THE LION'S WHELP

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A Story of Cromwell's Time

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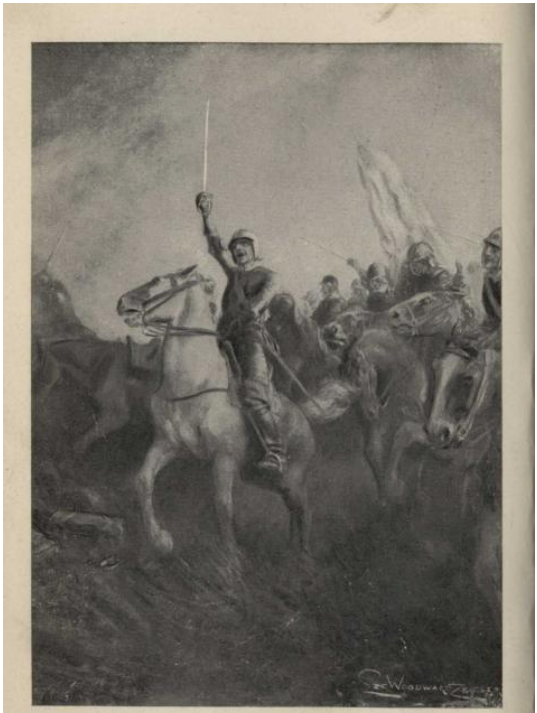

"'Now let God arise!'"

"'NOW LET GOD ARISE!'"

By
Amelia E. Barr
Author of
"The Bow of Orange Ribbon," "I, Thou, and the Other One," "The Maid of Maiden Lane," etc.

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"'Now let god arise!'" Frontispiece

"When he came again it was harvest time."

"Then he dropped his blade into the sheathe with a clang."

"Beheld Cromwell standing upon the threshold."

"The hawthorns were in flower."

"Rupert stood still, and bowed gravely."

"Three ominous-looking papers."

"'Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and the King of Glory shall come in.'"

BOOK I
The Hour and The Man

"Unknown to Cromwell as to me,

Was Cromwell's measure or degree.

* * * * *

He works, plots, fights, in rude affairs,
With 'squires, lords, kings, his craft compares,
Till late he learned, through doubt and fear,
Broad England harbored not his peer."
—*Emerson.*

The Lion's Whelp

CHAPTER I
SWAFFHAM AND DE WICK

"Sway the tide of battle which way it will, human existence is held together by its old, and only tenure of earnest thoughts, and quiet affections."

During the seventeenth century Swaffham Manor House was one of the most picturesque dwellings in Cambridgeshire. It was so old that it had a sort of personality. It was Swaffham. For as the Yorkshireman, in speaking of his beloved rivers, disdains the article "the" and calls them with proud familiarity, Aire, Ure, Ribble, so to the men of the country between Huntingdon and Cambridge, this ancient dwelling was never the Manor House; it was the synonym of its builders, and was called by their name—Swaffham. For it was the history of the Swaffham family in stone and timber, and no one could enter its large, low rooms without feeling saturated and informed with the spiritual and physical aura of the men and women who had for centuries lived and died under its roof.

The central tower—built of the white stone of the neighbourhood—-was the fortress which Tonbert Swaffham erected A.D. 870, to defend his lands from an invasion of the Danes; and five generations of Tonbert's descendants dwelt in that tower, before William of Normandy took possession of the crown of England.

The Swaffham of that date became a friend of the Conqueror; the Manor was enriched by his gifts; and the Manor House—enlarged and beautified by various holders—had the singular fortune to be identified with the stirring events of every dynasty.

In the middle of the seventeenth century it still retained this character. Puritan councils of offense and defense had been held in its great hall, and parliamentary soldiers drilled in its meadows. For Captain Israel Swaffham was the friend of General Cromwell, and at the time this story opens was with Cromwell in Scotland. Nothing of good in the old race was lacking in Captain Israel. He was a soldier going forth on a holy errand, hurrying to serve God on the battle-field; faithful, as a man must be who could say after a hard day's fighting,

"Tired! No. It is not for me to let my right hand grow tired, if God's work be half-done."

A great fighter, he had no parliamentary talent, and no respect for parliaments. He believed England's religious and civil liberties were to be saved by the sword, and the sword in the hand of his great leader, Oliver Cromwell; and when the King's fast-and-loose proposals had been discussed by the men of Cambridgeshire, in Swaffham, he had closed the argument with this passionate declaration:

"There is no longer disputing with such a double mind as the mind of Charles Stuart. The very oath of God would not bind him. Out, instantly, all of you who can!"

His three sons rose at his words and the rest of the council followed, for all felt that the work was but half done—there was to be a Second Civil War. Then home was again deserted for the battle-field, and Captain Swaffham's wife and daughter were once more left alone in the old Manor House.

Mrs. Swaffham was the child of a Puritan minister, and she had strong Puritan principles; but these were subject to passing invasions of feeling not in accord with them. There were hours when she had pitied the late King, excused his inexcusable treacheries, and regretted the pomps and ceremonies of royal state. She had even a feeling that England, unkinged, had lost prestige and was like a dethroned nation. In such hours she fretted over her absent husband and sons, and said words hard for her daughter Jane to listen to with any sympathy or patience.

For Jane Swaffham was of a different spirit. She had a soul of the highest mettle; and she had listened to those English mystics, who came out of the steel ranks of triumphant Puritanism, until she had caught their spirit and been filled through and through with their faith. The Swaffhams were a tall race; but Jane was a woman of small stature and slender frame, and her hair, though abundant, wanted the rich brown hue that was the heritage of the Swaffham beauties. No

one spoke of Jane as a beauty; the memory of her sister Amity—who had married Lord Armingford—and of her aunt, Cicely Compton, both women of rare loveliness, qualified Jane's claim to this family distinction. And yet she had a fresh, bright face, a face like a sweet single rose of the wood; one could see straight to her heart through it—a loving, cheerful daughter of righteousness; not perfect by any means; subject to little bursts of temper, and to opinions so positive they had the air of bigotry; but with all her faults holding that excellent oneness of mind, which has no doubts and no second thoughts.

This was the maiden who was sitting, one sunny afternoon, at the open window of the household parlour in Swaffham. The lazy wind brought her delicious puffs of sweetbrier scent, and in the rich fields beyond the garden she could hear the voices of the reapers calling to each other as they bound the wheat. On the hearthstone, her mother's wheel hummed in a fitful way, now rapidly, now slowly, anon stopping altogether. Jane was quite idle. A tray full of ripe lavender spikes was at her side and a partly finished little bag of sheer muslin was in her hand, but the work was not progressing. When thoughts are happy, the needle flies, when they are troubled or perplexed, the hands drop down and it becomes an effort to draw the thread. Jane was thinking of her father and brothers, of the unhappy condition of England, and of the unrest in their own household. For she knew that her mother was worried about many things, and the fret that was bred in the kitchen and the farm offices—in spite of all her efforts—insinuated itself into the still order of the handsome room in which she was sitting. She felt her mother's silence to be unpleasantly eloquent. The fitful wheel complained. It was a relief when Mrs. Swaffham brought to audible conclusions, the voiceless tension in which they were sitting.

"My work is never out of hand, Jane," she said fretfully. "I am fairly downhearted to-day—so put to the push as I have been, with women in the kitchen and men in the fields."

"Dear mother, it may not be for long."

"It will be long enough to bring everything to wrack and ruin. The dairy is twenty-four shillings short this week."

"There are perhaps fewer cows in milk."

"The wool is short weight also; one of the gray horses is sick; the best thresher has gone soldiering, like the rest of the fools."

"Mother!"

"And Will Will-be-so has the rheumatism, and in spite of his Bible and his psalm-singing, has been to Dame Yodene for a charm."

"Why did he not come to you for flannel and a plaster?"

"Come to me! That goes without saying. I went out of my way to help him, and then he wished Master Israel was home, and said 'there was no rheumatics

when he was round looking after his men.' I fired up, then, when he spoke that way—laying to my account the wettings he gets coming from the ale-house at nights; and then he muttered 'Women's ways—Will-be-so.'"

"Will is very provoking. I wish he would go to the wars."

"He likes the tap at Widow Tasburgh's, and the blacksmith's forge too well—let alone the women in the kitchen, who are all quarreling about him. And then there is this new girl, Susannah, who is more pretty than need be; her face gets her too much favour with the men and too little with the women. When Doctor Verity comes next, I must tell him to give a few words suitable at the Evening Service. They are a lazy, quarreling set, and every one of them does their work against the collar."

"Father told me he was led to believe he would not be long away. He said this campaign would be short and fierce, for General Cromwell looks on its necessity as the unpardonable sin in Charles Stuart."

"Short and fierce! Well, then, General Cromwell is well able to put fighting men up to that kind of thing."

"You are out with the General, mother, and all because you miss father so much."

"I am out with the war, Jane. What is the good of it? Charles Stuart alive, stands for his Prerogative just where Charles Stuart dead, did."

"The war is now an appeal to God. That is the good of it. You heard what Doctor Verity said of its necessity—and you agreed with him. Indeed, who could gainsay his words? He spoke as if he had heard God's command 'Up and be doing, and I will help you.'"

"Is God, then, the God of war? No, Jane. I will not believe it."

"God is the God of blessings, mother; but as the ploughshare breaks up the earth for the corn seed, so does the red ploughshare of war break up the heart of the nation for the blessing of freedom which shall follow it."

"I know not; I know not; but I am sure if there were no kings and queens in the world it would be little loss to God Almighty, or to any one else."

At this moment there was the sound of wheels and the tramp of horses, and Jane said, "It is Matilda de Wick. I know the roll of the carriage. Dear mother, keep a bright face in her presence. She will see everything, and draw conclusions from the smallest matter." Then Jane lifted her sewing, and the wheel began to hum, and the door opened swiftly and Matilda de Wick entered.

"I have just been at Ely," she said, "and if I live seven-and-fifty years longer in this sinful world, I shall not forget the visit." Then she laughed with a merry scorn, kissed Jane on the cheek, and laid off her hat, heavy with white plumes. "It is good-bye to my senses," she continued; "I am out of wisdom this afternoon—lend me your sobriety, Jane. I have been visiting Lady Heneage, and I have heard

so much of the Cromwell's full cup that, in faith, I think it has gone to my head. Do I look sensible? I have no hope of my words, and I pray you excuse whatever I may say."

"I trust Lady Heneage is well," said Mrs. Swaffham.

"She had need to be well. Her house is as full as the ark. Mrs. Elizabeth Hampden is there, and daughter Flambord, and daughter Clayton, and all their children and retainers. It is their last gathering before they go away. Do you wish to know where they are going? To London, of course. When people carry themselves to such a height, no other city is big enough. But I ask pardon; I told you my words had lost their senses."

"Why do you go to see Lady Heneage if you like her not and surely you like her not, or you would not make a mock of her doings."

"I like to go where good fortune sits, Jane—and in these days no one can expect honour that deserves it. You know also that the last Heneage baby was named for me, and I got word that it was short-coated last Sunday; and so I went to see the little brat. It is a beauty, if it hold on to its good looks; and 'tis like to do so, for whatever Heneage gets, Heneage keeps."

"And they are going to London? Is it really so?" asked Jane.

"'Tis not very civil to doubt it. I dare be sworn it is as true as a thing can be, when the world is topsy-turvy. But that is not all of my news—I heard also that Jane Swaffham was going to London—a thing I would not believe without Jane's assurance."

"It is very uncertain," replied Mrs. Swaffham. "Jane has an invitation from Mary Cromwell, and if Doctor Verity comes here soon, he may find the time to take her to London with him. We know not assuredly, as yet."

"Jane must move mountains to go. The Cromwells are now living in the stately Cockpit. They will hold court there, and Jane Swaffham will be of it. 'Tis said all this honour for the Irish campaign."

"Then it is well deserved," answered Jane with some heat.

"Jane," said Mrs. Swaffham, "I can not abide any more quarreling to-day. If you and Matilda get on that subject, truth and justice will go to the wall. Monstrous lies are told about Ireland, and you both suck them down as if they were part of the Gospels." Then turning to Matilda she asked, "Why does the Heneage family go to London?"

"Indeed, madame, now that Mr. Cromwell has become Captain-General, and Commander-in-Chief, why should not all his old friends go to London? London has gone mad over the man; even that supreme concourse of rebels called Parliament rose up, bareheaded, to receive him when he last honoured them with a visit."

"Just what they ought to have done," said Jane. "Is there any corner of

England not coupled gloriously with his name?"

"And Ireland?"

"Gloriously also."

"Pray, then, is it not extremely natural for his old friends to wish to see his glory?"

"I am sure of one thing," answered Jane. "Public honours please not General Cromwell. He would thank God to escape them."

"I do not say that the wish to see him honoured is universal," continued Matilda. "Father Sacy thinks there are a few thousand men still living in England who have not bowed the knee to this Baal."

"It is wicked to liken a good man to a devil, Matilda; and if mother will sit and listen to such words, I will not. And, look you, though Charles Stuart's men turn up their noses and the palms of their hands at General Cromwell, he stands too high for them to pull him down. Cromwell will work and fight the time appointed him—and after that he will rest in the Lord. For he is good, and just, and brave as a lion, and there is not a man or woman can say different—not a man or woman treading English ground to-day that can, in truth, say different! Always he performs God's will and pleasure."

"Or the devil's."

"He is a good man. I say it."

"And he knows it; and that is where his hypocrisy comes in—I——"

"Children! Children! can you find nothing more lovely to talk about? Matilda, you know that you are baiting Jane's temper only that you may see her lose it."

Then Matilda laughed, and stooping to her friend, kissed her and said, "Come, little Jane, I will ask your pardon. It is the curse of these days, that one must lie to one's own heart, or quarrel with the heart one loves. Kiss and be friends, Jane. I came to get your receipt for lavender conserves, and this is nothing to it."

"Jane was conserving, yesterday," answered Mrs. Swaffham, "and she has a new receipt from her sister Armingford for brewing a drink against sleeplessness. It is to be made from the blue flowers picked from the knaps."

"That is fortunate," said Matilda. "You know that my father has poor health, and his liking for study makes him ailing, of late. He sleeps not. I wish that I had a composing draught for him. Come, Jane, let us go to the still-room." She spoke with an unconscious air of authority, and Jane as unconsciously obeyed it, but there was a coldness in her manner which did not disappear until the royalist lady had talked with her for half-an-hour about the spices and the distilled waters that were to prevail against the Earl's sleeplessness.

When the electuary had been prepared, the girls became silent. They were

as remarkably contrasted as were the tenets, religious and civil, for which they stood. But if mere physical ascendency could have dominated Jane Swaffham, she was in its presence. Yet it was not Matilda, but Jane, who filled the cool, sweet place with a sense of power not to be disputed. Her pale hair was full of light and life; it seemed to shine in its waving order and crown-like coil. Her eyes had a steady glow in their depths that was invincible; her slight form was proudly poised; her whole manner resolute and a little cold, as of one who was putting down an offense only half-forgiven.

Matilda was conscious of Jane's influence, and she called all her own charms forth to rival it. Putting out of account her beautiful face and stately figure as not likely to affect Jane, she assumed the manner she had never known to fail—a manner half-serious and wholly affectionate and confidential. She knew that Swaffham was always a safe subject, and that a conversation set to that key went directly to Jane's heart. So, turning slowly round to observe everything, she said,

"How cool and sweet is this place, Jane!"

"It is, Matilda. I often think that one might receive angels among these pure scents."

"Oh, I vow it is the rosemary! Let me put my hands through it," and she hastily pulled off her white embroidered gloves, and passed her hands, shining with gems, through the deliciously fragrant green leaves.

"I have a passion for rosemary," she continued. "It always perfigures good fortune to me. Sometimes if I wake in the night I smell it—I smell miles of it—and then I know my angel has been to see me, and that some good thing will tread in her footsteps."

"I ever think of rosemary for burials," said Jane.

"And I for bridals, and for happiness; but it

"'Grows for two ends, it matters not at all,
Be it for bridal, or for burial.'"

"That is true, "answered Jane. "I remember hearing my father say that when Queen Elizabeth made her joyful entry into London, every one carried rosemary posies; and that Her Grace kept in her hand, from the Fleet Bridge to Westminster, a branch of rosemary that had been given her by a poor old woman."

"That was a queen indeed! Had she reigned this day, there had been no Cromwell."

"Who can tell that? England had to come out of the Valley and Shadow of Popery, and it is the Lord General's sword that shall lead her into the full light—

there is something round your neck, Matilda, that looks as if you were still in darkness."

Then Matilda laughed and put her hand to her throat, and slipped into her bosom a rosary of coral and gold beads. "It was my mother's," she said; "you know that she was of the Old Profession, and I wear it for her sake."

"It is said that Charles Stuart also wears one for his mother's sake."

"It is a good man that remembers a good mother; and the King is a good man."

"There is no king in England now, Matilda, and no question of one."

"There is a king, whether we will or no. The king never dies; the crown is the crown, though it hang on a hedge bush."

"That is frivolous nonsense, Matilda. The Parliament is king."

"Oh, the pious gang! This is a strange thing that has come to pass in our day, Jane—that an anointed king should be deposed and slain. Who ever heard the like?"

"Read your histories, Matilda. It is a common thing for tyrannical kings to have their executioners. Charles Stuart suffered lawfully and by consent of Parliament."

"A most astonishing difference!" answered Matilda, drawing on her gloves impatiently, "to be murdered with consent of Parliament! that is lawful; without consent of Parliament, that is very wicked indeed. But even as a man you might pity him."

"Pity him! Not I! He has his just reward. He bound himself for his enemies with cords of his own spinning. But you will not see the truth, Matilda——"

"So then, it is useless wasting good Puritan breath on me. Dear Jane, can we never escape this subject? Here, in this sweet room, why do we talk of tragedies?"

Jane was closing the still-room door as this question was asked, and she took her friend by the arm and said, "Come, and I will show you a room in which another weak, wicked king prefigured the calamity that came to his successor in our day." Then she opened a door in the same tower, and they were in a chamber that was, even on this warm harvest day, cold and dark. For the narrow loophole window had not been changed, as in the still-room, for wide lattices; and the place was mouldy and empty and pervaded by an old, unhappy atmosphere.

"What a wretched room! It will give me an ague," said Matilda.

"It was to this room King John came, soon after his barons had compelled him to sign the Great Charter of Liberties. And John was only an earlier Charles Stuart—just as tyrannical—just as false—and his barons were his parliament. He lay on the floor where you are now standing, and in his passion bit and gnawed the green rushes with which it was strewed, and cursed the men who he said had 'made themselves twenty-four over-kings.' So you see that it is not a new thing

for Englishmen to war against their kings."

"Poor kings!"

"They should behave themselves better."

"Let us go away. I am shivering." Then as they turned from the desolate place, she said with an attempt at indifference, "When did you hear from Cymlin? And pray in what place must I remember him now?"

"I know not particularly. Wherever the Captain-General is, there Cymlin Swaffham is like to be."

"At Ely, they were talking of Cromwell as near to Edinburgh."

"Then we shall hear tidings of him soon. He goes not anywhere for nothing."

"Why do you not ask after Stephen's fortune—good or bad?"

"I did not at the moment think of Stephen. When Cromwell is in the mind 'tis impossible to find him fit company. It is he, and he only."

"Yet if ever Stephen de Wick gets a glimpse of home, it is not home to him until he has been at Swaffham."

Jane made no answer, and they walked silently to the door where Matilda's carriage was waiting. Mrs. Swaffham joined them as Matilda was about to leave, and the girl said, "I had come near to forgetting something I wished to tell you. One of those men called Quakers was preaching his new religion at Squire Oliver Leder's last night. There was much disputing about him to-day."

"I wonder then," said Mrs. Swaffham, "that we were not asked. I have desired to hear some of these men. It is said they are mighty in the Scriptures, and that they preach peace, which—God knows—is the doctrine England now needs."

"Many were there. I heard of the Flittons and Mossleys and the Traffords and others. But pray what is the good of preaching 'peace' when Cromwell is going up and down the land with a drawn sword. It is true also that these Quakers themselves always bring quarreling and persecution with them."

"That is not their fault," said Jane. "The preacher can only give the Word, and if people will quarrel about it and rend it to and fro, that is not the preacher's fault. But, indeed, all testify that these people called Quakers quake at nothing, and are stiff and unbendable in their own way."

"So are the Independents, and the Anabaptists, and the Presbyterians, and the Fifth Monarchy Men, and the Root and Branch Men, and——"

"The Papists, and the Episcopalians," added Jane.

"Faith! No one can deny it."

"What said Lady Heneage of the preacher?" asked Mrs. Swaffham.

"She thought he ought to be put in the stocks; and her sister Isabel said that he was a good man, and had the root of the matter in him. Madame Flitton was

of the same opinion, though she did not feel at liberty to approve entirely. Others considered him full of temper and very forward, and the argument was hot, and quite Christian-like. I heard that he was to preach again at Deeping Den. Now I must make what haste I can; my father will be angry at my delay. Good-bye! faithful till we meet again."

"She says 'faithful,' yet knows not how to be faithful."

Mrs. Swaffham did not answer Jane's remark. She was thinking of the Quaker sermon at Oliver Leder's, and wondering why they had not been asked to hear it. "We ought to have been asked," she said to Jane as they turned into the house. "Leaving out Swaffham was bad treatment, and when I say bad, I mean bad. Did Matilda take the electuary for her father?"

"She was very little in earnest, and had forgotten it but for my reminding."

"She is much changed."

"It would be strange indeed if she was not changed. Before these troubles she was a girl living at her mother's knee, petted by her father, and the idol of her brothers. Two of her brothers fell fighting by the side of Prince Rupert, her mother wept herself into the grave for them, her father is still nursing the wound he got at Naseby, and her only brother, Stephen, is with Charles Stuart, wherever he may be. If such troubles did not change a girl, she would be hewn from the very rock of selfishness. Matilda is far from that. She loves with a whole heart, and will go all lengths to prove it. We do not know the new Matilda yet."

Jane would have made this remark still more positively, if she could have seen her friend as soon as Swaffham was left behind. She sat erect, lost in thought, and her eyes had a look in them full of anxiety and sorrow. The sadness of an immense disillusion was over her. But she belonged to that imperial race who never lose heart in any trouble. To the very last she must hope; to the very last believe even against hope and against reason. Her life had gone to ruin, but she trusted that some miracle would restore it. Not for long could any mood of despair subdue her; infallibly she must shake it away. For there was no egotism in her grief, she could suffer cheerfully with others; it was her isolation that hurt her. All her old friends had departed. The grave had some; others had taken different ways, or battle and exile had scattered them. By the side of her sick father she stood alone, feeling that even Jane—her familiar friend—doubted her, no longer took her at her word, called in question what she said, and held herself so far aloof that she could not reach her heart. Oppressed by such considerations, she felt like a child that suddenly realises it has lost its way and is left alone in a wilderness.

Nothing in her surroundings offered her any help. The road was flat and dreary; a wide level intersected with deep drains and "droves"—a poor, rough, moist land, whose horizon was only broken by the towers of Ely, vast and gray

in the distance. Large iron gates admitted her to de Wick park, and she entered an avenue bordered with ash trees, veiled in mist, and spreading out on either hand into a green chase full of tame deer. The House—pieced on to the broad walls of an Augustine monastery—was overshadowed by ash trees. It was a quadrangular building of various dates, the gray walls rising from trim gardens with box-edged flower plots and clipped yew hedges. There was a large fish pond teeming with perch, and pike, and eels; and black colonies of rooks filled the surrounding trees, and perched on the roof of the mansion. An old-world sleepy air, lonely and apart and full of melancholy, pervaded the place.

But all these things were part and parcel of the word Home. Matilda regarded them not in particular, they only affected her unconsciously as the damp air or the gathering shadows of the evening did. The door stood open, and she passed without delay into the wide entrance hall. It was chill with the drifting fog, and dark with the coming night shadows; but there was a good fire of ash logs at the upper end, and she stood a few minutes before it, feeling a certain exhilaration in its pleasant warmth and leaping flame. Then she went leisurely up the broad stairway. It was of old oak with curiously carved balusters, surmounted by grotesque animal forms; but she did not notice these ugly creations as she climbed with graceful lassitude the dark steps, letting her silk robe trail and rustle behind her. Her hat, with its moist drooping feathers, was in her hand; her hair hung limply about her brow and face; she was the very picture of a beauty that had suffered the touch of adverse nature, and the depression of unsympathetic humanity.

But the moment she entered her own room she had the sense of covert and refreshment. Its dark splendour of oak and damask was brought out by the glow and flame of firelight and candle-light; and her maid came forward with that air of affectionate service, which in Matilda's present mood seemed of all things most grateful and pleasant. She put off her sense of alienation and unhappiness with her damp clothing, and as the comfort of renewal came to her outwardly, the inner woman also regained her authority; and the girl conscious of this potent personality, erected herself in its strength and individuality. She surveyed her freshly clad form in its gown of blue lutestring; she turned right and left to admire a fresh arrangement of her hair; she put around her neck, without pretense of secrecy or apology, the rosary of coral and gold; and admired the tint and shimmer of its beauty on her white throat. Then she asked—

"Was any stranger with the Earl at dinner, Delia?"

"My lady, he dined with Father Sacy alone."

"And pray what did they eat for dinner?"

"There was a sucking pig roasted with juniper wood and rosemary branches, and a jugged hare, and a pullet, and some clotted cream and a rasp-

berry tart. All very good, my lady; will you please to eat something?"

"Yes. I will have some jugged hare, and some clotted cream, and a raspberry tart—and a glass of Spanish wine, Delia, and a pitcher of new milk. Have them served as soon as possible."

"In what room, my lady?"

"In what room is the Earl, my father, now sitting?"

"In the morning room."

"Then serve it in the morning room."

She took one comfortable glance at herself, and in the pleasure of its assurance went down-stairs. Her step was now firm and rapid, yet she paused a moment at the door of the room she wished to enter, and called up smiles to her face and a sort of cheerful bravado to her manner ere she lifted the steel hasp that admitted her. In a moment her quick eyes took a survey of its occupants. They were only two men—Earl de Wick, and his chaplain, Father Sacy. Both were reading; the Earl, Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia*; the Chaplain, the Evening Service in the Book of Common Prayer. Neither of them noticed her entrance, and she went straight to her father's side, and covering the open page with her hand, said in a merry tone—

"Here is a noble knight dwelling in Arcadia, while the great Captain-General Cromwell——"

"The devil!"

"Is going up and down and to and fro in the land, seeking whom he may devour. I have been at Ely and at Swaffham, gathering what news I can, and I assure you, sir, there is none to our comfort."

"What have you heard? Anything about the Scots?"

"Cromwell is in Scotland. What do you expect from that news?"

"That Leslie will be his match."

"Then you will be disappointed. 'There is a tide in the affairs of men,' and this tide of Cromwell and the Commonwealth is going to sweep all royalty and all nobility into the deep sea."

"Well, then, I may as well return to my *Arcadia* and learn how to be rustical. We nobles may play at Canute if we like—but—but——"

"It is useless, while this man's star flames in the firmament. I hear that the Parliament rose bareheaded to receive him when he last entered the House. If he were king, they could have done no more. They have also given to him and his family a royal lodging in the Cockpit, and already the women are removed thither. If he conquers the Scotch army, what more can they offer him but the crown?"

"Those unlucky Stuarts! They will swallow up all England's chivalry. Oh, for one campaign with Queen Elizabeth at its head! She would send old Oliver

with his Commonwealth to the bottomless pit, and order him to tell the devil that Elizabeth Tudor sent him there."

"The Stuarts are of God's anointing; and there are bad kings, and unlucky kings in all royal houses. I stood to-day where King John lay cursing and biting the rushes on the floor, because his barons had made themselves his over-kings."

"John's barons had some light," said the Earl. "They hated John for the reason England now hates the Stuarts. He perjured himself neck deep; he brought in foreign troops to subjugate Englishmen; he sinned in all things as Charles Stuart has sinned."

"Sir, are you not going too far?" asked the Chaplain, lifting his eyes from his book.

"I thought you were at your prayers, father. No, by all that is truthful, I am right! In the Great Charter, the barons specially denounce King John as '*regem perjurum ac baronibus rebellem*.' The same thing might fairly be said of Charles Stuart. Yet while a Stuart is King of England, it is the de Wicks' duty to stand by him. But I would to God I had lived when Elizabeth held the sceptre! No Cromwell had smitten it out of her hand, as Cromwell smote it from the hand of Charles on Naseby's field."

"That is supposition, my Lord."

"It is something more, father. Elizabeth had to deal with a fiercer race than Charles had, but she knew how to manage it. Look at the pictures of the de Wicks in her time. They are the pictures of men who would stand for their rights against 'prerogative' of any kind, yet the great Queen made them obey her lightest word. How did she do it? I will tell you—she scorned to lie to them, and she was brave as a lion. If she had wanted the Five Members in the Tower of London, they would have gone to the Tower of London; her crown for it! It was my great-grandfather who held her bridle reins when she reviewed her troops going to meet the Spaniards of the Armada. No hesitating, no tampering, no doubts, no fears moved her. She spoke one clear word to them, and she threw herself unreservedly upon their love and loyalty. 'Let tyrants fear!' she cried. 'I have placed my chief strength in the loyal hearts of my subjects, and I am come amongst you resolved to live or die amongst you all—to lay down for God, and my kingdom, and my people, my honour and my blood, even in the dust. I know I have the body of a weak woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a king, and of a King of England, too; and I think foul scorn that Spain, or any prince of Europe should dare to invade the borders of my realm!' This was Elizabeth's honest temper, and if Charles Stuart in throwing himself upon his nobles and his country had been true to them, he would never have gone to the scaffold. This I say boldly, and I mean what I say."

"Sir, many would mistake your words, and think you less than loyal."

"Father, I have proved my loyalty with my children and my blood; but among my own people and at my own hearth, I may say that I would I had better reason for my loyalty. I am true to my king, but above all else, I love my country. I love her beyond all words, though I am grateful to one great Englishman for finding me words that I have dipped in my heart's blood; words that I uttered on the battle-field joyfully, when I thought they were my last words—

"'——this blessed spot, this earth, this realm, this England,
This land of such dear souls, this dear, dear land!'"

"If to this degree you love England, father, how would you like to see this beggarly Cromwell upon her throne? How would you teach your head to bow to this upstart majesty?"

"Matilda, to the devil we may give his due, and there is naught of 'beggary' in Cromwell or in his family. They have entertained kings, and sat with nobles as equals, and as for the man himself, he is a gentleman by birth and breeding. I say it, for I have known him his life long, and if you add every crime to his name, I will still maintain that he has sinned with a clear conscience. He stood by Charles Stuart, and strove to save him until he found that Charles Stuart stood by no man, and could be trusted by no man."

"My lord, you are very just to the man Cromwell. Some would not thank you for it."

"If we cannot be just, father, we may doubt the fairness of our cause, perhaps also of our motives. 'Tis impossible to consider this man's life since he walked to the front of the Parliamentary army and not wonder at it."

"He is but the man of the hour, events have made him."

"Not so! His success is in him, 'tis the breed of his own heart and brain. Well, then, this Scotch campaign is the now or never of our effort. If it fail, we may have a Cromwell dynasty."

"'Tis an impossible event. The man has slain the king of England and throttled the Church of Christ. Even this holy Book in my hand has his condemnation—these gracious prayers and collects, whose music is ready made for every joy and sorrow—this noble Creed which we ought to sing upon our knees, for nothing made of English words was ever put together like it—yet you know how Cromwell's Root and Branch men have slandered it."

"Alas, father! one kind of Christian generally slanders all other kinds. The worshipers of the heathen gods were at least tolerant. A pagan gentleman who had faith in his own image of Bona Dea could still be friendly to an acquaintance who believed in Jupiter. But we are not even civil to our neighbours unless they

think about our God just as we do."

"What say you if, for once, we part without Cromwell between our good-wills and our good-nights? Father, I have seen to-day a fan of ostrich feathers; 'tis with Gaius the packman, who will be here in the morning. Also, I want some housewifery stores, and some embroidery silks, and ballads, and a book of poems written by one Mr. John Milton, who keeps a school in London."

"I know the man. We will have none of his poems."

"But, father, I may have the other things?"

"You will take no nay-say."

"Then a good-night, sir!"

"Not yet. I will have my pay for 'the other things.' You shall sing to me. Your lute lies there. Come—'It is early in the morning.'" She was singing the first line as she went for her lute, and de Wick closed his eyes and lay smiling while the old, old ditty filled the room with its sweetness—

"It is early in the morning,
At the very break of day,
My Love and I go roaming,
All in the woods so gay.
The dew like pearl drops bathes our feet,
The sweet dewdrops of May

"In the sweetest place of any,
'Mid the grasses thick and high
Caring nothing for the dewdrops,
That around us thickly lie.
Bathed in glittering May-dew,
Sit we there, my Love and I!

"As we pluck the whitethorn blossom,
As we whisper words of love,
Prattling close beside the brooklet,
Sings the lark, and coos the dove.
Our feet are bathed in May-dew,
And our hearts are bathed in love."

Happily, tenderly, fell the musical syllables to the tinkling lute, and as she drew to a close, still singing, she passed smiling out of the room; leaving the door open however, so that they heard her voice growing sweetly softer and softer,

and further and further away, until it left nothing but the delightsome echo in their hearts—

"Our feet are bathed in May-dew
And our hearts are bathed in love."

CHAPTER II
DOCTOR JOHN VERITY

"Some trust in chariots and some in horses; but we will remember the name of the Lord our God."

"The Lord strong and mighty; the Lord mighty in battle."

As Matilda went singing up the darksome stairway, the moon rose in the clear skies and flooded the place with a pallid, fugitive light. In that unearthly glow she looked like some spiritual being. It gave to her pale silk robe a heavenly radiance. It fell upon her white hands touching the lute, and upon her slightly raised face, revealing the rapt expression of one who is singing with the heart as well as with the lips. The clock struck nine as she reached the topmost step, and she raised her voice to drown the chiming bell; and so, in a sweet crescendo of melody, passed out of sight and out of hearing.

About the same time, Mrs. Swaffham and Jane stood together on the eastern terrace of the Manor House, silently admiring the moonlight over the level land. But in a few moments Jane began in a low voice to recite the first verse of the one hundred and third Psalm; her mother took the second verse, they clasped hands, and as they slowly paced the grassy walk they went with antiphonal gladness through the noble thanksgiving together. The ninety-first Psalm followed it, and then Mrs. Swaffham said—

"Now, Jane, let us go to bed and try to sleep. I haven't been worth a rush to-day for want of my last night's sleep. There's a deal to do to-morrow, and it won't be done unless I am at the bottom of everything. My soul, too, is wondrous heavy to-night. I keep asking it 'Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me?' and I get no answer from it."

"You must add counsel to inquiry, mother. Finish the verse—'Trust thou in God, and thou shalt yet praise Him, who is the health of thy countenance, and thy God.' You see, you are to answer yourself."

"I didn't think of that, Jane. A sad heart is poor company, isn't it?"

"There is an old saying, mother,—'A merry heart goes all the day.'"

"But who knows how much the merry heart may have to carry? There is another saying still older, Jane, that is a good deal better than that. It is God's grand charter of help, and you'll find it, dear, in Romans eighth and twenty-eighth. I can tell you, my heart would have failed me many and many a time, it would indeed, but for that verse."

"Are you troubled about my father and brothers?"

"Oh, Jane, that is the sword point at my heart. Any hour it may pierce me. Cromwell went to Scotland, and what for but to fight? and my men-folk have not charmed lives."

"But their lives are hid with Christ in God; nothing can hurt them, that is not of His sending."

"Yes! Yes! But I am a wife and a mother, and you know not yet what that means, Jane. All day I have been saying—no matter what my hands were doing—let this cup pass me, Lord. If your father fell!—if John, or Cymlin, or Tonbert were left on the battle-field! Oh, Jane! Jane!" and the terror that had haunted her all day and shown itself in an irrepressible fretfulness, now sought relief in tears and sobbing. Jane kissed and comforted the sorrowful woman. She led her up-stairs, and helped her into the sanctuary of sleep by many brave and hopeful words; and it so happened that she finally uttered a promise that had once been given to the anxious wife and mother, as a sacred secret token of help and deliverance. And when she heard the gracious words dropping from Jane's lips she said—"That is sufficient. Once, when I was in great fear for your father, the Lord gave me that assurance; now He sends it by you. I am satisfied. I will lay me down and sleep; the words will sing in my heart all night long," and she said them softly as Jane kissed her—"'From the beginning of our journey, the Lord delivered us from every enemy.'"

Then Jane went to her own room. It was a large, low room on the morning side of the house, and it was an illustration of the girl—a place of wide, free spaces, and no furniture in it that was for mere ornament—a small tent bed draped with white dimity, a dressing-table equally plain and spotless, a stand on which lay her Bible, a large oak chair of unknown age, and two or three chairs of the simplest form made of plaited rushes and willow wands. Some pots of sweet basil and geranium were in the casements, and the place was permeated with a peace and perfume that is indescribable.

To this sweet retreat Jane went with eager steps. She closed the door,

slipped the iron bolt into its place, and then lit a rush candle. The light was dim, but sufficient. In it she disrobed herself, and loosened the long braids of pale brown hair; then she put out the candle and let the moonlight flood the room, make whiter the white draperies, and add the last ravishing touch of something heavenly, and something apart from the sphere of our unrest and sorrow.

For some time she sat voiceless, motionless. Was she dreaming of happiness, or learning to suffer? Neither, consciously; she was "waiting" on the Eternal, waiting for that desire God Himself forms in the soul—that secret voice that draws down mercies and spiritual favours which no one knoweth but they who receive them. And Jane was well aware that it was only in the serene depth of a quiescent will she could rise above the meanness of fear and the selfishness of hope, and present that acceptable prayer which would be omnipotent with God:—omnipotent, because so wonderfully aided by all those strange things and secret decrees and unrevealed transactions which are beyond the stars; but which all combine in ministry with the praying soul.

That night, however, she could not escape the tremor and tumult of her own heart, and the sorrowful apprehension of her mother. Peace was far from her. She sat almost breathless, she rose and walked softly to and fro, she stood with uplifted thoughts in the moonlit window—nothing brought her clarity and peace of mind. And when at length she fell into the sleep of pure weariness, it was haunted by dreams full of turmoil and foreshadowings of calamity. She awoke weary and unrefreshed, and with a sigh opened a casement and looked at the outer world again. How good it seemed! In what gray, wild place of sorrow and suffering had she been wandering? She did not know its moors and bogs, and the noise of its black, rolling waters. How different were the green terraces of Swaffham! the sweet beds of late lilies and autumn flowers! the rows of tall hollyhocks dripping in the morning mist! A penetrating scent of marjoram and lavender was in the air, a sense, too, of ended summer, in spite of the lilies and the stately hollyhocks. She came down with a smile, but her mother's face was wan and tired.

"I hoped I should have had a good dream last night, Jane," she said sadly, "but I dreamt nothing to the purpose. I wonder when we shall have a letter. I do not feel able to do anything to-day. I'm not all here. My mind runs on things far away from Swaffham. I am going to let some of the work take its own way for a week. In all conscience, we should have news by that time."

So the anxious days went by for a week, and there was still no word. Then Jane went over to de Wick, hoping that the Earl might have news from his son, which would at least break the voiceless tension of their fears. But the Earl was in the same state—restless, perplexed, wistfully eager concerning the situation of the opposing armies. In their mutual sorrowful conjectures they forgot their

political antipathies, and a loving apprehension drew them together; they could not say unkind things, and Jane was even regretful for her cool attitude towards Matilda on her last visit to Swaffham. They drew close to each other, they talked in low voices of the absent, they clasped hands as they walked together through the lonely park in the autumn afternoon. They also agreed that whoever had news first should send a swift messenger to the other, no matter what the tidings should be. When they parted, Jane kissed her friend, a token of love she had not given her for a long time, and Matilda was so affected by this return of sympathy that she covered her face with her hands and wept. "Oh, Jane!" she said, "I have been so lonely!"

And as Jane answered her with affectionate assurances, there came into her heart a sudden anticipation of intelligence. Without consideration, with no purpose of mere encouragement, she said confidently—"There is some one on the way. I seem to hear them coming." So they parted, and Jane brought home with her a hope which would not be put down. Her face was so bright and her voice so confident that her mother felt the influence of her spirit, and anon shared it. The night was too damp and chill for their usual bedtime walk on the terrace, but they sat together on the hearth, knitting and talking until the evening was far spent. Then Mrs. Swaffham dropped her work upon her lap, and she and Jane began their private evening exercise:

"Then said he unto me, thou art sore troubled in mind for Israel's sake; lovest thou that people better than He that made them?

"And I said, No, Lord, but of very grief have I spoken; for my reins pain me every hour, while I labour to comprehend the way of the most High, and to seek out part of His judgment.

"And he said unto me, thou canst not. And I said wherefore, Lord, whereunto was I born then? or why was not my mother's womb my grave, that I might not have seen the travail of Jacob, and the wearisome toil of the stock of Israel?

"And he said unto me, number me the things that are not yet come; gather me together the drops that are scattered abroad; make me the flowers green again that are withered.

"Open me the places that are closed, and bring me forth the winds that in them are shut up; show me the image of a voice; and then I will declare to thee the thing that thou labourest to know.

"And I said, O Lord that bearest rule; who may know these things, but he that hath not his dwelling with men?

"As for me I am unwise; how may I speak of these things whereof thou askest me?

"Then he said unto me, like as thou canst do none of these things that I have spoken of, even so canst thou not find out my judgment; or in the end, the

love that I have promised unto my people."

And when the short antiphony was finished, they kissed each other a hopeful "good-night," being made strong in this—that they had put self out of their supplication, and been only "troubled in mind for Israel's sake."

All were in deep sleep when the blast of a trumpet and the trampling of a heavily-shod horse on the stones of the courtyard awakened them. Jane's quick ear detected at once the tone of triumph in the summons. She ran to her mother's room, and found her at an open window. She was calling aloud to the messenger, "Is it you, Doctor Verity?" and the answer came swift and strong, ere the question was fairly asked—

"It is I, John Verity, with the blessing of God, and good tidings."

"Get your horse to stable, Doctor, and we will be down to welcome you." The next moment the house was astir from one end to the other—bells were ringing, lights moving hither and thither, men and women running downstairs, and at the open door Mrs. Swaffham and Jane waiting for the messenger, their eager faces and shining eyes full of hope and expectation.

He kept them waiting until he had seen his weary horse attended to, then hurrying across the courtyard he clasped the hands held out in welcome, and with a blessing on his lips came into the lighted room. It was joy and strength to look at him. His bulk was like that of the elder gods; his head like an antique marble, his hazel eyes beaming, joyous, and full of that light which comes "from within." A man of large mind as well as of large stature, with a simple, good heart, that could never grow old; strong and courageous, yet tender as a girl; one who in the battle of life would always go to the front.

