been used for the purpose which he had suspected.

He next aroused his faithful squire, Wildrake, who, notwithstanding his deep share of the “blessedness of sleep,” had scarce even yet got rid of the effects of the grace-cup of the preceding evening. “It was the reward,” according to his own view of the matter, “of his temperance; one single draught having made him sleep more late and more sound than a matter of half-a-dozen, or from thence to a dozen pulls, would have done, when he was guilty of the enormity of rere-suppers,* and of drinking deep after them.”

“Had your temperate draught,” said Everard, “been but a thought more strongly seasoned, Wildrake, thou hadst slept so sound that the last trump only could have waked thee.”

“And then,” answered Wildrake, “I should have waked with a headache, Mark; for I see my modest sip has not exempted me from that epilogue.—But let us go forth, and see how the night, which we have passed so strangely, has been spent by the rest of them. I suspect they are all right willing to evacuate Woodstock, unless they have either rested better than we, or at least been more lucky in lodgings.”

“In that case, I will dispatch thee down to Joceline’s hut, to negotiate the reëtrance of Sir Henry Lee and his family into their old apartments, where, my interest with the General being joined with the indifferent repute of the place itself, I think they have little chance of being disturbed either by the present, or by any new Commissioners.”

“But how are they to defend themselves against the fiends, my gallant Colonel?” said Wildrake. “Methinks had I an interest in yonder pretty girl, such as thou dost boast, I should be loth to expose her to the terrors of a residence at Woodstock, where these devils—I beg

* Rere-suppers (*quasi arriere*) belonged to a species of luxury introduced in the jolly days of King James’s extravagance, and continued through the subsequent reign. The supper took place at an early hour, six or seven o’clock at latest—the rere-supper was a post-liminary banquet, a *hors d’œuvre*, which made its appearance at ten or eleven, and served as an apology for prolonging the entertainment till midnight.