

"For Heaven's sake, Master Grinegy," said Phoebe, "forbear giving the Colonel these bitter words! And do you, good Colonel Markham, scorn to take offence at his hands—he is but a boy."

"If the Colonel or you choose, Mistress Phoebe, you shall find me a man—I think the gentleman can say something to the purpose already.—Probably he may recommend to you the part of the Lady in Comus; and I only hope his own admiration of John Milton will not induce him to undertake the part of Samson Agonistes, and blow up this old house with execrations, or pull it down in wrath about our ears."

"Young man," said the Colonel, still in towering passion, "if you respect my principles for nothing else, be grateful to the protection which, but for them, you would not easily attain."

"Nay, then," said the attendant, "I must fetch those who have more influence with you than I have," and away tripped Phoebe; while Kerneguy answered Everard in the same provoking tone of calm indifference,—

"Before you menace me with a thing so formidable as your resentment, you ought to be certain whether I may not be compelled by circumstances to deny you the opportunity you seem to point at."

At this moment Alice, summoned no doubt by her attendant, entered the hall hastily.

"Master Kerneguy," she said, "my father requests to see you in Victor Lee's apartment."

Kerneguy arose and bowed, but seemed determined to remain till Everard's departure, so as to prevent any explanation betwixt the consins. "Markham," said Alice, hurriedly—"Cousin Everard—I have but a moment to remain here—for God's sake do you instantly begone!—be cautious and patient—but do not tarry here—my father is fearfully incensed."

"I have had my uncle's word for that, madam," replied Everard, "as well as his injunctions to depart, which I will obey without delay. I was not aware that you would have seconded so harsh an order quite so willingly; but I go, madam, sensible I leave those behind whose company is more agreeable."

"Unjust—ungenerous—ungrateful!" said Alice; but fearful her words might reach ears for which they were not designed, she spoke them in a voice so feeble, that her cousin, for whom they were intended, lost the consolation they were calculated to convey.

He bowed coldly to Alice, as taking leave, and said, with an air of that constrained courtesy which sometimes covers, among men of condition, the most deadly hatred, "I believe, Master Kerneguy, that I must make it convenient at present to suppress my own peculiar opinions on the matter which we have hinted at in our conversation, in which case I will send a gentleman, who, I hope, may be able to conquer yours."

The supposed Scotchman made him a stately, and at the same time a condescending bow, said

he should expect the honor of his commands, offered his hand to Mistress Alice, to conduct her back to her father's apartment, and took a triumphant leave of his rival.

Everard, on the other hand, stung beyond his patience, and, from the grace and composed assurance of the youth's carriage, still conceiving him to be either Wilmot, or some of his compeers in rank and profligacy, returned to the town of Woodstock, determined not to be outbearded, even though he should seek redress by means which his principles forbade him to consider as justifiable.

CHAPTER XXVI.

—Boundless Intemperance
In nature is a tyranny—it hath been
The untimely emptying of many a throne,
And fall of many kings.—

MACBETH.

WHILE Colonel Everard retreated in high indignation from the little refection, which Sir Henry Lee had in his good-humor offered, and withdrawn under the circumstances of provocation which we have detailed, the good old knight, scarce recovered from his fit of passion, partook of it with his daughter and guest, and shortly after, recollecting some sylvan task (for, though to little efficient purpose, he still regularly attended to his duties as Ranger), he called Bevis, and went out, leaving the two young people together.

"Now," said the amorous Prince to himself, "that Alice is left without her lion, it remains to see whether she is herself of a tigress breed.—So, Sir Bevis has left his charge," he said aloud; "I thought the knights of old, those stern guardians of which he is so fit a representative, were more rigorous in maintaining a vigilant guard."

"Bevis," said Alice, "knows that his attendance on me is totally needless; and, moreover, he has other duties to perform, which every true knight prefers to dangling the whole morning by a lady's sleeve."

"You speak treason against all true affection," said the gallant; "a lady's lightest wish should to a true knight be more binding than aught excepting the summons of his sovereign. I wish, Mistress Alice, you would but intimate your slightest desire to me, and you should see how I have practised obedience."

"You never brought me word what o'clock it was this morning," replied the young lady, "and there I sat questioning of the wings of Time when I should have remembered that gentlemen's gallantry can be quite as fugitive as Time himself. How do you know what your disobedience may have cost me and others? Pudding and pasty may have been burned to a cinder, for, sir, I practise the old domestic rule of visiting the kitchen; or I may have missed prayers, or I may have been too late for an appointment, simply by

the negligence of Master Louis Kerneguy failing to let me know the hour of the day."

"Oh," replied Kerneguy, "I am one of those lovers who cannot endure absence—I must be eternally at the feet of my fair enemy—such, I think, is the title with which romances teach us to grace the fair and cruel to whom we devote our hearts and lives.—Speak for me, good lute," he added, taking up the instrument, "and show whether I know not my duty."

He sung, but with more taste than execution, the air of a French rondelai, to which some of the wits or sonnettes, in his gay and roving train, had adapted English verses:

An hour with thee!—When earliest day
Dapples with gold the eastern gray,
Oh, what can frame my mind to bear
The toil and turmoil, care and care,
New griefs, which coming hours unfold,
And sad remembrance of the old!—
One hour with thee.

One hour with thee!—When burning June
Waves his red flag at pitch of noon;
What shall repay the faithful swain,
His labor on the sultry plain;
And more than cave or sheltering bough,
Cool feverish blood, and throbbing brow!—
One hour with thee.

One hour with thee!—When sun is set,
Oh! what can teach me to forget
The thankless labors of the day;
The hopes, the wishes, flung away;
The increasing wants, and lessening gains,
The master's pride, who scorns my pains!—
One hour with thee.

"Truly, there is another verse," said the songster; "but I sing it not to you, Mistress Alice, because some of the prudes of the court liked it not."