So it was good even to see him, and how much better to hear him say—

"Israel Swaffham is well, and God hath given us a great victory."

"And John?"

"I left him following after the enemy. We have smitten them hip and thigh; we——"

"And Cymlin?"

"He was guarding the prisoners. We have ten thousand of them, and——"

"And Tonbert?"

"Nothing has hurt him. He was in a strait for one five minutes; but I cried to him—'Set thy teeth, and fight for thy life, Tonbert;' and he came safely away with the colours in his hands, when he had slain two of the rogues who wanted them."

"Now then, we shall have peace, Doctor?"

"No use, Martha, in crying peace! peace! when peace is wickedness. Our Protestant liberty was won by men willing to go to the stake for it; our civil liberty can only be won by men willing to go to the battle-field for it. But here

come the beef and bread, and I am a hungry man. Let me eat and drink. And you women, bless the Lord and forget not all His benefits."

It was not long before he took a pipe from his pocket, lit it, and drew his chair to the hearthstone. "Now we will talk," he said. "When did you hear of us last?"

"About the tenth of August. You were then in camp near Edinburgh," said Mrs. Swaffham.

"To be sure—having a paper war with the Kirk and David Leslie. It was little to Cromwell's liking, and no more to David Leslie's; both of them would rather defiance of battle than Declarations from the General Assembly. They came to nothing, and as the weather was bad and our provisions short, and our men falling sick beyond imagination, we retreated to Dunbar to fortify and recruit. Then the cunning Scots got behind us and blocked up our way. We were in a bad case, Martha, between Leslie and the black North Sea—in a trap, and no less. For the first time our good Cromwell faced defeat, yes, annihilation. Did he lose heart? Not a bit of it. He sent word south to get men ready to meet Leslie, whatever became of us; and then he watched and waited and prayed. Such prayer! Martha. I saw him lifting up his sword to heaven—I heard him speaking to God—pressing forward and upward—bent on prevailing—taking heaven by assault. About three o'clock on the morning of the battle I went to him. It was yet dark, but the men were at arms, and Cromwell was going from troop to troop encouraging them. I said to him, 'Brother Oliver, you have got an answer?' And he smiled joyfully and said:

"'It is in my heart, John. When the devil had said all he had to say, then God spoke. Indeed I have great consolations. I know, and am sure, that because of our weakness, because of our strait, the Lord will deliver us. But tell the men that whoever has a heart for prayer, must pray now; and then quit themselves like men—there is ONE watching and helping them.'

"You women would not understand the setting of the battle. It is enough that it began at four in the morning, and that by nine o'clock there was no longer a Scotch army—three thousand of it were slain in the battle, many more killed in pursuit. We had all their baggage and artillery, besides fifteen thousand stand of arms and two hundred colours to hang up in Westminster Hall—and not twenty Englishmen killed. The Scots came forward shouting, '*The Covenant! The Covenant!*' and Cromwell thundered back, 'THE LORD OF HOSTS!' His voice seemed to fill the field. It was heard above the clash of the swords, and the shouting of the captains—and it was caught by thousands of other voices—above the bellowing of the cannon. It was an invocation, it was a shout of triumph, and indeed THE LORD OF HOSTS was above *The Covenant*.'"

"Oh, if I could have seen Cromwell at that onset! just for a moment!" ex-

claimed Jane.

"At the onset! Yes! It is something never to forget. He leaps to his horse, rides to the head of his troop, and gallops it to the very front of the battle. I saw him at Dunbar, his Ironsides in buff and rusty steel shouting after him—sons of Anak most of them—God's soldiers, not men's; and led by one whose swoop and stroke in battle no one ever saw equaled. All through the fight he was a pillar of fire to us; and just when it was hottest the sun rose upon the sea, and Cromwell took it for a sign of present victory, and shouted to his army, 'Now let God arise, and His enemies shall be scattered.'"

"I can see him! I can hear him!" cried Jane.

"And at that moment, the Scots broke and fled, and the field was ours. Then he called a halt, and to steady his men and fire them afresh for the pursuit, he sang with us the one hundred and seventeenth Psalm. And one troop after another caught the words, and for two miles men leaning upon their swords were singing, 'O praise the Lord all ye nations: praise Him all ye people. For His merciful kindness is great towards us, and the truth of the Lord endureth forever. Praise ye the Lord!' I tell you there was joyful clamour enough on Dunbar's swampy field to make the sky ring about it."

"And what of Israel Swaffham? He did his part? I know that," said Mrs. Swaffham.

"He led his own troop of the solid fen men of Cambridgeshire. I saw their blue banner waving wherever Tonbert carried it."

"And John?"

"Was with Lambert's Yorkshiremen. No one could resist them. Cymlin rode with Cromwell. Cymlin was never behindhand yet."

"I thank God for my men. I give them gladly to His Cause."

Jane's face was radiant, and tears of enthusiasm filled her eyes. She kissed the doctor proudly, and ran to send a messenger to de Wick with the tidings of Dunbar. When she returned she sat down by his side, and leaning her head against his arm, began to question him:

"Dr. John, at Marston Moor Leslie fought *with* Cromwell, was with him in that glorious charge, where he got the name of Ironside. Why then was he fighting against Cromwell at Dunbar?"

"The Scotch have had many minds in this war, Jane. Just now they are determined to make Presbyterianism dominant in England, and give us the young man, Charles Stuart, for our king. And Englishmen will not have either King or Presbytery. As far as that goes, most of them would rather take the Book of Common Prayer than touch the Scotch Covenant. And as for the young man, Charles Stuart, he is false as hell from his beard to his boots; false to the Scots, false to the English, true to no one."

"And you, Doctor, how do you feel?"

"My little girl, I was born an Independent. I have preached and suffered for liberty of conscience; if I could deny it, I would deny my baptism. I'll do neither—not while my name is John Verity."

Then Jane lifted his big hand and kissed it, and answered, "I thought so!"

"And if England wants a king," he continued, "she can make one; she has good men enough to choose from."

"Some say that Cromwell will make himself king."

"Some people know no more of Cromwell than a mite knows of a cheesemonger. Nevertheless, Cromwell is the Captain of England. He has expressed her heart, he has done her will."

"Yet he is not without faults," said Mrs. Swaffham.

"I don't see his faults, Martha. I see only him. Great men may have greater faults than little men can find room for; and Cromwell is beloved of God, and therefore not always explainable to men."

"He has dared to do many things which even his own party do not approve."

"Jane, they who care will dare, though it call flame upon them. And Cromwell loves to lead on the verge of the impossible, for it is then he can invoke the aid of the Omnipotent."

"I thought the Scotch were a very good, religious people."

"God made them to be good, but He knew they wouldn't be; so He also made Oliver Cromwell."

"Are you going further, Doctor?" asked Mrs. Swaffham.

"No, Martha. I mean to stay here until the General's messenger joins me. He sent a letter to London by the young Lord Cluny Neville, and he took the direct road there, so we parted very early in the day; but he calls here for me on his return, and we shall go back together, if so God wills, to Edinburgh. And now, Jane Swaffham, if thou be a discreet young woman, be careful of the young Lord Cluny Neville."

"Why am I warned, Doctor?"

"Because he is one of those men who take women captive with his beauty—a very gracious youth—a great lover of the General, and much loved by him."

"I never heard you speak of Lord Cluny Neville before."

"Because I did not know him before. He came into our camp at Musselburgh and offered Cromwell his sword. The two men looked at each other steadily for a full minute, and in that minute Cromwell loved the young man. He saw down into his heart, and trusted him. Later, he told me that he reminded him of his own son, Oliver, who, as you know, was killed in battle just before Naseby. He has set his heart on the youth, and shows him great favour. Some are jealous of the boy, and make a grumble that he is so much trusted."

"How can they be so foolish? I wonder the General suffers them. Surely he can have some one to love near him," said Mrs. Swaffham.

"Well, Martha, it was part of the Apostle's wisdom to suffer fools gladly. My brother Oliver can do it; and there is nothing wiser or more difficult. I cannot do it. I would rough them! rough them! till they learnt their folly, and left it."

"If this young Lord is taking a letter to Madame Cromwell, then why did not Israel write to me?"

"Oh, the unreasonableness of women! Can a man write when he is in the saddle pursuing the enemy? Israel and Lambert left immediately with seven regiments for Edinburgh. He sent you words full of love and comfort; so did your sons; what would you have, woman?"

"The General wrote to the Generaless."

"He wrote on the battle-field, the cries of the wounded and dying in his ears, all horror and confusion around him. He was giving orders about the arms and the artillery, and about the movement of the troops as he wrote. But he knew his wife and children were waiting in sore anxiety for news—and not expecting good news—and 'twas a miracle how he did write at all. No one else could have brought heart and hands to a pen."

"I think Israel might have written."

"I'll be bound you do! It's woman-like."

"What do you think of the young Charles Stuart?" asked Jane. "It is said he has taken the Covenant, and is turned pious."

"I think worse of him than of his father. He is an unprincipled malignant—a brazen villain, changing and chopping about without faith in God or man. Englishmen will have none of him—and the Scots can't force him on them."

"Dunbar settled that; eh, Doctor?"

"I should say that Dunbar has done the job for all the Presbyterian tribe."

"But oh, the suffering, Doctor!" said Mrs. Swaffham. "Think of that."

"I do, Martha. But God's will be done. Let them suffer. In spite of Cromwell's entreaties and reasonings, they had taken in the Stuart to force him upon us as king—a king who at this very moment, has a popish army fighting for him in Ireland; who has Prince Rupert—red with the blood of Englishmen—at the head of ships stolen from us on a malignant account; who has French and Irish ships constantly ravaging our coasts, and who is every day issuing commissions to raise armies in the very heart of England to fight Englishmen. Treachery like this concerns all good people. Shall such a matchless, astonishing traitor indeed reign over us? If we were willing for it, we should be worthy of ten thousand deaths—could ten thousand deaths be endured. Now let me go to rest. I am weary and sleepy, and have won the right to sleep. Give me a verse to sleep on."

Mrs. Swaffham answered at once, as if she had been pondering the words,

"'He lifted up his face to heaven, and praised the king of heaven. And said, from Thee cometh victory, from Thee cometh wisdom, and Thine is the glory, and I am Thy servant.'"

"Thank you, Martha; you have spoken well for me;" and with a smile he turned his beaming eyes on Jane, and she said confidently—

"'Strive for the truth unto death, and the Lord shall fight for thee.'"

"Amen, Jane! And as you have given me a word of Jesus, the son of Sirach, so will I give you both one, and you may ponder it in your hearts—'Many kings have sat down upon the ground, and one that was never thought of, hath worn the crown.'"

Then Mrs. Swaffham put her hand on the Doctor's arm to stay him, and she asked, "Do you remember the flag the women of Huntingdon and Ely gave to General Cromwell just before Naseby?"

"I do. It was a great lion—the lion of England guarding the Cross of England. And your Israel made the speech. I am not likely to forget it."

"Then you also remember that as Israel was speaking, the east wind rose, and stretched wide-out the silk folds, so that the big tawny lion watching the red cross was blown straight above the General's bare head. And there was a murmur of wonder, and then a great shout, and Israel pointing to the flag and the man below it, cried out—

"Behold your Captain! Cromwell 'is a lion's whelp—from the prey thou art gone up, my son—and unto Him shall the gathering of the people be.'"

"I was standing with Mrs. Cromwell and the girls," said Jane; "and at the shout he turned to them, and little Frances ran to him and he gave the flagstaff into your hand, Doctor, and then stooped and tied the child's tippet. Then Mary and I went closer, and to us he was just the same Mr. Cromwell that I knew years ago, when I sat on his knee, and put my arms round his neck, and he kissed me as tenderly as if I was one of his own little girls. But for all that, something of power and majesty clothed him like a garment, and the people generally feared to touch the hem of it."

"*A lion's whelp!*" he said proudly, "and while England's lion has such whelps, she may make and unmake kings as is best for her." Then he lit his candle and went stamping down the flagged passage that led to his room. The men and women of the house were waiting there for a word, and with the open door in one hand and the candle in the other, he bade them good-morning with the notable verse Jane had given him for his own comfort. And as he did so, he suddenly remembered that these words had been written thousands of years ago for *his* encouragement; and he was filled with wonder at the thought, and he called out, "Men and women, all of you, listen once again to the word of the Lord—

"'Strive for the truth unto death, and the Lord shall fight for you.'"

In the meantime Mrs. Swaffham and Jane were going slowly up-stairs. "We can have two or three hours sleep, Jane," said Mrs. Swaffham; and Jane answered, "Yes" like one who either heard not, or cared not. Her mother understood. She said softly, "He was thinking of Cromwell when he said 'one that was never thought of'—about the crown I mean, Jane?"

"Yes, mother—*Oliver Rex*!"

"It might be."

"It ought to be. He has conquered England, Ireland, Scotland:—William of Normandy had not a third of his right."

"I wish I could forget the man; for I must lose myself for an hour or two, or I shall be good for nothing when daylight comes. You, too, Jane, go and sleep."

She said, "Yes, mother." But sleep was a thousand miles away from Jane Swaffham.

CHAPTER III
WOVEN OF LOVE AND GLORY

"Because right is right, to follow right
Were wisdom in the scorn of consequence."

"See that thou lovest what is lovely."

For the next three days there was a busy time at Swaffham. All the neighbours were summoned to hear the news, and a sermon from Dr. Verity; and he did not spare the rod in the way of his calling. There were some wealthy young men present, and he let them know that they ought not to be present; furthermore, he told them how many miles it was to Duty and to Scotland.

"This is not a time," he said, "for men to be on their farms or in their shops getting a little money. '*Thou Shalt*' is written on life in characters just as terrible as '*Thou Shalt Not*.' It is not enough that you do not help the enemy; you *Shall* shut your shop, you *Shall* leave your oxen untied; you *Shall* take your musket, and never once think in your heart 'Who is going to pay me for this business?' You *Shall* go forth to serve God and to save England. If you, Squire Acton, would out, and you, Fermor, and you, Calthorpe, and Charmington and Garnier, you

would draw men after you; for many will follow if the candle be once lighted. By the mouth of John Verity, a servant of the Lord, you have this day got another call. Look inward and think over it. You say you love God; you say you love England; what is love worth that hath a tongue but no hands? I told you these things before, and if you did not hear me, you ought to have heard me. Stand up and face the world, and say plainly, 'I will go,' or else, 'I will not go.' You are Englishmen, you are obliged to own that name, and in the freedom or slavery, the glory or disgrace of England, you will be forced to share. You pray for England. Very well, that is your duty; but it is serving God very much at your ease. God wants your hands as well as your prayers."

"Against whom?" asked Garnier.

"Against this young Charles Stuart. He is a bolder liar than his father; he sticks at no perjury that answers his purpose. If you let him put shackles on you again, it will be a deed to make the devil blush—if he has any blushing faculty in him."

Then Acton rose and said, "Dr. Verity, I will go," and Calthorpe and Fermor followed, and the Doctor told them to meet him at Swaffham Market Cross the following day. "And I will say this thing to you," he added, "you are like to have the good fortune of the man hired at the eleventh hour; you will get the full penny for the last stroke.

"And now," he continued, "I have a few words for you, women. In times when everything seems on the perish, a deal depends on you. God knows there are troubles enough for us all, but some women are never weary of hunting for more. It is a poor business. Give it up. You know that you often make wretched days for yourselves, and every one you come across, about little things not worth minding. I have heard men that have been in tropic countries say 'they hardly ever saw the lions and serpents they feared,' but that the flies and the insects and the heat made their lives miserable enough. That is the way in most women's lives; they hear about sieges and battles and awful death, but such things don't often come to their door-step. If they do, my experience is that women behave themselves nobly; they lift up their hearts and meet their fate like men and Christians.

"I am bound to say, the main part of women's troubles comes from little things—from very little things. I've known a broken pitcher, or a slice of burned bread, or a smoky fire do the black business for a whole day. No matter what comes, women, keep a cheerful temper. Cheerfulness is the very coin of happiness. The devil loves a woman with a snappy, nagging temper; she does lots of business for him, without his helping her. I don't think any of you here will take his arles-penny, or work for his 'well done.' Besides, all women want to be loved; but I can tell you, every one feels bitter and hard to those *who prevent happiness.*

It is easier to forgive a person for doing us a great wrong than for deliberately spoiling our comfort because some trifling thing has put them out. A woman who will do that is a selfish creature, and she ought to live by herself."

The short service was followed by an excellent dinner, and the richly dressed men and women, full of eager questions and innocent mirth, filled the Swaffham parlours, and made a fair picture of hospitality sobered by great interests and great events. Some of the guests lingered for two and three days, but Dr. Verity would not be delayed. The next morning he enrolled sixty men, and then he was resolved to ride with them as far as York. "And if Neville comes, send him quickly after me," he said. "He thought he might be four days, but I will give him seven, and then wonder if he keeps tryst. There will be many things in London to delay him."

In fact Neville was so long delayed, that Mrs. Swaffham was certain he had been sent back to Scotland at once on Mrs. Cromwell's order, and that he would probably be with the Lord General before Dr. Verity. After a week or more had passed, all expectation of his visit died out, and Jane began to wonder why Matilda had not been to see her.

"No wonder at all," replied Mrs. Swaffham. "She showed her good sense in keeping away until the victory had been talked out. You would have been on the verge of quarreling all the time you were together, and the kindness between de Wick and Swaffham is a deal older than the oldest Stuart—it is generations old—and it is not worth while killing it for either Stuart or Cromwell."

As she was speaking there was a slight stir in the passage, and Jane smiled at her mother. It was only an illustration of the old law—they had been talking of Matilda, because she was approaching them, and had sent her thoughts in advance. She came in without her usual spirit. She was dressed in black with not even a flower to relieve its sombreness; she had been weeping, and her face was without colour or animation.

Jane went to meet her friend, kissed her, and removed her hat. Then Matilda went to Mrs. Swaffham and laid her head against her breast, and said, "I have a bad headache. I have a bad heartache. Oh, dear! Oh, dear!"

"It was bad news for you, dearie," said the motherly woman; "you may be sure I thought of you."

"I know you did. It was terrible news. Father has walked the floor night and day ever since."

"I hope that no one you love was hurt?"

"Stephen is well, as far as we know. He sent one of his troopers with the news—George Copping, a Huntingdon man. I dare say you know him?"

"I know who he is."

"I never saw my father so distracted. And it is always 'give, give, give.'

George took away our last silver, and I am sure nearly all our money. Father has sent away all the men-servants, but such as are necessary to work the land; four of them went back with George to the army. Poor old Anice! She has one son with Cromwell, and the other has now gone to the King. As she cooks, her tears fall. I have had to send Delia away—only Anice and Audrey are left to care for us, and father says they are more than he can afford. Though his wound has reopened since he heard of the Dunbar disaster, he would have gone north himself with George and the men——"

"Oh, my dear Matilda, do not suffer him to do that. You know much depends upon his keeping quiet at de Wick."

"You need not remind me of that, Jane. I know that we are only Cromwell's tenants, and subject to his will. We may be sent away at any hour, if General Cromwell says so."

"Not without proper process of law, Matilda. Cromwell is not the law."

"The King is my father's friend, yet if he move an inch for the King's help, he will lose everything."

"And he will break his word, which is the greatest loss of all," said Jane. "I know, dear, you would not wish him to do that."

"Is a promise given under stress to be kept, Jane? I doubt it."

"It is a stress bound all round by kindness. I heard my father speak of it. When the de Wick estate was under the Parliament's consideration, Cromwell was much disturbed. Your two brothers had just been killed in battle, your mother was very ill, your father suffering from a severe wound, and it was the Lord General who wrote your father a letter which should be graven upon the hearts of every de Wick. In it he promised that for their old friendship's sake, and for the sake of the fight over the Bedford Level—in which fight de Wick stood boldly with Cromwell—that he would stand between de Wick and all bills of forfeiture. He said also that he would not hold your father accountable for the acts of his son Stephen, if he personally restrained himself from all designs and acts injurious to the Commonwealth. My father said it was such a noble letter as one brother might have written to another."

"I have heard enough of it. I do not think much of a kindness cribbed and tethered by this and that condition. It has made my father nothing but Cromwell's servant. I am ashamed of it."

"Dr. Verity has been here," said Jane, trying to change the subject.

"Pray, who does not know that? He never comes but he takes some one away for Cromwell. I thought I could have counted on Acton and Fermor remaining at home."

"He thinks the war nearly over, Matilda."

"It is not. Even if King Charles were killed, there would then be King James

to fight. The war may last for a century. And if this is the world, I would I were out of it. Dear, shall I ever be happy again?"

"Yes indeed, Matilda. You will yet be very happy, and forget this sorrowful time."

"Not while my life lasts, Jane. Trust me, I shall never forget it."

"Let us stop talking of it. At any rate we can do that. Tell me about your lovers, Matilda. How many have you at this present?"

"The war has taken them all but young Godschall, and he and I are no longer friends. When he was at de Wick last, we said so much we have not spoken a word since."

"I am sorry for it."

"'Tis a common occurrence, many women endure it."

"And what has come to George St. Amand? He was once very much your servant."

"Poor George!"

"Why do you say 'poor George'?"

"Because we are told that all titles are to be cancelled and abolished, and George St. Amand is dumb unless he can salt every sentence he utters with what 'my Lord, my father' thinks or says."

"And there was also among your servants, one Philip Heneage."

"Philip has gone to the enemy. I do not know, and I will not know, and I scorn to know, anything more about him. He should be hanged, and cheap at that."

Before Jane could answer, Mrs. Swaffham, who had left the room, returned to it. She had a hot wine posset in her hand and a fresh Queen's cake. "Come, my dearie, and eat and drink," she said. "Keep your stomach in a good temper, and I'll be bound it will help you to bear heart-trouble, of all kinds, wonderfully."

Matilda took the posset and cake gratefully, and said, "I heard Dr. Verity gave the women who had come to meet him one of his little rages. I hope they liked it."

"He only told us the truth," said Jane. "Yes, we liked it."

"Well," said Matilda, "I am not one that wants all England for myself, but I think I could spare Dr. John Verity, and feel the better of it. May the Scots make much of him!"

"He is one of the best of men, Matilda."

"Yes, to you, whom he counts as one of the covenanted. To me, he is very hard, and I cannot forget that he was chief in silencing Father Sacy."

"A few years ago Father Sacy got Dr. Verity imprisoned for preaching the Word of God. He was two years in a dreadful cell, and his wife and child died while——"

"And pray what does the Word of God say about doing good to those who injure you? Dear Jane, never heed my words. I have a privilege to be ill-natured—the privilege of the losing and the sorrowful."

Thus, in spite of all Jane's efforts, they still found themselves on dangerous or debatable ground. All topics were roads leading thither, and they finally abandoned every kind of tactic and spoke as their hearts prompted them. Then, though some hard things were said, many very kind things were also said, and Matilda rose to go home comforted and helped—for, after all, the tongue is servant to the heart. As she was tying her hat, a maid called Mrs. Swaffham from the room, and Matilda lingered, waiting for her return. She stood with Jane at the window. Their hands were clasped in each other's, but they were silent, and both girls appeared to be looking at the beds full of late flowers—beautiful, pensive flowers, having a positive air of melancholy, as if they felt the sadness of the autumn sunset. But it was not likely that either of them saw the flowers; certainly, Matilda's first words gave no intimation that she did.

"Heigh-ho!" she said, "why should we worry? Everything comes round in time to its proper place, and then it will be, as old Anice expects—the hooks will find the eyes that fit them."

As she spoke, Mrs. Swaffham hastily entered the room, and with her was Lord Cluny Neville. Both girls turned from the window and caught his eyes at the same moment. He was, as Dr. Verity said, a man destined to captivate, not only by his noble bearing and handsome face, but also by such an indescribable charm of manner as opened the door of every heart to him. He carried his morion in his left hand, and in his dress of dark cloth and bright steel looked the very picture of a Puritan paladin. Bowing to both girls, he presented Jane with a letter from her friend Mary Cromwell, and also with a small parcel which contained some beautiful ribbons. The pretty gift made a pleasant introduction to a conversation full of gay inquiries and interesting items of social information. Matilda took little part in it. She watched the young soldier with eyes full of interest, and did not refuse his escort to her carriage; but as she departed, she gave Jane one look which left her with an unhappy question in her heart, not only for that night, but to be recalled long after as premonitory and prophetic.

During the preparations for the evening meal, and while Neville was in his chamber removing his armour and refreshing his clothing, Jane also found time to put on a pretty evening gown. It was of pale brown lutestring, a little lighter and brighter in colour than her own hair, and with its stomacher and collar of white lace it added greatly to the beauty of her appearance. Something had happened to Jane; she was in a delicious anticipation, and she could not keep the handsome stranger out of her consideration. There was a brilliant light in her eyes, and a brilliant colour on her cheeks, and a happy smile on her lovely bow-shaped

mouth.

When she heard Neville's steady, swift step coming towards her, she trembled. Why? She did not ask herself, and her soul did not tell her. It indeed warned her, either of joy or of sorrow, for surely its tremor intimated that the newcomer was to be no mere visitor of passage, no neutral guest; that perhaps, indeed, he might have entered her home as a fate, or at least as a messenger of destiny. For who can tell, when a stranger walks into any life, what his message may be? Bringers of great tragedies have crossed thresholds with a smile, and many an unknown enemy has been bidden to the hearth with a welcome.

Jane was in no mood for such reflections. This young soldier, bearing a gift in his hand, had bespoke for himself at his first glance and word the girl's favour. She knew nothing of love, and Dr. Verity's warning had not made her afraid of it. Indeed, there was in her heart a pleasant daring, the touch of unseen danger was exhilarating; she felt that she was on that kind of dangerous ground which calls out all a woman's watchfulness and all her weapons. One of the latter was the possibility of captivating, instead of being captivated. It was a natural instinct, never felt before, but which sprang, full-grown, from Jane's heart as soon as suggested. The desire for conquest! Who has not felt its pushing, irresistible impulse? She accused herself of having given away to Neville's influence without any effort to resist it. That thought in itself arrested her sympathies. Why did she do it? Might she not just as well have brought his right to question? Would she have succumbed so readily to the influence of some beautiful woman? This self-examination made her blush and utter an exclamation of chagrin.

Neville entered gayly in the midst of it. He had removed his steel corselet, and the pliant dark cloth in which he was dressed gave additional grace to his figure and movements. A falling band of Flemish lace was round his throat, and his fine linen showed beneath the loose sleeves of his coat in a band of the same material. His breeches had a bow of ribbon at the knee, and his low shoes of morocco leather a rosette of the same. It was now evident that his hair was very black, and that his eyebrows made dark, bold curves above his sunbrowned cheeks and flashing black eyes—eyes, that in the enthusiasm of feeling or speaking became living furnaces filled with flame. A solar man, sensitive, radiating; one who would move both men and women, whether they would or not.

It was a wonderful evening to both Jane and Mrs. Swaffham. Neville told over again the story of Dunbar, and told it in a picturesque way that would have been impossible to Dr. Verity. Taking whatever he could find that was suitable, he built for them the Lammermuir hills, on which the Scots' army lay; described the swamp at their base; the dark stream—forty feet deep—that ran through it, and the narrow strip by the wild North Sea, where Cromwell's army stood at bay. He made them feel the damp and chill of the gray, desolate place; he made them

see the men standing at arms all through the misty night; he made them hear the solemn tones of prayer breaking the silence, and then they understood how the great Cromwell, moving from group to group, saturated and inspired every man with the energy of his own faith and courage. Then he showed them the mighty onslaught, and the ever-conquering General leading it! Through Neville, they heard his voice flinging the battle-cry of the Puritan host in the very teeth of the enemy. They saw him, when the foe fled, leaning upon his bloody sword, pouring out a triumphal Psalm of gratitude so strenuously and so melodiously, that men forgot to pursue, that they might sing. It was a magnificent drama, though there was only one actor to present it.

And when the recital was over and they sat silent, being too much moved to find words for their feeling, he dropped his voice and said, "There is something else. I should like to tell you it, yet I fear that you will not believe me. 'Twas a strange thing, and beyond nature."

"Tell us," said Jane, almost in a whisper. "We should like to hear, should we not, mother?"

Mrs. Swaffham bowed her head, and the young man continued: "It was in the afternoon of the day preceding the battle. The Captain-General had just come back from Dunbar, and his face was full of satisfaction. There was even then on it the light and assurance of victory, and he called the men round him and pointed out the false step the Scots were taking. 'The Lord hath delivered them into our hands!' he said. And as he spoke, the fog was driven before the wind and the rain; and in the midst of it he mounted his horse to ride about the field. And as he stood a moment, looking towards the ships and the sea, *this man*, *this Cromwell*, grew, and grew, and grew, until in the sight of all of us, he was a gigantic soldier towering over the army and the plain. I speak the truth. I see yet that prodigious, wraithlike figure, with its solemn face bathed in the storms of battle. And not I alone saw this vision, many others saw it also; and we watched it with awe and amazement, until it blended with the drifting fogs and disappeared."

"Indeed, I doubt it not," said Mrs. Swaffham. "I have seen, I have heard, things in Swaffham that could only be seen and heard by the spiritual senses."

Jane did not speak; she glanced at the young man, wondering at his rapt face, its solemn pallor and mystic exaltation, and feeling his voice vibrate through all her senses, though at the last he had spoken half-audibly, as people do in extremes of life or feeling.

It is in moments such as these, that Love grows as Neville saw the wraith of Cromwell grow—even in a moment's gaze. Jane forgot her intention of captivating, and yet none the less she accomplished her purpose. Her sensitive face, its sweet freshness and clear candour, charmed by its mere responsiveness; and not accustomed to resist or to control his feelings, Neville showed plainly the

impression he had received. For when they parted for the night he held her hand with a gentle pressure, and quick glancing, sweetly smiling, he flashed into her eyes admiration and interest not to be misunderstood.

And Jane's heart was a crystal rock, only waiting the touch of a wand. Had she felt the mystic contact? Her fine eyes were dropped, but there was a faint, bewitching smile around her lovely mouth, and there was something bewildering and something bewildered in her very silence and simplicity.

Neville was charmed. His heart was so light, so happy, that he heard it singing as he held the little maiden's hand. He went into his chamber with the light step of one to whom some great joy has come, and, full of its vague anticipation, sat down a moment to realise what had happened. "I have caught love from her in a glance," he said. "What a dainty little creature! What a little darling she is! Shy and quiet as a bird, and yet I'll warrant me she hath wit and courage to furnish six feet of flesh and blood, instead of four. Is she fair? Is she handsome? I forgot to look with certainty. She hath the finest eyes I ever saw my own in—a face like a wild flower—a small hand, I saw that in particular—and feet like the maiden in the fairy tale—exquisite feet, prettily shod. Neat and sweet and full of soul! Little Jane! Little darling! A man were happy enough if he won your love. And what a rich heart she must have! She has made Love grow in me. She has created it from her own store."

Then he moved his chair to the hearth and looked around. It was a large room, full of the wavering shadows of the blazing logs and the long taper. "What an ancient place!" he sighed. "'Tis a bed fine enough and big enough for a monarch. Generations have slept on it. Those pillows must be full of dreams. If all the souls that have slept in this room were to be gathered together, how great a company they would be! If I could see them, I would enlist all for my hero—they should swear to be Cromwell's men! In solemn faith the room is full of *presence*." Then he rose, turned his face bravely to the shadowy place, and bending his head said, "Wraiths of the dead, I salute you. Suffer me to sleep in peace in your company."

He did not sit down again, but having cast over himself the shield and balm of prayer, he soon fell into the sound sleep of weary youth. The sun was high when he awoke, and he was ashamed of his apparent indolence and would scarce delay long enough to eat a hasty breakfast. Then his horse was waiting, and he stood at the threshold with Mrs. Swaffham's hand in his. There were tears in her eyes as she blessed him and bade him "God-speed," and gave him her last messages to her husband and sons.

"Fare you well," he answered, and "God be with you! I hope to be sent this way again, and that soon. Will you give me welcome, madame?"

"You will be welcome as sunshine," answered Mrs. Swaffham.

Then he looked at Jane, and she said, "God speed you on your journey. You have words for my father and brothers, but if you find the right time, say also to General Cromwell that Jane Swaffham remembers him constantly in her prayers, and give him these words for his strength and comfort—'They shall be able to do nothing against thee, saith the Lord: My hands shall cover thee.'"

He bowed his head, and then looked steadily at her; and in that momentary communion realised that he had lost himself, and found himself again, in the being of another—that he had come in contact with something and found his spirit had touched a kindred spirit. Yet he said only, "Good-bye, till we meet again."

As he mounted, Mrs. Swaffham asked him if he went by York, and he answered, "Yes, I know perfectly that road, and I must not miss my way, for I am a laggard already."

"That is right," she said. "The way that is best to go is the way that best you know."

He did not hear the advice, for the moment his horse felt the foot in the stirrup he was off, and hard to hold with bit and bridle. They watched him down the avenue, the sun glinting on his steel armour and morion and the wind tossing behind his left shoulder the colours of the Commonwealth.

When he was quite out of sight, they turned into the house with a sigh, and Mrs. Swaffham said, "Now, I must have the house put in order. If I were you, Jane, I would go to de Wick this afternoon. Matilda is full of trouble. I cannot feel indifferent to her."

"She says the kingfishers have left de Wick waters. They have bred there for centuries, and the Earl is much distressed at their departure."

"No wonder. Many people think they bring good fortune. I would not say different. There are more messengers of good and evil than we know of. If I get things in order, I will also go to de Wick. Reginald de Wick and I were friends when we could hardly say the word—that was in King James' reign. Dear me! How the time flies!"

Then Jane went to her room and began to fold away the pretty things she had worn the previous night. She smoothed every crease in her silk gown, and fingered the lace orderly, and folded away her stockings of clocked silk and her bronzed morocco shoes with their shining silver buckles. And as she did so, her heart sat so lightly on its temporal perch that she was singing and did not know it until her mother opened the door, and like one astonished, asked, "What are you singing, Jane?"

"Why, mother! Nothing but some verses by good George Wither."

Then the mother shut the door again. If George Wither had written what Jane was singing, she was sure the words were wise and profitable; for Wither

was the poet of the Puritans, and his "*Hallelujah*" all to the families of the Commonwealth, that the "*Christian Year*" has been to our own times. So Jane finished without further interruption, but with rather less spirit her song—"*For Lovers being constrained to be absent from each other*."

"Dearest fret not, sigh not so,
For it is not time nor place
That can much divide us two;
Though it part us for a space."

And she did not know that, at the very same moment, Cluny Neville was solacing the loneliness of his ride by the same writer's "*Hymn for Victory*" giving to its Hebraic fervour a melodious vigour of interpretation admirably emphasised by the Gregorian simplicity of the tune to which was sung—

"It was alone Thy Providence,
Which made us masters of the field.
Thou art our castle of defense,
Our fort, our bulwark, and our shield.
And had not Thou our Captain been,
To lead us on and off again;
This happy day, we had not seen,
But in the bed of death had lain."

CHAPTER IV
SO SWEET A DREAM

"To judge events, or actions, without connecting them with their causes, is manifestly unjust and untruthful. Such judgments may make inflexible justice to appear tyranny; righteous retribution to wear the guise of cruelty; and virtue itself to have the likeness of vice."

"All love is sweet,
Given or returned. Common as light is love,
And its familiar voice wearies not ever."

Peace was now confidently predicted, but hope outruns events, and the winter slowly settled down over the level dreariness of the land without any apparent change in the national situation. People grew tired of expecting, and turned almost sullenly to the daily duties of life. For in the North, the winter weather would certainly bring the winter truce, and they must bear the inaction and suspense as well as they were able.

In de Wick, the situation was pitiably forlorn and desolate. The great trees around it stood with dripping leaves motionless in the thick fog; the long grasses lay withered and brown; the livid waters of the lake were no longer enlivened by the scream of the kingfishers, and about the house were silence and desolation. Matilda would gladly have escaped its depressing atmosphere for a little while every day, but she could not, for the roads leading from it were almost quagmires unless steadied by frost, and it was only rarely on such occasions that the horses could be spared to take her as far as Swaffham. These visits were eagerly expected by both girls, and yet were usually regretted; for Matilda could not help saying many hard things, and Jane could not conscientiously quite pass them over. Much was excused for the sake of her sorrow and loss and visible poverty, but even these excuses had limitations and every interview brought with it many sharp words not quite washed out by reconciling tears and promised forgetfulness.

Even the atmosphere of Swaffham, though grateful and cheering, was exasperating to the poor royalist lady. There was such cheerfulness in its comfortable rooms, such plenty of all the necessaries of life, such busy service of men and maids, such active, kindly hospitality to herself, and such pleasant companionship between Jane and her mother, that Matilda could not help a little envious contrasting, a little backward thought of the days when her own home had been the light of its neighbourhood, and her father and mother had entertained in splendid fashion nobles and beauties and famous men whose names were familiar as household words to all England. In those happy days the rooms had shone with a hundred lights; her handsome mother had moved as a queen in them, and her father and brothers had made the place joyful with all the masculine stir of hunting and hawking, the racket of balls in the bowling-alley and tennis court, the excitement of the race, the laughter and love-making of the ballroom. All these, and far sweeter and dearer things, had been cast into the gulf of civil war, and Matilda spent her days counting the cost of such sacrifices—a terrible sum total which she always reckoned with one reflection: "if only mother had been left! I could bear all the rest."

One day, near Christmas, the roads were hard and clean and the sky blue above them, and in spite of the cold Matilda resolved to walk over to Swaffham. She had an abundance of rich clothing, but as she went through it, she saw that its very splendour was only another sign of her poverty, for neither her own nor

her mother's wardrobe contained the plain, scant skirt suitable for walking;—plenty of carriage robes, and dinner and dancing dresses; plenty of gold and silver tissues, and satin and velvet, and rich lace, but she would have given the richest of the costumes for a short cloth skirt and coat, such as Jane trod the miry ways in with comfort and cleanliness. However, she made the wisest choice possible, and when she stood before her father drawing on her white gloves and saying all manner of cheerful words, no one could have desired any change in her apparel. She held the train of her black velvet skirt over her left arm; her shoulders were covered with a tippet of minever, her large hat of black beaver was drooping with plumes. In her cheeks there was a faint rose colour, and her large brown eyes were full of feeling. She looked like some lovely princess exiled from her state and condition, but retaining, nevertheless, all the personal insignia of her royal birth.

As she left her father she kissed him affectionately, and then curtseyed to the Chaplain, who did not notice her attention, being happily and profitably lost in a volume by good Dr. Thomas Fuller, who was that moment saying to him, in one of his garrison sermons, "A Commonwealth and a King are no more contrary than the trunk of a tree and the top branch thereof; there is a republic included in every monarchy."

Matilda walked rapidly, and the clear cold air blew hope and cheerfulness into her heart. "Perhaps, after all, the King might come to his own—Cromwell had not reaped all that was anticipated from Dunbar victory, he was still obliged to remain in Scotland and watch the King; and if the King's position needed this watch, there must still be strength and hope in it. I will take what the Swaffhams say with a large allowance," she thought; and then she suddenly remembered that they had had no news from the royalist camp, and knew nothing on which any good likelihood could be built.

"It is very cruel of Stephen," she sighed; "if I were with the King I would get word to my father and sister of the King's condition—but it is either drawing the sword or shaking the dice, and while they gamble away the hours and the gold pieces, father and I fret life away in waiting and watching for the news that never comes."

The sight of Swaffham restored her. There was something so hearty and sincere in the very aspect of the house. As she went through the garden she saw a monthly rose in bloom, and she plucked it; and with the fair sweet flower in her hand entered the Swaffham parlour. No wonder she had missed Jane at the large casement where she usually sat at her work! Jane was sitting at the table serving Lord Cluny Neville, who was eating and drinking and leaning towards her with a face full of light and pleasure. Mrs. Swaffham sat on the hearth; it was Jane who was pouring out the Spanish wine and cutting the game pasty, and into

Jane's face the young Lord was gazing with eyes whose expression there was no mistaking.

Matilda saw the whole picture in a glance, and she set her mood to match it. Dropping her gown, she let the open door frame her beauty for a moment. She was conscious that she was lovely, and she saw the swift lifting of Neville's eyelids, and the look of surprised delight which came into his eyes. She was resolved to be charming, and she succeeded. She let Jane help her to remove her hat and tippet. She let Mrs. Swaffham make much of her, and when she said,

"Draw to table, my dear, and have a mouthful, for walking is hungry work, as well as pleasant," Matilda laughed and answered,

"Indeed, madame, I cannot tell wherein the pleasure of walking lies; I have sought it till I am weary, and cannot find it. However, I confess I am hungry with the search."

Then she sat down by Neville, and he cut her a slice of the pasty, and Jane filled her wine-glass, and Neville touched his own against it, and wished her health and happiness. And by an unspoken agreement they said not a word about the war, but eat their meal to such cheerful thoughts and conversation as made the meat and drink wholesome and joyful. Then they sang some madrigals, and as the shades of evening gathered, Neville began to tell them wild, weird stories of the Border-Land; and Jane had her traditions of Swaffham, and Matilda of de Wick, and they sat in the twilight pleasantly afraid of the phantoms they had themselves conjured up, drawing close together and speaking with a little awe, and finding even the short silences that fell upon them very eloquent and satisfying.

There was then no question of Matilda returning that night to de Wick, and very soon Mrs. Swaffham joined them, and the servants began to build up the fire and spread the table for the evening meal.

"Time wears on," she said. "I thought I would take a nap of ten minutes, but instead of shutting my eyes in a dog sleep, I dropped oft till candle-lighting. Why are you all looking so yonderly? I hope Lord Neville has not been a Job's postman; for as far as I can see, Satan does just as barefaced cruelties now as he did thousands of years ago."

"We have been talking of fairies, and the gray ghost of Raby, and the armoured giant that keeps Swaffham portal, and Matilda has told us many awesome things about Lady Sophia de Wick, whose ring no one can wear and escape doom."

"Peace to her spirit," ejaculated Mrs. Swaffham, and Jane added thoughtfully,

"If to such a spirit, peace would be any blessing."

"I would not talk of the dead if I were you; they may be nearer than you

think. And there are wick men and women in plenty to praise and to ban. Lord Neville has told us nothing at all, yet, about General Cromwell. I would like to know what is going on. Whatever has he been doing since Dunbar?"—and Mrs. Swaffham made these remarks and asked these questions with just a little touch of impatient irritability.