"I thank you, Master Louis," answered the young lady "both for your discretion in singing, what has given me pleasure, and in forbearing what might offend me. Though a country girl, I pretend to be so far of the court mode, as to receive nothing which does not pass current among the better class there."

"I would," answered Louis, "that you were so well confirmed in their creed, as to let all pass with you, to which court ladies would give currency."

"And what would be the consequence?" said Alice, with perfect composure.

"In that case," said Louis, embarrassed like a general who finds that his preparations for attack do not seem to strike either fear or confusion into the enemy—"in that case you would forgive me, fair Alice, if I spoke to you in a warmer language than that of mere gallantry—if I told you how much my heart was interested in what you consider as idle jesting—if I seriously owned 't was in your power to make me the happiest or the most miserable of human beings."

"Master Kerneguy," said Alice, with the same unshaken nonchalance, "let us understand each other. I am little acquainted with high-ored manners, and I am unwilling, I tell you plainly,

to be accounted a silly country girl, who, rather from ignorance or conceit, is startled at every word of gallantry addressed to her by a young man, who, for the present, has nothing better to do than coin and circulate such false compliments. But I must not let this fear of seeming rustic and awkwardly timorous carry me too far; and being ignorant of the exact limits, I will take care to stop within them."

"I trust, madam," said Kerneguy, "that however severely you may be disposed to judge of me, your justice will not punish me too severely for an offence, of which your charms are alone the occasion?"

"Hear me out, sir, if you please," resumed Alice. "I have listened to you when you spoke *en berger*—nay, my complaisance has been so great, as to answer you *en bergère*—for I do not think anything except ridicule can come of dialogues between Lindor and Jeanneton; and the principal fault of the style is its extreme and tiresome silliness and affectation. But when you begin to kneel, offer to take my hand, and speak with a more serious tone, I must remind you of our real characters. I am the daughter of Sir Henry Lee, sir; and you are, or profess to be, Master Louis Kerneguy, my brother's page, and a fugitive for shelter under my father's roof, who incurs danger by the harbor he affords you, and whose household, therefore, ought not to be disturbed by your unpleasing importunities."

"I would to Heaven, fair Alice," said the King, "that your objections to the suit which I am urging, not in jest, but most seriously, as that on which my happiness depends, rested only on the low and precarious station of Louis Kerneguy!—Alice, thou hast the soul of thy family, and must needs love honor. I am no more than a needy Scottish page, whom I have for my own purposes, personated, than I am the awkward lout, whose manners I adopted on the first night of our acquaintance. This hand, poor as I seem, can confer a coronet."

"Keep it," said Alice, "for some more ambitious damsel, my lord, for such I conclude is your title, if this romance be true,—I would not accept your hand, could you confer a duchy."

"In one sense, lovely Alice, you have neither overrated my power nor affection. It is your King—it is Charles Stewart who speaks to you!—he can confer duchies, and if beauty can merit them, it is that of Alice Lee. Nay, nay—rise—do not kneel—it is for your sovereign to kneel to thee, Alice, to whom he is a thousand times more devoted than the wanderer Louis dared venture to profess himself. My Alice has, I know, been trained up in those principles of love and obedience to her sovereign, that she cannot, in conscience or in mercy, inflict on him such a wound as would be implied in the rejection of his suit."

In spite of all Charles's attempts to prevent her, Alice had persevered in kneeling on one knee, until she had touched with her lip the hand

with which he attempted to raise her. But this salutation ended, she stood upright, with her arms folded on her bosom—her looks humble, but composed, keen, and watchful, and so possessed of herself, so little flattered by the communication which the King had supposed would have been overpowering, that he scarce knew in what terms next to urge his solicitation.

"Thou art silent—thou art silent," he said, "my pretty Alice. Has the King no more influence with thee than the poor Scottish page?"

"In one sense, every influence," said Alice; "for he commands my best thoughts, my best wishes, my earnest prayers, my devoted loyalty, which, as the men of the House of Lee have been ever ready to testify with the sword, so are the women bound to seal, if necessary, with their blood. But beyond the duties of a true and devoted subject, the King is even less to Alice Lee than poor Louis Kernegy. The Page could have tendered an honorable union—the Monarch can but offer a contaminated coronet."

"You mistake, Alice—you mistake," said the King, eagerly. "Sit down and let me speak to you—sit down—What is't you fear?"

"I fear nothing, my liege," answered Alice. "What can I fear from the King of Britain—I, the daughter of his loyal subject, and under my father's roof? But I remember the distance betwixt us; and though I might trifle and jest with mine equal, to my King I must only appear in the dutiful posture of a subject, unless where his safety may seem to require that I do not acknowledge his dignity."

Charles, though young, being no novice in such scenes, was surprised to encounter resistance of a kind which had not been opposed to him in similar pursuits, even in cases where he had been unsuccessful. There was neither anger, nor injured pride, nor disorder, nor disdain, real or affected, in the manners and conduct of Alice. She stood, as it seemed, calmly prepared to argue on the subject, which is generally decided by passion—showed no inclination to escape from the apartment, but appeared determined to hear with patience the suit of the lover—while her countenance and manner intimated that she had this complaisance only in deference to the commands of the King.

"She is ambitious," thought Charles; "it is very dazzling her love of glory, not by mere passionate entreaties, that I must hope to be successful.—I pray you be seated, my fair Alice," he said; "the lover entreats—the King commands you."

"The King," said Alice, "may permit the relaxation of the ceremonies due to royalty, but he cannot abrogate the subject's duty, even by express command. I stand here while it is your Majesty's pleasure to address me—a patient listener, as in duty bound."