"The first thing he did when he reached Edinburgh," answered Neville, "was to order the head of Montrose to be taken down from the Tolbooth and honourably buried. Some of the army grumbled at this order, and the Scotch whigs preached and raved about it, and even Dr. Verity, it is said, spoke sharply to Cromwell on the matter. And 'tis also said that Cromwell answered with some passion, 'I will abide by my order, notwithstanding the anger of the foolish. We all have infirmities; and I tell you, if we had among our ranks more such faithful hearts and brave spirits, they would be a fence around us; for indeed there lives not a man who can say worse of Montrose than that he loved Charles Stuart, and was faithful to him unto death.'"

"This is the noblest thing I have heard of Oliver Cromwell," said Matilda, "and my father will rejoice to hear it. How Montrose loved Charles Stuart I will tell you, for my brother Stephen was with him when he heard first of the murder of his King. He bowed his head upon his sword and wept, and when his heart had found some relief in tears, he stood up and called the King in a mighty voice,—indeed Stephen told me it was heard beyond all probability,—and with a great oath he vowed that he would sing his obsequies with trumpets, and write his epitaph with swords, in blood and death." As Matilda finished her story, her voice had a tone of triumph, and she stood up, and raised her eyes, and then made such a sad, reverent obeisance as she might have done had the dead been alive and present. No one liked to impugn a ceremony so pathetic and so hopeless; and a constrained silence followed, which was broken by Jane asking,

"Where did Charles Stuart go after Dunbar?"

"He went northward to Perth. For a little while he held with Argyle and the Kirk, but the Covenanters drove him too hard. They told him he must purify his Court from all ungodly followers, and so made him dismiss twenty-two English Cavaliers not godly—that is, not Calvinistic—enough. Then Charles, not willing to endure their pious tyranny, ran away to the Highlands behind Perth, and though he was caught and persuaded to return, he did so only on condition that his friends should be with him and fight for him."

"Why should the Scots object to that?" asked Mrs. Swaffham.

"Because," answered Neville, "these men were mostly Englishmen and Episcopalians; and the Whigs and Covenanters hated them as being too often reckless and wicked men, full of cavalier sauciness. In return, Charles Stuart hated the Whigs and Covenanters, made a mockery of them, and, it is said, did not disguise

his amusement and satisfaction at the defeat of the godly army at Dunbar."

"And how did these godly men regard Cromwell?" asked Matilda with undisguised scorn.

"They troubled us a little in the West," said Neville, "and Cromwell marched the army to Glasgow, and on the next Sabbath day the preachers railed at him from every pulpit in that city. One of them met the Lord General on the street, and attacked him with threats and evil prophecies. I would have shut his lips with a blow, but Cromwell said to me, 'Let him alone; he is one fool, and you are another;' and the very next day he made friends with this preacher, and I met them coming down the High Street together in very sober and pleasant discourse. After beating these Whigs well at Hamilton, we went into winter quarters at Edinburgh; and Cromwell is now staying at Lord Moray's house in the Canongate."[1]

[1] This house is still standing.

"He ought to have taken his rest in Holyrood Palace," said Jane.

"I am glad he did not," replied Neville. "'Tis enough to fight the living Stuart; why should he run into mortal danger by invading the home of that unlucky family? A man sleeps in his dwelling-place,—and when he sleeps he is at the mercy of the dead."

"Not so," said Jane. "The good man is at the mercy of God, and if he sleeps, his angel wakes and watches. 'I will lay me down in peace and take my rest: for it is Thou, Lord, only, that makest me dwell in safety.'"

Neville looked steadily at her as she spoke with such a glad confidence; and Jane's face grew rosy under his gaze, while Neville's smile widened slowly, until his whole countenance shone with pleasure.

They spoke next of the Parliament and the Council; and Mrs. Swaffham said, "For all she could find out, they had been at their usual work,—good and bad."

"And generally bad," ejaculated Matilda.

"That is not true," said Jane. "Think only of this: they have commanded the laws of England to be written in English. This order alone justifies them with the people. Also, they have received foreign ambassadors with dignity, and taught Holland, France and Spain by the voice of Blake's cannon that England is not to be trifled with; and in Ireland they are carrying on, through Ireton and Ludlow, the good work Cromwell began there."

"Good work, indeed!" cried Matilda.

"Yes, it was good work, grand work, the best work Cromwell ever did," answered Neville positively; "a most righteous dealing with assassins, who had slain one hundred thousand Protestants—men, women and children—while they dwelt in peace among then, thinking no evil[2] and looking for no injury. When men mad with religious hatred take fire and sword, when they torture the helpless with hunger and thirst and freezing cold, in the name of the merciful Jesus, then there is no punishment too great for them."

[2] See Knight's History of England, Vol. 3, p. 464; Clarendon (royalist historian) says 50,000; Paxton Hood, Life of Cromwell, p. 141, says as high as 200,000; Church (American edition) from 50,000 to 200,000 with mutilations and torture; Imgard, the Catholic historian, in Vol. X, p. 177, admits the atrocity of the massacre. Many other authorities, notably Hickson's "Ireland in the 17th Century," which contains the depositions before Parliament relating to the massacre. These documents, printed for the first time in 1884, will cause simple wonder that a terrible massacre on a large scale could ever be questioned, nor in the 17th century was it ever questioned, nor in the face of these documents can it ever be questioned, except by those who put their personal prejudice or interest before the truth.

"The number slain was not as great as you say," interrupted Matilda. "I have heard it was only ten thousand."

"I care not for the number of thousands," said Neville in a voice trembling with passion; "men were put to death with all the horrors religious fanaticism could invent; women and children outraged, starved, burned or drowned with relentless fury. There were months of such persecution before help could be got there."

"Very well, Lord Neville," said Matilda in great anger, "Episcopalians and Calvinists should not have gone to Ireland. I bought a song from a packman the other day for a farthing, that just suits them—

"'People who hold such positive opinions
Should stay at home in Protestant dominions.'

I am sure Cromwell has made a name to be hated and feared in Ireland for generations."

"England has far more cause to hate and ban the name of O'Neal for generations; but England does not bluster; she rights her wrong, and then forgives it. She is too magnanimous to hate for generations any race because one generation did wrong. Nowhere was Cromwell more just and merciful than in Ireland. There have been English sieges—for instance Colchester—far more cruel than

that of Drogheda; and at Drogheda it was mostly rebel Englishmen that were slain, Englishmen fighting in Ireland against the Commonwealth. Cromwell, even at Drogheda, offered mercy to all who would surrender and so spare blood. He was throughout as merciful as he could be, as the Irish themselves permitted him to be. I shake hands with Cromwell in Ireland and I clasp a clean, merciful hand!"

And as he said these words, Jane stretched out her hand to Neville; and Matilda cried, hysterically, "Throne of God! It is wicked to say such things! Give me my hat and tippet, Jane, I will listen no longer to Lord Neville! He is worse than you are."

"My lady, forgive me; but truth is truth, and must not be withheld when the occasion calls for it."

At this point Mrs. Swaffham, who had left the room, returned to it; and seeing Matilda's angry distress, she at once understood its cause.

"It is Ireland, of course," she cried. "Children, children, why will you quarrel about those savages? They are not in your concern except to pray for." Then turning to Neville she asked, "My Lord, why is it necessary to speak of Ireland? It breeds quarrels to name it; well is it called Ire-land, the land of ire, and anger, and quarreling. I forbid the word in this house. If the Irish are assassins for God's sake, may God forgive them!"

"There is nothing impossible to God, madame," said Neville. "But men find some limitations; and when effects are so much talked of and condemned, it is the part of Eternal Justice—though only from a mortal's mouth—to balance the deeds with the deeds that called them forth. And none can deny that Phelim O'Neal's atrocities called into righteous existence Oliver Cromwell's retributions." And at these words Matilda threw herself on the sofa in a passion of tears.

Neville fell on his knees at her side. "Say you pardon me," he urged; "I have wounded myself worse than you. Your tears drop like fire on my heart; I promise you they do."

With a slight frown on her face Jane stood looking at the two. She despised that abnegation of self-control which turned conversation and argument into disputing, and anger, and tears; and after a moment's thought, she went to her friend's side and asked Neville to rise. "There is no need to humble oneself for the truth," she said softly; "and Matilda knows that. She is now fretted with anxiety, and must not be judged by her words." Then she took Neville's place and soothed and reasoned with the weeping girl, as best she knew how; and Mrs. Swaffham brought the Bible for the evening prayer, and the words of the comforting Psalm stayed all other words; and when they ceased there was peace.

But Jane was grieved in her very heart. The evening promising so much had been spoiled; for love in such an unhappy atmosphere could find no op-

portunities. Yet in the short tremulous "good-night" which followed, Jane both remembered and foresaw; remembered the sweet glances and the refluent waves of sweet smiles which through all shadowings had drawn Love deep into her heart; and foresaw, beyond all obstacles and peradventures, what possible joy might be waiting in the future. And swift as thought the delicate love lines of her mouth grew bright with expectation, and the clasp of Neville's hand thrilled to her warm heart, and her soul blessed Love and Hope, and sheltered itself in the sunshine of their imperishable land.

Neville had asked to be called early, and before daybreak he came into the parlour ready for his journey. Some broiled beef, a manchet of white bread, and a black jack of spiced ale, stirred with a rosemary branch, was waiting for him; and Mrs. Swaffham and Jane sat at his side while he eat and drank. He spoke regretfully of his temper on the previous night, and left a message of apology for Lady Matilda de Wick, adding to it his sorrow, "not to be so favoured as to make his excuses in person."

"Matilda will sleep for three hours yet," said Mrs. Swaffham, "and I will be glad if she has that much comfort, for she frets her heart away when she is awake."

Then they stood up, for Neville's horse came clattering to the door. He clasped Jane's hand as it hung by her side, and they walked thus to the threshold. Snow was falling; the steps were white with it, and the east wind blew it gently in their faces. Mrs. Swaffham laughed and drew her shawl over her head, and Neville laughed also, and with a cheerful word, leaped to his saddle, his dark figure growing more and more phantom-like through the dim dawn and the white veil of the snow. At the gate he wheeled his horse, and, saluting them, vanished into the gray obscurity, which made all things as if they were not.

"The storm will grow worse, I fear," said Jane as they turned into the house.

"More like than not," answered Mrs. Swaffham; "but he is a dauntless youth, and nothing but good will come to him. Where goes he to-day?"

"As far as he can go. He is in haste to reach Edinburgh, for there is fresh news of rebels from Ireland landing on the Scotch coast. He showed me this report in a copy of the news-letter called *The Scottish Dove*."

"A badly named news-letter, Jane; the Scotch are never for peace."

"It is intended for a peace paper, mother."

"They are confused in their minds concerning peace. What did it say?"

"That ten ships were leaving Bristol to bring men from Ireland to help Charles Stuart against Cromwell. The *Dove* asserts, 'the Scotch are ready for speedy action, if God permit, and if advance money be forthcoming;'" and Jane laughed scornfully at the saving clause.

"He did not say much of the Cromwells. I'll warrant, they will forget you

in their rising state."

"Far away from it. Mary and Frances sent me many good words, and they are very persuasive with me to come to London and share their state."

"You cannot go just yet, Jane. Your father is opposed to it, until General Cromwell returns there. Then, if it so please God, we shall all go—at least for a season."

"But when will Cromwell return there?"

"God has set a time for all events, Jane. We must wait for it. What think you of Matilda?"

"That she is in trouble greater than we know. She shuts in her words, but I think that something is about to happen."

"Anything may happen with Cromwell in Scotland, and the Parliament carrying things with such a high hand. But see, Jane, we must be after our own concerns. Servants, men and women, are getting beyond all belief; they do such barefaced things as never was. The week's butter is gone already, and when I spoke to Debby, she wiped her saucy mouth and, like the fox in the fable, 'thanked God she wasn't a thief.'"

Then the mother and daughter separated, and Jane went to her friend's room. She was languidly brushing out her long black hair, and Jane tried to kiss a smile into her melancholy face. And as she lifted her head, she had a momentary glance at a beautiful miniature lying upon the dressing-table. The face was that of a youth with flowing locks and a falling collar of lace; but Jane was too honourable to let her eyes rest consciously upon what was evidently hid from her. For in that same moment, Matilda moved her ribbons and kerchief in a hurried way, contriving in so doing, to cover the picture. Then she assumed her usual manner and asked,

"Is Lord Neville still angry at me? I suppose if I had remained with him, he would have eaten me by this time."

"He was very sorry for his show of temper, and would fain have made some apologies to you."

"Then he has gone? Well, it is not worth my while saying I am sorry for it."

"He set off early this morning."

"And so gave me the slip."

"Oh, no! He had important news for General Cromwell, and would push on at his utmost."

"Yet staying awhile at every decent Puritan dwelling, and making love to their sweet daughters."

"Do not be ill-natured, Matilda. He had letters from my father and brothers, and also from Mary and Frances Cromwell to deliver, or he had not stopped at Swaffham."

"Oh, Jane, Jane! I pray your pardon! It must be easy now to forgive me, I keep you so well in practice. In truth, I am a wretched girl, this morning. I have been dreaming of calamities, and my speech is too small for my heart. And this young lord with his adoration of Cromwell and his familiar talk of 'the ladies Mary and Frances' angered me, for I thought of the days when the Lord General was plain 'Mr. Cromwell,' and we were, both of us, in love with young Harry Cromwell."

"Was I in love with Harry Cromwell? If so, I have forgotten it."

"You were in love with Harry Cromwell—or you thought so—and so was I. Do you remember his teaching us how to skate? What spirits we all had then! How handsome he was! How strong! How good-natured! I hear now that he is all for Dorothy Osborne, and has had some Irish hounds sent her, and seal rings, and I know not what other tokens. And Mistress Dorothy is a royalist—that is one good thing about her. Very soon this lucky Cromwell family will coax you to London to see all their glory, and I shall be left in de Wick with no better company than a clock; for my father speaks to me about once an hour, and the Chaplain not at all, unless to reprove me."

"But you shall come to London also."

"Do you think so ill of me as to believe I would leave my father in the loneliness of de Wick? And you know if he went to London he would be watched day and night, and though he were white as innocence about the King, some one would make him as black as Satan."

"Look now, Matilda, I will myself see Cromwell as soon as he is in London. I will say to him, 'My dear Lord and General, I have a favour to ask;' and he will kiss me and answer, 'What is it, little Jane?' and I will tell him that I want my friend, Matilda de Wick, and that she will not leave her father alone; and that will go right down into his tender heart, to the very soul of him, and he will say—perhaps with tears in his eyes—'She is a good girl, and I loved her father, and he stood by me once against the elder Charles Stuart and the Star Chamber. Yes he did, and I will leave de Wick in charge of his own honour, and I will give his daughter my name to shield them both. I will, surely.' Such words as this, good Cromwell will say. I know it."

"Oh, Jane, dear Jane, if I had to give a reason for loving you, what could I say for myself? If you can indeed do this thing for me, how glad I shall be!" And she stood up and kissed her friend, and in a little while they went downstairs together, and Matilda had some boiled milk and bread and a slice of venison. Then she asked Mrs. Swaffham to let her have a coach to go home in.

"For it is so near Christmas," she said, "that snow, or no snow, I must go to de Wick. Audrey was making the Nativity Pie when I left home, and it is that we may remember my brave dead brothers and my sweet mother as we eat it. Then

we shall talk of them and of the happy Christmas days gone by, and afterwards go away and pray for their remembrance and blessedness."

"My dear," said Mrs. Swaffham solemnly, "the dead are with God. There is no need to pray for them."

"It comforts my heart to ask God that they may remember me. I think surely He will do so. He must know how we feel at Christmas. He must hear our sad talk of them, and see our tears, and He has not forbid us anywhere in the Bible to come to Him about our dead, any more than about our living. Father Sacy says I may confidently go to Him; that He will be pleased that I still remember. And as I do not forget them, they will not forget me. In God's very presence they may pray for me."

Mrs. Swaffham kissed her for answer, and they sent her away with such confidence of good-will and coming happiness that the girl almost believed days might be hers in the future as full of joy as days in the past had been.

"She has a true heart," said Mrs. Swaffham as they watched the coach disappear; and Jane answered,

"Yes, she has a true heart; and when we go to London the de Wicks must go also. Mother, I think she has yet a tender fancy for Harry Cromwell—it might be." But Mrs. Swaffham shook her head, and Jane remembered the miniature, and all day long at intervals wondered whose the pictured face was. And the snow fell faster and thicker for many days, and all the narrow ways and lanes were strangled with it. Mrs. Swaffham constantly spoke of Neville, and wondered if it were possible for him to make his way north, until one night, more than a week after his visit, she suddenly said,

"Jane, I have a strong belief that Lord Neville has reached Edinburgh;" and Jane smiled brightly back as she answered, "I have the same assurance, mother." And this pulse of prescience, this flash and flow of thought and feeling was no marvel at all to their faithful souls.

"I did not fear for him, he is not a man to miss his mark," said Mrs. Swaffham.

"And we must remember this, also, mother, that God takes hands with good men."

"To be sure, Jane, it is all right; and now I must look after the house a little." So saying she went away softly repeating a verse from her favourite Psalm, thus suffusing with serene and sacred glow the plainest duties of her daily life.

After this visit, it was cold winter weather, and Cluny Neville came no more until the pale windy spring was over the land. And this visit was so short that Mrs. Swaffham, who had gone to Ely, did not see him at all. For he merely rested while a fresh horse was prepared for him, eating a little bread and meat almost from Jane's hand as he waited. Yet in that half-hour's stress and hurry, Love

overleaped a space that had not been taken without it; for as he stood with one hand on his saddle, ready to leap into it, Jane trembling and pale at his side, he saw unshed tears in her eyes and felt the unspoken love on her lips, and as he clasped her hand his heart sprang to his tongue, and he said with a passionate tenderness,

"Farewell, Jane! Darling Jane!"—then, afraid of his own temerity, he was away ere he could see the wonder and joy called into her face by the sweet familiar words.

"WHEN HE CAME AGAIN IT WAS HARVEST TIME."

"When he came again it was harvest time."

When he came again, it was harvest time; the reapers were in the wheat-fields, and as he neared Swaffham he saw Jane standing among the bound sheaves, serving the men and women with meat and drink. For though the day was nearly over, the full moon had risen, and the labourers were going to finish their work by its light. He tied his horse at the gate and went to her side, and oh, how fair and sweet he found her! Never had she looked, never had any woman looked in his eyes, so enthralling. In her simple dress with its snow-white lawn bodice and apron, surrounded by the reapers whom she was serving, she looked like some rural goddess, though Neville thought rather of some Judean damsel in the fields of Bethlehem. Her little white hood had fallen backwards, and the twilight and the moonlight upon her gathered tresses made of them a kind of glory. The charm of the quiet moon was over all; there was no noise, indeed rather a pastoral

melancholy with a gentle ripple of talk threading it about ploughing and sowing and rural affairs.

In a short time the men and women scattered to their work, and Cluny, turning his bright face to Jane's, took both her hands in his and said with eager delight,

"Dear Jane! Darling Jane! Oh, how I love you!"

The words came without intent. He caught his breath with fear when he realised his presumption, for Jane stood silent and trembling, and he did not at first understand that it was for joy which she hardly comprehended and did not at once know how to express. But the heart is a ready scholar when love teaches, and as they slowly passed through the fields of yellow fulness, finding their happy way among the standing sheaves, Jane heard and understood that heavenly tale which Cluny knew so well how to tell her. The moon's face, warm and passionate, shed her tender influence over them, and their hearts grew great and loving in it. For this one hour the bewitching moonlight of *The Midsummer Night's Dream* was theirs, and they did well to linger in it, and to fill their souls with its wondrous radiance. None just as heavenly would ever shine for them again; never again, oh, surely never again, would they thread the warm, sweet harvest fields, and feel so little below the angels!

Not until they reached Swaffham did they remember that they two were not the whole round world. But words of care and wonder and eager inquiry about war, and rumour of war, soon broke the heavenly trance of feeling in which they had found an hour of Paradise. Mrs. Swaffham was exceedingly anxious. The country was full of frightsome expectations. Reports of Charles Stuart's invasion of England were hourly growing more positive. Armed men were constantly passing northward, and no one could accurately tell what forces they would have to meet. It was said that Charles had not only the Highland Clans, but also Irish, French and Italian mercenaries; and that foreign troops had received commissions to sack English towns and villages, in order to place a popish king upon the throne. For there were not any doubts as to Charles Stuart's religious predilections. His taking of the Covenant was known to be a farce, at which he privately laughed, and the most lenient judged him a Protestant, lined through and through with Popery.

So the blissful truce was over, and Jane and Cluny were part of the weary, warring, working world again. Cluny knew nothing which could allay fear. He had just come from London, and he said—"The city is almost in panic; many are even suspecting the fidelity of Cromwell, and asking why he has permitted Charles Stuart to escape his army. And yet Cromwell sent by me a letter urging Parliament to get such forces as they had in readiness to give the enemy some check until he should be able to reach up to him. And still he added, as the last

words, that trust in the Lord which is his constant battle-cry. How can England fear with such a General to lead her army?"

"And what of the General's family?" asked Mrs. Swaffham, "are they not afraid?"

"They are concerned and anxious, but not fearful. Indeed, the old Lady Cromwell astonished me beyond words. She smiled at the panic in the city, and said 'It is the beginning of triumph.' And when madame, the General's wife, spoke sharply, being in a heart-pain of loving care, she answered her daughter-in-law with sweet forbearance in words I cannot forget: 'Elizabeth, I know from a sure word the ground of my confidence. I have seen, I have heard. Rest on my assurance, and until triumph comes, retire to Him who is a sure hiding-place.' And the light on her aged face was wonderful; she was like one waiting for a great joy, restless at times, and going to the windows of her room as if impatient for its arrival. I count it a mercy and a privilege to have seen her faith in God, and in her great son. It is the substance of the thing we hope for, the evidence of what we shall all yet see," he cried in a tone of exaltation. "And now give me a strong, fresh horse; I will ride all night! Oh, that I were at great Cromwell's side! Charles Stuart has entered England, but Cromwell's dash and sweep after him will be something for men and angels to see! Not for my life would I miss it."

"Where do you expect to find Cromwell?"

"I left him at Queensferry in Fife, cutting off the enemy's victual. This would force the Stuart either to fight or go southward, for he has completely exhausted the North, and it seems he has taken the south road. But it is incredible that this move is either unexpected or unwelcome to our General. Once before, he put himself between England and the Scots, and 'how God succoured,' that is not well to be forgotten. Those were his words, and you will notice, that it is 'how God succoured,' not how Cromwell succeeded. With him it is always, The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle;" and Cluny's voice rose and his words rang out sharply to the clatter of the horse's hoofs on the stone pavement.

Then he turned to Jane. "Darling Jane! My Jane!" and kissing her, he said boldly to Mrs. Swaffham, "I ask your favour, madame. Jane has this hour promised to be my wife."

"Jane has then been very forward," answered Mrs. Swaffham with annoyance, "and both of you very selfish and thoughtless. While your mother England's heart is at her lips, in this dread extremity, you two must needs talk of love and marrying. I am grieved. And Jane's father has not been spoken to, and he is first of all. I can say neither yea nor nay in the matter."

"But you will surely speak for us. Give me a kind word, madame, ere I go." And she could not resist the youth's beauty and sweet nature, nor yet the

thought in her heart that it might perhaps be his last request. If he should be slain in battle, and she had refused the kind word, what excuse would quiet her self-reproach? Then she looked kindly at him, and the thought of the young prince David going out to meet the uncircumcised Philistine who had defied the armies of the living God, came into her heart; and she drew down his face to hers and kissed and blessed him, saying, as Saul said to David, "Go, and the Lord be with thee."

Then he leaped into the saddle, and the horse caught his impatience and shared his martial passion, and with a loud neigh went flying over the land. Silently the two women watched the dark figure grow more and more indistinct in the soft, mysterious moonshine, until at length it was a mere shadow that blended with the indistinctness of the horizon.

"Thank you, dear mother," said Jane softly, and the mother answered, "In these times who dare say good-bye in anger? But let me tell you, Jane, you cannot now think of yourself first. England is at the sword's point; your father and brothers are living on a battle-field; your lover is only one of thousands fighting for the truth and the right, and his life is England's before it is yours. God and country must be served first, eh, my dear?"

"Yes, mother. First and best of all."

"When Neville has done his duty, he will come for you. He can no more bear to live without you than without his eyes. I see that."

Before Jane could reply, they heard the men and women coming from the harvesting. They were singing as they trailed homeward, their harsh, drawling voices in the night's silence sounding tired and pathetic and bare of melody. Jane slipped away to the music in her own heart, closing within herself that Love whose growth had been sweet and silent as the birth of roses.

CHAPTER V
SHEATHED SWORDS

"The peaceful cities
Lulled in their ease and undisturbed before are all on fire.
The thick battalions move in dreadful form
As lowering clouds advance before a storm;
Thick smoke obscures the field, and scarce are seen,

The neighing coursers and the shouting men;
In distance of their darts they stop their course,
Then man to man they rush, and horse to horse.
The face of heaven their flying javelins hide
And deaths unseen are dealt on every side.
. . . . . the fields are strewed
With fallen bodies, and are drunk with blood."

It will be well now to recall the positions which Charles Stuart and Cromwell, with their armies, occupied. The royalist defeat at Dunbar occurred on September the third, A.D. 1650, and Charles, after it, sought shelter in the fortress of Stirling Castle, where he remained until he went to Perth. Here, on January the first, 1651, he was crowned King of Scotland, and then he assumed the command of Captain-General of the Scotch forces, having under him the Duke of Hamilton and David Leslie. At this time the Scotch army had become purely royal and malignant, the Kirk having done its part had retired, leaving the King to manage his own affairs. During the winter, which was long and severe, Charles and his army could do nothing; but when fine weather came and they understood that Cromwell would march to Perth, the Scotch army went southward, fortifying itself on the famous Torwood Hill, between Stirling and Falkirk.

This long winter had been one of great suffering to General Cromwell. After making himself master of the whole country south of Forth and Clyde, he had a severe illness, and lay often at the point of death. In the month of May two physicians were sent by Parliament from London to Edinburgh to attend him, but ere they arrived, the Lord Himself had been his physician and said unto him, Live! He took the field in June, throwing the main part of his army into Fife, in order to cut off the enemy's victual. This move forced the hand of Charles Stuart. His army was in mutiny for want of provisions, the North country was already drained, he durst not risk a battle—but the road into England was clear.

Cromwell himself had gone northward to Perth, and on the second of August he took possession of that city; but while entering it was told that Charles Stuart, with fourteen thousand men, had suddenly left Stirling and was marching towards England. Cromwell was neither surprised nor alarmed; perhaps, indeed, he had deliberately opened the way for this move by going northward to Perth, and leaving the road to England open. At any rate, when Charles reached the border he found Harrison with a strong body of horse waiting for him, while Fleetwood with his Yorkshiremen lay heavy on his left flank, and Lambert with all the English cavalry was jogging on, pressing close the rear of his army. For in Lambert's ears was ringing night and day Cromwell's charge to him,—

"Use utmost diligence! With the rest of the horse and men I am hastening up, and by the Lord's help, I shall be in good time."

Charles had taken the western road by Carlisle, and it was thought he would make for London. He went at a flying speed past York, Nottingham, Coventry, until he reached the borders of Shropshire, summoning every town he passed, but hardly waiting for the thundering negatives that answered his challenge; for the swift, steady tramp of Cromwell's pursuit was daily drawing nearer and nearer. Reaching Shrewsbury, he found the gates shut against him, and his men were so disheartened that the King with cap in hand entreated them "yet a little longer to stick to him." For all his hopes and promises had failed, there had been no rising in his favour, no surrender of walled towns, and the roads between Shrewsbury and London were bristling with gathering militia. So Charles turned westward to Worcester, a city reported to be loyal, where he was received with every show of honour and affection. Here he set up his standard on the ill-omened twenty-second of August, the very day nine years previous, on which his father had planted his unfortunate standard at Nottingham.

Meanwhile Cromwell was following Charles with a steady swiftness that had something fateful in it. He had taken Perth on the second of August; he left it with ten thousand men on the third; he was on the border by the eighth; he was at Warwick on the twenty-fourth, where he was immediately joined by Harrison, Fleetwood and Lambert. Such swiftness and precision must have been prearranged, either by Cromwell or by Destiny. It was to be the last battle of the Civil War, and Cromwell knew it, for he had beyond the lot of mortals that wondrous insight, that prescience, which, like the scabbard of the sword Excalibur, was more than the blade itself—the hilt armed with eyes. There was in his soul, even at Perth, the assurance of Victory, and as he passed through the towns and villages of England, men would not be restrained. They threw down the sickle and the spade in the field, the hammer in the forge, the plane at the bench, and catching hold of the stirrups of the riders, ran with them to the halting-place. Cromwell had no need to beg Englishmen yet a little longer to stick to him. His form of rugged grandeur, the majesty and fierceness of his face, and his air of invincible strength and purpose, said to all, *This is the Pathfinder of your English Freedom! Follow Him!* The man was a magnet, and drew men to him; he looked at them, and they fell into his ranks; he rode singing of Victory at their head, and women knelt on the streets and by the roadside to pray for the success of those going up "*For the help of the Lord, and for England.*" This battle call, ringing from men at full spur, was taken up even by the old crones and little children, and their shrill trebles were added to the mighty shouting of strong men, whose heroic hands were already tightly closed upon their sword-hilts. So, with his ten thousand troops augmented to thirty thousand, he reached Warwick, and mak-

ing his headquarters at the pretty village of Keynton near by, he gave his men time to draw breath, and called a council of war.

Cromwell was now on the very ground where the first battle of the Civil War had been fought. Nine years previous the Puritan camp had lain at Keynton with the banner of Charles the First waving in their sight from the top of Edgehill. Outside the village there was a large farmhouse, its red tiled roof showing through the laden orchard trees; and the woman dwelling there gladly welcomed Cromwell to rest and comfort.

"All my sons are with General Harrison," she said; "and I have not seen their faces for two years."

"Nevertheless, mistress," said Cromwell, "they shall keep Harvest Home with you, and go out to fight no more, for the end of the war is near at hand." He spoke with the fervour of a prophet, but she had not faith to believe, and she answered—

"My Lord Cromwell, our Sword and our Saviour, their names are Thanet, James, and John, and Dickson, and Will. Surely you have heard of them, dead or alive?"

His keen eyes lost their fire and were instantly full of sadness as he answered, "Oh, woman, why did you doubt? If they have fallen in battle, truly they are well. Judge not otherwise. Your blood and your sons' blood has not run to waste."

Two hours after this conversation, Cluny Neville lifted the latch of the farm gate. He had heard reliably of Cromwell's pursuit of Charles at Newcastle, and turning back southward, had followed him as closely as the difficulty of getting horses in the wake of the army permitted. He was weary and hungry, but he was at last near the chief he adored. He gave himself a moment of anticipation at the door of the room, and then he opened it. Cromwell was sitting at the upper end of a long table. A rough map of the country around Worcester lay before him, and Harrison, Lambert, Israel Swaffham, and Lord Evesham were his companions. There were two tallow candles on the table, and their light shone on the face of Cromwell. At that moment it was full of melancholy. He seemed to be listening to the noble fanaticism of Harrison, who was talking fervidly of the coming of the Kingdom of Christ and the reign of the saints on earth; but he saw in an instant the entrance of Neville, and with an almost imperceptible movement commanded his approach.

Neville laid the letters of which he was the bearer before Cromwell, and his large hand immediately covered them. "Is all well?" he asked—and reading the answer in the youth's face, added, "I thank God! What then of the city?"

"Its panic is beyond describing," answered Neville. "Parliament is beside itself; even Bradshaw is in great fear; there are surmises as to your good faith,

my lord, and the rumours and counter-rumours are past all believing. London is manifestly with the Commonwealth, and every man in it is looking to you and to the army for protection. Some, indeed, I met who had lost heart, and who thought it better that Charles Stuart should come back than that England should become a graveyard fighting him."

"Such men are suckled slaves," said Lambert. "I would hang them without word or warrant for it."

"Yea," said Cromwell; "for Freedom is dead in them. That's their fault, it will not reach us. Thousands of Englishmen have died to crown our England with Freedom; for Freedom is not Freedom unless England be free." Here he rose to his feet, and the last rays of the setting sun fell across the rapture and stern seriousness of his face across his shining mail and his majestic soldierly figure. His eyes blazed with spiritual exaltation, and flamed with human anger, as in a voice, sharp and untunable, but ringing with passionate fervour, he cried—

"I say to you, and truly I mean it, if England's Red Cross fly not above free men, let it fall! Let it fall o'er land and sea forever! The natural milk of Freedom, the wine and honey of Freedom, which John Eliot and John Pym and John Hampden gave us to eat and to drink, broke our shackles and made us strong to rise in the face of forsworn kings and red-shod priests, devising our slavery. It did indeed! And I tell you, for I know it, that with this milk of Freedom England will yet feed all the nations of the world. She will! Only be faithful, and here and now, God shall so witness for us that all men must acknowledge it. For I do know that Charles Stuart, and the men with him, shall be before us like dust on a turning wheel. We shall have a victory like that of Saul over Nahash, and I know not of any victory like to it, since the world began—*Two of them—not left together.* Amen! But give me leave to say this: In the hour of victory it were well for us to remember the mercy that was in Saul's heart, 'because that day, the Lord had wrought salvation in Israel.' From here there are two courses open to us, a right one, and a wrong one. What say you, Lambert?"

"London is the heart of the nation, and just now it is a faint heart. I say it were well to turn our noses to London, and to let the rogues know we are coming."

"What is your thought, Harrison?"

"Worcester is well defended," he answered musingly. "It has Wales behind it. We cannot fight Charles Stuart till we compass the city, and to do that, we must be on both sides of the river. Then Charles could choose on which side he would fight, and we could not come suddenly to help each other."

"What way look you, Israel?"

"The way of the enemy. I see that he is here. What hinders that we fight him?"

"Fight him," said lord Evesham, "better now, than later."

"Fight him! That, I tell you, is my mind also," said Cromwell striking the table with his clinched hand. "Some may judge otherwise, but I think while we hold Charles Stuart safe, London is safe also."

"Surely," said Lambert, "it may be more expedient to secure Charles Stuart, but——"

"Expedient, expedient!" interrupted Cromwell. "Who can make a conscience out of expediency? Expediency says, *it may be*; Conscience says, *it is*. If Worcester were ten times as strong, I would not hesitate. God has chosen this battle-field for us, as He chose Dunbar; and because the place is strong, and because it is on both sides the river, we will draw closer and closer our crescent of steel round it. We will fight against it on both sides of the river, and we will expect that miracle of deliverance which will surely come, for we never yet found God failing, when we trusted in Him. In these parts we struck our first blows for Freedom, and here, at point and edge, we will strike our last, and then sheathe our swords. I give my word to you for this, and I will fully answer it. But there must be no slackness. The work is to be thorough, and not to do over again. The nation wishes it so, I know it. The plain truth is—we will march straight on Worcester; we will cut off Charles Stuart from all hope of London; we will fight him from both sides of the river, and bring this matter of the Stuarts to an end; for they are the great troublers of Israel."

The man and the time and the place had met, and there was no doubting it. His words burned this assurance into the hearts of all who heard him, and when he struck his sword-hilt to emphasise them, they answered with the same movement, unconscious and simultaneous.

In some remarkable way, this tremendous national crisis had become known in every corner of the land. If the great angel who guides and guards the destinies of England had sent out a legion of messengers to cry it from every church tower, there could not have been any more conscious intimation of the final struggle. And the very vagueness and mystery of the conviction intensified its importance, for generally the information came as the wind blows, no one knew whence—only that the billows of war, though low and far off, were heard, only that a sense of presence and movement not visible thrilled and informed men and women and brought them nearer to their inner selves than they had ever been before. Indeed, there were many whose spiritual senses were opened by intense longing and fearing, and they heard voices and saw portents and visions in the air above, yea, even on the streets around them.

At Swaffham and de Wick this fateful feeling was aggravated by keen personal interests. To Mrs. Swaffham and Jane the coming battle might mean widowhood and orphanage; sons and brothers might be among those appointed to

die for Freedom's sake. To de Wick it might mean the extinction of the family, root and branch, the loss to the lonely Earl and his daughter of the one love on which their future could build any hope. They could not bear audibly to surmise these things, but they feared them; and not even Jane had yet reached that far-seeing faith, which, for a noble end, levels life and death. As the days went on they ceased their usual employments; Jane went to the village, or even to Ely in search of news, or perhaps half-way to de Wick met Matilda on the same errand. Mutual fears drew them together; they talked and wept and encouraged each other, and always parted with the one whispered word—"*To-morrow.*"

At length there came a day when the unnatural tension grew to its cruel ripeness. The soft gray autumn morning was sensitive through every pulse of Nature, and as the day wore on a strange still gloom hung far and wide over the country. The very breath of calamity was in it. Puritan and Royalist alike went to the open churches to pray; tradesmen left their wares and stood talking and watching the highways; women wandered about their homes weeping and praying inaudibly, or they let their anxieties fret them like a lash. The next morning the west wind blew the sorrow in the air, far-off to sea; but left an instantaneous, penetrating sense of something being "all over." Whatever deed had been done, England would soon ring with it.

On the third afternoon, there came rumours of a great Parliamentary victory, rumours that Charles Stuart had been slain in battle, suppositions and surmises innumerable and contradictory. Jane went as quickly as possible to de Wick, for if indeed there had been a Royalist defeat, Stephen de Wick might have reached home and life was hardly to be borne, unless some certainty relieved the tension cutting like a tight thong her heart and brain.

The neglect and desolation of de Wick Park had in it something unusual: it was that strange air of sorrow, new and unaccepted, which insists on recognition. It hurried Jane's steps; she felt sure she was either going to meet trouble or that trouble was following after her. When she reached the house, there were two horses tied, and even two horses were a strange sight, now, at that door where once there had been all day long the noise and hurry of sportsmen, and of coming and going guests. She entered the hall and saw a man in his stockinged feet softly descending the stairs. She knew his name and his occupation, and her heart stood still with fear. The next moment Delia came forward, and Jane said,

"I am glad to see you back, Delia. Is Lady Matilda well? Is any one ill? O Delia, what is the matter? Why are you crying? And why is Jabez Clay here?"

"The priest is dead. Clay has been measuring him."

"Dead!"

"Yes, ma'am. He dropped dead when he heard of the fight—and the King's death."

"Then you have news?"

"The worst news that could come. No one has seen the King since the battle—all is lost—Audrey's Ben is back skin-whole, but he says——"

"Is that you, Jane Swaffham?" cried Matilda, running down-stairs. "Come here, come here, come here!" and seizing her by the arm, she compelled Jane to ascend at her side. As for Matilda, she was like a woman distraught. Grief and anger burned white in her face, her eyes blazed, her speech was shrill, her manner like one possessed. Jane made no resistance to such impetuous, imperative passion, and she was hurried up the steps and along the corridor until Matilda suddenly stopped and threw open the door of a darkened room.

"Go in, Mistress Swaffham," she cried, "and look your last on one of Cromwell's victims." And Jane shook herself free, and stood a moment regarding the placid face of the dead priest. He was wrapped in his winding sheet, the Book of Common Prayer lay on his breast, and his hands were clasped over it.

"Oh, God be merciful!" said Jane, and Matilda answered, "Yes, for men know nothing of mercy. Come, there is more yet."

Then she opened the door next to the death chamber, and Jane saw lying on a great canopied bed the dying Earl. His last breaths were coming in painful sobs, but he opened his eyes and looked mournfully at Jane for a few moments. Then the physician sitting by his side motioned authoritatively to the two girls to leave the room.

"He is dying. You see that. He may live till morning—no longer," said Matilda; "he is only waiting to see Stephen, and Stephen will never come. Ben said he was with the King's horse, and the King is slain, and all is red ruin and sorrow without end. When you rise to-morrow morning, you can tell yourself Matilda de Wick is motherless, fatherless, brotherless, friendless, and homeless; and I dare say you will add piously, 'It is the Lord's doing'; but it is not the Lord's doing, it is Oliver Cromwell's work. I would walk every step of the way to London if I might see him hung when I got there!"

"Indeed, Matilda, you are cruel to say such things. You are neither friendless nor homeless."

"Indeed, I am in both cases. I will have no friends that are partners in Cromwell's crimes, and if Stephen be dead, de Wick goes only in the male line, and there is not a male left to our name. Cromwell and his Parliament may as well take house and lands; they have slain all who can hold them—all, Reginald, Roland, Stephen, my Uncle Robert, my cousins Rufus and Edward! What wonder that Julian Sacy's heart broke, and that my father only waits at the door of Death to say good-bye to Stephen."

"What can I do for you, dear? Oh, what can I do?"

"I will have nothing from you, not even pity, while you endure, yes, even

admire, this monster of cruelty, Oliver Cromwell."

"Cruelty is far from him. He has the heart of a child."

"He is a very demon. He has drenched England in blood."

"He has done nothing of the kind. Why did Charles Stuart invade England? What right had he to do so? England is not his private estate. England belongs to Englishmen. No, I will not talk on this subject with you. When you are in reason send for me, and I will do anything, anything, that my heart and hands can do."

"I will not send for you. I never wish to see your face again. And how poor Stephen loved you! And you—you have not a tear for his fate. I thank God I am not of your profession. I can weep for the death of those who loved me."

With these words Matilda turned sobbing away, and Jane, slowly at first and then hastily, took the road to Swaffham. For after she had decided that it was best not to force her company on her distracted friend, she remembered that the news which had reached de Wick was probably at Swaffham. It might also have come there with a tale of death and danger, and her mother be needing her help and comfort. So she made all possible haste, and as soon as she reached Swaffham she was aware of a change. The servants were running about with unusual alacrity, and there was a sense of hurry and confusion. As soon as Jane spoke, her mother came quickly towards her. Her look was flurried, but not unhappy, as she cried, "Have you the news, Jane? 'Tis the greatest victory that hath ever been in England. Dr. Verity came an hour ago, so tired he could scarcely sit his horse. He has had a warm drink and sleeps, but he says no victory was ever like it."

"And my father and brothers? What of them?"

"Your father is well; Tonbert and Will have some slight sword cuts. Cymlin has taken them to London, and Dr. Marvel will see to their wounds. We must be ready to go with Dr. Verity to London on Tuesday morning. Your father desires it."

"I heard at de Wick that Charles Stuart is slain."

"Dr. Verity believes not such a report. He says, however, that the war is over. The Royalists have now neither army nor leader. Now, Jane, make some haste. Put carefully away what is to be left, and pack a small box with such clothing as you must take with you. Joslyn, the carrier, will bring the rest. To-morrow being Sabbath, we can do nothing towards our journey but on Monday all must be finished."

It troubled Jane that there was so little sense of triumph. "The greatest victory that had ever been in England" appeared quite a secondary thing to Mrs. Swaffham in comparison with the hurried journey to London, and all it implied. An unspeakable fear had been lifted from every heart, and yet, instead of the great rejoicing which would have been fit and natural, there was a little ennui

and forgetfulness—a feeling which if it had found words might have said, "There, now, the trouble is over. We have felt all we can feel. We would rather sit down and cry a little than shout to the church bells clanging all over England. We have given of ourselves freely while need was, now the need is over, let us alone."

Such an appearance of ingratitude troubled Jane in her very soul. Cromwell so eagerly looked for, so mighty to help, had not been even named. "What ingrates mortals are!" she thought bitterly, "what ingrates both to God and man. Yet had my father been here, he would have called the house together and thanked God for His help by the hand of Oliver Cromwell."

To such thoughts she worked rapidly. Her little box was soon packed, her room put in order, and she was beginning to wonder if Dr. Verity's sleep was delaying supper, when there was a sharp, impatient knock at the door. Before she could in any way answer it, Matilda de Wick entered and threw herself on her knees at Jane's side.

"You said you would help me," she cried; "you said you would, with heart and hands! Now, Jane, keep your word! It is life or death! Have pity on me! Have pity on me!"

"What is it, Matilda? What is it you wish?"

"It is Stephen; it is his friend Hugh Belward. They are searching de Wick for them now. I have brought them to you. Father told me to come here. I could go nowhere else, I had no time. Jane, for God's sake save them; not for my sake, not for pity's sake, but for God's sake save them! They are now outside this door—they may be seen by some servant—let them enter—may I open the door? Jane, speak. There is not a moment to lose. The men seeking them may be on their way here—Jane, Jane! Why don't you let them in? You said you would help me! Oh, for God's dear sake!"

"How can I do what you ask me, Matilda? Think of what you ask——"

"I know; I ask life for two poor souls ready to perish. One of them loves you—Jane, speak—why are you waiting?"

"My father—my brothers—and in this room?—My own room?——"

"The more sure sanctuary. Be not too nice, when too much niceness may be murder. Jane, there is no time to talk. Let them through the door."

"I will call mother," she said; "let them in until I bring her here." Then she opened the door, and Matilda brought the two wayworn, blood-stained, fainting fugitives within the sanctuary.

Mrs. Swaffham was not long in answering Matilda's petition. That divine compassion that oversteps every obstacle, and never asks who or what art thou, saw the visible necessity and hastened to meet it.

"Surely, surely, my poor lads," she said pitifully, "I will find hiding for you."

"God Himself thank you, madame," sobbed Matilda. "Father said you

would. He told me to bring the boys to you, and I brought them through the fields and under the hedges. No one has seen them; it was nearly dark," she said hysterically.

"Yes, dearie, and Will shall saddle a horse and take you home."

"No, no, no! It would then be known I had come here in the dark; and the servants would ask what for, and suspect the truth. No one must know. I can find my way—and I must now go."

"Tell your father that they who would hurt the young men must hurt me first."

"It will be the greatest, the last, comfort he can have in this world." Then she kissed her brother, and with a glance of farewell pity at his companion, went quickly and quietly away.

"Go down-stairs, Jane," said Mrs. Swaffham, "and if Dr. Verity is waiting, order supper to be served. Tell him not to wait on my necessities, which are many, with so much packing and putting away to look after. Keep men and maids busy on the ground floor, and the east side. I will bestow our friends in the oak room, on the west side of the house."

To this room she took them, and then brought water and wine and bread and meat, and some of her son's clothing, showing them, also, that the wide chimney had been prepared for such emergencies by having stout, firm, iron stirrups placed right and left at very short intervals. "By these you can easily reach the roof," she said; "Dr. Verity did so once, when Laud's men were seeking him. But I think no Parliament soldiers will search Israel Swaffham's house for succored malignants. To-night and to-morrow you can rest and sleep; I will waken you very early Monday morning, and you can go to de Wick for your horses, ere any one is astir." She kissed them both and poured out wine and made them drink, and then, looking carefully to see that no chink in shutters or door let out a glimpse of candle-light, left them to eat and rest. Her heart was light, and she had no sense of wrong-doing, although Stephen had warned her that Parliament had issued an order threatening all who sheltered royalists with fine and imprisonment.

"Parliament's orders are well enough," she said to herself as she stepped rapidly and lightly away from the scene of her disobedience, "well enough, but I think far more of the orders of the King of kings, and He tells me if my enemy hunger to feed him and give him drink, and of course shelter and clothing—the oil and the twopence—the oil for his visible wants, and the twopence for the wants not seen. I must not forget the twopence. Thank God, I can spare a few pounds for the poor lads!" And her face was so happy in the thought that she seemed to bring sunshine into the parlour, where she found Dr. Verity eating a beefsteak pudding and talking to Jane, who sat with a white and anxious face trying to smile and answer him.

"Come and rest a little, Martha," he said, "I am not to halve a day."

"But I am, Doctor. I want to see to my boys' wounds."

"Wounds! Pshaw! Scratches! They will be in armour to enter London when Cromwell does. And what think you? Here come a half-a-dozen riders awhile ago, seeking young de Wick. They said also that it was thought Charles Stuart might be with him, and they would have searched Swaffham—high and low—if I had not been here. I vouched my word for no Stuart or de Wick in Swaffham, and told them the whole house was upside down, men and maids in every room, and you and Jane packing for London. And the rascals didn't take my word, but went to the kitchen and asked Tom and Dick and Harry and all the wenches, and so satisfied themselves."

"The impudent varlets," said Mrs. Swaffham, "to set your word at naught. I wish that you had called me."

"I told them when they hummed and hawed to 'light from their horses and go through the house, and Jane said, 'Surely, sirs, Dr. Verity will go with you;' and then I let them have the rough side of my tongue, and said, 'I'd do no such mean business as search Captain Israel Swaffham's house for royalists, and he and his three sons fighting them on every battle-field in England and Scotland. Not I!' So they went their ways to the kitchen, and learned nothing to what I told them; but they got a drink of ale, which was likely what they wanted. But if Charles Stuart had been here I would have gladly led the way to him, for I like well to betray a man who deceives and betrays all men."

"You would not, Dr. Verity," said Jane. "I know you better than your words. You would have put him on your own big horse, and put money in his hand, and said, Fly! I am not thy executioner."

"I say, No, downright."

"I say, Yes," affirmed Mrs. Swaffham. "In the heart of battle perhaps No, but if he came to you after the battle and begged for mercy, you would think of the reproach our Lord Christ gave to the unmerciful steward—shouldst not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant even as I had pity on thee."

"You argue like a woman, Martha. There is the example of Jael."

"I wouldn't do what Jael did if England's crown was for it. There is not an Englishwoman living, not one living, who would play Jael. If Charles Stuart has got away from battle, he has got away; and if you are looking to Englishwomen to betray a poor soul in extremities, Charles Stuart may live to be King of England yet."

"You are making a wicked and impossible suggestion, Martha."

"No more wicked and impossible than that there is another Jael in England. There is not!"

"Don't flare up in that way, Martha. Thank God, we are neither of us yet

called upon to decide such a question as Charles Stuart's life or death. But he might come here; the courage of despair may bring him. What would you do?"

"You are here, and I would leave you to answer that question for me."

"Well, I wish he would come. There is danger while he is hiding here and there in the country. What good is it to quench the fire in the chimney if it be scattered about the house? I think we will begin our journey to London on Monday morning, Martha."

"I cannot. If I had as many hands as fingers, I could not. You may keep watch and ward to-morrow and Monday, and it may be well to do so; for to tell the truth, I trust neither men nor maids in the kitchen. For a Parliament half-crown they would hide the devil. When was this great battle of Worcester fought?"

"Last Wednesday, on the third day of this month."

"Mother, remember how sad we were all that day. You said to me, 'Jane, there is death in the air;' and the men could not work, and they vowed the beasts trembled and were not to guide or to hold."

"The third of September!" said Mrs. Swaffham, "that was Dunbar day. A great victory was Dunbar!"

"Worcester was a greater victory; and there will be one more third of September, the greatest victory of all. But where it will be, and over what enemy, only God knows."

"When did the Worcester battle begin?" asked Jane.

"About four in the afternoon. It was a fair day, the sun shone brightly over the old city, with its red-tiled roofs, its orchards and gardens and hop fields, and over the noble river and long line of the green Malvern hills a few miles away. And the Royalist army made a grand show with their waving cloaks and plumes, their gay silk banners, and their shouts of *For God and King*! But they were as stubble before steel when Cromwell's iron men faced them with their stern answering shout of *God With Us*! It was a stiff business, but indeed God was with us. As for Cromwell, he was so highly transported that scarce one dared speak to him. Wherever he led, a great passion, like to a tempestuous wind, seized the men, and they crowded and rushed the enemy from street to street, shouting as they did so psalms of victory. Yes, Martha, yes, Jane, rushed them as the devil rushed the demon-haunted hogs into the sea of Galilee. Oh, I tell you, Cromwell! our Cromwell! is always grand, but never so mighty as when on horseback in front of his army. Then you look at the man, and thank God for him."

"And the battle began at four? I remember hearing Swaffham church strike that hour. I stood in a wretched mood at the door and counted the strokes. They had a fateful sound."

"We had been at work all day, but at that hour we had two bridges over the

Severn, and Cromwell with half the army passed over them to the west side of the city. He rode in front, and was the first man to cross. Pitscottie's Highlandmen were waiting for him, and he drove them at push of pike from hedge to hedge till they were cut to pieces, every man's son of them, one on the heels of the other. And when Charles Stuart saw this battle raging on the west side of the river, he attacked the troops that had been left with Lambert on the east side. Right glad was Lambert, and 'tis said that the Stuart behaved very gallantly and broke a regiment of militia; and the troops, being mostly volunteers, began to waver. But Cromwell saw this new attack at once, and he and Desborough and Cobbett came rattling over the bridges of boats. No dismay when Cromwell was there! His voice and presence meant victory! The malignants, with their Scotch allies, retreated before him into Worcester streets, Cromwell's men after them pell-mell. Women, it was then hell let loose, for by this time it was nearly dark, and the narrow streets were lit only by the flashes of the great and small shot. Cromwell rode up and down them, in the midst of the fire; he took Fort Royal from the enemy, and with his own hands fired its guns upon them as they fled hither and thither, they knew not, in their terror and despair, where. Every street in Worcester was full of fire and blood, the rattle of artillery, the shouts of our captains, the shrieks of the dying. All night the sack of the city went on. It was a tenfold Drogheda, and ever since, by day and night, Lambert has been following the flying enemy, hunting and slaying them in every highway and hiding-place. Oh, indeed, the faces of our foes have been brought down to earth and their mouths filled with dust; and rightly so. No one will ever know the number slain, and we have ten thousand prisoners."

"Was such cruelty necessary?" asked Mrs. Swaffham.

"War is cruel, Martha; a battle would not be a battle unless it was cruel—furiously cruel. What is the use of striking soft in battle? The work is to do over again. A cruel war is in the end a merciful war."

"It is said Charles Stuart is slain."

"I don't believe that report, it has been spread by his friends to favour his escape. At first he was distracted, and went about asking some one to slay him; but he was seen afterwards beyond the gates of Worcester, moving eastward with a number of his adherents. David Leslie may be slain. I saw him riding slowly up and down like a man who had lost his senses. I could have shot him easily—but I did not."

"Thank God, Doctor!"

"I don't know about that, Martha. I'm not sure in my own mind about letting the old traitor go. But his white hair, his bloody face, and his demented look stayed my hand. He had left his bridle fall, his horse was trembling in every limb; the old man did not know what he was doing, he had lost his senses. Yet

David Leslie ought to have been shot—only, I could not shoot him; he fought at my side—once. God forgive him! Martha, I have had enough of war. I thank God it is over."

"But is it over?"

"Cromwell says so, and I believe him. When a man walks with God as closely as Cromwell does, he knows many things beyond ordinary knowledge. I saw him about ten o'clock. He had written then a few lines to his wife and family, and was writing to the Parliament. And what did he say in that letter? Did he praise himself? No! He was bold humbly to beg that all the glory might be given to God, who had wrought so great a salvation. When he had sealed and sent off these letters—by Lord Cluny Neville, Mistress Jane—he lifted his sword, red from the hilt to the point, and wiped it upon a Royalist flag lying near him. Then he dropped the blade into the sheathe with a clang, and said, 'Truly thou hast had thy last bloody supper. Rest now, thy work is done!'"

"Truly, I know not what work," said Mrs. Swaffham. "I see only death and destruction."

"Martha, suppose Charles Stuart had conquered at Worcester, and that he had marched on London and been received there as the conqueror of a rebellious people, what would follow?"

"I know not, nor does any man or woman know."

"I can tell you. Our Protestant faith and our civil liberty would be taken from us; for the latter depends on the former, and all we have done since 1640 would be to do over again. Jericho has fallen, would you rebuild it?"

"All I want is peace."

"That we shall now have. Our steel bodies, that have galled us long with the wearing of them, may be cast off; our men will return to their homes and their daily work, and our worship shall never more be broken up, but our Sabbaths be full of good things."

"If we love God, I wonder if it makes so much difference how we worship Him?"

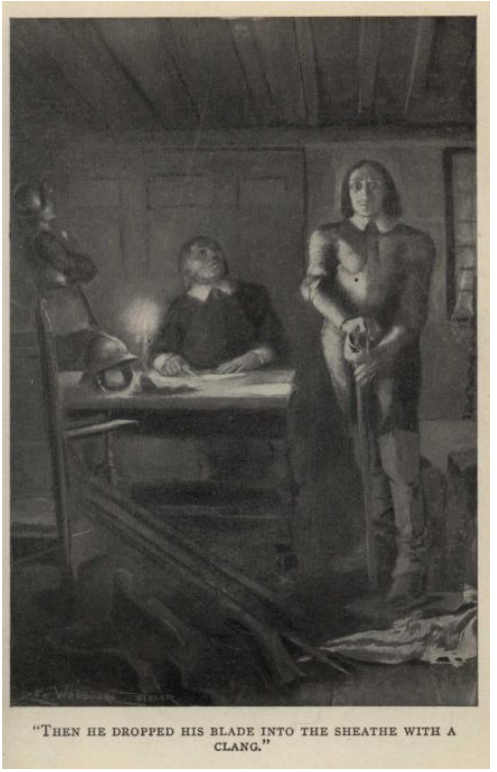
"I am astonished at you, Martha."

"I am astonished likewise at all the sorrow and blood-shedding about surplices and chasubles and written prayers and such things."

"My dear mother!"

"Oh, my dear Jane, it is so; and I was astonished when I was a girl and saw my father go to poverty and prison for such trifles. Yes, I say trifles—and I am a Puritan minister's child, and not ashamed of it—and my husband and sons have been taken from me, and my household left for the battle-field, and I know not what sorrows and trials——"

"Come, come, Martha, you are tired and fretted. If we believe in a great and



"THEN HE DROPPED HIS BLADE INTO THE SHEATHE WITH A CLANG."

"THEN HE DROPPED HIS BLADE INTO THE SHEATHE WITH A CLANG."

terrible God, *how* we are most acceptably to worship Him is not a trifling thing; far from it! I tell you both, the form of worship we have in England measures our civil liberty. If we submit to spiritual slavery, any king or queen or successful soldier may make us civil slaves. Now let the subject drop; the war is over, we will think of peace."

"Peace comes too late for many a family. There are the de Wicks."

"I am sorry for them, and I could be sorrier if they had suffered for the right instead of the wrong. What will the young Lady Matilda do after her father's death?"

"I know not what, with any surety."

"Her aunt, Lady Jevery, has been written for, more than a week ago. She may be at de Wick even now. I think Matilda will make her home with the Jeverys."

"Then she goes to London. I know their great house near Drury Lane. It has very fine gardens indeed. I believe the Jeverys are under suspicion, Martha, as very hot malignants. And now, Jane, dear little Jane, listen to me. You are going to the great city, to Whitehall Palace, to Hampton Court, to the splendour and state of a great nation. You will be surrounded by military pomp and civil glory and social pride and vanity. Dear little girl, keep yourself unspotted from the world!"

"May God help me, sir."

"And let not the tale of love beguile you. Young Harry Cromwell, gallant and good, will be there; and Lord Neville, with his long pedigree and beautiful face; and officers in scarlet and gold, and godly, eloquent preachers in black and white, and foreign nobles, and men of all kinds and degrees. And 'tis more than likely many will tell you that Jane Swaffham is fair beyond all other women, and vow their hearts and lives to your keeping. *Then*, Jane, in such hours of temptation, be low and humble towards God. Go often to the assembling of the saints and catch the morning dew and celestial rain of their prayers and praise. Then, Jane, cry all the more earnestly—'Tell me, oh Thou whom my soul loveth'—*my soul*, Jane—'where Thou feedest, where Thou makest Thy flocks to rest at noon.' And no doubt you will add to this inquiry its sweet closing—'He brought me to the banqueting-house, and His banner over me was love.'"

And Jane smiled gratefully, and her eyes were dim with tears as she laid her hands in Doctor Verity's to clasp her promise. Yet when she reached her room and sat quiet in its solitude, no one will blame her because many thoughts of love and hope blended themselves with the piteous ones she sent to de Wick, and to the two weary fugitives under Swaffham roof. She was pleased at the thought of Harry Cromwell, but oh! what a serious happiness, what a flush of maiden joy transfigured her face when she thought of her lover, forecasting rose-winged

hours for him to glorify. And in her soul's pure sanctuary she whispered his name while her eyes dreamed against the goal of their expected meeting. For Love gives Hope to the true and tender, but counts a cold heart a castaway.

BOOK II

The Tools To Those Who Can Handle Them!

CHAPTER VI

ON THE TIDE TOP

"Cromwell! Why that's the name of Victory."

"The shouting cries
Of the pleased people, rend the vaulted skies."

"Let there be music. Let the Master touch
The solemn organ, and soft breathing flute."

"Rupert! Oh there's music in the name,
Repeated as a charm to ease my grief.
I, that loved name did as some god invoke;
And printed kisses on it as I spoke."

The great day of triumph was over. Cromwell had entered London at the head of his victorious army, and the city was safe and jubilant. Standing at her mother's side, Jane had witnessed from a window in the crowded Strand the glorious pageant of Liberty, the martial vision of warriors whose faces had been bathed in that rain that falls on battle-fields, red as the rains of hell; she had seen again the simple, kindly man who had been her childhood's friend, and who was now England's chief of men, being to England both father and son, both sword and shield. She had heard his name carried on rolling tides of human shouts and huzzas, chording with the firing of cannon, the beating of drums, the tread of

thousands, the chiming of bells, and all the multitudinous and chaotic clamour which constitutes the excitement of a great crowd, and always brings with it the sense of bounding life and brotherhood.

And in the midst of this joyful turbulence she had caught sight of her father and brothers and lover; her father's face sternly glad, like the face of a man who had fought a good fight to assured victory; his sons imitating his bearing, as well as youth could copy age; and the young lord not far from them, proud and radiant and carrying aloft the colours of the Commonwealth. Somewhere in that crowd of spectators he thought Jane must be present, and he bore himself as if he were constantly in her sight.

As yet they had not met, nor had Cluny any certain knowledge of the Swaffham's location. There had been some supposition that they would lodge in Leadenhall Street, at the home of Mistress Adair, the widow of an Independent minister who had preached often in the little chapel attached to Oliver Cromwell's house in Huntingdon; but of this he had no positive information, and he certainly expected that Mrs. Swaffham would advise him of their arrival in London.

Mrs. Swaffham had, however, learned that Cluny Neville was personally objectionable to her husband and sons, and, as she could not see clearly what road to take, she very wisely stood still, waiting for some light and guidance. And it seemed unnecessary to trouble Jane's heart until there was a positive reason for doing so; yet her depression and evident disappointment fretted her mother.

"What is the matter with you, Jane?" she asked irritably one morning; "you look as if you had lost everything in the world instead of being, as your father thinks, right on the road to many a good day. I wouldn't throw such a damp over things if I were you."

"You seem to have forgotten Cluny, mother."

"He seems to have forgotten us; he might have called, I think."

"Does he know where we are?"

"He could have found out. He sees Cymlin often enough."

"I think Cymlin dislikes him. I asked him yesterday if he knew Lord Neville and he answered me rudely."

"He is your brother."

"Just for that reason he ought to have spoken civilly to me."

"He is your brother, and you must hear and heed what he says. And I must tell you, Jane, that it is not maidenly to take any young man so seriously as you take Lord Neville until your father and brothers are satisfied. It is a matter of importance to them what men are brought into the Swaffham family. There is plenty to make you happy without Lord Neville. Your own people are safe and sound, the Cause we love is secure, and you may now dwell your life out in

England; but if we had not conquered, it would have been over the seas and into the wilderness for us, and strangers forever in old Swaffham. I shouldn't think you were done thanking God for these mercies yet; and if not, then where do you find heart-room for such melancholy and moping as I see in you?"

"But, mother, when I look back to last August——"

"If you want to look happily forward never look backward."

"To be sure; but though I know Cluny loves me, doubts and fears will come, and I cannot always fight them or reason with them."

"Don't try either fighting or reasoning. There is a broad enough way between them."

Jane smiled and lifted her tambour work, and her mother nodded cheerfully as she continued, "Enjoy the hour as it comes to you. I have always found that one good hour brings on another." And Jane took the counsel into her heart and anon began to sing—

"It was alone Thy Providence,
That made us Masters of the field,"

and when she had got thus far, a loud, joyful voice joined her in the next two lines, and its owner came into the room singing them—

"Thou art our Castle of defense,
Our Fort, our Bulwark and our Shield."

"Oh, Doctor Verity!" Jane cried, "how glad I am to see you."

"I had been here an hour ago, but I had to wait on the Lady Mary Cromwell. They who serve women must learn to wait. She has sent you a letter, and a coach is at your order, and you are bid to Whitehall. And you will be very welcome there."

"I know not any ceremonies, Doctor."

"You do not need to know them. It is Mary Cromwell, yet; though if the women of Cromwell's house assume greatness, he has won it for them. Why should they not wear the honours their father gives them?"

Then Jane ran to her mother, and her box of fineries was quickly packed, and the girl came down for her visit glowing with hope and happiness. All the shadows were gone; she sat a little proudly in the fine coach by the side of Doctor Verity, and was alert and watchful, for it did not seem an improbable thing that she might have a passing sight of her lover. The city had by this time recovered its every-day temper, and she could not help contrasting the plodding, busy serenity

of its present mood with its frenzy of triumphant joy on the entry of Cromwell. Doctor Verity insisted that the two conditions were alike natural. "No one can play the fool like a wise man," he said; "and the greater and the richer the city the more extravagantly and unreasonably and vauntingly it will express its victory and salvation. London had so much to lose," he continued, "that it would better have lain in ashes than lain at the feet of any Stuart."

As they drew near to Whitehall, Jane's spirits fell a little. She had not caught a glimpse of her lover, and she felt a sudden anxiety about her position. Sometimes prosperity is as fatal to friendship as adversity, and the girl tried in silence to prepare herself for any change in affection that change of fortune might have caused. But her fears were very transient; Mary and Frances Cromwell met her with effusive attentions; they called her affectionately by her name, and quickly took her to the general sitting-room of the family. Madame Cromwell was there, as kind and motherly as of old; and Mistress Ireton, silently reading a sermon of Doctor Owen's; and Mrs. Claypole selecting some damask for a new gown; and Mary and Frances, full of the joy and pride of their great position, soon carried Jane all through their splendid apartments, and afterwards sat down together in Mary's room to talk over old times and the friends and occupations that had made them happy and memorable. Their first inquiry was for Lady Matilda de Wick, and when Jane answered, "Her father is dead, and I know not exactly what has befallen her since his death," the girls were all silent a few minutes. After the pause, Mary Cromwell said—

"I remember her so well on her fine Barbary mare. How handsome she was! How proud! If the Earl spoke to my father then she would deign to ask after my lessons, or my dog, or how the skating was on the Broad. But she was older than I, and it seems so long ago—lately she has been deaf, dumb and blind to the Cromwells—they do not mind that much now. I wonder where she is."

"It was said she would live with her aunt, Lady Jevery; if so, she must be in London."

"And you know it not? And you have not seen her? That is a marvel. It was thought impossible for Matilda de Wick and Jane Swaffham to live long apart."

"There have been great changes," sighed Jane. "People that were once friends know each other no more. It is hoped now that there will be many reconciliations."

"We have seen Lady Heneage often," said Mary Cromwell, "and 'tis said there is a purpose of marriage between Alice Heneage and a favourite of my father's—Lord Cluny Neville."

"I have seen Lord Neville," said Jane. "He brought me your letters and the blue and gold ribbon you sent me. His visits were flying ones; he came and he went."

"Like the knight in the story—he loved and he rode away. But we are all mightily taken with his fine manner and his beauty, and the Lord General, my father, thinks him to have great sincerity and discretion."

"A very perfect youth," answered Jane with a smile.

"Indeed, we think so; if you are of a different opinion you will change it on a better knowledge of the young man. He is coming here this afternoon, is he not, Frank?"

"He said so. He was to make some copies of the hymn he wrote, for Mr. Milton has set it to music, and we are to practice the singing together. Father thinks very highly of the words."

"Dear me!" ejaculated Jane, "is he also a poet? I thought he wrote only with his sword. I fear that he has too many perfections. Has he not one fault to balance them?"

"Yes," answered Mary, "he has one great fault, he is a Presbyterian, and a Scotch Presbyterian. In all other things he holds with the Lord General, but he sticks to his Scotch idols—John Knox and the Covenant."

"I think no worse of him for that," said Jane. "If he knew what an Independent was, he would likely be an Independent."

"It is not believable," retorted Mary. "He is a Scotchman, or next door to one. And if a man is a Samaritan, what can he know of Jerusalem?"

"I care not what he is," said Frances. "He has handsome eyes, and he writes poetry, and he tells such stories as make your blood run cold—and sometimes love-stories, and then his voice is like music; and if it was not sinful to dance——"

"But it is sinful," said Jane warmly, "and if I saw Lord Neville or any other man making mincing steps to a viol I would never wish to speak to him again. Would you, Mary?"

"Of course not, but Frank is only talking. We have masters now in music and singing and geography, and I am learning *Morley's Airs*[1] straight through, besides roundelays and madrigals. And we have a new harpsichord, though the Lord General, my father, likes best the organ or the lute."

[1] Popular and patriotic songs having the same vogue then as *Moore's Melodies* in our era.

"And besides all this," continued Frances, "we are studying the French tongue, and history, and the use of the globes; and Mrs. Katon comes twice every week to teach us how to make wax flowers and fruit and take the new stitches in tatting and embroidery. And, Jane, I have got a glass bowl full of goldfish. They came from China, and there are no more of them, I think, in England. Come with me,

and you shall see them."

"Never mind the fish now, Frank," said Mary; "there is the bell for dinner, and we must answer it at once or we shall grieve mother."

They rose at these words and went quickly to the dining-room. Mrs. Cromwell, leaning upon the arm of her daughter, Mrs. Ireton, was just entering it, and Jane wondered silently at the state these simple country gentry had so easily assumed. Officers of the household, in rich uniforms, waited on all their movements and served them with obsequious respect; and they bore their new honours as if they had been born to the purple. Mrs. Cromwell's simplicity stood her in the place of dignity, and the piety and stern republicanism of Mrs. Ireton gave to her bearing that indifference to outward pomp which passed readily for inherited nobility, while the beauty of Mrs. Claypole and her love of splendour fitted her surroundings with more than accidental propriety. All the women of this famous household were keenly alive to the glory of those achievements which had placed them in a palace, and all of them rendered to its great head every title of honour his mighty deeds claimed as their right.

"The General dines with the Speaker," said Mrs. Cromwell; and she was herself about to say grace when Doctor Verity entered. He was greeted with a chorus of welcomes, and readily took his seat at the foot of the table and spoke the few words of grateful prayer which sweetened and blessed every Puritan meal. Then in answer to some remark about Cromwell's absence he said,

"The Lord General is much troubled about the Worcester prisoners. There has just been a pitiful kind of triumph made out of their miseries. I don't approve of it, not I, God forbid! They have been made a spectacle for men and angels, marched from Hampstead Heath, through Aldgate, Cheapside, and the Strand, to Westminster—hungry, beggarly creatures, many of them wounded, and nearly naked."

"Poor fellows," said Mrs. Cromwell.

"Sturdy, surly fellows, madame. I don't envy the men who will have to manage them as slaves."

"They go to the Barbadoes, I hear?"

"Yes,—it is Scotland no more for them."

"Is that right, Doctor?"

"Indeed, madame, I am not clear in my conscience concerning the matter. It is the liberty of war. The Lord General has given two or three prisoners to each of his friends and entertainers between here and Worcester. However, the miserable fellows brought some comfort out of their evil plight, for the citizens along all the route forgot they were enemies, and the women fed them with the best of victuals, and the men stepped from their shop doors and put money in their hands. I'll be bound the rogues got more money and good white bread this

morning than they have seen in all their lives before. Besides which, there is, in the Exchange and in the ale-houses, a box for the poor prisoners, and whenever men make a bargain they drop a God's-penny into it for them. That's Englishmen all over; they fight to the death in fair battle, but when their foe is at their feet they lift him up and help him and forget that he was ever their enemy. And may God keep Englishmen ever in such mind!"

"Indeed," said Mary Cromwell, "these Scots have given us trouble and sorrow enough. They ought to be sent out of the country, or out of the world, and that at once!"

"That is my opinion," said Mrs. Ireton. "Our brave men are being slain, and the country is torn asunder for their malignancy."

"There have been as brave spirits as the world ever saw in both Puritan and Royalist armies, madame," answered the Doctor. "I, for one, am glad that both parties have fought their quarrel to the end. I rejoice because our hard-smiting Puritan hosts would not let the Stuarts come back and trample them, with all law and liberty, under their feet. But I would have been deadly sorry if the Cavaliers of England had wanted the temper to fight for their King and their church. Right or wrong, we must honour men who have convictions and are willing to die for them."

"Monarchy and Prelacy go together," said Mrs. Ireton; "and England has had more than enough of both."

"We are of one mind on that point, madame," said Doctor Verity. "In this respect, the man George Fox and his followers have some true light, and they are scattering the truth, as they see it, broadcast. I have taken occasion, and sought occasion, and gone out of my way to find occasion, to meet George Fox, but have not yet done so. I was told that he once listened to my preaching at St. Paul's Cross, and that he said I was not far from the Kingdom. I liked that in George; I hope I may say the same for him. Our Lord General thinks him to be a man after God's own heart."

"My father sees the best in every one," said Mrs. Claypole.

"Why do you not speak to the Lord General about these poor prisoners?" Mrs. Cromwell said. "He gave very kind orders about the Dunbar prisoners, and if they were not carried out it was not his fault."

"I neglect no opportunities, madame. And Cromwell needs not that any one soften his heart. The sight of these fallen heroes made him weep—but there are considerations—and every triumph implies some one crushed at the chariot wheels."

"But, Doctor Verity," said Jane, "if we may lawfully fight and kill for the sake of our rights and our convictions, may we not also lawfully punish those who made us put our lives in such jeopardy?"

"Jane, I am sure that we have the right of self-defense; the awful attributes of vengeance and retribution are different things. Will mortal hands be innocent that take the sword of vengeance from God's armoury? I fear not. I had a long talk with Sir Richard Musgrave this morning on this very subject. I found Lord Cluny Neville with him; it seems they are related."

"Why did you not bring Lord Neville with you?" asked Frank.

"Lord Neville looks after his own affairs, Lady Frances—I do likewise."

"Then, Doctor," said Mrs. Cromwell, "look better after your dinner. That buttered salmon has gone cold while you talked. There is a jar of olives near you,—and pray what will you have? a dish of steaks? or marrow bones? or ribs of roast beef? or some larded veal? or broiled larks?"

"Roast beef for John Verity, madame, and a couple of broiled birds and a dish of prawns and cheese. I enjoy my meat, and am not more ashamed of it than the flowers are of drinking the morning dew."

"You are always happy, Doctor," said Jane.

"I think it is the best part of duty to be happy, and to make others happy. No one will merit heaven by making a hell of earth. As I came through Jermyn Street I saw Lady Matilda de Wick. She looked daggers and pistols at me. God knows, I pity her. She was shrouded in black."

"Has anything been heard of Stephen de Wick?" asked Jane.

"It is thought he reached The Hague in safety. His companion, Sir Hugh Belvard, joined Prince Rupert's pirate fleet there."

Then Mrs. Ireton, as if desirous of changing the subject, spoke of Doctor John Owen, and of his treatise on "*The Pattern-Man*," and Doctor Verity said he was "a Master in Israel." Talking of one book led to conversations on several others, until finally the little volume by Cromwell's brother-in-law, Doctor Wilkins, was mentioned. It was a dissertation on the moon and its inhabitants, and the possibility of a passage thither. Mrs. Ireton disapproved the book altogether, and Mrs. Cromwell was quite scornful concerning her brother Wilkins, and thought "the passage to the heavenly land of much greater importance."

But it was easy to turn from Doctor Wilkins to the great University in which he was a professor, and Mrs. Claypole reminded her mother of their visit to Oxford after its occupation by Cavalier and Puritan soldiers.

"I remember," she answered. "It was a sin and a shame to see! The stained windows were broken, and the shrines of Bernard and Frideswide open to the storm; the marble heads of the Apostles were mixed up with cannon balls and rubbish of all kinds. Straw heaps were on the pavements and staples in the walls, for dragoons had been quartered in All Souls, and their beasts had crunched their oats under the tower of St. Mary Magdalene. I could not help feeling the pity of it, and when I told the General he was troubled. He said 'the ignorant have

clumsy ways of showing their hatred of wrong; but being ignorant, we must bear with them.'"

"All these barbarisms have been put out of sight," said Dr. Verity, "and thanks to Doctor Pocock, Oxford is itself again."

"Doctor Pocock!" ejaculated Mrs. Cromwell. "He was here a few days ago to consult with the General. He had on a square cap, and large ruff surmounting his doctor's gown; his hair was powdered and his boots had lawn tops trimmed with ribbons. He looked very little like a Commonwealth Divine and Professor."

"My dear madame, Doctor Pocock is both a Royalist and a Prelatist."

"Then he ought not to be in Oxford," said Mary Cromwell hotly. "What is he doing there?"

"He is doing good work there, Lady Mary, for he is the most famous Oriental and Hebrew scholar in England. No Latiner, but great in Syriac and Arabic; and no bigot, for he is the close friend of Doctor Wallis and of your uncle, Doctor Wilkins, though he does not go with them to the Wadham conventicle. The Parliamentary triers declared him incompetent but Edward Pocock had powerful friends who knew his worth, and perhaps if you ask your honoured father, he can tell you better than I why Dr. Pocock is in Oxford, and what he is doing there."

At this moment, Lord Cluny Neville entered the room. He saw Jane on the instant, and his eyes gave her swift welcome, while in the decided exhilaration following his entrance Love found his opportunities. But among them was none that gave him free speech with Jane; they were not a moment alone. Cluny had a fund of pleasant talk, for he had just come from the Mulberry Gardens, where he had met Mr. and Mrs. Evelyn and had some refreshment at the tables with them.

"I suppose the Evelyns were as gaily dressed as usual?" asked Mrs. Claypole, "and looking as melancholy as if the world would come to an end in a week's time?"

"Indeed, they were very handsome," answered Neville; "and the coach they brought from Paris is extremely fine. We had some chocolate in thin porcelain cups, and some Italian biscuits and sweetmeats. And anon we were joined by Mr. Izaak Walton, the gentlest of malignants, and very entertaining in his talk. Mr. Evelyn was praising Mr. Milton's poetry, but Mr. Walton did not agree with him. He thought John Milton was always trying to scale heaven by a ladder of his own, or else to bring down heaven on earth in some arbitrary shape or other—that in truth, he knew not in his work where he was going."

"He goes, truly, where Mr. Izaak Walton cannot follow him," said Mrs. Ireton. "John Milton has looked God's Word and his own soul in the face, and he will not hold Mr. Walton's opinion of him as anything to his hurt."

"Besides," added Cluny with a pleasant laugh, "Mr. Walton is writing a

book, and Mr. Milton will soon not need to say with the patient man of Uz, 'Oh, that mine enemy had written a book!' He may have reprisals."

During this speech there was heard from a distant apartment the sound of music, low and sweet, and full of heavenly melody.

"That is Mr. Milton playing," said Mary Cromwell. "I would know his touch among a thousand." And then Cluny blushed a little, and held out a small roll which he carried in his hand. It contained three fair copies of his own hymn, and Mary delightedly hurried Jane and Frank away with her to the musician. He turned as they entered and bowed gravely, and the girls fell at once under the charm of his music. Mary involuntarily assumed a majestic attitude, Frances ceased her childish titter, Cluny became almost severe, and Jane stood in silent delight while the grand melody filled their souls till they outsoared the shadow of earth and that unrest which men miscall delight. "Glory to God!" he sang, and the room rang with the lofty notes and seemed full of Presence, and of flame-like faces, sublime and tender, while the air vibrated to the final triumphant crescendo, "Glory to God! Glory to God! Glory to God in the Highest!" And in his beautiful face there was seen for a few moments that face of the soul wherein God shineth.

Then there was a short pause of spiritual sensitiveness which was broken by the opening of a door, and all eyes turning towards it beheld Cromwell standing on the threshold. Perhaps he had been listening to Mr. Milton's ecstatic anthem, for his clear, penetrating eyes were tender and mystical, and a smile gentle as a woman's softened his austere mouth. He wore a suit of black cloth with a falling linen collar, stockings of homespun wool which his wife had knit, and strong shoes fastened with a steel latchet. But his brown hair, tinged with gray, flowed down upon his shoulders, and his whole air was that of a man on whom the eternal dignities of a good and great life had set their seal. Frances ran to him with a cry of delight. Mary looked at him with adoring pride, and then put into Mr. Milton's hand the roll of manuscript Lord Neville had given her. Jane left her companions and timidly advanced to meet the Lord General. He saw her in a moment, and gave her a smile so bright and affectionate that all fear vanished, and she hastened her steps and the next moment felt his strong arm draw her to his side.

"Jane," he said tenderly, "Jane Swaffham, I got your message, and it did me good; it did indeed. Out of the mouths of babes often come our sweetest help and comfort. When I was ill and my heart was troubled for Israel, I remembered one night the word you sent me by John Verity, and it was very good. I think of it often, Jane, when in the midst of ill men. Say it now in my own ears, and let me taste its goodness from your own lips."

Then Jane lifted her eyes to his, and the fiery particle in them filled her

"Beheld Cromwell standing upon the threshold."

"BEHELD CROMWELL STANDING UPON THE THRESHOLD."

with Cromwell's own faith and courage, and she said with a fearless fervour, "*They shall be able to do nothing against thee, saith the Lord. My hands shall cover thee.*"

"Truly God is good, indeed He is, Jane, and you have been His messenger to me. Let us take this gracious God at His Word. And if ever I can help you or yours, Jane, come to me; I will be as good as my word—doubt not. Let us see what John Milton is going to play for us. I'll warrant 'tis my young soldier's hymn, and in my judgment, a good hymn."

They were advancing towards the organ as Cromwell spoke, and they joined the group around the inspired player. His trampling notes gave the sensation of charging men and horses, and of the ministration of angelic hosts. Then there was a pause, and out of it arose in jubilant praise the song of triumph on the battle-field:

Not unto us, not unto us, O Lord,
Thine was the Word, and Thine the mighty sword,
Thine be the glory.
We heard Thy call to arms, and understood:
But Thine the hand that wrought in flame and blood,
The splendid story.

Not for ourselves, or for this day, we fought,
But for all lands and for all times we wrought
Stormy Salvation:
Thine was the battle, both by land and sea,
Thine was our valour and our victory,
Thine our oblation."

So far, Cluny Neville led the singers, but it was Cromwell's strenuous, adoring tones that mostly influenced the stirring chorus—

"Not unto us triumphant lauds and lays,
To 'Him whose name is Wonderful' be praise!
Be thanks! Be glory!"

The exultant song ceased, but their hearts were yet full of thanksgiving, and Cromwell walked about the room—with Frances and Jane at his side—humming the majestic melody, or breaking out into some line of audible song, until he finally said,

"I came here for John Milton, whose pen I need, and I have stayed to sing;

and that is well, for the soul has wings as well as hands—and indeed our souls have had a good flight heavenward." Then addressing John Milton, he said,

"We have sundry letters to write, and the plain truth is, I could wish they were more heavenly. Here is a man to answer who is playing fast and loose with us,—and I will not have it. He is laying too much weight on my patience; let him take care that he break it not."

Speaking thus, he walked towards the door, and Jane marveled at the man. His countenance was changed: all its wistful tenderness and exaltation had given place to a stern, steadfast severity; his voice was sharp, his words struck like caustic, and the homelike, country gentleman was suddenly clothed with a great and majestic deportment. He put on his hat as he left the room. And there was the glint of a gold band round it, and in Jane's mind it gave to the rugged, broad-hatted grandeur of the man a kind of mythical authority, for she instantly remembered a picture of St. George of Cappadocia in de Wick hall which had the same gold band around the helmet. And ever afterwards she associated in her memory the patron Saint of England and the great Pathfinder of her people.

Neville left soon after the Lord General, and the girls had a game of battledore and shuttlecock in the long gallery; then sewing, reading aloud, the evening meal, and the evening exercise closed the day. The days that followed were little different; when the weather permitted there was a ride in the park, or shopping in Jermyn Street, or a visit to St. Paul's to hear Dr. Owen, or the great tolerant Mr. Jeremy Taylor. But Jane thought Dr. Verity need hardly have given her special counsel against the vanities of such a life as the Cromwells led. On the whole, she was not very sorry when her visit was over and she was free to return home. In spite of the frankest kindness, she felt out of her element. The Cromwells had outgrown their old friends, and not all their familiarities could dispel the atmosphere of superiority which surrounded them; it was unavoidable and unequivocal, though they were not themselves conscious of it.

But every happy family takes its tone from the head of the household, and this conqueror of three Kingdoms, stepping out grandly to their government from his victorious battle-fields, impressed something of his own character upon those so nearly and dearly allied to him. They had been after his image and likeness at St. Ives and Ely, what wonder if in the palaces of London they took on something of the royal air which his achievements entitled them to assume? There are friends whose favour we wear as jewels and ornaments, and there are others whose love will bear the usage of an every-day garment, and Jane understood that she must put the Cromwells among those friends reserved for rare or great occasions.