"Know then, simple girl," said the King, "that in accepting my proffered affection and protection, you break through no law either of

virtue or morality. Those who are born to royalty are deprived of many of the comforts of private life—chiefly that which is, perhaps, the dearest and most precious, the power of choosing their own mates for life. Their formal weddings are guided upon principles of political expedience only, and those to whom they are wedded are frequently, in temper, person, and disposition, the most unlikely to make them happy. Society has commiseration, therefore, towards us, and binds our unwilling and often unhappy wedlocks with chains of a lighter and more easy character than those which fetter other men, whose marriage ties, as more voluntarily assumed, ought, in proportion, to be more strictly binding. And therefore, ever since the time that old Henry built these walls, priests and prelates, as well as nobles and statesmen, have been accustomed to see a fair Rosamond rule the heart of an affectionate monarch, and console him for the few hours of constraint and state which he must bestow upon some angry and jealous Eleanor. To such a connexion the world attaches no blame; they rushed to the festival to admire the beauty of the lovely Esther, while the imperious Vashti is left to queen it in solitude; they thronged the palace to ask her protection, whose influence is more in the state an hundred times than that of the proud consort; her offspring rank with the nobles of the land, and vindicate by their courage, like the celebrated Longsword, Earl of Salisbury, their descent from royalty and from love. From such connexions our richest ranks of nobles are recruited; and the mother lives, in the greatness of her posterity, honored, and blessed, as she died lamented and wept in the arms of love and friendship."

"Did Rosamond so die, my lord?" said Alice. "Our records say she was poisoned by the injured Queen—poisoned, without time allowed to call to God for the pardon of many faults. Did her memory so live? I have heard that, when the Bishop purified the church at Godstowe, her monument was broken open by his orders, and her bones thrown out into unconsecrated ground."

"Those were rude old days, sweet Alice," answered Charles; "queens are not now so jealous, nor bishops so rigorous. And know, besides, that in the lands to which I would lead the loveliest of her sex, other laws obtain, which remove from such ties even the slightest show of scandal. There is a mode of matrimony, which, fulfilling all the rites of the Church, leaves no stain on the conscience; yet investing the bride with none of the privileges peculiar to her husband's condition, infringes not upon the duties which the King owes to his subjects. So that Alice Lee may, in all respects, become the real and lawful wife of Charles Stewart, except that their private union gives her no title to be Queen of England."

"My ambition," said Alice, "will be sufficiently gratified to see Charles king, without

aiming to share either his dignity in public, or his wealth and regal luxury in private."

"I understand thee, Alice," said the King, hurt but not displeased. "You ridicule me, being a fugitive, for speaking like a king. It is a habit, I admit, which I have learned, and of which even misfortune cannot cure me. But my case is not so desperate as you may suppose. My friends are still many in these kingdoms; my allies abroad are bound, by regard to their own interest, to espouse my cause. I have hopes given me from Spain, from France, and from other nations; and I have confidence that my father's blood has not been poured forth in vain, nor is doomed to dry up without due vengeance. My trust is in Him from whom princes derive their title, and, think what thou wilt of my present condition, I have perfect confidence that I shall one day sit on the throne of England."

"May God grant it!" said Alice; "and that he may grant it, noble Prince, deign to consider whether you now pursue a conduct likely to conciliate his favor. Think of the course you recommend to a motherless maiden, who has no better defence against your sophistry, than what a sense of morality, together with the natural feeling of female dignity, inspires. Whether the death of her father, which would be the consequence of her imprudence;—whether the despair of her brother, whose life has been so often in peril to save that of your Majesty;—whether the dishonor of the roof which has sheltered you, will read well in your annals, or are events likely to propitiate God, whose controversy with your House has been but too visible, or recover the affections of the people of England, in whose eyes such actions are an abomination, I leave to your own royal mind to consider."

Charles paused, struck with a turn to the conversation which placed his own interests more in collision with the gratification of his present passion than he had supposed.

"If your Majesty," said Alice, curtsying deeply, "has no farther commands for my attendance, may I be permitted to withdraw?"

"Stay yet a little, strange and impracticable girl," said the King, "and answer me but one question:—Is it the lowness of my present fortunes that makes my suit contemptible?"

"I have nothing to conceal, my liege," she said, "and my answer shall be as plain and direct as the question you have asked. If I could have been moved to an act of ignominious, insane, and ungrateful folly, it could only arise from my being blinded by that passion, which I believe is pleaded as an excuse for folly and for crime much more often than it has a real existence. I must, in short, have been in love, as it is called—and that might have been with my equal, but surely never with my sovereign, whether such only in title, or in possession of his kingdom."

"Yet loyalty was ever the pride, almost the ruling passion, of your family, Alice," said the King,

"And could I reconcile that loyalty," said Alice, "with indulging my sovereign, by permitting him to prosecute a suit dishonorable to himself as to me? Ought I, as a faithful subject, to join him in a folly, which might throw yet another stumbling-block in the path to his restoration, and could only serve to diminish his security, even if he were seated upon his throne?"

"At this rate," said Charles, discontentedly, "I had better have retained my character of the page, than assumed that of a sovereign, which it seems is still more irreconcilable with my wishes."

"My candor shall go still farther," said Alice. "I could have felt as little for Louis Kernegy as for the heir of Britain; for such love as I have to bestow (and it is not such as I read of in romance, or hear poured forth in song), has been already conferred on another object. This gives your Majesty pain—I am sorry for it—but the wholesomest medicines are often bitter."

"Yes," answered the King, with some asperity, "and physicians are reasonable enough to expect their patients to swallow them, as if they were honeycomb. It is true, then, that whispered tale of the cousin Colonel; and the daughter of the loyal Lee has set her heart upon a rebellious fanatic?"

"My love was given ere I knew what these words fanatic and rebel meant. I recalled it not, for I am satisfied, that amidst the great distractions which divide the kingdom, the person to whom you allude has chosen his part, erroneously perhaps, but conscientiously—he, therefore, has still the highest place in my affection and esteem. More he cannot have, and will not ask, until some happy turn shall reconcile these public differences, and my father be once more reconciled to him. Devoutly do I pray that such an event may occur by your Majesty's speedy and unanimous restoration!"

"You have found out a reason," said the King, pettishly, "to make me detest the thought of such a change—nor have you, Alice, any sincere interest to pray for it. On the contrary, do you not see that your lover, walking side by side with Cromwell, may, or rather must, share his power? nay, if Lambert does not anticipate him, he may trip up Oliver's heels, and reign in his stead. And think you not he will find means to overcome the pride of the loyal Lees, and achieve an union, for which things are better prepared than that which Cromwell is said to meditate betwixt one of his brats and the no less loyal heir of Fauconberg?"

"Your Majesty," said Alice, "has found a way at length to avenge yourself—if what I have said deserves vengeance."

"I could point out a yet shorter road to your union," said Charles, without minding her distress, or perhaps enjoying the pleasure of retaliation. "Suppose that you sent your Colonel word that there was one Charles Stewart here, who had come to disturb the Saints in their

peaceful government, which they had acquired by prayer and preaching, pike and gun,—and suppose he had the art to bring down a half-score of troopers, quite enough, as times go, to decide the fate of this heir of royalty—think you not the possession of such a prize as this might obtain from the Rumpers, or from Cromwell, such a reward as might overcome your father's objections to a roundhead's alliance, and place the fair Alice and her cousin Colonel in full possession of their wishes?"

"My liege," said Alice, her cheeks glowing, and her eyes sparkling—for she too had her share of the hereditary temperament of her family.—"this passes my patience. I have heard, without expressing anger, the most ignominious persuasions addressed to myself, and I have vindicated myself for refusing to be the paramour of a fugitive Prince, as if I had been excusing myself from accepting a share of an actual crown. But do you think I can hear all who are dear to me slandered without emotion or reply? I will not, sir; and were you seated with all the terrors of your father's Star-chamber around you, you should hear me defend the absent and the innocent. Of my father I will say nothing, but that if he is now without wealth—without state, almost without a sheltering home and needful food—it is because he spent all in the service of the King. He needed not to commit any act of treachery or villany to obtain wealth—he had an ample competence in his own possessions. For Markham Everard—he knows no such thing as selfishness—he would not, for broad England, had she the treasures of Peru in her bosom, and a paradise on her surface, do a deed that would disgrace his own name, or injure the feelings of another.—Kings, my liege, may take a lesson from him. My liege, for the present I take my leave."

"Alice, Alice—stay!" exclaimed the King. "She is gone.—This must be virtue—real, disinterested overawing virtue—or there is no such thing on earth. Yet Wilnot and Villiers will not believe a word of it, but add the tale to the other wonders of Woodstock. 'Tis a rare wench! and I profess, to use the Colonel's obtestation, that I know not whether to forgive and be friends with her, or study a dire revenge. Were it not for that accursed cousin—that puritan Colonel—I could forgive everything else to so noble a wench. But a roundheaded rebel preferred to me—the preference avowed to my face, and justified with the assertion, that a king might take a lesson from him—it is gall and wormwood. If the old man had not come up this morning as he did, the King should have taken or given a lesson, and a severe one. It was a mad rencontre to venture upon with my rank and responsibility—and yet this wench has made me so angry with her, and so envious of him, that if an opportunity offered, I should scarce be able to forgive him.—Ha! whom have we here?"

The interjection at the conclusion of this royal

soliloquy, was occasioned by the unexpected entrance of another personage of the drama.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Benedict.—Shall I speak a word in your ear!
Claudio.—God bless me from a challenge.

MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING.

As Charles was about to leave the apartment, he was prevented by the appearance of Wildrake, who entered with an unusual degree of swagger in his gait, and of fantastic importance on his brow. "I crave your pardon, fair sir," he said; "but, as they say in my country, when doors are open dogs enter. I have knocked and called in the hall to no purpose; so, knowing the way to this parlor, sir,—for I am a light partisan, and the road I once travel I never forget,—I ventured to present myself unannounced."

"Sir Henry Lee is abroad, sir, I believe, in the Chase," said Charles, coldly, for the appearance of this somewhat vulgar debauchee was not agreeable to him at the moment, "and Master Albert Lee has left the Lodge for two or three days."

"I am aware of it, sir," said Wildrake; "but I have no business at present with either."

"And with whom is your business?" said Charles; "that is, if I may be permitted to ask—since I think it cannot in possibility be with me."

"Pardon me in turn, sir," answered the cavalier; "in no possibility can it be imparted to any other but yourself, if you be, as I think you are, though in something better habit, Master Louis Girnigo, the Scottish gentleman who waits upon Master Albert Lee."

"I am all you are like to find for him," answered Charles.

"In truth," said the cavalier, "I do perceive a difference, but rest, and better clothing, will do much; and I am glad of it, since I would be sorry to have brought a message, such as I am charged with, to a tatterdemalion."

"Let us get to the business, sir, if you please," said the King;—"you have a message for me, you say?"

"True, sir," replied Wildrake; "I am the friend of Colonel Markham Everard, sir, a tall man, and a worthy person in the field, although I could wish him a better cause.—A message I have to you, it is certain, in a slight note, which I take the liberty of presenting with the usual formalities." So saying, he drew his sword, put the billet he mentioned upon the point, and making a profound bow, presented it to Charles.

The disguised Monarch accepted of it, with a grave return of the salute, and said, as he was about to open the letter, "I am not, I presume, to expect friendly contents in an epistle presented in so hostile a manner?"