Then there came to her mind in very sweet fashion the memory of Matilda de Wick. They had quarreled almost constantly for years, and Matilda's exact-

ing temper and sharp tongue had wounded her often; but for all that she knew Matilda loved her. Now perfect friendship must be founded on perfect equality, for though love may stoop to an inferior, friendship cannot do so without becoming patronage and offense. But between Matilda and Jane there was no question of this kind. The Swaffhams were noble by birth, they needed no title to give them rank. In their own county they stood among the foremost, and Earl de Wick had ever been ready to acknowledge the precedence of a family so much more ancient than his own. Besides which, the Swaffhams were very wealthy. Israel Swaffham had given his eldest daughter on her marriage to Lord Armingford ten thousand pounds, an immense bridal gift in those days. So that the question of equality had never crossed or shadowed the friendship between Jane and Matilda. Their many quarrels had been about King Charles, or Oliver Cromwell—or Stephen de Wick, for Matilda was passionately attached to her youngest brother and she thought Jane Swaffham valued him too little. With her mind full of kindly thoughts towards Matilda, Jane returned to her home, and she was delighted to find a letter from her friend waiting for her.

"It came this very morning," said Mrs. Swaffham, "and I told the man who brought it you would be here to-day, and no doubt would answer it forthwith. Have you had a good visit, Jane?"

"Yes, mother."

"You wouldn't like to go again just yet, eh, my dear?"

"No, mother. I do not know why. They were all very kind to me, and the Lord General wonderfully so—but there was a difference, a change I cannot describe. It was not that they were less kind——"

"I understand. Power changes every one. Open your letter, I want to know how Matilda is; her man was so uppish, I would not ask him a question."

Then Jane laid aside her bonnet and opened her letter. "She is at Lady Jevery's house, mother, and she longs to see me, and indeed I am in the same mind. We shall be sure to quarrel, but then——"

"You can both play at that game, and you hold your own very well. What is the use of a friend if you can't talk plain and straight to her? I like Matilda no worse for her little tempers. I would go to Jevery House in the morning. Whom did you see at the Cockpit?"

"Doctor John Owen for one. He has just been made Chancellor of Oxford, and General Cromwell expects great things from him. I saw also John Milton, who writes so beautifully, and he plays the organ like a seraph. And Doctor Wilkins was there one day, and he talked to us about his lunarian journey; and Mr. Jeremy Taylor called, and we had a little discourse from him; and Mrs. Lambert, and Mrs. Fleetwood, and Lady Heneage, and Mrs. Fermor, and many others paid their respects. It seemed to me there was much enforced courtesy, especially

between Mrs. Fleetwood and Mrs. Ireton; but—changes are to be expected. Mrs. Cromwell and Lady Heneage used to be gossips, and kiss each other before they sat down to talk, and now they curtsey, and call each other 'my lady,' and speak of the last sermon, or Conscience Meeting. I saw Lord Neville several times, but had no private speech with him; and I heard Mary Cromwell say there was a purpose of marriage between him and Alice Heneage."

"'Tis very like."

"I do not think so. I am sure he loves me."

"Then he should say so, bold and outright."

"He said last night he was coming to see my father and you, and though he spoke the words as if they were mere courtesy, I read in his face the purpose of his visit. Mother, we shall need your good word with my father."

"I can't go against your father, Jane. I would as soon take hot coals in my naked hands."

"But you can manage to make father see things as you do."

"Not always. He would have stayed at Swaffham and minded his own affairs instead of following Oliver Cromwell, if I could have made him see things as I did. Men know better than women what ought to be done; they are the head of the house, and women must follow as they lead. Your sister Armingford wanted to marry Frederick Walton, and your father would not hear of such a thing. You see he was right. Frederick Walton was killed in battle, and she would have been a widow on her father's and her father-in-law's hands. You will have to do as your father says, Jane; so make up your mind to that. The Swaffham women have always been obedient and easy to guide, and it isn't likely you will need bit and bridle."

"I would not endure bit and bridle."

"All I can say is, your father will decide about Lord Neville. Father keeps his own counsel, and he may have a purpose already of marrying you to some one else."

"I will not marry any one else."

"Your sister said the same thing, but she married Philip Armingford; and now there is no man in the world but Philip."

"I will marry Cluny Neville or remain a spinster."

"You will in the end do as your father and brothers say."

"What have my brothers to do with my marriage?"

"A great deal. The men of a family have to meet about family affairs. It wouldn't do to have some one among the Swaffhams that the Swaffhams didn't like or didn't trust. They have always been solid for Swaffham; that is the reason that Swaffham has done well to Swaffham. There, now! say no more about your marriage. It is beforehand talk, and that kind of discussion amounts to nothing.

It is mostly to go over again. Your father thinks of buying this house. Parliament has offered it very reasonable to him, in consideration of the service he and your three brothers have rendered."

"It belonged to Sir Thomas Sandys?"

"Yes."

"And Parliament confiscated it?"

"Yes."

"If I were father I would not give a shilling for it. It will yearn for its own till it gets back to them. If the King had taken Swaffham, we should yearn for it at the other side of the world, and some Swaffham would go back to it, though it were generations after."

"I don't know what you are talking about, Jane. I suppose the Cromwells live in a deal of splendour."

"Everything is very fine. Mary Cromwell's room has the walls hung with green perpetuano and tapestries of Meleager. The standing bed is of carved wood, and the quilt of Holland striped stuff. There is a large looking-glass in an ebony frame, and many fine chairs and stools, and her toilet table is covered with silk and lace, and furnished with gilded bottles of orange-flower water and rose perfume. All the rooms are very handsome; Mrs. Cromwell's——"

"That is enough. I have often been in Elizabeth Cromwell's room, both in Slepe House and in Ely. I remember its tent bed and checked blue-and-white curtains! Well, well—it is a topsy-turvy world. You must go and see Matilda to-morrow. I have been making inquiries about the Jeverys; they are what your father calls 'Trimmers,'—neither one thing nor another. He is an old soldier, and has made use of his wounds to excuse him from further fighting; and Lady Jevery mingles her company so well that any party may claim her. A girl so outspoken as her niece Matilda will give her trouble."

In the morning Jane was eager to pay her visit, and she felt sure Matilda was as eager as herself; so an hour before noon she was on her way to Jevery House. It stood where the busy tide of commerce and the drama now rolls unceasingly, close by Drury Lane—a mansion nobly placed upon a stone balustraded terrace, and surrounded by a fine garden. In this garden the old knight was oftenest found; here he busied himself with his flowers and his strawberry beds, and discoursed with his friend John Evelyn about roses; or with that excellent person and great virtuoso, Mr. Robert Boyle, about his newly invented air pump; or thoughtfully went over in his own mind the scheme of the new banking establishments just opened by the City Goldsmiths: certainly it would be more comfortable to have his superfluous money in their care than in his own strong chests—but would it be as safe?

He was pondering this very question in the chill, bare walks of Jevery

House when Jane's carriage stopped at its iron gates. She had been delayed and almost upset in Drury Lane by the deep mud, so that the noon hour was striking as Sir Thomas Jevery met and courteously walked with her to the entrance hall. Here there were a number of servants, and their chief ushered her into a stately cedar salon the walls of which were painted with the history of the Giants' war. But she hardly noticed these storied panels, for above the mantel there was a picture which immediately arrested her attention. It was a portrait of Oliver Cromwell, the rugged, powerful face standing out with terrible force amid the faces of Pym, Laud, Hampden, Strafford and Montrose. With the countenances of all but Montrose Jane was familiar, and she regarded this unknown face with the most intense interest. It was one not to be ignored, and having been seen, never to be forgotten—a face on the verge of being ugly, and yet so proudly passionate, so true, so strong that it left on Jane's mind the assurance of a soul worthy of honour.

She was standing gazing at it and quite oblivious of the Florentine curtains, the Venetian crystal, and French porcelain, when Delia came hurriedly into the room with an exclamation of delight. "Oh, Miss Swaffham! Oh, Miss Jane!" she cried. "My lady is impatient to see you. Will you kindly come to her room? She has been ill, oh, very ill! and you were always the one she called for!" So saying, she led Jane up a magnificent stairway lined with portraits, mostly by Holbein and Vandyke, and they soon reached Matilda's apartment. As the door opened she rose and stretched out her arms.

"Baggage!" she cried with a weak, hysterical laugh. "You dear little baggage! You best, truest heart! How glad I am to see you!"

And Jane took her in her arms, and both girls cried a little before they could speak. Matilda was so weak, and Jane so shocked to see the change in her friend's appearance, that for a few moments tears were the only possible speech. At length Jane said:

"You have been ill, and you never sent for me. I would have stayed by you night and day. I would have been mother and sister both. Oh, indeed, my mother would have come to you, without doubt! Why did you not let us know?"

"I have only been in London three days. I was ill at de Wick. I became unconscious at my father's burial. We had heard that day that Stephen had been shot while trying to reach the coast. It was the last thing I could bear."

"But I assure you Stephen is at The Hague. Doctor Verity said so, and he said it not without knowledge."

"I know now that it was a false report, but at the time I believed it true. My father was lying waiting for burial, so was Father Sacy, and Lord Hillier's chaplain came over to read the service. It was read at midnight in the old chapel at de Wick. We did not wish any trouble at the last, and we had been told the

service would be forbidden; so we had the funeral when our enemies were asleep. You know the old chapel, Jane, where all the de Wicks are buried?"

"Yes, dear; a mournful, desolate place."

"A place of graves, but it felt as if it was crowded that midnight. I'll swear that there were more present than we had knowledge of. The lanterns made a dim light round the crumbling altar, and I could just see the two open graves before it. Father Olney wept as he read the service; we all wept, as the bodies were laid in their graves; and then our old lawyer, William Studley, put into Father Olney's hands the de Wick coat of arms, and he broke it in pieces and cast the fragments on my father's coffin; for we all believed that the last male de Wick was dead. And when I heard the broken arms fall on the coffin, I heard no more. I fell senseless, and they carried me to my own room, and I was out of my mind for many days. My aunt and Delia were very kind to me, but I longed for you, Jane, I did indeed. I am nearly well now, and I have left my heartache somewhere in that awful land of Silence where I lay between life and death so long. I shall weep no more. I will think now of vengeance. I am only a woman, but women have done some mischief before this day, and may do it again."

"Tonbert and Will are now at Swaffham; they will keep a watch on de Wick if you wish it."

"I suppose I have left de Wick forever; and I could weep, if I had tears left, for the ill fortune that has come to the old place. You remember Anthony Lynn, the tanner and carrier, Jane?"

"Yes."

"He has bought de Wick from the so-called Parliament. He was very kind to me, and he knew his place; but on my faith! I nearly lost my senses when I saw him sitting in my father's chair. Well, then, I am now in London, and all roads lead from London. I shall not longer spoil my eyes for the Fen country, and

"'De Wick, God knows,
Where no corn grows,
Nothing but a little hay,
And the water comes
And takes all away.'

You remember the old rhyme; we threw it at one another often when we were children. But oh, Jane, the melancholy Ouse country! The black, melancholy Ouse, with its sullen water and muddy banks. No wonder men turned traitors in it."

And Jane only leaned close, and closer to the sad, sick girl. She understood that Matilda must complain a little, and she was not unwilling to let the dreary

meadows of the Ouse bear the burden. So the short afternoon wore away to Jane's tender ministrations without one cross word. Early in her visit she had yielded to Matilda's entreaties, had sent home her carriage, and promised to remain all night. And when they had eaten together, and talked of many things and many people, Matilda was weary; and Jane dismissed Delia, and herself undressed her friend as tenderly as a mother could have done; and when the tired head was laid on the pillow, she put her arms under it and kissed and drew the happy, grateful girl to her heart.

"Sweet little Jane!" sighed Matilda; "how I love you! Now read me a prayer from the evening service, and the prayer for those at sea—you won't mind doing that, eh, Jane?"

And after a moment's hesitation Jane lifted the interdicted book, and taking Matilda's hand in hers, she knelt by her side and read the forbidden supplications; and then Matilda slept, and Jane put out the candles and sat silently by the fire, pondering the things that had befallen her friends and acquaintances. The strangeness of the house, the sleeping girl, the booming of the city's clocks and bells, and the other unusual sounds of her position filled her heart with a vague dream-like sense of something far off and unreal. And mingling with all sounds and sights, not to be put away from thought or presence, was that strange powerful picture in the salon—the terrible force of Cromwell's face and attitude as he seemed to stride forward from the group; and the unearthly passion and enthusiasm of the unknown, just a step behind him, would not be forgotten. She saw them in the flickering flame and in the shadowy corners, and they were a haunting presence she tried in vain to deliver herself from.

So she was glad when she turned around to find Matilda awake, and she went to her side, and said some of those sweet, foolish words which alas! too often become a forgotten tongue. Matilda answered them in the same tender, broken patois—"Dear heart! Sweetheart! Darling Jane! Go to the little drawer in my toilet table and bring me a picture you will find there. It is in an ivory box, Jane, and here is the key." And Jane went and found the miniature she had once got a glimpse of, and she laid it in Matilda's hand. And the girl kissed it and said, "Look here, Jane, and tell me *who* it is."

Then Jane looked earnestly at the handsome, melancholy, haughty face; at the black hair cut straight across the brows and flowing in curls over the laced collar and steel corselet, and she lifted her eyes to Matilda's but she did not like to speak. Matilda smiled rapturously and said,

"It is not impossible, Jane, though I see you think so. He loves me. He has vowed to marry me, or to marry no one else."

"And you?"

"Could I help loving him? I was just sixteen when we first met. I gave my

heart to him. I adored him. He was worthy of it. I adore him yet. He is still more worthy of it."

"But—but—he cannot marry you. He will not be allowed. Half-a-dozen kings and queens would rise up to prevent it—for I am sure I know the face."

"Who is it, Jane? Whisper the words to me. Who is it, dear heart?" And Jane stooped to the face on the pillow and whispered,

"*Prince Rupert.*"

And as the name fell on her ear, Matilda's face grew heavenly sweet and tender, she smiled and sighed, and softly echoed Jane's last word—

"*Rupert.*"

CHAPTER VII
TWO LOVE AFFAIRS

"Justice, the Queen of Virtues!
All other virtues dwell but in the blood,
That in the soul; and gives the name of good."

* * * * *

"The wise and active conquer difficulties
By daring to attempt them. Fear and Folly
Shiver and shrink at sight of wrong and hazard,
And make the impossibility they fear."

Matilda's confession brought on a conversation which lasted many hours. The seal of silence having been broken, the sick and sorrowful girl eagerly took the consolation her confidence procured her. She related with an impulsive frankness—often with bitter, though healing tears—the story of her love for the gallant Royalist leader. "He came first when I was yet a girl at my lessons," she said, "but my governess had told me such wonderful things of him, that he was like a god to me. You must know, Jane, that he is exceedingly tall and warlike, his black hair is cut straight across his brows, and flows in curls upon his shining armour. And he is always splendidly dressed."

"Indeed, all have heard of his rich clothing; even the laced cravats are called after him."

"See how people talk for nothing. Rupert's laced cravat was a necessity, not a vanity. He told me himself, that being out very early drilling his men, he took a sore throat, and having no other covering, he drew his laced kerchief from his pocket and tied it round his neck. And his officers, seeing how well it became him, must needs also get themselves laced neckerchiefs, and then civilians, as is their way, followed the custom. But who could look as Rupert looked? the most beautiful, the most soldierlike man in England."

"I might question that opinion, Matilda. I might say there is your brother Stephen—or——"

"Or Lord Cluny Neville, or many others; but let the question go, Jane. I had given my heart to Prince Rupert before I knew what love was; but one day—it was my sixteenth birthday—we were walking in de Wick Park, and the Hawthorns were in flower—I can smell them now, it was the very scent of Paradise; and he said such words as seemed to float upon their sweetness, and they filled my heart till I could have cried for pure happiness. The green turf was white with flowers, and the birds sang above us, and if heaven can come to earth, we were in heaven that dear spring morning. And as truly as I loved him, so he loved me; and that is something to make all my life beautiful. I have been loved! I have been loved! even if I see him no more, I have been loved! and by the noblest prince that ever drew a righteous sword. This is the one joy left me."

"But, Matilda, it was a secret joy, and it could not be right. What would your father and mother have said?"

"You think wrong too readily, Jane. When Rupert had told me how dear I was to him, he went to my parents. He said to them, as he held my hand, 'Earl and Countess de Wick, with your permission, this is my Princess;'—and they were glad and proud, for they loved Rupert, and my brothers, who were in his troop, adored him. As for me, when Rupert said 'Matilda,' I was in an ecstasy; and if he took my hand I trembled with delight. I was so happy! So happy! For those heavenly hours I will thank God all my life long."

"But I see not how, even with your father's and mother's consent, you could hope to marry Prince Rupert. Kings and queens would be against it."

"Indeed, it was a most likely consummation. The Prince came to de Wick to arrange loans for the King. You must have heard that at the beginning of the war my father had great wealth which he had made by joining in Sir Thomas Jevery's East and West Indian ventures. He was glad to let King Charles have money, and a great deal of gold was sent, from time to time, as the King needed it. And when the war was over, my father was to have all his loans back, and also be raised to the rank of a Duke. And in those days we never doubted that the

"THE HAWTHORNS WERE IN FLOWER."

King would win; not till Dunbar, not till after cruel Worcester, did we lose hope. And surely you can see that an English Duke's daughter, with a large fortune in money, would be a suitable match for one of the Palatine Princes. Rupert is poor, Jane, his sword is his only fortune. And moreover, Rupert's mother and brothers have been in terror lest he marry a papist. But as for me—you know that I would die, yes, I would burn for my Bible and Book of Common Prayer. More than this, the King was pleased at our engagement, and sent me a jewel in token of it. Alas, it has been an unlucky jewel! I have had only sorrow since it came to me."

"I would get quit of it."

"It is too beautiful. And when the poor King is dead! Oh, dear me! I could not bear to part with it. Do you wonder now that the news of Dunbar made me so cross and sad, and that I was distraught—past myself—after Worcester? All was lost that fatal night."

"I do not wonder, but——"

"Say you are sorry, plain out, Jane. I am past disguise with you, now, and must ask your pity. Think of my father and mother dead of grief, and of my three brothers,—two slain in battle, one wandering, I know not where. Remember that with my father's death, died all hope of the loaned money and the dukedom to the family, and all my own hopes regarding my lover. For without money and rank, I would be no bride for Prince Rupert; a milkmaid were as fit. And when father had been three days in his grave, and I lay at point of death, Anthony Lynn came with his Parliamentary title to our house and lands. I was at his mercy, at his charity, Jane."

"Well, and if so, many favours he and his have received from your family. All he is worth he owes to your father."

"He was kind and respectful; I am very sensible of that. It is a strange thing to count past benefits, Jane; 'tis like remembering eaten bread. If Anthony thought of my father's help, 'tis more than can be believed. But for my jewels, I am a very pauper—a dependent on Sir Thomas Jevery."

"He was your father's friend and partner in business—he is the husband of your aunt."

"'Tis confest; but for all that, I am here by his charity."

"Your aunt?"

"My aunt lives in the atmosphere of Sir Thomas' whims and wishes. What she will think, what she will do, depends upon what he thinks and what he does."

"'Tis commonly said that he is devoted to her."

"He loves her after the ordinary rate of husbands, I'll warrant." Then, speaking with her old peremptoriness, she said suddenly, "But for God's sake let me ask when you heard anything of Prince Rupert? Oh, Jane, I am sick with heart-hunger for some small intelligence of his doings or his whereabouts."

"He has filled the news-letters and papers lately."

"But I am not suffered to see them. 'Tis pretended they will make me ill; and Sir Thomas vowed when the doctor gave the order, that he was glad on it, and that he had long wanted an excuse to keep the pernicious sheets outside of his house. So, then, I hear nothing, and if I did hear, twenty to one I would be the better of it."

"I think you would, Matilda. What is harder to bear than trouble that is not sure? Still, to be the messenger of ill news is an ungrateful office."

"Any news will be grateful; be so much my friend, dear Jane, as to tell me all you have heard."

"You know that he was made Admiral of the Royalist Navy; but, indeed, he is said to be nothing else but a pirate, robbing all ships that he may support the Stuart family at The Hague. No sail could leave British waters without being attacked by him, until Blake drove him to the African coast and the West Indies."

"He is the bread-finder of the King as well as his defender. So much I knew, and 'tis well done in him."

"The latest news is the drowning of Prince Maurice."

"That is the worst of news. Rupert loved this brother of his so tenderly. They were not happy apart. Poor Rupert! His last letter said, 'he was kept waking with constant troubles'; this will be a crowning misfortune. Sir Hugh Belward told me that his disasters have followed one on the heels of the other; that he had no port, and that poverty, despair and revenge alone guided his course."

"Sir Hugh Belward! Was he not the companion of your brother Stephen—*that night*?"

"Yes. He is now at The Hague with the King, and he has been over on secret affairs. I saw him at de Wick the day before I left. He was so shocked at my appearance that he burst out weeping, and knelt down and kissed my hands. Aunt begged him to leave my presence, for indeed I was like to faint away."

"Then you must have heard all about the doings of Prince Rupert?"

"I had not heard of the drowning of Prince Maurice. That affliction will bring Rupert to shore, and then what will the King do for money?"

"He is said now to be in great need of it, though Prince Rupert sent home a rich prize this past summer; and 'tis further said he resigned his own share of it to his cousin, Charles Stuart."

"'Twould be most like him."

"Some English sailors taken on a prize were put on one of the Royalist ships, and they overpowered her officers, and brought the ship to London a few days ago. I like not to tell you what they said of Prince Rupert to the Parliament."

"It will not vex me, Jane. Evil is said of people so universally that no one is hurt by it."

"They declared, then, that the delight of Prince Rupert and his crews was in swearing and plundering, and in sinking all English ships they could lay their talons on; but also, they added to this account, that there was a chaplain on the Admiral's ship, and that they rode still on Sundays, and did the duties of the day in the best manner they could—the same at evening. Many believed not this report, and many made a mock at, what they conclude, is a travesty of true worship."

"Indeed, Jane, the Puritans have not all the religion in the world, though they think so. However, if Prince Maurice be dead, I am sure that Rupert will not keep the high seas wanting him. Thank you for this intelligence, Jane. 'Twill be some comfort to hear that Rupert is on dry land again."

This conversation had many asides and deviations, and the night was far spent when Matilda was willing to sleep. And in the morning, while they eat breakfast together, the subject was renewed; for sorrow is selfish, and Matilda forgot that she had never even asked after the welfare of Jane's family. As they talked, Lady Jevery joined them. She bid Delia bring her some capon and white wine, and then thanked Jane for her visit, adding—

"I have brought you the key to my private entrance. It will admit you to Matilda's apartments when you wish, without the delays of a formal reception; and 'twill be the greatest token of kindness if you come often."

She spoke gently, and was soft and moth-like in all her movements, but her affection for her niece was unmistakable. While she talked, Jane's eyes wandered over the richly furnished room, noting its draperies of rose velvet, beautifully painted, its carved bedstead and quilted satin coverlet, its dressing-table with little gilded Venetian ewers for perfumes, and India boxes for powders—and also the fine breakfast service of French china before her. Lady Jevery's "charity" to her niece was certainly magnificent, and Jane felt no anxiety concerning her friend's material comforts.

She returned to her home soon after breakfast, and her mother met her with a smiling face. "I was going to send the coach for you," she said, "for there is to be company to-night;" and then she looked at Jane so intelligently that the girl understood at once what was meant.

"Is it Cluny?" she asked, blushing brightly.

"Yes. He has asked for an interview with your father, and I suppose that it is granted, for I was told of the matter."

"Mother, dear, you will speak in our favour?"

"If needs be, Jane. But I am of this opinion—some one has spoken already."

"Do you mean the Lord General?"

"I wouldn't wonder if he has said the two or three words that would move your father more than any woman's talk or tears. Keep your bravery, Jane; father likes women that stand up for themselves. When we were first married, I tried

crying for my way, and I never got it. It is a deal better with men like your father and brothers to stand up for your rights. They know what that means, but they think a crying woman is trying to get the better of them."

Jane understood this advice, and she was not a girl inclined to cry for her way or her wish, yet she was glad to be thus early warned of the stand she might have to take. After all, it was one so loving and simple, so well defined in her own mind, and so positively accepted, that there was little need for preparation.

"I have made a resolve to marry Cluny, if Cluny be of the same mind," she said to herself, "and I have made a resolve to marry no one else, whether Cluny be of the same mind or not. I will let no one impose a husband on me. This thing I will stand boldly for; it has the witness of my heart, and love is too great to need lying or deceit."

It was evening when Cluny came, and he was taken at once to the room in which General Swaffham was smoking his good-night pipe. He looked steadily at the young man as he entered, but the look was one of inquiry and observation rather than of displeasure.

"Good-evening, sir," he answered to Cluny's greeting. "Sit down. You have requested speech with me; talk straight out then."

"I am here, General, to ask for your daughter's hand. I love her."

"Come, come, Lord Neville! Do you expect to drive the wedge head foremost? Ere you ask so great a gift, give me some good reasons for expecting it."

"We love each other, sir."

"So! but you must forethink, and straightforward is the best course. You cannot live on love—you two. No, sir!"

"I have my sword and the Lord General's favour. And my mother left me an estate in Fifeshire. 'Tis no great matter, but it is between me and the wolf's mouth."

"Very good for a young man; for a married man, very poor. If you were wanting to know how in God's name you were to provide for your household and pay your debts, would it do to ask your sword, or to send to Fifeshire—or to the stars—for the gold? That is a father's question, sir."

"It is a lover's also. I have enough for our necessities, and somewhat for our comfort,—and we are both willing to take love as security for our contentment." And though the words were such ordinary ones, the young man's heart throbbed in them, and the father felt it.

"Well, well," he answered, "yet I could wish you were altogether an Englishman."

"My mother was of a noble Scotch family, the Cupars of Fife. I would not willingly lose anything she gave me, sir."

"Lord Neville, I have seen the Scots in the late unhappy war, enough of

them, and more than enough—greedy creatures, never losing sight of the spoil. I saw a good deal of the country also—beggary, nakedness, hunger, ever-lasting spite, envy and quarreling. But in every land God has His elect and reserve, and I doubt not that Lady Neville was among them."

"She was the purest-hearted of women. A word against her goes to my heart like a sword."

"Nay, nay, I meant no unkindness in particular; I spoke of generalities. You are not a Scot, but I hear that you are a Presbyterian. If you marry my daughter, I wish you to become an Independent."

"'Twould be an impossible thing, sir. I sucked Presbyterianism in my mother's milk. Even in heaven, it would grieve her to know I had become an apostate."

"An apostate! The veriest nonsense. There is not an ounce of difference between a Presbyterian and an Independent—but the ounce is the salt and the savour. You will become an Independent. The Lord General is an Independent."

"He never asked me to become one."

"You never asked him for his daughter, his youngest child, his darling."

"Forgive me, sir; Mistress Swaffham has no objection to my faith."

"Because, if men have not every good quality, some woman invents all they lack for them. Mistress Swaffham assures herself she can change your creed."

"I hope that she judges me of better mould. I can no more change a letter in my creed than a feature in my face."

"That is John Knoxism! It won't do, Lord Neville. If I was asking you to become a Fifth Monarchy Man, or one of those unbaptised, buttonless hypocrites, who call themselves Quakers, you might talk about the letters of your creed. Pooh! Pooh!"

"Sir, not for any woman born, will a man, worth the name of a man, give up his creed or his country. Mistress Swaffham would not ask this thing of me. She takes me as I am. I love her with all my soul. To the end of our life days, I will love and cherish her. Whether you credit me thus far, or not, I can say no more. I am a suppliant for your grace, and I know well that I have nothing worthy to offer in return for the great favour I ask from you."

Dauntless, but not overbold, the fine, expressive face of the suppliant was very persuasive. General Swaffham looked at him silently for a few moments and then said, "I will not be unkind to either you or my daughter; but there must be no leap in the dark, or in a hurry. Take five years to learn how to live together fifty years. At the end of five years, if you are both of a mind, I will do all I can for your welfare."

"Your goodness is very great, sir; make it more so by bringing it nearer to us. Five years is a long time out of life."

"That is what youth thinks. Five years' service for fifty years of happiness. You gave your teachers far more time to prepare you for life. Now go to school five years, for love. I waited six years for my wife, Jacob waited fourteen for Rachel."

"Sir, we live not by centuries, as Jacob did—if it would please you to say two years."

"I have said five, and verily it shall be five; unless these strange times bring us some greater stress or hurry than is now evident. Cannot you wait and serve for five years? If not, your love is but a summer fruit, and Jane Swaffham is worthy of something better."

"Sir, I entreat. I am no coward, but I cannot bear to think of five years."

"I have said my say. There is nothing to add or to take from it—save, to remind you, Lord Neville, that there is more heroism in self-denial than in battle."

Then Cluny perceived that entreaty would only weaken his cause, and he advanced and offered his hand, saying, "I am much in your debt, sir. 'Tis more than I deserve, but Love must always beg more than his desert." And General Swaffham stood up and held the slim brown hand a moment. He was moved beyond his own knowledge, for his voice trembled perceptibly as he answered—

"You have time and opportunity to win your way to my heart, then I will give you a son's place. Go and ask Jane; she will tell you I have done kindly and wisely." And Cluny bowed and went silently to seek his betrothed.

There was a sense of disappointment in his heart. Perhaps also an unavoidable feeling of offense. The Lord General had looked into his face and trusted him; yea, about great affairs, public and private. He had asked no five years' trial of his honour and honesty; and such thought gave an air of dissatisfaction and haughtiness to the young man that struck Jane unhappily as he entered the room in which she was sitting.

"Your father says we are to wait five years, sweet Jane; and 'tis a hard condition. I know not how I am to endure it."

And Jane smiled and began to talk over with her lover the hard condition, and somehow it became an easy and reasonable one. They soon saw it through Love and Hope and Wisdom, and so at the beginning of their probation, they rejoiced in the end of it. Cluny was hopeful of getting some military appointment in Edinburgh, and then the estate that was "no great matter" would be a home, at no inconvenient distance. And he described the old place with its ivy-covered walls and ancient rooms, and its garden, dark with foliage, until Jane knew all its beauties and possibilities. They were so happy and so full of happy plans, that they were laughing cheerfully together when the General came in with his wife and household for evening prayers. And it touched and pleased Cluny that he was mentioned by name in the family petition, and so, as it were, taken publicly

and affectionately into it. He felt this all the more when the servants, in leaving the room, included him in their respectful obeisance to their master and mistress. It restored to him the sense of home, and he carried that strength and joy with him to his duty, and day by day grew to more perfect manhood in it.

Life soon settled itself to the new conditions of the Swaffhams. The General, in spite of his wife's and daughter's disapproval, bought the Sandys House near Russel Square, and some of the most precious heirlooms of old Swaffham were brought up to London to adorn it, For it was now certain that the Lord General would not agree to part with his faithful friend and ally; and, indeed, Swaffham's influence in the army could not well be spared, for it was evident enough that there was such ill-will between the army and the Parliament as might easily become a very dangerous national condition.

"So we may be here the rest of our lives, Jane, and we may as well get our comforts round us," said Mrs. Swaffham, and there was a tone of fret in her voice she did not try to hide. "William won't marry as a good man should at his age," she continued, "and Tonbert thinks himself too young to wive; and Cymlin is for Lady Matilda de Wick or no other woman, and so the dear old place will run to waste and mischief. And there are the fine milch cows—and the turkeys. Who will attend to them when I am not there to see they get attention? Nobody."

"Will and Tonbert know how to manage, mother."

"Yes, if it comes to meadow and corn land, or horses, or dogs. I am thinking of the house and the dairy and the poultry yard. Men don't bother themselves about such things; and my boys won't marry, and my girls won't let marrying alone. I am sure I don't know what to make of it all."

In spite of her complaining, however, she was well content in London. Social by nature, fond of the stir and news of life, enjoying even the shadow of her old friends' power and splendour, and taking the greatest interest in all public events of the time, she was pleased rather than otherwise at the Lord General's determination to keep her husband near him.

Neither was Jane at all averse to London. Cluny was in London, and Matilda was there, and most of the girls whom she had known all her life long. And it was not difficult to adapt herself to the new home, with its long galleries and large rooms full of beautiful paintings and handsome furniture. The little figure in its sober-tinted raiment took on a prouder poise, richer clothing seemed necessary and fitting; and insensibly, but continually, the fashion of the Swaffhams' life shook off its rusticity and became after the manner of the great Puritan town in which their lot had been cast.

And if Jane accepted willingly this change in life, Matilda took her phase of it still more enthusiastically. She was not long in discovering that it was in her power to be virtual mistress of the Jevery mansion. Her youth, her beauty

and her many sorrows inclined Sir Thomas Jevery's heart to sympathy, and this prepossession grew rapidly to devoted affection. What the Lady Matilda de Wick desired became a law in Jevery House, and Matilda's desires were not remarkable for their moderation. She had her own apartments, her own servants, and her own company at her own hours, and Sir Thomas settled on her an income which he pretended had been an agreement between Earl de Wick and himself—a statement Matilda neither inquired about nor disputed.

No stipulations were made concerning her friends, and indeed Sir Thomas was not averse to a distinct royalist party in his house, if it was reasonably prudent. He himself entertained all parties, affecting to be inclined to men through higher motives than political prejudices. "Izaak Walton and John Milton, Mr. Evelyn and Sir Harry Vane, are all equally welcome at my table," he would say; "we have a common ground to meet on, which is beyond the reach of politics."

So Matilda quickly outgrew those griefs for which there was no remedy; she regained her health and much of her radiant beauty, and she spent many hours every day in adorning herself. For the first time in her life she had money enough to indulge this passion, and Sir Thomas declared she was in the right to do so. "A lovely woman in a shabby gown," he said, "is a sin against nature; she is like a queen without her crown and robes."

With such encouragement to fine attire, Matilda was not sparing in her orders for silks and brocades, furs and laces, and India goods of all descriptions. She had inherited her mother's jewels, and she was considering one morning a string of Orient pearls, wondering if they could be worn with her new damasse gown, when Jane entered her dressing-room.

"Jane Swaffham," she cried with delight, "I'll swear I was just wishing for you. But what is the matter? Are you for a funeral? Or—is there another plot against Cromwell's life discovered? If so, I am not in it. I do believe there are tears in your eyes."

"Indeed, all England weeps to-day. Have you not heard that General Ireton is dead?"

"A just retribution. Indeed, I will rejoice at it. More than any one else, more than Cromwell himself, he drove his late Majesty to the scaffold. He had no pity for the poor Queen, he was glad to make her a widow. I have no pity for the widow of Ireton. Let her drink of the cup her husband filled for a better woman. Let her drink it to the dregs."

"She lacks not any sympathy that can comfort so great a loss; a loss public, as well as personal, for my father says Ireton was nearer to Cromwell than any other man—the wisest, bravest soldier, the truest patriot——"

"Jane, do be more sparing of your praises, or you will have none left for your prime idol."

"I must tell you that I have new praises for Cromwell. I have seen him this morning in a strange light—holding his weeping daughter to his heart; weeping with her, praying with her; 'tis said, 'like as a father pitieth his children,' but indeed Cromwell was more like a mother. When I entered the room Mrs. Cromwell told Mrs. Ireton I was present, and she cried out, 'Oh, Jane, he is dead! He is dead!' and then Cromwell with streaming eyes answered her in a tone of triumph—'Nay, but he has PREVAILED, Bridget. He has prevailed against the kingdom of death! Be comforted, dear child.' I cannot tell you how good it was to be there—in the house of mourning."

"I never found it good, and I was there for years. But with such a brother as Stephen, I may be there again, and that soon enough. Stephen keeps me on cracking ice night and day."

"But he is in safety now, Matilda?"

"He is never safe—and partly your fault, Jane."

"I will not credit that, and 'tis a piece of great unkindness to make me accountable."

"He is always pining to see you, and always fearing that some one is your servant in his absence; and so he is willing to take all risks if he may but come to England." Then looking steadily at Jane, she added, "He is here now. Will you see him?"

"I will not," answered Jane positively. "I will not come to question about him if he is discovered. Do not ask me to put myself in such a strait, Matilda. It is far better I should be able to say, 'I have not seen him.'"

"You are a very proper, prudent young woman. I think you must have set your heart on that young sprig of a Puritan noble I saw at Swaffham. What was his name?"

"I am sure you have not forgotten it, but if so, it is little worth my repeating."

"As you like it. I have heard this and that of him from Mr. Hartlib who is a friend of that quarrelsome John Milton. Mr. Hartlib comes here frequent. He is full of inventions; only last night he brought Uncle Jevery one for taking a dozen copies of any writing at once, and this by means of moist paper and an ink he has made. I heard of Lord Cluny Neville, and of a hymn he has written which Mr. Milton has set to music. He talked as if it was fit for the heavenly choir. Something also was said about his marrying Mary Cromwell. Fancy these things! Marvels never cease."

"The Lady Mary Cromwell may look much higher," answered Jane. "Lord Neville told us that his sword was his fortune."

"The Lady Mary may see, if she looks at home, that a sword is a very good fortune. In these unholy wars, the faithful saints have given themselves the earth—that is the English earth—not to speak of Scotland and Ireland, and

such trifles. Look at it, Jane, if you have any fancies the Neville way."

"If I had, the Lady Mary would not trouble me. I have seen them together: and indeed I know that she has other dreams."

"Perhaps she dreams of marrying the King, though he is a wicked malignant. 'Tis said she is the proudest minx of them all."

"She would not say 'tush!' to a queen."

"The great Oliver may lay his ten commandments on her."

"How you wrong him! His children have all been allowed to marry where their love led them. And I am sure if the Lady Mary and Lord Neville wished to marry, it would give his kind heart the greatest pleasure to make them happy. Do you think he loves riches or rank or honours or power? I declare to you that he cares not a fig for any of them."

"Pray, then, what does he love?"

"First and foremost, he loves England. He loves England with every breath he draws. England is the word graven on the palms of his hands; it was the word that made his sword invincible. He loves the Protestant faith, which he holds one with all religious and civil freedom. These two things run with his life blood. He loves his wife and children better than himself; he loves all mankind—even Jews and Quakers—so well that he would make them share alike in all that Freedom means."

"And he hates——"

"Every soul that hates England; every dealer in priestcraft or tyranny; every false heart, whether it beat in prince or ploughman."

"I thank my Maker he loves not me."

"But he does love you."

"Let him keep his regard until I ask for it."

"That you may do at some time. 'Tis not wise to throw dirt into the well from which you may have to drink."

"Thank you for good advices, Jane. Oh, 'tis ten thousand pities you are not a preacher. If you could hold forth at St. Paul's Cross you might work miracles with the ungodly. But all this is beyond our bargain to let men in high places alone; and I was going to tell you of Stephen, who is here and so well disguised I had like to have given him the insult of calling a lackey to kick him off the premises. Indeed, he was strangely like to Lord Neville. It was this strange likeness set me thinking of Neville."

"Strange indeed," answered Jane, a little scornfully.

"You do not ask why Stephen is here?"

"It concerns me not."

"Jane, I will tell you a piteous tale. 'Tis of our late Queen. She is so wretchedly poor, and since her son returned to their miserable little court in the

Louvre, so broken-hearted 'twould make you weep to hear of her. Stephen came with Sir Hugh Belward to get some money on Belward, for though the French government have settled an income on the poor Queen, they pay it only when it seems good in their own eyes. She is often in great need; she is need now, in sore need of every comfort."

"How does Sir Hugh Belward hope to get money on Belward? He is proscribed."

"His younger brother joined the Parliament, and he left the estate in his care. And his brother has turned traitor to him, and would give him nothing but permission to ride away as secretly as he came. He has returned here in a passion of grief and anger. Thus I carry so many troubles that are not really mine. But oh, Jane! the poor, poor Queen!"—and then Matilda went into some details of the piteous straits and dependencies and insults the widowed woman had been obliged to bear.

Jane listened silently, but there were tears in her eyes; and when Matilda said, "I have given her the jewel the gracious King sent me by my beloved Prince Rupert, and also, what moneys I could get from my Uncle Jevery," Jane added—

"I have ten pieces of gold that are altogether my own, I will give them to her; not because she was once Queen of England, but because she is a sorrowful woman, poor, oppressed, and a widow."

"Oh, Jane Swaffham! Who taught your charity to reach this height, and then to limit and clip it with exceptions? Why not say boldly, 'I am sorry for the poor Queen, and she is welcome to my gold.'"

"I have said so. Now I must go. I will send the gold by a sure messenger to-day."

Matilda did not urge her to remain, and Jane was eager to get away. She had had some intention—if circumstances favoured the confidence—of telling Matilda of her betrothal, but the conversation had drifted into a tone which had made this communication impossible. And she was glad of her enforced reticence, and resolved to maintain it. She knew, now, that to make Cluny a topic of conversation was to subject him to Matilda's worst words and to all the disagreeable things she could say in those moods, and she was sure that it would be almost impossible to keep the peace if Cluny came between them. It was difficult enough to endure her railing at Cromwell, but if Cluny became the target of her satire, her annoyances and anxieties, Jane knew that a rupture must certainly follow.

When she reached home, her father was walking about the parlour and talking in an excited manner to his wife. He showed much discontent, and as he walked and talked he rattled his sword ominously to his words.

"Cromwell wants only that Parliament should know its own mind, and declare itself dissolved. God knows it is high time, but Vane, and more with him,

would sit while life lasts. He said to-day that 'the members must have their time, and their rights *or*' and the Lord General took him up at the word, and answered, 'the army can say "*or*" as loud as you, Sir Harry, it may be louder,' and there was a murmur and a noise as of moving steel. Later, I joined a party in the lobby, and I heard Colonel Streater say boldly, that in his opinion, Cromwell designed to set up for himself; and Major General Harrison said, 'You are far astray, sir; Cromwell's only aim is to prepare the way for the kingdom of Christ, and the reign of the Saints;' and Streater laughed, and answered with some rudeness, 'Unless Christ come suddenly, He will come too late.' Martha, my heart is troubled within me. Have we got rid of one tyrant calling himself King, to give obedience to a hundred tyrants calling themselves Parliament? It shall not be so. As the Lord liveth, verily, it shall not!"

Israel Swaffham's temper on this matter was but a reflex of the sterner dissatisfaction which Cromwell voiced for the people. The Parliament then sitting was the one summoned by King Charles the First, eleven years previously, and it had long outlived its usefulness. Pym was dead, Hampden was dead, and it was so shrunken from honour, that in popular speech it was known as "the Rump" of that great assembly which had moulded the Commonwealth. It was now attacked by all parties; it was urged to dissolve itself; yet its most serious occupation seemed to be a determination to maintain and continue its power.