"A-hem, sir," replied the ambassador, clearing his voice, while he arranged a suitable answer, in which the mild strain of diplomacy might be properly maintained; "not utterly hostile, I

suppose, sir, is the invitation, though it be such as must be construed in the commencement rather bellicose and pugnacious. I trust, sir, we shall find that a few thrusts will make a handsome conclusion of the business; and so, as my old master used to say, *Pax nascitur ex bello*. For my own poor share, I am truly glad to have been graced by my friend, Markham Everard, in this matter—the rather as I feared the puritan principles with which he is imbued (I will confess the truth to you, worthy sir), might have rendered him unwilling, from certain scruples, to have taken the gentlemanlike and honorable mode of righting himself in such a case as the present. And as I render a friend's duty to my friend, so I humbly hope, Master Louis Girnigo, that I do no injustice to you in preparing the way for the proposed meeting, where, give me leave to say, I trust, that if no fatal accident occur, we shall be all better friends when the skirmish is over than we were before it began."

"I should suppose so, sir, in any case," said Charles, looking at the letter; "worse than mortal enemies we can scarce be, and it is that footing upon which this billet places us."

"You say true, sir," said Wildrake; "it is, sir, a cartel, introducing to a single combat, for the pacific object of restoring a perfect good understanding betwixt the survivors—in case that fortunately that word can be used in the plural after the event of the meeting."

"In short, we only fight, I suppose," replied the King, "that we may come to a perfectly good and amicable understanding?"

"You are right again, sir; and I thank you for the clearness of your apprehension," said Wildrake.—"Ah, sir, it is easy to do with a person of honor and of intellect in such a case as this. And I beseech you, sir, as a personal kindness to myself, that, as the morning is like to be frosty, and myself am in some sort rheumatic—as war will leave its scars behind, sir,—I say, I will entreat of you to bring with you some gentleman of honor, who will not disdain to take part of what is going forward—a sort of pot-luck, sir—with a poor old soldier like myself—that we may take no harm by standing unoccupied during such cold weather."

"I understand, sir," replied Charles; "if this matter goes forward, be assured I will endeavor to provide you with a suitable opponent."

"I shall remain greatly indebted to you, sir," said Wildrake; "and I am by no means curious about the quality of my antagonist.—It is true I write myself esquire and gentleman, and should account myself especially honored by crossing my sword with that of Sir Henry or Master Albert Lee; but, should that not be convenient, I will not refuse to present my poor person in opposition to any gentleman who has served the King, which I always hold as a sort of letters of nobility in itself, and, therefore, would on no account decline the duello with such a person."

"The King is much obliged to you, sir," said

Charles, "for the honor you do his faithful subjects."

"O, sir, I am scrupulous on that point—very scrupulous.—When there is a roundhead in question, I consult the Herald's books, to see that he is entitled to bear arms, as is Master Markham Everard, without which, I promise you, I had borne none of his cartel. But a cavalier is with me a gentleman, of course—be his birth ever so low, his loyalty has ennobled his condition."

"It is well, sir," said the King. "This paper requests me to meet Master Everard at six tomorrow morning, at the tree called the King's Oak.—I object neither to place nor time. He proffers the sword, at which, he says, we possess some equality—I do not decline the weapon; for company, two gentlemen—I shall endeavor to procure myself an associate, and a suitable partner for you, sir, if you incline to join in the dance."

"I kiss your hand, sir, and rest yours, under a sense of obligation," answered the envoy.

"I thank you, sir," continued the King; "I will therefore be ready at place and time, and suitably furnished; and I will either give your friend such satisfaction with my sword as he requires, or will render him such cause for not doing so as he will be contented with."

"You will excuse me, sir," said Wildrake, "if my mind is too dull, under the circumstances, to conceive any alternative that can remain betwixt two men of honor in such a case, excepting—sa—sa—." He threw himself into a fencing position, and made a pass with his sheathed rapier, but not directed towards the person of the King, whom he addressed.

"Excuse me, sir," said Charles, "if I do not trouble your intellects with the consideration of a case which may not occur.—But, for example, I may plead urgent employment on the part of the public.—This he spoke in a low and mysterious tone of voice, which Wildrake appeared perfectly to comprehend; for he laid his forefinger on his nose with what he meant for a very intelligent and apprehensive nod.

"Sir," said he, "if you be engaged in any affair for the King, my friend shall have every reasonable degree of patience.—Nay, I will fight him myself in your stead, merely to stay his stomach, rather than you should be interrupted.—And, sir, if you can find room in your enterprise for a poor gentleman that has followed Lunsford and Goring, you have but to name day, time, and place of rendezvous; for truly, sir, I am tired of the scald hat, cropped hair, and undertaker's cloak, with which my friend has bedizened me, and would willingly ruffle it out once more in the King's cause, when whether I be banged or hanged, I care not."

"I shall remember what you say, sir, should an opportunity occur," said the King; "and I wish his Majesty had many such subjects.—I presume our business is now settled?"

"When you shall have been pleased, sir, to

give me a trifling scrap of writing to serve for my credentials—for such, you know, is the custom—your written cartel hath its written answer.”

“That, sir, will I presently do,” said Charles, “and in good time—here are the materials.”

“And, sir,” continued the envoy—“Ahi!—ahem!—if you have interest in the household for a cup of sack—I am a man of few words, and am somewhat hoarse with much speaking—moreover, a serious business of this kind always makes one thirsty.—Besides, sir, to part with dry lips argues malice, which God forbid should exist in such an honorable conjuncture.”

“I do not boast much influence in the house, sir,” said the King; “but if you would have the condescension to accept of this broad piece towards quenching your thirst at the George—”

“Sir,” said the cavalier (for the times admitted of this strange species of courtesy, nor was Wildrake a man of such peculiar delicacy as keenly to dispute the matter),—“I am once again beholden to you. But I see not how it consists with my honor to accept of such accommodation, unless you were to accompany and partake?”

“Pardon me, sir,” replied Charles, “my safety recommends that I remain rather private at present.”

“Enough said,” Wildrake observed; “poor cavaliers must not stand on ceremony. I see, sir, you understand cutler’s law—when one tall fellow has coin, another must not be thirsty. I wish you, sir, a continuance of health and happiness until to-morrow, at the King’s Oak, at six o’clock.”