The leader of these despised legislators was Sir Harry Vane, the only man living who in Parliamentary ability could claim to be a rival of Cromwell. But Vane's great object was to diminish the army, and to increase the fleet; and as chief Minister of Naval affairs he had succeeded in passing the Navigation Act, which, by restricting the importation of foreign goods to English ships, struck a fatal blow at Dutch Commerce, hitherto controlling the carrying trade. This act was felt to be a virtual declaration of war, and though negotiations for peace were going on, English and Dutch sailors were flying red flags, and fighting each other in the Downs.

Everything relating to the conduct of affairs both in Church and State was provisional and chaotic; and the condition of religion, law, and all social matters, filled Cromwell with pity and anger. He wanted the Amnesty Act, to relieve the conquered royalists, passed at once. Intensely conservative by nature, he was impatient for the settlement of the nation, and of some stable form of government. And he had behind him an army which was the flower of the people,—men who knew themselves to be the natural leaders of their countrymen,—trained politicians, unconquered soldiers; the passion, the courage, and the conscience of England in arms. Their demands were few, but definite, and held with an intense tenacity. They wanted, first of all, the widest religious freedom for themselves and others; secondly, an orderly government and the abolition of all the

abuses for which Laud and Charles had died. And though devoted to their great chief, they longed to return to their homes and to civil life, therefore they echoed strenuously Cromwell's cry for a "speedy settlement," a consummation which the sitting Parliament was in no hurry to take in hand. On this state of affairs Cromwell looked with a hot heart. Untiring in patience when things had to be waited for, he was sudden and impatient when work ought to be done, and his constant word then was—"without delay."

There was a meeting of the Council at the Speaker's house the night after Israel Swaffham's indignant protest against the Parliament, and Cromwell, sitting among those self-seeking men, was scornfully angry at their deliberations. His passion for public and social justice burned and in a thunderous speech, lit by flashes of blinding wrath, he spoke out of a full and determined heart. Then he mounted his horse and rode homeward. It was late, and the city's ways were dark and still; and as he mused, he was uplifted by a mystical ecstasy, flowing from an intense realisation of his personal communion with God.

Cluny Neville was in attendance, and as he silently followed that dauntless, massive figure, he thought of Theseus and Hercules doing wonders, because, being sons of Jove, they must of necessity relieve the oppressed, and help the needy, and comfort the sorrowful; and then he added to this force the sublime piety of a Hebrew prophet, and in his heart called Cromwell the Maccabeus of the English Commonwealth. And in those moments of inspiration, amid the shadows of the starlit night, he again saw Cromwell grow vague and vast and mythical, and knew that his gigantic soul would carry England on waves of triumph until she could look over the great seas and find no rival left upon them.

Thought is transferable, and unconsciously Cluny's enthusiasm affected the silent, prayerful man he loved and followed. And so hope came into Cromwell's reveries, and many earthly plans and desires; and when he alighted at Whitehall, he thought instantly of his wife, and longed for her sympathy. For though he seldom took her counsel, he constantly looked to her for that fellow-feeling which is as necessary as food. Man lives not by bread alone, and there is untold strength for him in womanly love which thinks as he thinks, feels as he feels, and which, when he is weary and discouraged, restores him to confidence and to self-appreciation.

He walked rapidly through the silent, darkened rooms, and opening the door of his own chamber very softly, saw his wife sitting by the fire. There was no light but its fitful blaze, and the room was large and sombre with dark furniture and draperies, the only white spots in it being the linen of the huge bedstead, and the lace coverings of Mrs. Cromwell's head and bosom. Yet apart from these objects there was light, living light, in the woman's calm, uplifted face, and even in her hands which were lying stilly upon her black velvet gown. She stood up

as her husband advanced, and waited until he drew her to his heart and kissed her face. "You are late, Oliver," she said with quiet assertion, "and I have been a little anxious—your life is so precious, and there are many that seek it."

"Why do you fret yourself so unwisely? Of a surety you know that I have a work to do, and I shall not see death until it be finished. Yet I am greatly troubled for England; I tell you plainly, Elizabeth, that we are, for all good purposes, without a government."

"There is the Parliament, Oliver."

"I look for no good from it—a noisy, self-opinionated old Parliament. We want a new one. Vane, and others, think wisdom was born with them; yea, and that it will die with them. They fritter time away about trifles, when an Act of Amnesty ought to be passed without delay. It is the first necessity; they must pass it; they must turn to—or turn out."

"Therein you are right, as you always are."

"Truly, the whole country is like the prophets' roll, written within and without with mourning and wrong and woe. As for the Royalists, they are harried to death; they hold everything on sufferance. The time for this strictness has gone by. England now wants peace, justice for all, Amnesty, and above all, a new Parliament. If these things don't come to pass, worse things will—I say this to you; it is the plain truth; I profess it is!"

"Then tell them what to do, Oliver. And if they will not obey, make them. Are they not as much at your disposal as the shoes on your feet?"

"The time is not fully ripe; a little longer they must trample upon law and justice and mercy, and do such bare-faced things as will make men wonder—a little longer we must suffer them, then——"

"Then, Oliver?"

"I will thunder at the door for inquisition, and it will be with no runaway knock. I am sorry, and I could be sorry to death, for the needs-be, but it will come, it will come. God knows I wish it otherwise. I do, indeed!"

"What were they about to-night?"

"About nothing they should be. Have we not come to a pretty state when Parliament looks to the private doings of its members? After some testimonies, there came a motion to expel all profane and unsanctified persons from the House, and I rose and said,—'I could wish also, that all fools were expelled; then we might have a house so thin it would be at our say-so.'"

"Pray, what said Sir Harry Vane to that? He is as touchy as tinder."

"He said, 'General, no man in England knows better than you do, the usefulness of piety;' and I answered him prompt, 'Sir Harry Vane, I know something better than the usefulness of piety, it is the piety of usefulness. Take heed,' I said, 'of being too sharp, or of being too easily sharpened by others. If Parliament is to

sit that it may count the number of glasses a man drinks, or the style of his coat and his headgear, England is in her dotage. I would rather see death than such intolerable things, I would truly.' And I said these words in great wrath, and I could wish I had been in still greater anger."

"Why don't they do what you desire? Will they come to disputing with you?"

"I look for it, but I understand the men. This state of affairs will grow to somewhat. I know what I feel. My dearest, I need pity; I do, indeed. I am set here for England's defense, and there is *One* who will sift me as wheat concerning my charge. Elizabeth, there are at this very hour twenty-three thousand unheard cases in Chancery. I see the law constantly abused. If I say a word that mercy may now be shown, I am accused of pandering to the malignants for some end of my own. Hundreds of Englishmen are in prison on matters of conscience;—they ought to be free. There are tithes and exactions intolerable, and this fragment and figment and finger-end of an old Parliament busies itself with its members' moralities; with raising money for a Dutch war, or with selling the stonework, leads and bells of our Cathedrals. If my God will give me a word, I will better such work; I will indeed!"

"Sir Harry Vane has already reduced the army. He thought thus to curtail your power, Oliver; I saw through the man from the first."

"My authority came not through Sir Harry Vane, nor can Sir Harry Vane take it from me. My comfort is that God called me to be captain of Israel's host. Truly, I never sought the place. I did not. But while my head is above the mold, my heart will burn against oppression. I will not suffer it; before God and angels and men I will not suffer it! 'Tis the time now for showing mercy and for settling the Kingdom, and these things shall be done. I know the sort of men I have to deal with, I will carry justice through their teeth, even if they be a Parliament. And let God be my judge."

"But what will you do? There are strong men that hate you."

"I will do nothing just yet—unless I get the commission. Who are these men? Only cedars of Lebanon that God has not yet broken. 'They shall be able to do nothing against me. His Hands shall cover me.' That word came to me by little Jane Swaffham. I have thanked her many times for it."

"I know your patience and your goodness, Oliver."

"Yes, but patience works to anger. I shall stand no nonsense from any one much longer. When Opportunity comes, I shall make Importunity fit Opportunity—I will that."

He had been unbuttoning his doublet as he spoke these words, and he flung it from him with an extraordinary force and passion; then suddenly calming himself he sat down, and said with a sadness equal to his anger, "Let me have your

prayers, dear wife, let me have them. For come what will, we must work God's good pleasure and serve our generation—our rest we expect elsewhere. I live in Meshec (prolonging) and in Kedar (blackness), yet as John Verity said to me last Sabbath—'Brother Oliver, you have daily bread, and you shall have it, despite your enemies. In your Father's house there is enough and to spare of every good thing; and He dispenseth it.' Those three words go to my heart like heavenly wine—*He dispenseth it*, Elizabeth;" and he took her hand, and she leaned her face full of light and trust against his shoulder, and as he stooped to it, his countenance grew sweet and tender as a little child's. For a few moments they sat silent, then the God-full man burst into rapturous thanksgiving, because all his hopes were grounded on the Truth of God, on the immutability of His Counsel, and on the faithfulness of His promises. "Promises," he cried out, "having this double guarantee, that they have not only been spoken, they have been sworn to."

An inward, instant sense of God's presence came to both of them. They had a joy past utterance. Troubles of all kinds grew lighter than a grasshopper. They partook of those spiritual favours which none know, save those who receive them; and urged by a spiritual pressure within, Cromwell sighed into the very ear of God, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee."

For the Eternal God was the firmament of this man's life; whether on the battle-field or in the Council Chamber, amid his family or alone in his closet, God was the Majestic Overhead and Background of all his thoughts, affections, purposes and desires.

CHAPTER VIII
UPON THE THRESHOLD

"Predestinated ills are never lost."

* * * * *

"The Power that ministers to God's decrees,
And executes on earth what He foresees,
Called Providence,—
Comes with resistless force; and finds, or makes a way."

If we believe that life is worth living, our belief helps to create that fact, for faith is in matters of the spirit all that courage is in practical affairs. To Jane and Cluny this belief was not difficult, for limitation always works for happiness, and during the ensuing year life kept within the bounds of their mutual probation and of Cluny's military duties, was full of happy meetings and partings; days in which Love waited on Duty, and again, days in which Love was lord of every hour; when they wandered together in the Park like two happy children, or, if the weather was unfit, sat dreaming in the stately rooms of Sandys about the little gray house in Fifeshire, which was to be their own sweet home.

These dreams and hopes were set to a national life full of unexpected events and rumours of events, and to interesting bits of gossip about the beloved Lord General and his family and friends. The news-letters were hardly necessary to the Swaffhams; they were in the heart of affairs, and life was so full of love and homely pleasures, that the days came and went to thanksgiving—literally so, for Jane could not but notice how at this time her father and mother selected for the household worship psalms, whose key-note was, "Bless the Lord," "Make a joyful noise unto the Lord," or, "I will love thee O Lord my strength." And she could so well remember when these prayers were implorations for help and comfort, or for victory over enemies. How different was now her father's tone of joyful confidence when he recited with the family his favourite portion from the eighteenth psalm, generally beginning about the thirtieth verse, and growing more and more vivid and earnest, until in a voice of triumph he closed the Book with a great emphasis, to the exulting words, "The Lord liveth, and blessed be my Rock, and let the God of my salvation be exalted."

So the weeks and months went by, and though they were not alike, they had that happy similitude which leaves little to chronicle. Jane's chief excitements came from her visits to Mary Cromwell and Matilda de Wick. The latter had now quite recovered her beauty and brightness, and she had gradually moulded her new life to her satisfaction. It was not a life that Jane thoroughly understood, and indeed she shrank from Matilda's confidences about it; and Matilda was soon aware of this reluctance and ceased to make any overtures in that direction. And in this matter, Mrs. Swaffham was of her daughter's mind.

"If Sir Thomas is blind to what goes on beneath his own roof, Jane," she said, "why should you see inconveniences? There is a deal of wisdom in looking over and beyond what is under your eyes. The Lord General does it, for Sir Thomas dined at Whitehall last week. Your father says one of his ships has been taken by Prince Rupert, and Cromwell has written to Cardinal Mazarin about the matter. But Admiral Blake is the only messenger Mazarin will heed."

The affection between Jane and Matilda had, however, the strong root of habit as well as of inclination. They could not be happy if they were long apart.

Jane visited frequently at Jevery House, and Matilda quite as frequently at Sandys. That they disagreed on many subjects did not interfere with their mutual regard. It was an understood thing that they would disagree, and yet there was between them such a sincere love as withstood all differences, and ignored all offenses. Generally Jane was forbearing but occasionally her temper matched Matilda's, and then they said such words, and in such fashion said them, that final estrangement seemed inevitable. Yet these bursts of anger were almost certainly followed by immediate forgiveness and renewal of affection.

One morning in the spring of 1653, Jane was returning from a two days' visit to the Cromwells. The air was so fresh and balmy she went to Jevery House, resolved to ask Matilda to drive in the Park with her. She had not her key to the private door, and was therefore compelled to alight at the main entrance. Sir Thomas was among his crocus beds, at this time a living mass of gold and purple beauty, and he was delighted to exhibit them to one so sensitive to their loveliness. Jane told him she had been at the Cockpit, and he asked after the Lord General, adding, "It is high time he stepped to the front again." Then Jane instantly remembered the picture in the cedar salon, and smiled an understanding answer.

As she went up-stairs she wondered what mood she would find Matilda in, for there was a certain mental pleasure in the uncertainty of her friend's temper. It was so full of unlooked-for turns, so generally contrary to what was to be expected, that it piqued curiosity and gave spice and interest to every meeting. She found her lying upon a sofa in her chamber, her little feet, prettily shod in satin, showing just below her gown; her hands clasped above her head, her long black hair scattered loosely on the pillow. She smiled languidly as Jane entered, and then said,

"I have been expecting you, Jane. I could not keep the thought of you out of my mind, and by that token I knew you were coming. But how bravely you are gowned! Pray, where have you been? Or, where are you going?"

"I have been spending two days with the Cromwells; and the morning is so fair, I wondered if you would not drive an hour in the Park. Perhaps, then, you would come home with me to dinner, and so make mother very happy. Do you know that Cymlin arrives from Ireland to-day? He would think the journey well taken, if he saw you at the end of it."

"You are a little late with your news, Jane. That is one of your faults. Cymlin was here last night. He spent a couple of hours with me;" then she smiled so peculiarly, Jane could not help asking her—

"What is there in your way of smiling, Matilda? I am sure it means a story of some kind."

"I shall have to tell you the story, for you could never guess what that smile

was made of. First, however, what did you see and hear at the Cromwells? 'Tis said the great man is in a strange mood, and that his picked friends are wondering how he will cast the scale. Vane and he must come to 'Yes' and 'No' soon; and when rogues fall out, honest folk get their rights."

"England will get her rights if Cromwell cast the scale. He is both cornerstone and keystone of her liberties. He was in the kindest of moods, and I took occasion to speak of you and your many sorrows. And he wet my speech with the most pitiful tears ever man shed, saying such words of your father as brought me to weeping also. He spoke also very heavenly about your afflictions, and bade me tell you sorrow was one of the surest ways to heaven."

"But I could wish a pleasanter way, and so will not take Cromwell's guidance."

"I heard in a passing manner that Prince Rupert is off the seas forever—that he is at the French Court, where he is much made of."

"Jane Swaffham, have you no fresher news?" and she pulled out of her bosom many sheets of paper tied together with a gold thread. "I had this yesterday," she said, "by the hand of Stephen, and I may as well tell you to prepare to meet Stephen de Wick, for he vows he will not leave England again until he has speech with you."

"Then he is forsworn; I will not see him."

"It will be no treason now to speak to your old servant. The Amnesty Act will cover you. But I fight not Stephen's battles; I have enough to do to keep my own share of your friendship from fraying. See how Fortune orders affairs! The ship my uncle has been worrying Cromwell about, and which Cromwell has been bullying Mazarin about, was taken by Prince Rupert; and I hope, by this time, he has turned her last ounce of cargo and her last inch of plank into good gold ducats."

"But that would be to your uncle's great loss."

"Cromwell has promised to see to that. The man and his army ought to be of some use. If you can keep a secret suspicion, you may believe, with me, that my uncle was not averse to letting the royal family have this one of his ventures. They need the money from it, and Cromwell will collect the full value from the Frenchman. I like that way of paying Sir Thomas. The French have behaved abominably to the poor Queen and His Majesty, and their unhappy Court. Let them pay for what Rupert took. They owe it to His Majesty; let them pay! Make them pay! In grace of God, 'tis good enough for them. As for Uncle Jevery, he always gets his own; some one, in some manner, will pay him for the *Sea Rover*, plank and cargo. In the meantime, the King can have a little comfort. Why has Cymlin come at this time from Ireland?"

"He has leave of absence from Commander-in-chief Fleetwood."

"Oh, Jane! I am tipsy with laughing when I think of the doleful widow Ireton—and Fleetwood. You remember what a hot quarrel we had about Ireton being buried among the Kings of England—they will kick him out yet, though they be dead—and how you shamed me for not weeping with the desolated woman?"

"It would be better to forget these things, Matilda."

"And then she let the widower Fleetwood console her in less than half a year! It makes me blush! Yet the widow Ireton is an honourable woman! To be sure, only God understands women. I don't. I don't understand myself—or you."

"No woman likes to be put down; and when General Lambert got Ireton's place, Madame Lambert was insolently proud, and insisted on taking precedence of Ireton's widow, though she was Cromwell's daughter."

"Fancy the saints quarreling about earthly precedence! Madame Lambert was right. A living dog is better than a dead lion. And I admire the devout Bridget's revenge; it was so human—so sweetly womanly. How did she get round her father?"

"Indeed, men are sweetly human too; and the better men, the more human. Colonel Fleetwood by taking Lady Ireton's part, won her affection; it was a fitting match, and it pleased the Lord General; he recalled Lambert—who was truly overpowered by his great position—and made Fleetwood commander in Ireland, thus giving his daughter back the precedence."

"'Twas a delightful bit of domestic revenge. I enjoyed it. London enjoyed it. Puritans and Royalists alike laughed over it. It was such a thing as any mortal father would have done, and every mortal father, for once, felt kin to the Lord General. 'Nicest thing I ever heard of him,' said Lord and Lady Fairfax; for, as you know, Lord and Lady Fairfax always have the same opinion."

"Why do you talk of it? The thing is past and over."

"By no means. The Lamberts are still going up and down, he in wrath and she in tears, talking about it."

"Then let us talk of other things. As I came here I met a large company of Dutch prisoners. They were taking them to our Fen country, that they might drain it."

"They are very fit for that work. They are used to living in mud and water. How came they?"

"They did not come. Blake sent them. He sunk their ship and made them his prisoners."

"Why did they interfere with Blake? It serves them right."

"The Dutch are at war with the Commonwealth. Does not that please you?"

"No. What right have the Dutch to meddle in our affairs? The quarrel is between our King and the Parliament. It is our own quarrel, Englishmen against Englishmen. That is all right. It is a family affair; we want no foreigners taking

a hand in it. The only time I ever saw my father angry at the King was when he landed foreigners to fight Englishmen. We can settle our own quarrels. If Dutchmen will come into our boat they will, of course, get the oars over their fingers. Serve them right. Let them go to the Fens. They are only amphibious creatures."

"But you do not understand; they——"

"And I do not want to understand; I have settled that affair to my satisfaction. Now I must tell you something concerning myself. I am going to France."

"France!" cried Jane in amazement.

"Yes, France. I have persuaded my uncle that he ought to go there, and look after the *Sea Rover*. I have persuaded my aunt that it is not safe for my uncle to go without her; and they both know my reason for going with them, although we do not name Prince Rupert."

"When do you go, Matilda?"

"To-morrow, if Stephen be ready. And let me tell you, Jane, Stephen's readiness depends on you."

"That is not so."

"It is. I hope you will be definite, Jane. You have kept poor Stephen dangling after you since you were ten years old."

"What about Cymlin and yourself?"

Then Matilda laughed, and her countenance changed, and she said seriously, "Upon my word and honour, I was never nearer loving Cymlin than I was last night, yet he was never less deserving of it. 'Tis a good story, Jane. I will not pretend to keep it from you, though I would stake my last coin on Cymlin's silence about the matter. He came into my presence, as he always does, ill at ease; and why, I know not, for a man more handsome in face and figure it would not be easy to find in England. But he has bad manners, Jane, confess it; he blushes and stumbles over things, and lets his kerchief fall, and when he tries to be a gallant, makes a fool of himself."

"You are talking of my brother, Matilda, and you are making him ridiculous, a thing Cymlin is not, and never was."

"Wait a bit, Jane. I was kind to him, and he told me about his life in Ireland, and he spoke so well, and looked so proper, that I could not help but show him how he pleased me. Then he went beyond his usual manner, and in leaving tried to give me a bow and a leg in perfect court fashion; and he made a silly appearance, and for the life of me I could not help a smile—not a nice smile, Jane; indeed, 'twas a very scornful smile, and he caught me at it, and what do you think he did?"

"I dare say he told you plainly that you were behaving badly?"

"My dear Jane, he turned back, he walked straight to me and boxed my ears,

for 'a silly child that did not know the difference between a man and a coxcomb.' I swear to you I was struck dumb, and he had taken himself out of the room in a passion ere I could find a word to throw after him. Then I got up and went to a mirror and looked at my ears, and they were scarlet, and my cheeks matched them, and for a moment I was in a towering rage. I sat down, I cried, I laughed, I was amazed, I was, after a little while, ashamed, and finally I came to a reasonable temper and acknowledged I had been served exactly right. For I had no business to put my wicked little tongue in my cheek, because a brave gentleman could not crook his leg like a dancing-master. Are you laughing, Jane? Well, I must laugh too. I shall laugh many a time when I think of Cymlin's two big hands over my ears. Had he kissed me afterwards, I would have forgiven him—I think."

"I cannot help laughing a little, Matilda, but I assure you Cymlin is suffering from that discipline far more than you are."

"I am not suffering at all. This morning I admire him. There is not another man in the world who would have presumed to box the Lady Matilda de Wick's ears; accordingly I am in love with his courage and self-respect. I deserved what I got, I deserved it richly, Jane;"—and she rose and went to the glass, and turned her head right and left, and looked at her ears, and then with a laugh said, "Poor little ears! You had to suffer for a saucy tongue. Jane, my ears burn, my cheeks burn, I do believe my heart burns. I shall laugh and cry as long as I live, and remember Cymlin Swaffham."

"It was too bad of Cymlin—but very like him. He has boxed my ears more than once."

"You are his sister. That is different. I will never speak to him again. He can go hang himself if he likes, or go back to Ireland—which seems about the same thing."

"Cymlin will not hang himself for man or woman. Cymlin has the fear of God before him."

"I am glad he has. Surely he has no fear of Matilda de Wick. There, let the matter drop. I wish now, you would either take Stephen, or send him off forever. I am in a hurry to be gone, and Sir Thomas also."

"Sir Thomas seemed full of content among his lilies and crocuses."

"I'll wager he was bidding them, one by one, a good-bye. Go and send Stephen with a 'Yes' or 'No' to me. I am become indifferent which, since you are so much so."

The little fret was a common one; Jane let it pass without comment, and it did not affect the sympathy and affection of their parting. Many letters were promised on both sides, and Jane was glad to notice the eagerness and hope in her friend's voice and manner. Whatever her words might assert, it was evident she looked forward to a great joy. And as long as she was with Matilda, Jane let

this same spirit animate her; her ride home, however, was set to a more anxious key. She was a little angry also. Why should Stephen de Wick intrude his love upon her? Twice already she had plainly told him that his suit was hopeless, and she did not feel grateful for an affection that would not recognise its limits, and was determined to force itself beyond them.

She entered Sandys with the spring all about her; her fair face rosy with the fresh wind, and her eyes full of the sunshine. Cymlin and Stephen were sitting by the fireside talking of Irish hounds and of a new bit for restive horses which Cymlin had invented. It was evident that Mrs. Swaffham had given Stephen a warm welcome; the remains of a most hospitable meal were on the table, and he had the look and manner of a man thoroughly at home. In fact, he had made a confidant of Cymlin, or, rather, he had talked over an old confidence with him. Cymlin approved his suit for Jane's hand. He did not like the idea of Cluny as a member of his family. He had an aversion, almost a contempt, for all men not distinctly and entirely English, and he was sure that Cluny had won that place in the Lord General's favour which he himself was in sight of when Cluny appeared. Again, Stephen had been his playmate; he was his neighbour, and if the King ever came back, would be an important neighbour; one whose good offices might be of some importance to Swaffham. Besides which, though he habitually snubbed Jane, he loved her, and did not like to think of her living in Scotland. It was a pleasanter thing to imagine her at de Wick; and it may be noticed that the return of the Stuarts was almost assured by this constant thought and predication of it in the staunchest Puritan minds. The fear was the unconscious prophecy.

When Jane entered, Cymlin and Stephen both rose to meet her. Cymlin was kind with the condescension of a brother. He spoke to her as he spoke to creatures weaker than himself, and kissed her with the air of a king kissing a subject he loved to honour. Then he made an excuse to the stables and gave Stephen his opportunity. The young man had kept his eyes fixed on the beautiful face and slender form of the girl he loved, but had uttered no word except the exclamation that sprung from his lips involuntarily when she entered:

"Jane!"

Even when they were alone, he first put the logs together with the great tongs and replaced them in their stand ere he went to her and clasped her hands and said with a passionate eagerness, "Jane, dearest! I have come again to ask you to marry me. Say one good, kind word. When you were not as high as my heart, you did promise to be my wife. I vow you did! You know you did! Keep your promise; oh, I look for you to keep your promise!"

"Stephen, I knew not then what marriage meant. You were as a brother to me. I love you yet as I loved you then. I am your friend, your sister if you will."

"I will not. You must be my wife."

"I cannot be your wife. I am already plighted."

"To Lord Neville. What the devil——"

"Sir!"

"I beg your pardon. I am no saint, and what you say stirs me to use words not found in books. As for Neville, you shall never marry him. I forbid it. I will hunt him to the gates of death."

"It is sinful to say such things."

"Let my sins alone. I am not in the humour to be sorry for them. I say again, you shall not marry that scoundrelly Scot."

"He is not what you call him—far from it."

"I call things by their right names. I call a Scot, a Scot; and a scoundrel, a scoundrel." He threw her hands far from him, and strode up and down the room, desperate and full of wrath. "You shall marry no man but myself. Before earth and heaven you shall!"

"If God wills, I shall marry Lord Neville."

"I say *no*!" he shouted. "Jane, when the King comes back, and I have my estate and title, will you marry me?"

"You are asking me to marry your estate and title. I do not value either *that*—" and she snapped her thumb against her finger, with no doubtful expression.

"Oh, Jane! I shall go to total ruin if you do not marry me."

"Shall I marry a man who is not lord of himself? I will not."

"You have made me your enemy. What follows is your own fault."

"'Tis a poor love that turns to hatred; and you can do no more than you are let do."

"You will see. By my soul, 'tis truth!"

"There is God between me and you. I have no fear."

"I am beyond reason. What am I saying? All my quarrels with you are kind ones, Jane. Oh, 'tis ten thousand pities you will not love me!"

"It is nowise possible, Stephen."

He flung himself into a chair, laid his arms upon the table, and buried his face in them. "Go away, then," he sobbed; "I wish to see your face no more. For your sake, I will hate all women forever."

There was no use in prolonging a conversation so hopeless. She went away, and in the hall met her brother Cymlin. He looked at her angrily. "You have been behaving badly to Stephen; I see that much. What for did God make women? They are His wrath, I think. You and your friend are both as wicked and cruel and beautiful as tigers; and you have no more heart or conscience than cats have."

"If you are speaking of Lady Matilda, it is a shame. She told me to-day she thought you as handsome a man in face and figure as was in England. She

praised your courage and self-respect, and said if you had kissed her last night she would have forgiven you."

As Jane spoke, wonder and delight chased each other across Cymlin's face. "What else did she say?" he eagerly asked.

"Indeed, I have told you too much."

"Tell me all, Jane, I must know."

"Why should you care for her words? She is cruel as a tiger, and has no more heart or conscience than a cat."

"I did not fully mean such things of Matilda—nor of you, in the main. You are sure she said I was handsome?"

"Sure."

"And brave?"

"Sure."

"And self-respecting?"

"She said every word, and more than I have told you."

"The rest, then?"

"No. I am true to my friend—in the main."

"You are ill-tempered. Stephen ought to be thankful for your 'No.' He will be, some day. I shall go and see Matilda to-morrow."

"She may leave for France to-night."

"You are a provoking creature."

"Go and abuse me to Stephen. I think little of him. He is neither handsome nor brave nor self-respecting, and he threatens me! What do you think of a lover who threatens his mistress? He is out of the Court of Love. He is an alien, an outlaw."

"How you rant!"

She did not wait to hear more. She was both angry and scornful; and she sought out her mother, and found her resting in her own room.

"I get tired soon in the day, Jane," she said; "I think it is the London air, and the strange life, and the constant fear of some change. No one seems to know what a day will bring forth. Did you see Stephen?"

"Yes."

"It can't be, I suppose?"

"You know it can't be, mother." She was hurt at the question. It was a wrong to Cluny; and she said with some temper, "It could not be under any circumstances. The man is mean; he has just threatened me. If I had not been a woman I would have given him his threat back in his teeth. I would rather be Cluny's wife, if Cluny had not a crown."

"Cluny is not troubled with crowns, or half-crowns. Stephen is an old neighbour,—but I am not one to complain. If you are pleased, father and I can

make shift to look so. As for your brothers, I'm not so sure of them."

Then Jane felt a sudden anger at the de Wick family. All her life, in some way or other, it had been the de Wicks. Matilda's exactions and provoking words and ways came to her memory and brought with them a sense of too much endured. Stephen's love had ever been a selfishly disturbing element. Many an unpleasant day it had caused her, and at this moment she told herself that, say what they would, the Earldom had an unacknowledged power over the imagination of all the Swaffhams but herself. She was just going to voice this opinion, when her mother's weary face arrested her words; she went away without justifying herself or her lover, and when the act of self-denial had been accomplished, she was glad of it. In the stillness of her room she retired with Him who is a sure hiding-place, and there found that peace which "soft upon the spirit lies, as tired eyelids upon tired eyes." Her soul sat light and joyful on its temporal perch, for she had been with God, and all the shadows were gone. Men and women who have this supernatural element in them, will understand; to those who are without it, there are no words, there are no miracles which could authenticate this *intimate*, spiritual communion to them.

The next day Cymlin went to Jevery House and reported, on his return, its forlorn emptiness. There were only two or three servants there, and they had no idea when the family would return. To Jane he admitted that London seemed desolate, and Jane was herself conscious of a want or a loss. Much of her London life had been blended with Jevery House, and there was now a necessity for a fresh ordering of her time and duties.

About a week after Matilda's departure Cluny called early one evening and asked Jane to go with him to Mr. Milton's house in Petty France. They sauntered through St. James' Park, not then open to the public in general, though an exception was made in favour of certain houses on the Westminster side. In one of these, "a pretty garden house," Mr. Milton lived, and they found him walking with his daughters under the shady elms. Cluny delivered to him some papers, but did not accept his invitation to enter the house and sing with him an anthem which he had just composed; for the evening promised to be exceedingly lovely, and Jane's company in the sweet, shady walks was a far greater attraction.

They soon lost sight of all humanity, and were conscious only of each other's presence, for indeed a general air of complete solitude pervaded the twilight shades. Jane was telling Cluny about her interview with Stephen, and they were walking slowly, hand in hand, quite absorbed in their own affairs. So much so, that they never noticed a figure which emerged from behind a clump of shrubs, and stood looking at them. It was the Lord General. He had been pacing a little alley of hazel trees near by, for some time, and was about to alter his course in order to take the nearest road to his apartments in Whitehall. His

face was grave, but not unhappy, and when he saw Cluny and Jane he stood still a moment, and then quietly withdrew into the shadow he had left. A smile was round his mouth, and his lips moved in words of blessing, as he took another path to the gate he wished. Amid thoughts of the most momentous interest, a little vision of love and youth and beauty had been vouchsafed him, and there was a feeling of pleasure yet in his heart when he entered the sombre apartment where Israel Swaffham with a guard of soldiers, was in attendance. He saluted his General, and Cromwell called him aside and had some private speech with him.

He then entered a lofty, royally furnished room, where the Council were awaiting his arrival—officers of the army, and members of Parliament. St. John, Harrison, Fleetwood, Desborough and others instantly gathered round Cromwell; Marten, Whitelock, Hazelrig, Scott, Sidney, and about seventeen others, supported Sir Harry Vane, who was leading the Parliamentary cause.

Cromwell opened the discussion by reminding the members that he had already held more than a dozen meetings, in order to induce Parliament to issue an Act for the election of a new Parliament, and then discharge itself. "This is what the people want, in every corner of the nation," he said; "and they are laying at our doors the non-performance of this duty and of their wishes."

Hazelrig reminded him that Parliament had determined to dissolve on the 3d of the ensuing November, after calling for a new election.

"It is now only the 19th of April," answered Cromwell, sharply. "Give me leave to tell you that the 3d of November will not do. I am tired talking to you. There must be a healing and a settling, and that without delay. As for your resolution, the people will not have it. I say, the people will not have it. A Parliament made up of all the old members—without reelection—and of such new ones, as a committee of the old approve and choose! Such a patched, cobbled, made-over, old Parliament will not satisfy the people. I know it! I know it better than any man in England. It will not satisfy me. It will not satisfy the army——"

"Oh, the army!" ejaculated Sir Harry Vane.

"The army, Sir Harry Vane, has been so owned of God, so approved of men, so witnessed for, that, give me leave to say, no man will be well advised who speaks lightly of the army. The question is not the army, the question is the sitting Parliament, which, without either moral or legal right, wants to make itself perpetual."

"This Parliament, General Cromwell, has been the nursing mother of the Commonwealth," said Sir Harry Marten.

"If that be so, yet it is full time that the Commonwealth be weaned. Milk for babes truly, but England wants no more nursing; she wants strong meat, good government, just laws and the settlement of the Gospel Ministry. There is

nothing but jarrings and animosities, and we are like to destroy ourselves when our enemies could not do it."

"The army is full of factions and designs, and 'tis well the Lord General is aware of them," said Hazelrig. "Their insolency to members of Parliament is beyond reason."

"Sir, I cannot be of your judgment," answered Cromwell; "but I do admit that the army begins to have a strange distaste against certain members of Parliament, and I wish there was not too much cause for it."

"Cause! What cause?" asked Whitelock.

"Their self-seeking, their delays in business, their resolve to keep all power perpetually in their own hands; their meddling in private matters, their injustice when they do so meddle, and the scandalous lives of some of the chief of them. These things do give grounds for good people—whether in the army or not in the army—to open their mouths against them."

"There is the Law to punish all evil-doers," said Vane. "While the Law lasts the army need not make inquisitions."

"This Parliament has been, and is, a law unto themselves. They are not within the bounds of the law—there being no authority so full and so high as to keep them in better order," answered Cromwell with some anger. Then the discussion assumed a very acrimonious character. Undoubtedly Vane was sincerely afraid for the liberties of England, with Cromwell and his victorious army at the very doors of the House of Commons. He was also intensely interested in the creation of a British Navy, which should not only balance the glory and power of the army, but also make England lord of the seas, and of their commerce. Besides, his genius had just perfected a plan for raising £120,000 a month to continue the war with Holland; and a project setting quite as near to his heart was publicly to sell all the royal palaces, and so remove from the sight of any ambitious man a palpable temptation to seize the crown. To surrender all he had done in these directions, to leave his cherished projects for others to carry out, or to bring to naught, to forego all the glory and profit Blake was even then winning for the Parliament, was not only hard for himself, but he feared it would be disastrous to England and to her liberties.

He spoke of these things, and especially of the great naval victories of Blake over the Dutch, with eloquence. Cromwell admitted all. He was far too great to wish Blake's honour less, for Blake's honour was England's honour, and England's honour was Cromwell's master passion. "Blake is a good man, and a great commander," he said heartily; "I have seen him on the battle-field, again and again; he took his men there through fire to victory; I do think he will now take them through water the same sure road."

When it drew towards midnight the long, bitter argument was at its height;

no decision had been reached, no course of conduct decided on; and it was evident to Cromwell that passion and self-interest were gaining the mastery. He stood up, and pointing to the smoky, flickering lights of the nearly burned out candles, said,

"The plain truth is, we must have a new Parliament, though we do carry it by force through the teeth of the greatest in the land. I say we must have it. I wish that we had such due forwardness as to set about it to-morrow."

"The 3d of November," cried Whitelock.

"Such a far-off promise is but words for children. I will better it. I will say to-morrow."

"I am with Mr. Whitelock," said one of the members; "at least with present showing."

"And I am of the same mind," added Hazelrig.

"Hazelrig, you are ever egging people of two minds to be of the worser."

"My Lord General, you put us all down. It were well, my lord, if you could believe there are some others of account beside yourself."

Cromwell looked keenly at the speaker but did not answer him.

Turning to Sir Harry Vane he said, "It is now near to midnight, and we have done no good, and I think we shall do none. Let us go to rest. To-morrow, we will talk the matter down to the bottom, and do what God wills."

"Or what the Lord General wills," said Harry Marten with a light laugh, rising as he spoke.

"I want not my own will," answered Cromwell with a sudden great emotion. "I have sought the Lord's will, night and day, on this question. I have indeed! But I do think we have fadged long enough with so great a subject, and the people want a settlement of it—they will have a settlement of it—and I tell you the plain truth, to-morrow there must be some decision. It cannot longer be delayed. There are those who will not suffer it. Truly, I believe this is the greatest occasion that has come to us. As the business stands—I like it not, and somewhat must be done to mend it. I must say this to you—impute it to what you please."

This speech beginning with a pious submission to God's will and ending with a dauntless assertion of his own determination, had a marked effect. The Parliamentary members agreed to let the bill for perpetuating themselves lie over until after another conference to be held the following day, and with this understanding, the members of the Council separated. Cromwell took the promise in good faith; and he said to Israel Swaffham as they went towards Whitehall, "I have at last brought Vane to terms. I do think we may draw up the Act for a new Parliament."

"Then I know not Vane," answered Israel. "He has more shifts than you dream of, and the other members cluster round him like twigs in a broom."

"Everything must bide its time; I mean *His* time. Truly, I hoped for a settlement to-night; it seems we must wait for to-morrow."

Cromwell spoke wearily, and after a moment's pause added, "'Tis striking twelve. Hark to the clocks, how strangely solemn they sound! Well, then, to-day has come, but we have not got rid of the inheritance of yesterday; and what to-day will bring forth, God only knows. We are in the dark, but He dwelleth in light eternal."

CHAPTER IX
CROMWELL INTERFERES

"His port was fierce,
Erect his countenance; manly majesty
Sate in his front and darted from his eyes,
Commanding all he viewed."

Daylight came with that soft radiance of sunshine over fresh green things which makes spring so delightful. Israel, who had slept his usual six hours, was in the garden to enjoy it, and his heart was full of praise. He watched the little brown song sparrows building their nests, and twittering secrets among the hawthorns. He saw the white lilies of the valley lifting their moonlight bells above the black earth, and he took into his heart the sweet sermon they preached to him. Then suddenly, and quite unawares, a waft of enthralling perfume led him to stoop to where at the foot of a huge oak tree a cluster of violets was flinging incense into the air. He smiled at his big hands among them, he was going to gather a few for Jane, and then he could not break their fragile stems. "Praise the Lord where He set you growing," he said softly; "my hands are not worthy to touch such heavenly things, they have been washed in blood too often." And his heart was silent and could find no prayer to utter, but the conscience-stricken cry of the man of war centuries before him, "Cast me not away from Thy presence, and take not Thy holy spirit from me."

Softened by such exquisite matins, he went in to breakfast. He was seldom inclined to talk on public affairs, and this morning he said not a word about the Council of the previous night, nor of the self-humiliation which he felt certain

would be demanded of the Parliament that day. He eat his portion cheerfully, listening to Jane, who was more talkative and light-hearted than usual. She told her father she was going with Alice Heneage and a number of young people to Hampton Court. They were to picnic in the park and come home in the gloaming by the river; and as she dwelt on what was to be done and seen that happy day, Israel looked at her with a tender scrutiny. He said to himself, "She is more beautiful than she used to be;" and he watched with pleasure her soul-lit eyes and speaking face, not oblivious, either, of the neatness of her shining hair and the exquisite purity of her light gown of India calico, with its crimped rufflings and spotless stomacher of embroidery. "*She* might have worn the violets on her breast," he thought; and then he rose hastily and called in the household, and read a psalm, and made a short, fervid prayer with them.

And this morning he looked at the men and maids afterwards, and was not pleased at what he saw. "Tabitha," he said sternly, "you come to worship with too little care. Both you and the other wenches may well wash your faces, and put on clean brats when you are going to sit down and listen to the Word of the Lord;" then observing a grin on one of the men's faces, he turned on them with still more anger, and rated them for their want of respect to God and man for their uncombed hair and soiled garments and unblacked shoes, and so sent all of them away with shame in their red faces and not a little wrath in their hearts. And he had no idea that Jane's delicious freshness and purity had really been the text prompting his household homily.

Soon after General Swaffham's departure for Whitehall, Jane's friends called for her, and they went away together full of youth's enthusiasm and anticipation. They took the road to the river, and to the sound of music and the falling and dipping of the oars they reached Richmond and soon spread the contents of their hampers upon the grass under some great oaks in the secluded park. Jane was disappointed at Cluny's absence; he had certainly been expected, and no word explaining his failure to keep his engagement had been received. But the general tone of the company was so full of innocent gayety, that she could not, and did not, wish to resist it.

After a happy, leisurely meal, they spent the rest of their holiday in wandering through the palace, until its melancholy, monastic grandeur subdued them almost to silence. Captain Desborough, a young officer who waited on Alice Heneage, was familiar with the building, and as he led them through the rooms he told them stories, good and ill, connected with the various apartments. Finally they came to one on the ground floor, that had been the private parlour of King Charles—a gloomy room furnished with a sombre magnificence—and here the young man drew the company closer to him, and said—

"I can tell you something true and strange about this room. There were

two prophecies made in it, and one of them has come to pass. King Charles stood at this window one day, just where we are now standing, and his three eldest children were with him. And a woman, swart as an Indian savage, with eyes full of a strange, glazing light, came suddenly before them. And she said to the King, 'Let me read the future of your children. It may comfort you when you will need comfort.' But the King, being in one of his melancholy tempers, answered her haughtily, 'No mortal man or woman can foresee the future;' and she looked scornfully at him, and putting a small steel mirror before his face said, 'Look!' and the King cast down his eyes and saw his own head lying on a bloody sheet; and he shuddered and reeled as if he would have fallen. Then a look of pity came into the woman's face, and she put aside the mirror, and said in a strange, far-off voice—as if she was already a long way distant—'When a dog dies in this room, your son will come to the throne again.' And the King called loudly for his attendant, but when the officer came, the woman had disappeared, nor could any trace or tidings of her be found or heard tell of."