“Farewell, sir,” said the King, and added, as Wildrake went down the stair whistling, “Hey for cavaliers,” to which air his long rapier, jarring against the steps and banisters, bore no unsuitable burden—“Farewell, thou too just emblem of the state, to which war, and defeat, and despair, have reduced many a gallant gentleman.”

During the rest of the day, there occurred nothing peculiarly deserving of notice. Alice sedulously avoided showing towards the disguised Prince any degree of estrangement or shyness, which could be discovered by her father, or by any one else. To all appearance, the two young persons continued on the same footing in every respect. Yet she made the gallant himself sensible, that this apparent intimacy was assumed merely to save appearances, and in no way designed as retracting from the severity with which she had rejected his suit. The sense that this was the case, joined to his injured self-love, and his enmity against a successful rival, induced Charles early to withdraw himself to a solitary walk in the wilderness, where, like Hercules in the Emblem of Cebes, divided betwixt the personifications of Virtue and of Pleasure, he listened alternately to the voice of Wisdom and of passionate Folly.

Prudence urged to him the importance of his own life to the future prosecution of the great

object in which he had for the present miscarried—the restoration of monarchy in England, the rebuilding of the throne, the regaining the crown of his father, the avenging his death, and restoring to their fortunes and their country the numerous exiles, who were suffering poverty and banishment on account of their attachment to his cause. Pride too, or rather a just and natural sense of dignity, displayed the unworthiness of a Prince descending to actual personal conflict with a subject of any degree, and the ridicule which would be thrown on his memory, should he lose his life for an obscure intrigue by the hand of a private gentleman. What would his sage counsellors, Nicholas and Hyde—what would his kind and wise governor, the Marquis of Hertford, say to such an act of rashness and folly? Would it not be likely to shake the allegiance of the staid and prudent persons of the royalist party, since wherefore should they expose their lives and estates to raise to the government of a kingdom a young man who could not command his own temper? To this was to be added, the consideration that even his success would add double difficulties to his escape, which already seemed sufficiently precarious. If, stopping short of death, he merely had the better of his antagonist, how did he know that he might not seek revenge by delivering up to government the Malignant Louis Kerneguy, whose real character could not in that case fail to be discovered?

These considerations strongly recommended to Charles that he should clear himself of the challenge without fighting; and the reservation under which he had accepted it, afforded him some opportunity of doing so.

But Passion also had her arguments, which she addressed to a temper rendered irritable by recent distress and mortification. In the first place, if he was a prince, he was also a gentleman, entitled to resent as such, and obliged to give or claim the satisfaction expected on occasion of differences among gentlemen. With Englishmen, she urged, he could never lose interest by showing himself ready, instead of sheltering himself under his royal birth and pretensions, to come frankly forward and maintain what he had done or said on his own responsibility. In a free nation, it seemed as if he would rather gain than lose in the public estimation by a conduct which could not but seem gallant and generous. Then a character for courage was far more necessary to support his pretensions than any other kind of reputation; and the lying under a challenge, without replying to it, might bring his spirit into question. What would Villiers and Wilmot say of an intrigue, in which he had allowed himself to be shamefully baffled by a country girl, and had failed to revenge himself on his rival? The pasquinades which they would compose, the witty sarcasms which they would circulate on the occasion, would be harder to endure than the grave rebukes of Hertford, Hyde, and Nicholas. This reflection, added to the stings of youthful

and awakened courage, at length fixed his resolution, and he returned to Woodstock determined to keep his appointment, come of it what might.

Perhaps there mingled with his resolution a secret belief that such a reconcourse would not prove fatal. He was in the flower of his youth, active in all his exercises, and in no way inferior to Colonel Everard, as far as the morning’s experiment had gone, in that of self-defence. At least, such recollection might pass through his royal mind, as he hummed to himself a well-known ditty, which he had picked up during his residence in Scotland—

“A man may drink and not be drunk;
A man may fight and not be slain;
A man may kiss a bonnie lass,
And yet be welcome back again.”

Meanwhile the busy and all-directing Dr. Rochecliffe had contrived to intimate to Alice that she must give him a private audience, and she found him by appointment in what was called the study, once filled with ancient books, which, long since converted into cartridges, had made more noise in the world at their final exit, than during the space which had intervened betwixt that and their first publication. The Doctor seated himself in a high-backed leathern easy-chair, and signed to Alice to fetch a stool and sit down beside him.

“Alice,” said the old man, taking her hand affectionately, “thou art a good girl, a wise girl, a virtuous girl, one of those whose price is above rubies—not that rubies is the proper translation—but remind me to tell you of that another time. Alice, thou knowest who this Louis Kerneguy is—nay, hesitate not to me—I know every thing—I am well aware of the whole matter. Thou knowest this honored house holds the fortunes of England.” Alice was about to answer. “Nay, speak not, but listen to me, Alice—How does he bear himself towards you?”

Alice colored with the deepest crimson. “I am a country-bred girl,” she said, “and his manners are too court-like for me.”

“Enough said—I know it all. Alice, he is exposed to a great danger to-morrow, and you must be the happy means to prevent him.”

“I prevent him!—how, and in what manner?” said Alice, in surprise. “It is my duty, as a subject, to do any thing—any thing that may become my father’s daughter—”

Here she stopped, considerably embarrassed.

“Yes,” continued the Doctor, “to-morrow he hath made an appointment—an appointment with Markham Everard; the hour and place are set—six in the morning, by the King’s Oak. If they meet, one will probably fall.”

“Now, may God forefend they should meet,” said Alice, turning as suddenly pale as she had previously reddened. “But harm cannot come of it; Everard will never lift his sword against the King.”

“For that,” said Dr. Rochecliffe, “I would not warrant. But if that unhappy young gentleman

shall have still some reserve of the loyalty which his general conduct entirely disavows, it would not serve us here; for he knows not the King, but considers him merely as a cavalier, from whom he has received injury.”

“Let him know the truth, Doctor Rochecliffe, let him know it instantly,” said Alice; “he lift hand against the King, a fugitive and defenceless! He is incapable of it. My life on the issue, he becomes most active in his preservation.”

“That is the thought of a maiden, Alice,” answered the Doctor; “and, as I fear, of a maiden whose wisdom is misled by her affections. It were worse than treason to admit a rebel officer, the friend of the arch-traitor Cromwell, into so great a secret. I dare not answer for such rashness. Hammond was trusted by his father, and you know what came of it.”

“Then let my father know. He will meet Markham, or send to him, representing the indignity done to him by attacking his guest.”

“We dare not let your father into the secret who Louis Kerneguy really is. I did but hint the possibility of Charles taking refuge at Woodstock, and the rapture into which Sir Henry broke out, the preparations for accommodation and defence which he began to talk of, plainly showed that the mere enthusiasm of his loyalty would have led to a risk of a discovery. It is you, Alice, who must save the hopes of every true royalist.”

“It” answered Alice; “it is impossible.—Why cannot my father be induced to interfere, as in behalf of his friend and guest, though he know him as no other than Louis Kerneguy?”

“You have forgot your father’s character, my young friend,” said the Doctor; “an excellent man, and the best of Christians, till there is a clashing of swords, and then he starts up the complete martialist, as deaf to every pacific reasoning, as if he were a game-cock.”

“You forget, Dr. Rochecliffe,” said Alice, “that this very morning, if I understand the thing aright, my father prevented them from fighting.”

“Ay,” answered the Doctor, “because he deemed himself bound to keep the peace in the Royal Park; but it was done with such regret, Alice, that should he find them at it again, I am clear to foretell he will only so far postpone the combat as to conduct them to some unprivileged ground, and there bid them tilt and welcome, while he regaled his eyes with a scene so pleasing. No, Alice, it is you, and you only, who can help us in this extremity.”

“I see no possibility,” said she, again coloring, “how I can be of the least use.”

“You must send a note,” answered Dr. Rochecliffe, “to the King—a note such as all women know how to write better than any man can teach them—to meet you at the precise hour of the rendezvous. He will not fail you, for I know his unhappy foible.”

“Doctor Rochecliffe,” said Alice, gravely—“you have known me from infancy—What have

you seen in me to induce you to believe that I should ever follow such unbecoming counsel?"

"And if you have known me from infancy," retorted the Doctor, "what have you seen of me that you should suspect me of giving counsel to my friend's daughter, which it would be misbecoming in her to follow? You cannot be fool enough, I think, to suppose, that I mean you should carry your complaisance farther than to keep him in discourse for an hour or two, till I have all in readiness for his leaving this place, from which I can frighten him by the terrors of an alleged search?—So, C. S. mounts his horse and rides off, and Mistress Alice Lee has the honor of saving him."

"Yes, at the expense of her own reputation," said Alice, "and the risk of an eternal stain on my family. You say you know all. What can the King think of my appointing an assignation with him after what is passed, and how will it be possible to disabuse him respecting the purpose of my doing so?"

"I will disabuse him, Alice; I will explain the whole."

"Doctor Rochecliffe," said Alice, "you propose what is impossible. You can do much by your ready wit and great wisdom; but if new-fallen snow were once sullied, not all your art could wash it white again; and it is altogether the same with a maiden's reputation."

"Alice, my dearest child," said the Doctor, "bethink you that if I recommend this means of saving the life of the King, at least rescuing him from instant peril, it is because I see no other of which to avail myself. If I bid you assume, even for a moment, the semblance of what is wrong, it is but in the last extremity, and under circumstances which cannot return—I will take the surest means to prevent all evil report which can arise from what I recommend."

"Say not so, Doctor," said Alice; "better undertake to turn back the Isis than to stop the course of calumny. The King will make boast to his whole licentious court, of the ease with which, but for a sudden alarm, he could have brought off Alice Lee as a paramour—the mouth which confers honor on others, will then be the means to deprive me of mine. Take a fitter course, one more becoming your own character and profession. Do not lead him to fail in an engagement of honor, by holding out the prospect of another engagement equally dishonorable, whether false or true. Go to the King himself, speak to him, as the servants of God have a right to speak, even to earthly sovereigns. Point out to him the folly and the wickedness of the course he is about to pursue—urge upon him, that he fear the sword, since wrath bringeth the punishment of the sword. Tell him, that the friends who died for him in the field at Worcester, on the scaffolds, and on the gibbets, since that bloody day—that the remnant who are in prison, scattered, fled, and ruined on his account, deserve better of him and his father's race, than

that he should throw away his life in an idle brawl.—Tell him, that it is dishonest to venture that which is not his own, dishonorable to betray the trust which brave men have reposed in his virtue and in his courage."

Doctor Rochecliffe looked on her with a melancholy smile, his eyes glistening as he said, "Alas! Alice, even I could not plead that just cause to him so eloquently or so impressively as thou dost. But, alack! Charles would listen to neither. It is not from priests or women, he would say, that men should receive counsel in affairs of honor."

"Then, hear me, Doctor Rochecliffe—I will appear at the place of rendezvous, and I will prevent the combat—do not fear that I can do what I say—at a sacrifice, indeed, but not that of my reputation. My heart may be broken,"—she endeavored to stifle her sobs with difficulty—"for the consequence; but not in the imagination of a man, and far less than man her sovereign, shall a thought of Alice Lee be associated with dishonor." She hid her face in her handkerchief, and burst out into unrestrained tears.

"What means this hysterical passion?" said Doctor Rochecliffe, surprised and somewhat alarmed by the vehemence of her grief—"Maiden, I must have no concealments; I must know."