And every one was strangely silent; they walked away separately and examined the fine tapestry hangings, but they said not a word to each other about the uncanny incident. It seemed only a fit sequence that their next visit should be through the low, narrow portals to the gloomy subterranean apartments, which had been the guard rooms, and which were still decorated with dusty battle flags and old arms and armour. A singular sensation of having been in these vault-like rooms before, a sense of far-backness, of existence stretching behind everlastingly, of sorrows great and unavailing, permeated the atmosphere. Jane felt that here, if anywhere, men of war might understand the barrenness of their lives, and anticipate the small, and gloomy harvest of their tremendous pilgrimage.

It was like passing from death unto life to come out of these caverns of the sword into the light and glory of the westering sun, to feel its warmth, and see its brave colours, and hear the cuckoo, like a wandering voice, among the trees. Jane was the first to speak. "How beautiful is life and light!" she cried. "Let us get far away from this woeful palace. I felt such sorrowful Presence in every room; I thought I heard sighs following me, and soft steps. Who would live in such a home? To do so, it is to say to Misfortune, 'Come and live with me.'"

The spirits of the little party, so gay in the morning, had sunk to the level of their surroundings: the damp river with its twinkling lights, the gray gloaming, the laboured dip of the traveling oars. They were near the city when Mary Former said a few words about the evil-omened parlour and the two prophecies; then she wondered, "If it was really in the power of any one to reveal the future." And Philip Calamy, a very devout young man, who was in attendance upon Jane, answered,

"The Book of the Future, in whatever language it may be written, is a per-

ilous one to read. We should go mad with too much learning there."

"Yet," said Jane, "it is most sure that certain signs precede certain events; and I see not why the good man, being related to heavenly beings—a little lower than the angels—may not foresee and foretell; and by the same token, the evil being, related to evil angels, might have a like intelligence."

The discussion was not continued, for they were at the river stairs, and as they passed through the city they were instantly aware of great excitement. The rabble were gathered round the men of news, and were listening with open mouths; the tradesmen were talking in groups at their shop doors; they heard the name of Cromwell repeatedly, sometimes in pride, sometimes in anger; and small bodies of the army were very much in evidence. It was impossible not to feel that something of great moment had happened, or was going to happen; and when Jane entered the hall at Sandys and saw Doctor Verity's hat and cloak there, she expected that he had come with information. The next moment Mrs. Swaffham came hurriedly forward, and when she saw Jane, she raised her eyes and threw up her hands with the palms outward, to express her huge astonishment and dismay.

"Mother," cried Jane, "what is the matter? What has happened?" and Mrs. Swaffham answered—

"The strangest thing that ever happened in England."

Even while she spoke they heard General Swaffham coming up the steps, the clatter of his arms emphasising his perturbed feelings. He was very little inclined to parade his military importance, so that the rattle of swords and spurs meant something more than usual to those who understood him. He had scarcely entered the door ere Doctor Verity came into the hall crying—

"Is it true, Israel? Is it true?"

"Quite true."

"And well done?"

"Well done. I am sure of it."

Men and women went into the parlour together, and a servant began to remove the General's cavalry boots and spurs. "I told you, Doctor, this morning, that a settlement of some kind must come to-day. When I reached Whitehall I found the Lord General waiting for Sir Harry Vane and the members who had promised to come and continue the conference relating to the bill early in the day. The General was occupying himself with a book, but as the hours went by he grew restless and laid it down. Then he turned to me and said, 'Truly these men are long in coming; are you ready, General?' and before I could answer he asked again 'ready and willing?' I told him a word would move my troop as one man, if that word came from himself; and he waited silently a little longer. Then Lord Cluny Neville came in very hastily, and said a few words, I know not what

they were; and he had scarce gone when Colonel Ingoldsby entered, and there was no secrecy then—

"'My lord!' he cried, 'Parliament is sitting at this moment; and Sir Harry Vane, Sidney, and Henry Marten are urging the immediate passage of the bill so hateful to the whole nation.'

"Then Cromwell roused himself like an angry lion. His passion at this perfidious conduct leaped into flame; he shouted to Lambert and his own troop of Ironsides. He gave me the signal I understood, and we went quickly to the Parliament House. In the lobby St. John was standing, and he said to Cromwell, 'Are you come down to the House, my lord, this morning? It was thought you were safe at the Cockpit?' and Cromwell answered, 'I have somewhat to do at the House. I am grieved to my soul to do it. I have sought the Lord with tears to lay the work on some other man. I would to God I could innocently escape it—but there is a necessity!' and he spoke with force and anger, and so went into the House."

"But what then?" asked Doctor Verity, his face burning with the eager soul behind it.

"I stood at the door watching him, my men being in the lobby. He went to his usual seat, but in a very great and majestic manner, and for a little while he listened to the debate. Then he beckoned Major General Harrison and told him he judged 'it was high time to dissolve this Parliament.' And Harrison told me this afternoon, that he advised Cromwell to consider what he would do, for it was a work great and dangerous; and who, he asked, 'is sufficient for it?' And Cromwell answered, 'The Servant of the Lord, he is sufficient;' yet he sat down again, looking at me as he did so, and I looked back straight into his eyes that I and mine could be depended on.

"In a few minutes the question for passing the bill was put, and the man could be restrained no longer. He stood up, took off his hat, and looked round the House, and it quailed under his eyes; every man in it shifted on his seat and was uneasy. He began to speak, and it was with a tongue of flame. He reproached them for their self-seeking and their hypocrisy and oppression; and as he went on, there was the roar of a lion in his voice, and the members, being condemned of their own consciences, cowered before him."

"Did no one open their mouth against him?"

"No one but Sir Peter Wentworth. He said, 'My Lord General, this Parliament has done great things for England;' and Cromwell answered, 'The spoke in the wheel that creaks most does not bear the burden in the cart!' Then Sir Peter told Cromwell his abuse of the Parliament was the more horrid because it came from the servant of the Parliament, the man they had trusted and obliged."

At these words Dr. Verity laughed loudly—"Cromwell, the servant of such

a Parliament!" he cried. "Not he; what then, Israel?"

"He told Wentworth to be quiet. He said he had heard enough of such talk, and putting on his hat, he took the floor of the House. I watched him as he did so. He breathed inward, like one who has a business of life and death in hand. I could see on his face that he was going to do the deed that had been the secret of his breast for many days; and his walk was that quick stride with which he ever went to meet an enemy. He stood in the middle of the House, and began to accuse the members personally. His words were swords. He flung them at the men as if they were javelins; shot them in their faces as if from a pistol; and while rivers run to the sea, I can never think of Oliver Cromwell as I saw him this day but as one of the Immortals. He did not look as you and I look. He filled the House, though a less man in bulk and stature than either of us. He told the members to empty themselves of Self, and then they would find room for Christ, and for England. He told them the Lord had done with them. He said they were no Parliament, and that he had been sent to put an end to their sitting and their prating.

"And at these words, Cluny Neville spoke to the Serjeant, and he opened the doors, and some musketeers entered the House. Then Sir Harry Vane cried out, 'This is not honest;' and Cromwell reminded him of his own broken promise. And so, to one and all, he brought Judgment Day; for their private lives were well known to him, and he could glance at Tom Challoner and say, 'Some of you are drunkards;' and at Henry Marten, and give the text about lewd livers; and at the bribe-takers he had only to point his finger, and say in a voice of thunder '*Depart*,' and they began to go out, at first slowly, and then in a hurry, treading on the heels of each other."

"What of Lenthall? He has a stubborn will."

"He sat still in the Speaker's chair, until Cromwell ordered him to come down. For a moment he hesitated, but General Harrison said, 'I will lend you my hand, sir;' and so he also went out."

"But was there no attempt to stay such dismissals? I am amazed, dumbfounded!" said Doctor Verity.

"Alderman Allen, the Treasurer of the Army, as he went out said something to Cromwell which angered him very much; and he then and there charged Allen with a shortage of one hundred thousand pounds, and committed him to the care of a musketeer for examination. And as Sir Harry Vane passed him, he told him reproachfully that his own treacherous conduct had brought affairs to their present necessity; for, he added, 'if Sir Harry Vane had been at the Cockpit according to his words, Oliver Cromwell had not been in the Parliament House.' But I tell you, there was no gainsaying the Cromwell of this hour. He was more than mortal man; and Vane and the others knew, if they had not known before,

why he was never defeated in battle."

"After the Speaker had left, what then?"

"His eye fell upon the Mace, and he said scornfully to some of the Ironsides, 'Take that bauble away!' Then he ordered the musketeers to clear the House, he himself walking up to its Clerk and taking from under his arm the bill which had caused the trouble, and which was ready to pass. He ordered the man to go home, and he slipped away without a question. Cromwell was the last soul to leave the Chamber, and as he went out of it he locked the door and put the key in his pocket. He then walked quietly back to his rooms in the Cockpit, and I dare say he was more troubled to meet Mistress Cromwell than he was to meet Sir Harry Vane and his company."

"Oh, no!" said Jane. "Mistress Cromwell is in all her husband's counsels. He would go to her for comfort, for whatever he may have said and done. I know he is this hour sorrowful and disturbed, and that he will neither eat nor drink till he has justified himself in the sight of God."

"He will need God on his right hand and on his left," said Doctor Verity. "More than we can tell will come of this—implacable hostility, rancorous jealousy, everlasting envy and spite. The members——"

"The members," interrupted General Swaffham, "have tied themselves, hands and feet, with cords of their own spinning, and Oliver Cromwell holds the ends of them. They will not dare to open their mouths. Sir Harry Vane said something about the business being 'unconstitutional,' and Cromwell answered him roughly enough, after this fashion: 'Unconstitutional? A very accommodating word, Sir Harry Vane. Give me leave to say you have played fast and loose with it long enough. I will not have it any longer! England will not have it! You are no friend of England. I do say, sir, you are no friend of England!' And his passion gathered and blazed till he spurned the floor with his feet, just as I have seen my big red bull at Swaffham paw the ground on which he stood."

"This is all very fine indeed," said Mrs. Swaffham, almost weeping in her anger; "but you need not praise this man to me. He has slain the King of England, and turned out the English Parliament, and pray what next? He will make himself King, and Elizabeth Cromwell Queen. Shall we indeed bow down to them? Not I, for one."

"He wants no such homage, Martha," said the Doctor, "and if I judge Madame Cromwell rightly, she is quite as far from any such desire."

"You know nothing of the Cromwell women, Doctor—I know. Yes, I know them!"

"Dear mother——"

"Jane, there is no use 'dear mothering' me. I know the Cromwells. Many a receipt for puddings and comfits I have given Elizabeth Cromwell, and shown

her how to dye silk and stuffs; yes, and loaned her my silver sconces when Elizabeth married Mr. Claypole; and now to think of her in the King's palace, and people bowing down to her, and hand-kissing, and what not! And as for Oliver Cromwell's passions, we know all about them down in Cambridgeshire," she continued. "He stamped in that way when some one preached in St. Mary's what he thought rank popery; and about the draining of the Fens, he kicked enough, God knows! Oh, yes, I can see him in steel and buff, sword in hand, and musketeers behind him, getting his way—for his way he will have—if he turn England hurly-burly for it."

"Martha, he wore neither steel nor buff, and his sword was far from him. He went down to the House in a black cloth suit and gray worsted stockings, which, no doubt, were of his wife's knitting; and his shoes were those made by Benjamin Cudlip, country fashion, low-cut, with steel latchets. He had not even a falling collar on, just a band of stitched linen round his neck."

"I wonder, oh, I hope!" said Jane, "that it was one of the bands I stitched when I was last staying at Whitehall."

"Find it out, Jane; settle your mind that it was one of them," answered Doctor Verity; "and then, Jane, you may tell it to your children, and grandchildren, God willing."

"At any rate," continued General Swaffham, "Cromwell at this hour owed nothing to his dress. I have seen him in the fields by St. Ives, and in Ely Market, in the same kind of clothing. What would you? And what did it matter? His spirit clothed his flesh, and the power of the spirit was on him, so that the men in velvet and fine lace wilted away in his presence."

"No one minds the Lord General's having power, no one minds giving him honour for what he has done for England, but the Cromwell women! What have they done more than others?" asked Mrs. Swaffham.

"Be at peace, Martha," said General Swaffham; "here are things to consider of far greater import than the Cromwell women. How the nation will take this affair, remains to be seen. 'Tis true the Lord General was cheered all through the city, but he knows—and no man better—what a fickle heart the populace have. As like as not, it will be, as he said to me, 'Overturn, overturn, and great tasks on all sides.'"

"I look for measureless wrath and vain babble, and threats heard far and wide," said Doctor Verity. "The people have been given what they wanted, and twenty to one they will now nay-say all they have roared for. That would be like the rest of their ways."

For once Doctor Verity was wrong. This master-stroke of Cromwell's went straight to the heart of London. "Not a dog barked against it," said Cromwell to his friends, and he was to all intents and purposes right. Those who called it

"usurpation" confessed that it was an usurpation of capability, in place of one of incapability. Even the lampoons of the day were not adverse to Cromwell, while some of them gave him a grim kind of pleasure.

Thus, one morning, Cluny Neville passing the Parliament House noticed placards on its walls, and going close enough to read them, found they advertised "*This house to let; unfurnished.*" And when he told this to Cromwell, that faculty in the man which sometimes made for a rude kind of mirth, was aroused, and he burst into an uproarious enjoyment of the joke. "I wish," he cried, "I wish I knew the wag who did it. I would give him a crown or two, I would indeed, and gladly."

There had been a little uncertainty about the navy, for Sir Harry Vane had shown it great favour. But Admiral Robert Blake was as great and as unselfish a man in his office as was Oliver Cromwell. He accepted the change without dissent, telling his fleet simply—

"It is not the business of seamen to mind state affairs. Our business is to keep foreigners from fooling us, and to find the Dutch ships, fight them, and sink them."

And yet the feeling which led to Mrs. Swaffham's little burst of temper was not particular to herself. Many women felt precisely as Martha Swaffham did, and Cromwell did not take this element into his consideration. Yet it was one that worked steadily towards its reckoning, for men do not finally withstand the ceaseless dropping fire of their own hearthstones. Mrs. Fleetwood's and Mrs. Lambert's ill-feeling about precedence was indefinitely multiplied, and Mrs. Swaffham's more intimate rejection of the Cromwell women was a stone thrown into water and circling near and far. The Lord General Cromwell, men and women alike, could accept; he had fought his way to honour, and they could give him what he had won. But the Cromwell women had done nothing, and suffered nothing beyond the ordinary lot; it was a much harder thing to render homage unto them. In these days, Mrs. Swaffham, though ignoring the late King, was distinctly royal and loyal where Queen Henrietta Maria was concerned.

But it was, after all, a grand time in old England. Adventures and victories were the news of every day. Nothing was too strange to happen; people expected romances and impossibilities; and because they expected them, they came. The big city was always astir with news; it flew from lip to lip, like wild fire, was rung out from every steeple, and flashed in bonfires from one high place to another. This formidable man in black and gray was at the helm of affairs, and England felt that she might now trade and sow and marry and be happy to her heart's desire. The shutting of the Parliament House affected nothing; the machinery of Government went on without let or hindrance. A new Parliament was quickly summoned, one hundred and forty Puritan notables "fearing God and of approved fidelity and honesty," and it was to begin its sittings on the ensuing fourth of July.

Meantime, Robert Blake was wiping out of existence the Dutch navy and the Dutch commerce. In the month of June, he took eleven Dutch men-of-war and one thousand three hundred and fifty prisoners; the church bells rang joyously from one end of England to the other, and London gathered at St. Paul's to sing Te Deums for the victory.

Thus to the echoes of trumpets and cannon the business of living and loving went on. The great national events were only chorus to the dramas and tragedies of the highest and the humblest homes. While Cromwell was issuing writs for a new Parliament and holding the reins of Government tightly in his strong hands, his wife and daughters were happily busy about the marriage of young Harry Cromwell to Elizabeth Russel; and Sir Peter Lely was painting their portraits, and Lady Mary Cromwell had her first lover; and Mrs. Swaffham was making the cowslip wine; and the Fermor and Heneage girls off to Bath for trifling and bathing and idle diversions; and Jane sewing the sweetest and tenderest thoughts into the fine linen and cambric which she was fashioning into garments for her own marriage. In every family circle it was the same thing: the little comedies of life went on, whether Parliament sat or not, whether Blake brought in prizes, or lay watching in the Channel; for, after all, what the people really wanted was peace and leisure to attend to their own affairs.

One lovely morning in this jubilant English spring, Jane sat at the open window writing to Matilda de Wick. All the sweet fresh things of the earth and the air were around her, but she was the sweetest and freshest of all. There was a pleasant smile on her lips as her fingers moved across the white paper. She was telling her friend about Harry Cromwell's marriage in the old church at Kensington; about the dresses and the wedding feast, and the delightful way in which the Lord General had taken his new daughter to his heart. "And what now will Mistress Dorothy Osborne do?" she asked. "To be sure, she is said to be greatly taken with Sir William Temple, who is of her own way of thinking—which Harry Cromwell is not, though Mrs. Hutchinson has spoken of him everywhere as a 'debauched, ungodly cavalier;' but Mrs. Hutchinson has a Presbyterian hatred of the Cromwells. And I must also tell you that the Lords Chandos and Arundel have been tried before the Upper Bench for the killing of Mr. Compton in a duel. The crime was found manslaughter, and they were sentenced to be burned in the hand which was done to them both, but very favourably. And the Earl of Leicester said he was glad of it, for it argued a good stiff government to punish men of such high birth; but my father thinks Leicester to be the greatest of levelers, he would abolish all rank and titles but his own. And I must also tell you that General Monk has discovered his marriage to Ann Clarges a market-woman of low birth, no beauty whatever, and a very ill tongue. My mother is sure the General must have been bewitched; however, Mistress Monk has gone to live in

Greenwich palace, which has been given to the General for a residence. And the rest of my news is in a nutshell, Matilda. I heard from Tonbert that your brother had been seen at de Wick, but this I discredit. Did he not go with you to France: Cymlin is in Ireland, and sulking at his banishment to so barbarous a country; and so I make an end of this long letter, saying in a word I am your friend entirely and sincerely, Jane Swaffham."

When Matilda received this letter she was in Paris. Her first resting-place had been at The Hague, where she had speedily been made known to the Princess Elizabeth Stuart, the widowed ex-Queen of Bohemia, and the mother of Prince Rupert. In her poverty-stricken Court Matilda found kindred spirits, and she became intimate with the light-hearted Queen and her clever daughters. For in spite of the constant want of money, it was a Court abounding in wit and fun, in running about The Hague in disguise; in private theatricals, singing and dancing, and other "very hilarious amusements," deeply disgusting to the English Puritans.

So, then, while Sir Thomas Jevery was busy about his ships and his merchandise, Lady Jevery and Matilda spent much time with the ex-Queen, her dogs and her monkeys, her sons and her daughters, and the crowd of Cavalier gentlemen who made the house at The Hague a gathering place. Rupert, however, had never been his mother's favourite, yet she was proud of his valour and achievements, and not generally indisposed to talk to Matilda about her "big hero." It pleased her most to describe with melodramatic thrills his baptism in the great old palace of Prague, his ivory cradle embossed with gold and gems, and his wardrobe—"the richest he ever had in his life, poor infant;"—and then she continued, "He was not a lucky child. Misfortune came with him. He was not a year old when the Austrians overran Bohemia, and we were without a Kingdom—a king and a queen without a crown. Well, I have my dogs and my monkeys."

"Which your Majesty greatly prefers to your sons and daughters," said the witty young Princess Sophie.

"They give me fewer heartaches, Sophie," was the answer. "Look, for instance, at your brother Rupert. What an incorrigible he is! What anxieties have I not suffered for him. And Maurice, who must get himself drowned all because of his adoration of Rupert! Oh, the poor Prince Rupert! he is, as I say, most unlucky. I told my august brother Charles the same thing, and he listened not, until everything was lost, and it was too late. The great God only knows what calamities there are in this world."

"But Prince Rupert has been the hope and support of his cousin's Court in the Louvre for three years," said Matilda warmly; "it is not right to make little of what he has done."

"He has done miracles, my dear Lady Matilda," answered Rupert's mother; "but the miracles never pay. We are all of us wretchedly poor. He sells his valour

and his blood for nothing worth while."

"He is the greatest soldier and sailor in the world; so much even his enemies admit."

"There are no results," said the ex-Queen, with a gay laugh and a shrug of her shoulders. "And I am told he has learned magic among the Africans, and brought home blackamoors and finer monkeys than my own. I object to nothing, since he assures me of his undying love for myself and the Protestant religion. I assure you, if he did not love the Protestant religion I should find no difficulty in renouncing him."

"He was too well educated in his religion to forget it, madame," said the Princess Louise.

"I am not to blame if it were otherwise. I assure you he knows his Heidelberg Catechism as well as any Doctor of Divinity, and the History of the Reformers is at his tongue's end. I am not in health to go regularly to church, but my children go without omission, and they give me the points of the sermon in writing. I do my duty to them; and of Rupert I had once great hopes, for the first words he ever spoke were 'Praise the Lord,' in the Bohemian tongue. After that, one does not readily think evil of a Prince."

Every day Matilda adroitly induced such conversations; and once when the mother had talked herself into an enthusiasm, she said, "Come and I will show you some pictures of this Rupert. His sister Louise makes portraits quite equal to those of her master, Honthorst. I may tell you frankly, we have sold her pictures for bread often; they are said to be Honthorst's, but most often they are the work of the Princess Louise. The poor child! she paints and she paints, and forgets that she is a Palatine Princess without a thaler for her wardrobe. Look at this portrait of Rupert! Is he not a big, sturdy boy? He was only four then, but he looks eight. How full of brave wonder are those eyes, as he looks out on the unknown world! And in this picture he is fourteen. He does not appear happy. No, but rather sad and uncertain, as if he had not found the world as pleasant as he expected. In this picture he is seventeen, gallant and handsome and smiling. He has begun to hope again,—perhaps to love. And look now on this face at twenty-nine; he has carried too heavy a burden for his age, done too much, suffered too much."

Matilda knew the latter portrait well, its facsimile lay upon her heart; and though she did not say a word, it was impossible not to notice in all the painted faces that strange, haunting Stuart melancholy, which must have had its root in some sorrowful, unfathomable past.

On another evening they were talking of England, and of recent events there, chiefly of the high-handed dismissal of the Parliament, and the gay-hearted Elizabeth laughed at the affair very complacently. "I am an English Princess," she said, "but I hate Parliaments; so did his late Majesty, my brother Charles. But for

the Parliament, my fate might have been different. I adored my husband, that is known, but it was the Parliament who made our marriage. My father, the great and wise King James, did not wish me to marry the Elector Palatine,—it was a poor match for the Princess Royal of England,—but the Parliament thought the Elector would make himself the leader of the Calvinistic princes of the Empire. My dear Lady Matilda, he was sixteen years old, and I was sixteen, and we two children, what could we do with those turbulent Bohemian Protestants? You make a stir about your Oliver Cromwell ordering the English Members of Parliament out of their own House, listen then: the Protestant nobles of Bohemia threw the Emperor's ministers and members out of their Council Chamber windows. It was only their way of telling the Emperor they would not have the Catholic King he supported. The English adore the Law, and will commit any crime in it and for it; the Bohemians are a law unto themselves. They then asked us to come to Prague, and we went and were crowned there, and in the midst of this glory, the Prince Rupert was born. He was a wonder for his great size, even then. And he had for his sponsors the King of Hungary and the Duke of Wurtenburg and the States of Bohemia, Silesia, and Upper and Lower Lusatia. Yet in less than a year we were all fugitives, and the poor child was thrown aside by his frightened nurse, and found lying alone on the floor by Baron d'Hona, who threw him into the last coach leaving the palace; and he fell into the boot and nearly perished. So you see how unfortunate he was from the beginning."

"But, madame, you have a large family; some of them will surely retrieve your misfortunes."

"I do not trouble myself about the day I have never seen. There is a great astrologer in Paris, and he has told me that my daughter Sophia will bear a son, who will become King of England. Sophia gives herself airs on this prediction."

Sophia, who was present, laughed heartily. "Indeed, madame," she said, "and when I am Queen Mother I shall abolish courtesies. Imagine, Lady de Wick, that I cannot eat my dinner without making nine separate courtesies, and on Sundays and Wednesdays, when we have two divines to eat with us, there are extra ones. I shall regulate my Court with the least amount of etiquette that will be decent."

"You perceive, Lady de Wick, what a trial it is to have four clever daughters—not to speak of sons. My daughter, the Princess Elizabeth, is the most learned of women; I think she knows every language under the sun. You have seen the paintings of the Princess Louise. Sophia is witty and pretty, and is to be the mother of an English King; and my fair Henrietta is a beauty, and what is remarkable, she is also amiable, and makes adorable embroideries and confections. So the mother of four such princesses must not complain."

"Especially when she has seventeen dogs and horses; not to speak of mon-

keys and blackamoors," cried Sophia.

"Sophia is jealous!" said the merry ex-Queen. "So is Rupert. Now, I am never jealous; I think jealousy is selfishness."

Such intimate conversations occurred daily while Matilda frequented the House at The Hague; and when Sir Thomas Jevery was ready to proceed to Paris, the ladies did not leave their pleasant entertainer without tangible, financial proof of their interest in the Palatines. The light-hearted, dependent Elizabeth took the offering with open satisfaction. "It is very welcome," she said gratefully; "and the more so, because it is so sensibly expressed. Some would have thought it best to offer me a jewel, and so put my steward to the trouble of selling it, and me to the loss. Oh!" she sighed, smiling cheerfully at the same time, "it is a sad thing to be poor for want of money; poverty is so transparent. If you have only money, it is a cloak for everything."

CHAPTER X
RUPERT AND CLUNY

"Beauty formed
Her face; her heart Fidelity."

"For he was of that noble trade,
That demigods and heroes made;
Slaughter, and knocking on the head,
The trade to which they all were bred."

When the Jeverys arrived in Paris, they went immediately to the beautiful Hotel de Fransac, which Sir Thomas had rented for their residence while in the city. It was situated in La Place Royale, almost within sight of the palaces of the King and the Cardinal. But Sir Thomas considered it necessary to the success of his business with Mazarin to wear the outside show of great wealth, and it was quite as necessary to Matilda's hopes and desires. If she would keep in enthralment a prince, she must, at least, be the princess of his imagination. In reality, she was now much more so than ever before. Years and sorrow and manifold experiences had imparted to the mere loveliness of the flesh the captivating charm of the

spirit. She was now a woman, not only to be adored for her beauty, but still more so for the qualities that would be in their perfection when beauty of face and form had faded away.

And with this rarer loveliness there had come a kind of necessity to express it in clothing marvelously splendid and effective. The palace in which she was abiding also demanded it: the enormous spaces given to stairways and apartments, the magnificent furniture, the gorgeously liveried servants, were only the natural accessories of some personage whose nobility or authority or wealth found in such splendour a fitting expression.

One afternoon Matilda stood at a window watching the crowds passing incessantly from palace to palace. Silk and velvet and lace fluttered in the bright sunshine; jewels flashed from the soft hats, and the gleaming vests and the ready weapons. They were kissing hands, drawing swords, falling on one knee before some beauty or dignitary; they were laughing and swearing, and wooing and fighting, and riding and driving, as if life was only a grand Court pageant.

To the right was the palace of the great King Louis, and not far away the palace of his Eminence, the great Cardinal Mazarin; and between them, the crowd amused itself, conscious all the time of that other palace for the Unfortunates, called the Bastile. Its shadow was always over Place Royale; dark, inexorable, mysterious; and every soul of them knew that either road, or any road, might lead them to that silent, living sepulchre. How different was all this from the cool, gray, busy streets of London, with their steady movement of purposeful men and women!

Matilda appeared to be watching the brilliant scene in La Place Royale, but she was taking no special notice of it. She had just received a letter from Jane, and was pondering the news it brought her and waiting. She was wonderfully dressed, and wonderfully lovely, the delicate brightness of her complexion admirably enhanced by the darkness of her hair, and the robe of ruby-coloured Lyons velvet in which she was dressed. It fell away in billows of lace from her white throat and shoulders; and its large sleeves were lifted above the elbows with bands of Oriental pearls. There were pearls round her throat and round her arms, and the golden combs that held back her hair were ornamented with them.

She was dressed for her lover, and awaiting his arrival, her soul flashing from her watching eyes, her whole sweet body at attention. When to ordinary ears there would have been nothing to give notice, Matilda heard a step. She let Jane's letter drop to her feet, and stood facing the door with hands dropped and tightly clasped. She was very tall and her long velvet gown gave emphasis to her stature. Unconsciously she had advanced her right foot—indeed, her whole body had the eager look of one whose soul was outreaching it.

A moment later the footsteps were very distinct; they were ascending the

stairway quickly, peremptorily—the tread of impatience where all obstacles have been removed. A perfectly ravishing light spread itself over Matilda's face. A moment was an hour. Then the door flew open and Prince Rupert entered; "entered," however, being too small a word, for with the opening of the door he was on his knees at Matilda's feet, his arms were round her waist, she had bent her face to his, they were both near to weeping and knew it not; for love must weep when it snatches from some hard Fate's control the hours that years have sighed for.

"Adorable Mata! O lovely and beloved! O my love," he sighed. "O Mata, my flower! my wine! my music! my sacred secret!"

She kissed him, and made him rise. And he told her again, all the waste, weary remembrance of his life apart from her, and showed her the long tress of hair which had kept for him the kisses and vows of long ago. And with what sweet sighs she answered him! Her tender eyes, her happy mouth, her soft tones, her gentle touch, were all tokens from her heart's immediate sanctuary. Amid the sins and sorrows and shows of Paris, there was paradise for two hearts in the Hotel de Fransac.

In these days men and women did really live and die for love, and a lover who did not fall at his mistress' feet was held graceless and joyless, and without natural fervour. And Rupert could do everything in excess and yet be natural, for all his being was abnormally developed; his gigantic stature, his passionate soul, his unreasoning love, his reckless bravery, his magnificent generosity, his bitter enmities, were all points in which he offended against the usual standard—though it was a large standard, if measured by the conventions of the present day. He had been dangerously ill after his arrival in Paris, and he was not the Rupert who had invaded the high seas three years previously. In these three years he had endured every evil that tempests, bad climates, war, fever, want of food and "strange hardnesses" of all kinds could bring him; and above all he had practically failed in everything. He had lost most of the treasure so hardly won; his ships and his men and his idolised brother, Maurice; and all these losses had taken with them some of the finer parts of his nature. He had come home a disappointed and cynical man, his youth melted away in the fiery crucible of constant strife with human and elemental forces.

Yet he was the most picturesque figure in Paris. The young King Louis delighted in his society. Mazarin was his friend, and not only the English Court in exile, but also the French Court paid him the most extraordinary attentions. His striking personality, his barbaric retinue of black servants, his supposed wealth, the whispers of his skill in necromancy, were added to a military and naval reputation every one seemed desirous to embellish. Many great ladies were deeply in love with him, but their perfumed billet-doux touched neither his heart nor

his vanity.

He loved Matilda. All the glory and the sorrow of his youth were in that love, and as he knelt at her feet in his princely, soldierly splendour, there was nothing lacking in the picture of romantic devotion. "Adorable, ravishing Mata!" he cried, "at your feet I am paid for my life's misery." And Matilda leaned towards him till their handsome faces touched, and Rupert could look love into her eyes, soft and languishing with an equal affection.

"How tall you have grown. You have the stature of a goddess," he cried with rapture; and then in a tone full of seriousness he added,

"You are my mate. You are the only woman I can ever love. I vow that you shall be my princess, or I will die unmarried for your sake."

For a little while their conversation was purely personal, but their own interests were so blent with public affairs that it was not possible to separate them for any length of time.

"We have sold all our cargoes," he said triumphantly, "in spite of old Cromwell's remonstrances. Mazarin helped us, and the money is distributed. What can Cromwell do? Will he go to war with France for a merchant's bill of lading? The King and the Cardinal laugh at his demands. He is an insolent fellow. Does he think he can match his Eminence? But, this or that, the money is scattered to the four quarters of the world. Let him recover it."

"I will tell you something, Rupert. I had a letter to-day from my friend, Mistress Jane Swaffham. She says her lover, Lord Cluny Neville, must be in Paris about this time, and that he will call on me. He is on Cromwell's business; there is no doubt of it."

"Do you wish to see the man?"

"No. He has stolen my brother's mistress. He has done Stephen a great wrong; and he is also full of perfections. A very sufficient youth in his own opinion, and much honoured and trusted by his Excellency, the Lord General Cromwell."

She spoke with evident scorn, and Rupert said, "I shall have to reckon with him. Stephen's wrongs are my wrongs. Is the lady fair and rich?"

"'Tis thought so. I once loved her."

"And now, you love her not; eh, sweetheart?"

"There is Cromwell between us—and Neville."

"What is the appearance of Neville? I think I saw him this morning."

Then Matilda described the young lord, and the particularity of her knowledge regarding his eyes and hair and voice and manner did not please Prince Rupert. At least, he affected to be jealous of such intimate observation, and for a few minutes the affairs of Cromwell and Mazarin were forgotten in one of those whiffs of displeasure with which lovers season their affections. But during it,

Matilda had felt obliged to speak disparagingly and disagreeably of Neville, and she was only too sensible afterwards of all the ill-will she had expressed. In putting the dormant dislike into words, she had brought it into actual existence.

"A very haughty youth," said Rupert when the conversation was resumed. "He was with the Cardinal this morning, and bore himself as if he carried the honour of England on his shoulders. And now I begin to remember his business was such as in a manner concerns us. 'Twas about a merchant ship which that old farmer on King Charles' throne wants payment for. My men took it in fair fight, and 'tis against all usage to give back spoils. The demands of Cromwell are beyond measure insolent, and the goods are gone and the ship is sold and the money scattered, and what can old Ironsides do in the matter?"

They talked of these things until Rupert's engagements called him away, then they rose, and leaning towards each other, walked slowly down the long splendid room together. Large mirrors repeated the moving picture they made, and before one of them Rupert stood, and bid Matilda survey her own beauty. It was very great and bewitching, and its effect was certainly heightened by the handsome, picturesque figure at her side. There he kissed her with the fondest love and pride, promising an early visit on the following day.

She went then to find her uncle and aunt, for she knew that she owed to their love and generosity her present opportunities, and though her gratitude had in it, very likely, a certain sense of favours to come, she was really pleased and thankful for the happiness present and within her reach. But she quickly noticed in them an air of anxiety and gloom, and it annoyed her. "Could she never be happy and find all her surroundings in key with her? It was too bad!" Such thoughts gave a tone of injury to her inquiry, "Is anything particularly wrong, aunt? Have I been making some trouble again?"

"Sir Thomas is very unhappy, niece. He has heard news that frightens him, and we are longing to be in the peace and safety of our own home."

Then Matilda began to complain. "As soon as a joy is at my hand, it is taken away," she said. "And what a lovely city is Paris! How can any one want to leave it and go to London? It is cruel. It is beyond bearing!"

"Niece, dear niece," said Sir Thomas, "you have had many happy meetings now with your lover. You said 'one' would make you happy. While he was so ill, consider to what trouble and expense I gladly went, in order that you might have the satisfaction of knowing his constant condition. Be reasonable, Matilda. I have already done far more than I promised, and now affairs are in such a state that I feel it best to go home. I do long for my home and my garden. I have missed all my roses this summer. And the business I came to settle has been suddenly settled for me."

"You are going to lose a little gold, and so you are wretched, and must go

to the City-of-the-Miserable."

"I am not going to lose a penny."

"Well, then?"

"There may be trouble because of this very thing, and I do not want to be in Paris with the two women I love better than myself, if Cromwell and Mazarin come to blows. I might be taken from you. I should very likely be sent to the Bastile; you would not wish that, Matilda?"

"That is nonsense! But will you tell me what is this last outrage of Cromwell's?"

"Blake, by his orders, has taken a French merchantman. It was brought to London and sold with the cargo, and the money received from this sale was used to cancel the debt owing me by the French Government. All the papers relating to the transaction, with the balance of the money, were turned over to Mazarin this morning. The Cardinal was furious. He called me into his Presence Chamber, and though his words were smooth as oil, he pointed out the wrong of such high-handed management of debit and credit between two nations. Also, he was much chagrined at the seal on the papers, the design of which represents England's navy as filling the seas. He said scornfully, 'I perceive his Excellency has very merchant-like ways of business, and has not yet learned king-craft;' then he was silent a moment, and smiled,—my dear wife and niece, try and fancy a serpent smiling,—after which he handed me the seals again, and still smiling, continued, "Tis in the mercy of the Almighty that He has been kind enough to make the seas so wide as to permit poor French sailormen a little pathway through His great waters. His Excellency, Oliver Cromwell, would have no ships but English ships—very patriotic, but perhaps patriotism is a smaller virtue than people think; justice may be greater. As for me,' he added, casting his eyes to heaven, 'as for me, 'tis in my vows to love all men.' Much more was said, but these are the particulars as I remember them."

"He is a great hypocrite," said Lady Jevery. "He loves very few men, and no one loves him."

"Is that all, uncle?"

"He turned sharply to Lord Neville, asked to look at his credentials again, and called for an accountant. He seemed to forget my existence, and I asked permission to retire. I am very uneasy in my mind. Mazarin's good words are not to be trusted; his silence is to be feared. I must leave France as soon as possible. My affairs have been taken out of Mazarin's hands by Cromwell; he will visit the offense on me. Every moment is full of uncertainty and danger."

"Prince Rupert will not see us injured."

"I cannot take Prince Rupert for our surety. He has not yet spoken to me about your marriage. He is at the mercy of so many minds."

"That detestable Lord Neville! Ever and always, he brings me trouble and sorrow. There are half-a-dozen of my lovers who would run him through for a look. I would do it myself. You need not smile, sir, I am as ready with the sword as any man, and have matched both Stephen and Cymlin Swaffam. I hate Neville. I would most willingly make an end of him."

"Hush, Matilda! Your words belie you. You mean them not. But there is no time for words now, we shall leave here for England in two days. If Prince Rupert loves you so much as to marry you, there are ways and means to accomplish that end. If money only is the lack, I shall be no miser, if I may ensure your happiness."

"Dear uncle, shall we not return by The Hague?"

"No. Lord Neville has promised to do my business there. It is only a matter of collecting a thousand pounds from my merchant; but he is going to take charge of your aunt's jewels, and you had better trust yours also with him. They will be safer in the saddle of a horseman than in a guarded traveling coach. In the latter case, robbers are sure there is plunder; in the former it is most unlikely."

"I will not trust anything I possess to Lord Neville. Nothing!"

"The man trusted by Cromwell is above suspicion."

"It is his interest to be honest with Cromwell."

"You are angry at Neville."

"I have good reason. He is always the bringer of bad news. The order to leave Paris and the Prince could have come only through him."

"The Prince knows how he may keep you at his side."

"Oh! I am weary of balancing things impossible. The Prince cannot marry like a common man."

"Then he should only make love to such women as are fit to marry with him. I have said often what I thought right in this affair; I have offered to help it with my gold as far as I can—that is all about it, Matilda. I say no more."

"It is enough," answered Lady Jevery. "Matilda cannot wish to put in danger your liberty or life."

"My happiness is of less consequence, aunt."

"Certainly it is;" and there was such an air of finality in Lady Jevery's voice that Matilda rose and went to her own apartments to continue her complaints. This she did with passionate feeling in a letter to Prince Rupert, in which she expressed without stint her hatred of Lord Neville and her desire for his punishment. Rupert was well inclined to humour her wish. He had seen the young Commonwealth messenger, and his handsome person and patrician manner had given him a moment's envious look back to the days when he also had been young and hopeful, and full of faith in his own great future. The slight hauteur of Neville, his punctilious care for Cromwell's instructions, his whole bearing of victory, as against his own listless attitude of "failure," set his mind in a mood ei-

ther to ignore the young man, or else by the simplest word or incident to change from indifference to dislike.

Matilda's letter furnished the impetus to dislike. He said to himself, "Neville showed more insolence and self-approval in the presence of his Eminence than I, after all my wars and adventures, would have presumed on, under any circumstances. He wants a lesson, and it will please Matilda if I give him it; and God knows there is so little I can do to pleasure her!" At this point in his reflections, he called his equerry and bid him "find out the lodgings of Lord Neville, and watch him by day and night;" adding, "Have my Barbary horse saddled, and when this Englishman leaves his lodging, bring me instant word of the course he takes."

The next morning he spent with Matilda. She was in tears and despair, and Rupert could do nothing but weep and despair with her. He indeed renewed with passionate affection his promise to marry her as soon as this was possible, but the possibility did not appear at hand to either of them. Rupert certainly could have defied every family and caste tradition, and made the girl so long faithful to him at once his wife; but how were they to live as became his rank? For in spite of popular suppositions to the contrary, he was in reality a poor man, and he could not become a pensioner on Sir Thomas Jevery, even if Sir Thomas had been able to give him an income at all in unison with Rupert's ideas of the splendid life due to his position and achievements.

But he had not long to wait for an opportunity to meet Neville. While he was playing billiards the following afternoon with the Duke of Yorke, his equerry arrived at the Palais Royale with his horse. Neville had taken the northern road out of the city, and it was presumably the homeward road. Rupert followed quickly, but Neville was a swift, steady rider, and he was not overtaken till twenty miles had been covered, and the daylight was nearly lost in the radiance of the full moon. Rupert put spurs to his horse, passed Neville at a swift gallop, then suddenly wheeling, came at a rush towards him, catching his bridle as they met.

"Alight," he said peremptorily.

Neville shook his bridle free, and asked,

"By whose orders?"

"Mine."

"I will not obey them."

"You will alight. I have a quarrel to settle with you."

"On what ground?"

"Say it is on the ground of your mistress. I am Earl de Wick's friend."

"I will not fight on such pretense. My mistress would deny me if I did."

"Fight for your honour, then."

Neville laughed. "I know better. And before what you call Honour, I put

Duty."

"Then fight for the papers and money in your possession. I want them."

"Ha! I thought so. You are a robber, it seems. The papers and gold are not mine, and I will fight rather than lose them. But I warn you that I am a good swordsman."

"Heaven and hell! What do I care? Alight, and prove your boast."

"If you are in such a hurry to die, go and hang yourself. On second thoughts, I will not fight a thief. I am a noble, and an honourable man."

"If you do not alight at once, I will slay your horse. You shall fight me, here and now, with or without pretense."

Then Neville flung himself from his horse and tied the animal to a tree. Rupert did likewise, and the two men rapidly removed such of their garments as would interfere with their bloody play. They were in a lonely road, partially shaded with great trees; not a human habitation was visible, and there were no seconds to see justice done in the fight, or secure help after it, if help was needed. But at this time the lack of recognised formalities was no impediment to the duel. Rupert quickly found that he had met his match. Neville left him not a moment's breathing space, but never followed up his attacks; until at last Rupert called out insolently, "When are you going to kill me?"