"Exert your ingenuity, then, and discover it," said Alice—for a moment put out of temper at the Doctor's pertinacious self-importance—"Guess my purpose, as you can guess at everything else. It is enough to have to go through with my task, I will not endure the distress of telling it over, and that to one who—forgive me, dear Doctor—might not think my agitation on this occasion fully warranted."

"Nay then, my young mistress, you must be ruled," said Rochecliffe; "and if I cannot make you explain yourself, I must see whether your father can gain so far on you." So saying, he arose somewhat displeased, and walked towards the door.

"You forget what you yourself told me, Doctor Rochecliffe," said Alice, "of the risk of communicating this great secret to my father."

"It is too true," he said, stopping short and turning round; "and I think, wench, thou art too smart for me, and I have not met many such. But thou art a good girl, and wilt tell me thy device of free will—it concerns my character and influence with the King, that I should be fully acquainted with whatever is *actum atque tractatum*, done and treated of in this matter."

"Trust your character to me, good Doctor," said Alice, attempting to smile; "it is of firmer stuff than those of women, and will be safer in my custody than mine could have been in yours. And thus much I condescend—you shall see the whole scene—you shall go with me yourself, and much will I feel emboldened and heartened by your company."

"That is something," said the Doctor, though not altogether satisfied with this limited confi-

dence. "Thou wert ever a clever wench, and I will trust thee; indeed, trust thee I find I must, whether voluntarily or no."

"Meet me, then," said Alice, "in the wilderness to-morrow. But first tell me, are you well assured of time and place?—a mistake were fatal."

"Assure yourself my information is entirely accurate," said the Doctor, resuming his air of consequence, which had been a little diminished during the latter part of their conference.

"May I ask," said Alice, "through what channel you acquired such important information?"

"You may ask unquestionably," he answered, now completely restored to his supremacy; "but whether I will answer or not is a very different question. I conceive neither your reputation nor my own is interested in your remaining in ignorance on that subject. So I have my secrets as well as you, mistress; and some of them, I fancy, are a good deal more worth knowing."

"Be it so," said Alice, quietly; "if you will meet me in the wilderness by the broken dial at half-past five exactly, we will go together to-morrow, and watch them as they come to the rendezvous. I will on the way get the better of my present timidity, and explain to you the means I design to employ to prevent mischief. You can perhaps think of making some effort which may render my interference, unbecoming and painful as it must be, altogether unnecessary."

"Nay, my child," said the Doctor, "if you place yourself in my hands, you will be the first that ever had reason to complain of my want of conduct, and you may well judge you are the very last (one excepted) whom I would see suffer for want of counsel. At half-past five, then, at the dial in the wilderness—and God bless our undertaking!"

Here their interview was interrupted by the sonorous voice of Sir Henry Lee, which shouted their names, "Daughter Alice—Doctor Rochecliffe," through passage and gallery.

"What do you here," said he entering, "sitting like two crows in a mist, when we have such rare sport below? Here is this wild crack-brained boy Louis Kernezy, now making me laugh till my sides are fit to split, and now playing on his guitar sweetly enough to win a lark from the heavens.—Come away with you, come away! It is hard work to laugh alone."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

This is the place, the centre of the grove;
Here stands the oak, the monarch of the wood.

JOHN HOME.

THE sun had risen on the broad boughs of the forest, but without the power of penetrating into its recesses, which hung rich with heavy dewdrops, and were beginning on some of the trees to exhibit the varied tints of autumn; it being the season when Nature, like a prodigal

whose race is well-nigh run, seems desirous to make up in profuse gaiety and variety of colors, for the short space which her splendor has then to endure. The birds were silent—and even Robin red-breast, whose chirruping song was heard among the bushes near the Lodge, emboldened by the largesses with which the good old knight always encouraged his familiarity, did not venture into the recesses of the wood, where he encountered the sparrow-hawk, and other enemies of a similar description, preferring the vicinity of the dwellings of man, from whom he, almost solely among the feathered tribes, seems to experience disinterested protection.

The scene was therefore at once lovely and silent, when the good Dr. Rochecliffe, wrapped in a scarlet roquelaure, which had seen service in its day, muffling his face more from habit than necessity, and supporting Alice on his arm (she also defended by a cloak against the cold and damp of the autumn morning), glided through the tangled and long grass of the darkest alleys, almost ankle-deep in dew, towards the place appointed for the intended duel. Both so eagerly maintained the consultation in which they were engaged, that they were alike insensible of the roughness and discomforts of the road, though often obliged to force their way through brush-wood and coppice, which poured down on them all the liquid pearls with which they were loaded, till the mantles they were wrapped in hung lank by their sides, and clung to their shoulders, heavily charged with moisture. They stopped when they had attained a station under the coppice, and shrouded by it, from which they could see all that passed on the little esplanade before the King's Oak, whose broad and scathed form, contorted and shattered limbs, and frowning brows, made it appear like some ancient warworn champion, well selected to be the umpire of a field of single combat.

The first person who appeared at the rendezvous was the gay cavalier Roger Wildrake. He also was wrapped in his cloak, but had discarded his puritanic beaver, and wore in its stead a Spanish hat, with a feather and gilt hatband, all of which had encountered bad weather and hard service; but to make amends for the appearance of poverty by the show of pretension, the castor was accurately adjusted after what was rather profanely called the *d-me cut*, used among the more desperate cavaliers. He advanced hastily, and exclaimed aloud—"First in the field after all, by Jove, though I bilked Everard in order to have my morning draught.—It has done me much good," he added, smacking his lips.—"Well, I suppose I should search the ground ere my principal comes up, whose Presbyterian watch trudges as slow as his Presbyterian step."

He took his rapier from under his cloak, and seemed about to search the thickets around.

"I will prevent him," whispered the Doctor to Alice. "I will keep faith with you—you shall not come on the scene—*nisi dignus vindice nodus*