The angry impatience of the inquiry probably induced a moment's carelessness, and Rupert did not notice that in the struggle their ground had insensibly been changed, and Neville now stood directly in front of a large tree. Not heeding the impediment, Rupert made a fierce thrust with the point of his sword, which Neville evaded by a vault to one side, so that Rupert's sword striking the tree, sprang from his hand at the impact. As it fell to the ground, Neville reached it first, and placed his foot upon it. Rupert stood still and bowed gravely. He was at Neville's mercy, and he indicated his knowledge of this fact by the proud stillness of his attitude.

"It was an accident," said Neville; "and an accident is God's part in any affair. Take your life from my hand. I have no will to wish your death." He offered his hand as he spoke, and Rupert took it frankly, answering,

"'Tis no disgrace to take life from one so gallant and generous, and I am glad that I can repay the favour of your clemency;" then he almost whispered in Cluny's ear three words, and the young man started visibly, and with great haste untied his horse.

"We would better change horses," said Rupert; "mine is a Barb, swift as the wind."

But Cluny could not make the change proposed without some delay, his papers and jewels being bestowed in his saddle linings. So with a good wish the two men parted, and there was no anger between them;—admiration and good

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will had taken its place. Neville hastened forward, as he had been advised, and Rupert returned to Paris. He knew Matilda was expecting him, and he pictured to himself her disappointment and anxiety at his non-appearance; it was also her last evening in Paris, and it grieved him to miss precious hours of love, that might never be given him again. Yet he was physically exhausted, and as soon as he threw himself upon a couch he forgot all his weariness and all his anxieties in a deep sleep.

Matilda was not so happy as to find this oblivion. She knew over what social pitfalls every man of prominence in Paris walked—in the King's favour one day, in the Bastile the next day—and that this very insecurity of all good things made men reckless. Rupert might have offended King Louis or the great Cardinal. She imagined a hundred causes for flight or fight or imprisonment; she recalled one story after another of nobles and gentlemen seen flourishing in the presence of Louis one day and then never seen again. She knew that plots and counterplots, party feuds and family hatreds, were everywhere rife; and that Rupert was rash and outspoken, and had many enemies among the courtiers of Louis and the exiled nobles of England, not to speak of the Commonwealth spies, to whom he was an object of superstitious hatred, who regarded his blackamoors as familiar spirits, and believed firmly that "he had a devil," and worked evil charms by the devil's help and advice. And above all, and through these sad forebodings, there

was the ever present likelihood of a duel. Every man had sword in hand, ready to settle some terrible or trivial quarrel—though it did not require a quarrel to provoke the duel; men fought for a word, for a sign, for the colour of a ribbon, for nothing at all, for the pleasure of killing themselves to kill time.

Matilda was keenly alive to all these possible tragedies, and when her lover failed to keep what was likely to be their last tryst, she was more frightened than angry; yet when Rupert came at an exceptionally early hour in the morning, and she saw him safe and well, her anxiety became flavoured with displeasure.

"How could you so cruelly disappoint me?" she cried. "You see now that our time is nearly gone; in a few hours we must part, perhaps forever."

"My dearest, loveliest Mata, I was about your pleasure. I was following Lord Neville, and he took me further than I expected. When my business was done with him, I had twenty miles to ride back to Paris; and I confess to you, I was so weary that I could only sleep. In your love, remember how lately I have been sick to death."

"Lord Neville again! The man is an incubus. Why did you follow him?"

"You wished me to give him a lesson. He was going homeward. I had to ride last night, or let him escape. By my troth, I had only your pleasure in mind."

"Oh, but the price paid was too great! I had to give up your society for hours. That is a loss I shall mourn to the end of my life. I hope, then, that you killed him. Nothing less will suffice for it."

"I was out of fortune, as I always am. I had an accident, and was at his mercy. He gave me my life."

"Now, indeed, you pierce my heart. You at his mercy! It is an intolerable shame! It will make me cry out, even when I sleep! I shall die of it. You! You! to be at his mercy—at the mercy of that Puritan braggart. Oh, I cannot endure it!"

"You see that I endure it very complacently, Mata. The man behaved as a gentleman and a soldier. I have even taken a liking to him. I have also paid back his kindness; we are quits, and as soldiers, friends. It was an accident, and as Neville very piously said, 'Accidents are God's part in an affair;' and therefore we would not be found fighting against God. You know, Mata, that I have been very religiously brought up. And I can assure you no one's honour suffered, mine least of all."

But Matilda was hard to comfort. Her last interview with her lover was saddened and troubled by this disagreement; and though both were broken-hearted in the moments of farewell, Matilda, watching Rupert across the Place Royale, discovered in the listless impatience of his attitude and movements, that inward revolt against outward strife, which, if it had found a voice, would have ejaculated, "I am glad it is over."

This, then, was the end of the visit from which she had expected so much;

and one sad gray morning in November they reached London. Sir Thomas was like a man released from a spell, and he went about his house and garden in a mood so happy that it was like a psalm of gratitude to be with him. Lady Jevery was equally pleased, though less ready to show her pleasure; but to Matilda, life appeared without hope—a state of simple endurance, for she had no vital expectation that the morrow, or any other morrow, would bring her happiness.

The apparently fateful interference of Neville in her affairs made her miserable. She thought him her evil genius, the bearer of bad news, the bringer of sorrow. She felt Rupert's "accident" as part of the bad fate. She had been taught fencing, and Cymlin Swaffham had often declared her a match for any swordsman, so that she knew, as well as Rupert knew, no honour had been lost between him and Neville. But the "accident" touched her deeper than this: she regarded it as a proof that the stars were still against her good fortune, separating her from her lover, influencing Neville and his party for victory, and dooming the King and his party to defeat in all their relationships, private and national.

She said to herself in the first hours of her return that she would not see Jane, but as the day wore on she changed her mind. She wished to write Rupert every particular about national events, and she could best feel the Puritan pulse through Jane; while from no one else could she obtain a knowledge of the household doings of Cromwell and his family. Then, also, she wished Jane to see her new dresses, and to hear of the great and famous people she had been living among. What was the use of being familiar with princesses, if there was no one to talk to about them? And Matilda had so much to say concerning the ex-Queen of Bohemia and her clever daughters, that she could not deny herself the society of Jane as a listener. So she wrote and asked her to come, and Jane answered the request in person, at once. This hurry of welcome was a little malapropos. Matilda had not assumed the dress and style she had intended, and the litter of fine clothing about her rooms, and the partially unpacked boxes, gave to her surroundings an undignified and unimpressive character. But friendship gives up its forms tardily; people kiss each other and say fond words long after the love that ought to vitalise such symbols is dead and buried; and for awhile the two girls did believe themselves glad to meet again. There were a score of things delightful to women over which they could agree, and Jane's admiration for her friend's beautiful gowns and laces and jewels, and her interest in Matilda's descriptions of the circumstances in which they were worn, was so genuine, that Matilda had forgotten her relation to Lord Neville, when the irritating name was mentioned.

"Did you see Lord Neville in Paris?" Jane asked; and there was a wistful anxiety in her voice to which Matilda ought to have responded. But the question came when she was tired even of her own splendours and successes; she had talked herself out, and was not inclined to continue conversation if the subject of

it was to be one so disagreeable. "No," she answered sharply. "I did not see him. He called one day, and had a long talk with Sir Thomas, but aunt had a headache, and I had more delightful company."

"I thought for my sake you would see him. Did you hear anything of his affairs?"

"Indeed, I heard he gave great offense to Cardinal Mazarin by his authoritative manner."

"*Oh!*"

"You know, Jane, that he has a most presuming, haughty way? He has!"

"I am sure he has not, Matilda."

"Every one wondered at Cromwell sending a mere boy on such delicate and important business. It was considered almost an insult to Mazarin."

"How can you say such things, Matilda? The business was neither delicate nor important. It was merely to deliver a parcel to Mazarin. Cluny was not charged with any explanations, and I am sure he took nothing on himself."

"I only repeat what I heard—that he carried himself as if he were a young Atlas, and had England's fate and honour on his shoulders."

"You can surely also repeat something pleasant. Did you hear of him at the minister's, or elsewhere? He is not one to pass through a room and nobody see him."

"I heard nothing about him but what I have told you. He prevented my seeing the Queen of Bohemia on my return, because he offered to attend to my uncle's business at The Hague for him; and for this interference I do not thank Lord Neville."

"Nor I," answered Jane. "Had he not gone to The Hague he might have been in London by this time." Then wishing to avoid all unpleasantness, she said, "To be sure it is no wonder you forgot me and my affairs. You have been living a fairy tale, Matilda; and the fairy prince has been living it with you. How charming!"

Matilda was instantly pleased, her voice became melodious, her face smiling and tender. "Yes," she answered, "a fairy tale, and my prince was so splendid, so famous, so adored, kings, cardinals, great men of all kinds, and the loveliest women in France sought him, but he left all to sit at my side;" and then the girls sat down, hand in hand, and Matilda told again her tale of love, till they were both near to weeping. This sympathy made Matilda remember more kindly Jane's dreams and hopes concerning her own love affair, and though she hated Neville, she put aside the ill feeling and asked, "Pray now, Jane, what about your marriage? Does it stand, like mine, under unwilling stars?"

"No. I am almost sure my father has changed his mind; perhaps the Lord General has helped him to do so, for no man, or woman either, takes such sweet interest in a true love affair. He is always for making lovers happy, whether they

be his own sons and daughters or those of his friends; and he likes Cluny so much that when he returns he is to have a command at Edinburgh. And I can see father and mother have been talking about our marriage. One morning, lately, mother showed me the fine damask and house linen she is going to give me, and another morning she looked at my sewing and said, 'I might as well hurry a little; things might happen sooner than I thought for;' and then she kissed me, and that is what mother doesn't often do, out of time and season."

Jane had risen as she said these words, and was tying on her bonnet, and Matilda watched her with a curious interest. "I was wondering," she said slowly, "if you will be glad to marry Cluny Neville and go away to Scotland with him."

"Oh, yes," Jane answered, her eyes shining, her mouth wreathed in smiles, her whole being expressing her delight in such an anticipation. Matilda made no further remark, but when Jane had closed the door behind her, she sat down thoughtfully by the fire, and stirring together the red embers, sighed rather than said—

"Why do people marry and bring up sons and daughters? This girl has been loved to the uttermost by her father and mother and brothers, and she will gladly leave them all to go off with this young Scot. She will call it 'Sacrifice for Love's sake;' I call it pure selfishness. Yet I am not a whit whiter than she. I would have stayed in Paris with Rupert, though my good uncle was in danger. How dreadful it is to look into one's own soul, and make one's self tell it the honest truth. I think I will go to my evening service;" and as she rose for her Common Prayer, she was saying under her breath, "We have left undone those things which we ought to have done, and we have done those things which we ought not to have done. And there is no health in us."

Lady Jevery had a dinner party that night, and Matilda went down to it in considerable splendour. Doctor Hewitt was present, and Mr. Waller, the poet, and Denzil Hollis, and the witty, delightful Henry Marten, and Matilda's great favourite, the little royalist linen draper, Izaak Walton, whose *Complete Angler* had just been published. He had brought Sir Thomas a copy of it, and Matilda found out at once the song, "Come live with me and be my love." Her praises were very pleasant to the old man, who had hid Donne and Hooker and Herbert in his Inner Chamber during the days of the Long Parliament; who had been the friend of bishops Ken and Sanderson, and of archbishops Usher and Sheldon; and who, born in Elizabeth's reign, had lived to see "Sceptre and Crown tumbled down."

"But you are not the only author of Great Oliver's reign," she said with a whimsical smile. "This day Mistress Dorothy Osborne sent me a copy of the poems of my Lady Newcastle. She has been making herself still more absurd than she is by writing a book—and in verse. 'Sure,' said Mistress Dorothy to me, 'if I did not sleep for a month, I should never come to that point.' Why does her

husband let her run loose? I vow there are soberer people in Bedlam."

"Her husband adores her; he believes her to be a prodigy of learning."

"They are a couple of fools well met. I am sorry for them. She dashes at everything, and he goes about trumpeting her praises. Come, sir, I hear the company tossing Cromwell's name about. Let us join the combatants; I wish to be in the fray."

The fact was Sir Thomas had asked after political affairs since he left England in April, and there was plenty of material for discussion. Denzil Hollis was describing the opening of the Parliament summoned by Cromwell, and which met on the fourth of July. "He made to this Parliament," he said, "a wonderful speech. He declared that he 'did not want supreme power, no, not for a day, but to put it into the hands of proper persons elected by the people.' And he bid them 'be humble and not consider themselves too much of a Parliament.' And then he burst into such a strain as none ever heard, taking texts from psalms, and prophets and epistles, mingled with homely counsels, and entreaties to them to do their duty—speaking till the words fell red hot from his lips, so that when he ended with the psalm on Dunbar field we were all ready to sing it with him; for as he told us, with a shining face, 'the triumph of the psalm is exceeding high and great, and God is now accomplishing it.'"

"No English Parliament was ever opened like that," said Sir Thomas. "Has it done anything yet?"

"It has done too much. It has committees at work looking into the affairs of Scotland and Ireland, the navy, the army and the law. They have been through the jails, and set three hundred poor debtors free in London alone. They have abolished titles and the Court of Chancery; and the last two acts have made the nation very uneasy. Upon my honour, the people are more unhappy at getting rid of their wrongs than you would credit."

"Englishmen like something to grumble about," said Mr. Walton. "If the Commonwealth leaves them without a grievance, it will doom itself."

"That is not it, Mr. Walton," said Henry Marten; "Englishmen don't like the foundations destroyed in order to repair the house. Going over precipices is not making progress. You may take it for an axiom that as a people, we prefer abuses to novelties."

"The reign of the saints is now begun," said Doctor Hewitt scornfully; "and Sir Harry Vane is afraid of what he has prayed for. He has gone into retirement, and sent Cromwell word he would wait for his place until he got to heaven."

"Sir Harry is not one of Zebedee's sons."

"This Parliament is going too fast."

"They have no precedents to hamper them."

"Everything old is in danger of being abolished."

"They talk of reducing all taxation to one assessment on land and property. Absurd!"

"Some say they will burn the records in the Tower; and the law of Moses is to take the place of the law of England."

"And the Jews are to have civil rights."

"And after that we may have a Jewish Sanhedrim in place of a Puritan Parliament."

"The good people of England will never bear such innovations," said Sir Thomas with great indignation.

"None of us know how much the good people of England will bear," answered Hollis.

"And pray what part does Cromwell take in these changes? Surely he is the leader of them?" asked Lady Jevery.

"He takes no part in them, madame," answered Walton; "gives no advice, uses no authority."

"Oh, indeed he is just waiting till his Assembly of Saints have made themselves beyond further bearing," said Matilda. "Then he will arise to the rescue, and serve them as he did the last Parliament."

"And then, Lady Matilda, what then?" asked Doctor Hewitt.

"He will make himself Emperor of these Isles."

"I do not think he has any such intent; no, not for an hour," said Sir Thomas.

There was a cynical laugh at this opinion, and Matilda's opinion was, in the main, not only endorsed, but firmly believed. Many could not understand why he had waited so long. "When he sheathed his sword at Worcester he could have lifted the sceptre, and the whole nation would have shouted gratefully, 'God save King Oliver,'" said Sir Thomas. "Why did he not do so, I wonder?"

But if the spiritual eyes of these men had been suddenly opened, as were those of Elisha, they might have seen that hour the man Cromwell, as God saw him, and acknowledged with shame and blame their ready injustice. For even while they were condemning him, accusing him of unbounded ambition and unbounded hypocrisy, he was kneeling by the side of a very old woman, praying. One of her small, shriveled hands was clasped between his large brown palms, and his voice, low, but intensely deep and earnest, filled the room with that unmistakable pathetic monotone, which is the natural voice of a soul pleading with its God. It rose and fell, it was full of tears and of triumph, it was sorrowful and imploring, it was the very sob of a soul wounded and loving, but crying out, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." When he rose, his face was wet with tears, but the aged woman had the light of heaven on her calm brow. She rose with him, and leaning on the top of her ivory staff, said,

"Oliver, my son Oliver, have no fear. Man nor woman shall have power to

hurt thee. Until thy work is done, thou shalt not see death; and when it is done, the finger of God will beckon thee. Though an host should rise up against thee, thou wilt live thy day and do thy work."

"My mother! My good mother! God's best gift to me and mine."

"The Lord bless thee, Oliver, and keep thee.
The Lord make His face to shine upon thee,
And be gracious unto thee.
The Lord lift up His countenance upon thee,
And give thee peace."

Then Oliver kissed his mother tenderly, and went out from her presence with the joy of one whom "his mother comforteth." And his face was bright and lifted up, and his footsteps firm; and he carried himself like a man whose soul had been "ministered unto." And if the envious doubters at Sir Thomas Jevery's had seen him at that moment, they must have instantly taken knowledge of him that he had been with God. All his fears were gone, all his troubles lighter than a grasshopper; in some blessed way there had come to him the knowledge that even

"Envy's harsh berries, and the chocking pool,
Of the world's scorn and hatred, are the right mother milk
To the true, tough hearts that pioneer their kind."

BOOK III
Oliver The Conqueror

CHAPTER XI
OLIVER PROTECTOR

"O heart heroic, England's noblest son!

At what a height thy shining spirit burns
Starlike, and floods our souls with quickening fire."

* * * * *

"Fearful commenting is
The leaden servitor to dull delay."

The popular discontent with the rapid and radical reforms of the saints' Parliament was not confined to the Royalists; the nation, without regard to party, was bitterly incensed and alarmed. Cromwell was no exception; the most conservative of men, he also grew angry and restless when he saw the reign of the saints beginning in earnest.

"These godly men are going straight to the confusion of all things," he said to Israel Swaffham; "they forget they are assembled here by the people, and are assuming a direct power from the Lord. If we let them, they will bring us under the horridest arbitrariness in the world."

There was reason enough for this fear. Not content with the changes in government, religion and law, Feake and Powell were urging social changes that would level all ranks and classes to an equality, and Cromwell abominated such ideas. Of equality, as we understand the word, he had no conception. He told the members plainly that England had known for hundreds of years, ranks and orders of men—nobles, gentlemen, yeomen—and that such ranks were a good interest to the nation, and a great one. "What is the purport," he asked, "to make the tenant as liberal a fortune as the landlord? If obtained, it would not last; the men of that principle, after they had served their own turns, would have cried up property fast enough."

To the Fifth Monarchy men who held that the saints alone should rule the earth, he gave the sternest rebuke, telling them plainly that the carnal divisions among them were not symptoms of Christ's Kingdom. "Truly," he added, "you will need to give clearer manifestations of God's presence among you before wise men will submit to your conclusions."

In the meantime the anger outside the Parliament House rose to fury. Doubtless Cromwell had foreseen this crisis. Certainly a large number of the members were of his way of thinking, and on the twelfth of December, Colonel Sydenham rose, and accusing the members of wishing to put a Mosaic code in place of the Common Law of England—of depreciating a regular ministry (for what need of one, if all men could prophesy?) and of opposing learning and education, he declared the salvation of the nation lay in resigning the trust com-

mitted to them into the hands of the Lord General Cromwell. The motion was seconded by Sir Charles Wolseley. The Speaker left the chair, and followed by a majority of the members, went to Whitehall, and there and then they wrote out their resignation. It was said that "Cromwell looked astonished, and only received the paper upon great importunity." And if ever Cromwell drolled in his life, he drolled then, for it is not likely this movement was unforeseen; all its details had been too ably arranged to be the result of unanticipated action.

No serious opposition was made. Some thirty of the members remained in the House "to protest," but Colonel Goff entering with a file of musketeers, the argument was quickly closed. "What are you doing here?" asked the Colonel, and some one answered, "We are seeking the Lord," then said he, "You may go elsewhere, for to my certain knowledge the Lord has not been here these many years." Three days after this event a new Council of State resolved that his Excellency be chosen LORD PROTECTOR of the three nations, and on the sixteenth of December be so installed in Westminster Hall.

"And you would think that he had been publicly scorned instead of publicly chosen," said Israel to his wife. "He looks miserable; he is silent and downcast, and talks much to himself. Yet he is in his right place, and the only man in England who can save us from anarchy."

"God knows. It is a place of great honour for Mr. Oliver Cromwell of Slepe House."

"No, no. 'Tis a place of great danger, a place of terror and forlorn hope. God knows, I would not have it for all the honour and gold in England. Martha, his Excellency and her Highness desire your company, and that of Jane, to the ceremony. You will go?"

"I had better stay at home, Israel. I cannot 'Your Highness' Elizabeth Cromwell. Jane will go."

"And you, too, Martha. I wish it."

"I never go against your wishes, Israel—at least not often."

So it happened that on the sixteenth of December, Mrs. Swaffham and Jane wore dressing for Whitehall. Mrs. Swaffham was nervous and irritable; nervous, because she feared her gown was not as handsome as it ought to be; irritable, because she felt that circumstances were going to control her behaviour, whether she approved or not. Jane was unable to encourage or cheer her mother; she was herself the most unhappy maiden in London that day. She was white as the satin robe that clothed her, and her eyes held in their depths the shadow of that fear and grief which filled her heart. And though her mother was sorry for her distress, she was vexed that her girl could not better hide her trouble. "I hate to be pitied, Jane," she said, "and above all by 'her Highness.' And those Cromwell girls, they too will be crying 'Oh dear me!' and 'Poor Jane!' and you will be a sweet sadness

to spice their own glory and happiness. Keep a brave heart, my girl. Something may happen any hour."

Jane did not answer. She could not talk; she needed all her strength to live. For eighteen days she had been forced to accept the fact that Cluny was at least eighteen days behind all probable and improbable delays. She had not received a line from him since he left Paris; no one had. He had apparently vanished as completely as a stone dropped into mid-ocean. She had been often at Jevery House, and during two of her visits had managed to see Sir Thomas and ask "if he had any intelligence from Lord Neville?" On her first inquiry he answered her anxiously; on his second his reply showed some anger.

"He offered voluntarily to take charge of Lady Jevery's jewels and to collect my money at The Hague; and unless he was certain of his ability to do these things safely, he ought not to have sought the charge."

And with these words there entered into Jane's heart a suspicion that hurt her like a sword-thrust. She found herself saying continually, "It is impossible! impossible! Oh, my God, where is he?"

All this time London was angry, anxious, almost tumultuous. Jane would have gone to Cromwell for help—indeed she did go once to Whitehall with this object in view—but she was told that he was in his own apartments silent and sad, and carrying a weight of responsibility that might have appalled the stoutest heart. Indeed, the whole family were quiet and preoccupied, and she came away without finding any fit opportunity to say a word about Cluny and his unaccountable delay. There was no one else to go to. Doctor Verity was visiting the Rev. Mr. Baxter at Kidderminster, and Matilda hated Cluny. Jane could not bear to suggest to Matilda a doubt as to Cluny's return. Certainly Mrs. Swaffham listened to her daughter's fears and anxieties, but Jane felt that the Parliament and its doings and misdoings, and the speculations concerning Cromwell, were the great and vital interest filling every heart. No one seemed to care about Lord Neville as she thought they ought to. So far, then, she had borne her sorrow alone, and it had never left her a moment for eighteen days and nights. Even in her sleep she wandered wretchedly looking for him; her pillows were full of evil forebodings, and the atmosphere of her room was heavy with the misery of her thoughts.

Fortunately the Cromwells had no idea that Jane was in trouble; they were, as was right and natural, very much excited over the ceremony of the day and the order in which it was to be carried out. His Excellency was with a number of his officers in a separate apartment, but madame, the General's mother, was in the large parlour of the Cockpit, and when the Swaffhams entered, she rose with delight to meet her old neighbours and friends. In spite of her great age she looked almost handsome in a robe of black velvet and silver trimmings, with a

shawl-like drapery of rich white lace. In a short time her daughter-in-law and her grandchildren entered, and Mrs. Swaffham looked curiously at her old friend. Was this indeed the Elizabeth Cromwell she had gossiped with and sometimes quarreled with? this stately woman in purple velvet, with large pearls round her throat and falling in priceless beauty below her waist? There could be no doubt of her identity, for as soon as Mrs. Swaffham began to approach her, she came forward, saying in a tone of real pleasure,

"Martha! Martha! How glad I am to see you!" and the two women broke into smiles and exclamations, and then kissed each other.

There was no time to spare. The Lord General, dressed in a rich suit of black velvet, appeared, and the procession was formed. The Commissioners of the Great Seal, the Judges and Barons of the Exchequer in all the splendour of their insignia, preceded it. Then came the Council of State and the Lord Mayor and Aldermen in their scarlet robes. Cromwell followed. He was alone in a magnificent coach with outriders, but he was attended by the chief officers of the army, and by an imposing military escort. His family and friends in conveyances of equal splendour were behind, and were also attended by a military guard of honour.

"Is it a dream, Jane?" said Mrs. Swaffham to her daughter. "Am I asleep or awake? Are these the very Cromwells we used to know? Did you see that little chit, Frank, whom I have birched and stood in the corner, and scolded more times than I can remember?—did you see her? Did you see her curtsying to her mother and calling her, 'Your Highness'? and Mary Cromwell giving orders like a very Queen? and even Elizabeth Claypole looking as if England belonged to them? After this, Jane, nothing can astonish me."

Jane was as silent as her mother was garrulous; the crowds, the excitement, the poignant crash and blare of martial music, the shining and clashing of steel, the waving of flags, the shouts and huzzas of the multitudes, the ringing of innumerable bells, the overpowering sense of the brotherhood of humanity in a mass animated by the same feeling, these things thrilled and filled souls until they were without words, or else foolishly eloquent.

A place of honour had been reserved for the Cromwell party, and the great General's mother found a throne-like chair placed for her in such a position that she could see every movement and hear every word of that august ceremony which was to acknowledge her son "the greatest man in England." And as she sat there, watching him stand uncovered beside the Chair of State, and listened to him taking the solemn oath to rule England, Scotland and Ireland justly, she thought of this battle-scarred man as a baby at her breast, fifty-four years before, pressing her bosom with his tiny fingers, and smiling up in her face, happily unconscious of the travail of body and soul he was to undergo for the sake of

England, and of all future free peoples. And she thought also of one cold winter day, when, a lad of twelve, he had come in from his lessons and his rough play at football and thrown himself upon his bed, weary with the buffeting; and as he lay there, wide-awake in the broad daylight, how he had seen his angel stand at his feet, and heard him say, "*Thou shalt be the greatest man in England.*" And there in her sight and hearing, the prophecy was fulfilled that day, for she had never doubted it. The boy had been scolded and flogged for persisting in this story, but she had comforted him and always known that it was a vision to be realised.

Her faith had its reward. She watched this boy of hers put on his hat, after taking the oath, and with a kingly air ascend to what was virtually the throne of England. She saw him unbuckle his sword and put it off, to signify that military rule was ended; and then she heard, amid the blare of trumpets, the Heralds proclaim him *Lord Protector of England, Scotland and Ireland.* Her lips moved not, but she heard her soul singing psalms of glory and thanksgiving; yes, she heard the music within rising and swelling to great anthems of rejoicing. Her body was impotent to express this wonderful joy; it was her soul that made her boast in the Lord, that magnified the God of her salvation. And she really heard its glad music with her natural body, and the melody of that everlasting chime was in her heart to the last moment of her life. And her children looked at her and were amazed, for her face was changed; and when the people shouted, to "*God save the Lord Protector of the Commonwealth!*" she stood up without her staff, and was the first to render him obeisance.

Jane watched her with wonder and delight; she forgot her own grief in this aged mother's surpassing happiness, and she partly understood that hour the new doctrine of the men called Quakers. For she had watched this Inner sight of Life transfuse the frail frame, and seen it illuminate the withered face and strengthen the trembling limbs, and, above all, fill the Inner woman with a joy unspeakable and beyond speech or understanding.

The ride back to Whitehall was an intoxicating one. Londoners had at last a ruler who was a supremely able man. They could go to their shops, and buy and sell in security. Oliver Protector would see to their rights and their welfare. His very appearance was satisfying; he was not a young man headstrong and reckless, but a Protector who had been tried on the battle-field and in the Council Chamber and never found wanting. His personality also was the visible presentment of the qualities they admired and desired. They looked at his sturdy British growth, and were satisfied. His head and face, muscular and massive, were of lion-like aspect; his stature nearly six feet, and so highly vitalised as to look much higher. Dark brown hair, mingled with gray, fell below his collar-band, and from under large brows his deep, loving eyes looked as if in lifelong sorrow; and yet not thinking life sorrow, thinking it only labour and endeavour. Valour,

devout intelligence, great simplicity, and a singular air of mysticism invested his rugged, broad-hatted majesty with a character or impress transcendentally mysterious. Even his enemies felt this vague shadow of the supernatural over and around him, for Sir Richard Huddleston, in watching him on Naseby's field, had cried out passionately, "Who will find King Charles a leader like him? He is not a man; he is one of the ancient heroes come out of Valhalla."

But be the day glad or sad, time runs through it, and the shadows of evening found the whole city worn out with their own emotions. Mrs. Swaffham and Jane were glad to return to the quiet of their home—"Not but what we have had a great day, Jane," said the elder woman; "but, dear me, child, what a waste of life it is! I feel ten years older. It would not do to spend one's self this way very often."

"I am tired to death, mother. May I stay in my room this evening? I do not want to hear any more about the Cromwells, and I dare say Doctor Verity will come home with father, and they will talk of nothing else."

"You are fretting, Jane, and fretting is bad for you every way. Why will you do it?"

"How can I help it, mother?"

Then Mrs. Swaffham looked at her daughter's white face, and said, "You know, dear, where and how to find the comfort you need. God help you, child."

And oh, how good it was to the heart-sick girl, to be at last alone, to be able to weep unwatched and unchecked—to shut the door of her soul on the world and open it to God, to tell Him all her doubt and fear and lonely grief. This was her consolation, even though no sensible comfort came from it—though the heavens seemed far off, and there was no ray of light, no whisper from beyond to encourage her. Hoping against despair, she rose up saying, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him;" and these words she repeated over and over with increasing fervour, as she neatly folded away her clothing and put her room in that exquisite order which was necessary to her sleep, or even rest. For she kept still her childish belief that her angel would not visit her, if her room was untidy. And who will dare to say she was wrong? These primitive faiths hold truths hid from the wise and prudent, but revealed to the simple and pure of heart.

At nine o'clock her mother brought her a possett and toast, and she took them gratefully. "Is father home?" she asked.

"Yes, Jane. He came in an hour ago with Doctor Verity."

"Have they any word of——"

"I fear not. They would have told me at once. I haven't seen much of them. There were lots of things undone, and badly done, to look after. The wenches and the men have been on the streets all day, and the kitchen is upside down. You never saw the like. I am tired of this Cromwell business, I am that. Phoebe was abusing him roundly as she jugged the hare for supper, and I felt kindly to

her for it. 'You are a pack of time-serving turncoats,' she was saying as I went into the kitchen; 'you would drink as much ale to-morrow to King Charles as you have drunk to-day to old Noll Cromwell.' And as she was stirring the pot, she did not know I was there, until I answered, 'You speak God's truth, Phoebe!' Then she turned and said, 'I do, ma'am. And for that matter, they would drink to the devil, an he asked them with old October!' Then I stopped her saucy tongue. But I don't wonder at her temper—not a clean saucepan in the closets, and men and maids off their heads with ale and Cromwell together."

"If Doctor Verity gives you any opportunity will you speak about Cluny, mother?"

"You know I will. He and others will, maybe, have time for a word of kindness now. I'm sure the last few weeks have been past bearing—a nice mess the saints made of everything—London out of its seven senses, and the whole country screaming behind it; and the men who had a little sense, not knowing which road to turn. Now Cromwell has got his way, there will be only Cromwell to please, and surely a whole city full can manage that."

"I don't suppose he has ever thought of Cluny being so long over time."

"Not he! He has had things far closer to him to look after."

"But now?"

"Now he will inquire after the lad. Doctor Verity must speak to him. Dear Jane, do you suppose I don't see how you are suffering? I do, my girl, and I suffer with you. But even your father thinks we are worrying ourselves for nothing. He says Cluny will walk in some day and tell his own story—nothing worse than a fit of ague or fever, or even a wound from some street pad; perhaps a heavy snowstorm, or the swampy Netherlands under water. Men can't fight the elements, or even outwit them, dear. Mother is with you, Jane, don't you doubt that," and she stepped forward and clasped the girl to her breast, and kissed the tears off her cheeks. "Now drink your possett and go to sleep; something may happen while you are dreaming of it; the net of the sleeping fisherman takes just as well—better maybe—than if he kept awake to watch it."

So Jane laid herself down and slept, and if her angel came with a comforting thought or a happy vision, she found herself in a spotless room, white as a bride chamber, holding the scent of rosemary and roses from the pots on the window-sills, and prophesying strength and comfort in the Bible lying open at the forty-second and forty-third Psalms—"Why art thou cast down, O my soul? And why art thou disquieted in me? Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance."

Jane's supposition that Doctor Verity would be with her father and that their talk would be only of Cromwell, was correct. Mrs. Swaffham found the two men smoking at the fireside, and their conversation was of the Man and the Hour.

She sat down weary and sleepy, so much so, that she did not take the trouble to contradict Doctor Verity, though he was making, in her opinion, a very foolish statement.

"If you only assert a thing strong enough and long enough, Israel, you will convince the multitude. To-day, as I was passing Northumberland House, a party of musketeers stopped there, and cried, '*God save the Lord Protector!*' and the crowd asserted in the most positive manner that the big lion on the house wagged its tail at the shout. Every one believed it, and looked at the beast admiringly; and I found it hard to keep my senses in the face of such strong assertion. Vain babble, but it took and pleased."

"I am sorry for Oliver Cromwell. Such a load as he has shouldered! Can he bear it?" said Israel.

"Through God's help, yes; and ten times over, yes! He is a great man," answered the Doctor.

"I think more of measures than of men," continued Israel.

"Very good. But something depends on the men, just as in a fire something depends on the grate," said the Doctor.

"Who would have thought the man we knew at Huntingdon and St. Ives had this man in him? And what a strange place for God to bring England's Deliverer out of. No captain from the battle-field, no doctor out of the colleges, but a gentleman farmer out of the corn market and the sheep meadows of Sedgy Ouse. 'Tis wonderful enough, Doctor."

"Great men, Israel, have always come from the most unlikely places. The desert and the wilderness, the sheepfolds and threshing floors bred the judges and prophets of Israel. From the despised village of Nazareth came the Christ. From the hot, barren deserts of Arabia, came Mahomet. From the arid plains of Picardy, came Calvin. From the misty, bare mountains of Scotland, came John Knox, and from the fogs and swamps of the Fen country, comes Oliver Cromwell. So it is, and should be. God chooses for great men, not only the time, but the place of their birth. The strength of Cromwell's character is in its mysticism, and this quality has been fed from its youth up by the monotony of his rural life, by the sombre skies above him, by his very house, which was like a deserted cloister buried in big trees. All those years Cromwell was being forged and welded by spiritual influences into the man of Naseby and Dunbar and Worcester—into the man who stepped grandly to the throne we saw him mount to-day."

"One thing is sure: he will set free all godly men in prison for conscience' sake—unless it be papists and prelatists. Yet 'tis hard to imprison men because they can't agree about caps and surplices."

"Such talk does not go to the root of the matter, Israel. Oliver, and men like him, look on papists and prelatists as Amorites and Amalekites to be rooted out,

and as disloyal citizens to be coerced into obedience."

"I know papists that believe the Mass to be a holy obligation. They are sincere, Doctor; I know it."

"What of that, Israel? A good Puritan cares no more for their sincere opinions than the Jewish prophets cared about the scruples of a conscientious believer in Baal. Why should he?"

"Well, then, as to Episcopacy—a great number of Englishmen love it; and you can't preach nor teach Episcopacy out of them."

"Don't I know it? Popery without the Pope, that is what Englishmen want. They love ceremonies dearly; they love Episcopacy as they love Monarchy. Queen Elizabeth made an ordinance that at the name of Christ every woman should curtsy and every man bare his head. It went straight to the heart of England. Men and women loved Elizabeth for it, and bent their knees all the more willingly to herself. As for Cromwell, his zeal for the Protestant religion will be the key to every act of his reign. Take my word for it."

"Reign?"

"Yes, reign. He is King, call him what you like."

"As ruler—King or Protector—over papists, will it be right to hate them as bitterly as he does?"

"Right? Yes, a thousand times right. You must remember what his education and experience have been. From some who lived in Mary's reign he must have heard how Ridley and Latimer and Cranmer were burned in the streets of Oxford for their Protestantism. The whole awful history of Mary's reign was part of his education. He may have heard from eye-witnesses of the scene in the great square of Brussels when Horn and Egmont, champions of the Protestant faith, were beheaded by Alva's bloody Council. The Armada sent to conquer England and force on us by fire and sword the Catholic religion, was wrecked on our shores by God Almighty, only eleven years before Cromwell was born. The Popish Gunpowder Plot to blow up the King and the Parliament was discovered when he was six years old. Both of these last events were the staple of fireside conversations, and would be told him in wonderfully effective words by his grand-hearted mother, and you may be sure they were burned into the heart of the boy Oliver. He was old enough to understand the cruel murder of Henry by the Jesuits in Paris; he grew into his manhood during the thirty years' war of Catholic Europe against the Protestants. When he first entered Parliament, he was one of the Committee that investigated the brutal treatment of Prynne, Doctor Bastwick and the Rev. Mr. Burton. I think, indeed, that he witnessed these noble confessors pilloried and burned with hot irons and deprived of their ears, because they would none of Laud's surplices and mummeries. And both you and I witnessed his agonies of grief and anger at the frightful massacre by Phelim

O'Neil of one hundred thousand Protestants in Ireland. How can Cromwell help hating popery and prelacy? How can any of us help it? Let us judge, not according to outward appearance, but with righteous judgment. Oliver will do his work, and he will do it well, and then go to Him who sent him. Verily, I believe he will hear the 'Well done' of his Master."

"And then?"

"The Commonwealth will be over. The soul of it will have departed—can it live afterwards?"

"Think you that our labour and lives have been wasted? No, no! We will be free of kings forever; we have written that compact with our blood."

"Not wasted, Israel, not wasted. The Puritan government may perish, the Puritan spirit will never die. Before these wars, England was like an animal that knew not its own strength; she is now better acquainted with herself. The people will never give up their Parliament and the rights the Commonwealth has given them, and if kings come back, they can be governed, as Davie Lindsey said, by 'garring them ken, they have a lith in their necks——'"

"If I survive the Puritan government," said Israel, "I will join the pilgrims who have gone over the great seas."

"I will go with you, Israel, but we will not call ourselves 'pilgrims.' No, indeed! No men are less like pilgrims than they who go, not to wander about, but to build homes and cities and found republics in the land they have been led to. They are citizens, not pilgrims."

At these words Mrs. Swaffham, who had listened between sleeping and waking, roused herself thoroughly. "Israel," she said, "I will not go across seas. It is not likely. Swaffham is our very own, and we will stay in Swaffham. And I do not think it is fair, or even loyal, in you and Doctor Verity, on the very day you have made a Protector for the Commonwealth to be prophesying its end. It is not right."

"It is very wrong, Martha, and you do well to reprove us," said Doctor Verity.

"And talking of going across seas," she continued, "reminds me of Cluny; neither of you seem to care about him, yet our Jane is fretting herself sick, and you might both of you see it."

"Tell Jane to be patient," said Doctor Verity. "If Cluny is not back by the New Year, I will go myself and bring him back. There is no need to fret; tell her that."

"Yet we must speak to Cromwell about the young man," said Jane's father; "there has likely been some letter or message from him, which in the hurry and trouble of the last month has been forgotten. You will see the Protector to-morrow, speak to him."

"If it is possible, Israel. But remember all is to arrange and rearrange, order

and reorder, men to put out of office, and men to put into office. The work before the Protector is stupendous."

This opinion proved to be correct. Day after day passed, and no word concerning Cluny was possible; but about the New Year a moment was found in which to name the young man and wonder at his delay. Cromwell appeared to be startled. "Surely there must have been some word from him," he said. "I think there has. A letter must have come; it has been laid aside; if so, there could have been nothing of importance in it—no trouble, or I would have been told. Mr. Milton is fond of Lord Neville; so am I, indeed I am, and I will have inquiry made without delay."

"Without delay" in government inquiries may mean much time. The accumulated papers and letters of a month or more had to be examined, and when this was accomplished, nothing had been found that threw any light on Neville's detention. Yet no anxiety was expressed. Every one had such confidence in the young man; he was accustomed to the exigencies of travel, ready in resort, and brave and wise in emergencies. Cromwell made light of any supposition affecting his safety, and there was nothing then for Jane to do, but bear, and try to believe with those supposed to know better than herself, that the difficulties of winter travel in strange countries would easily account for her lover's non-appearance.

Thus, sad with the slow sense of time, and with grief void and dark, Jane passed the weary days. The world went on, her heart stood still. Yet it was in these sorrowful days, haunted by uncertain presentiments, that she first felt the Infinite around her. It was then that she began to look for comfort from within the veil, and to listen for some answering voice from the other life, because in this life there was none. Outside of these consolations she had only a bewildering fear, and she would have wept and worried her beauty away, had there not dwelt in her pure soul the perennial youth of silent worship. But this constantly renovating power was that fine flame of spiritual light in which physical beauty refines itself to the burning point. The greatest change was in her manner; a slight cold austerity had taken the place of her natural cheerfulness—this partly because she thought there was a want of sympathy in all around her, and partly because only by this guarded composure could she maintain that tearless reticence she felt necessary to her self-respect. Nevertheless, through her faith, her innocence, her high thought and her laborious peace, she set her feet upon a rock.

One crisp, sunny morning in January she suddenly resolved to make some inquiries herself. It was not an easy thing to do; all her education and all conventional feeling were against a girl taking such a step. But the misery of a grief not sure is very great, and Jane believed that her direct inquiries might be of some avail. She went first to Jevery House. Sir Thomas had a financial interest in Lord Neville's return, and it was likely he had made investigations, if no one

else had. She expected to find him in his garden, and she was not disappointed; wrapped in furs, he was walking up and down the flagged pathway leading from the gates to the main door of the mansion. He was finding a great deal of pleasure in the green box borders and the fresh brown earth which, he said to Jane, was "nourishing and cherishing his lilies and daffodils. You must come again in three weeks, Jane," he added; "and perhaps you will see them putting out their little green fingers." Jane answered, "Yes, sir;" but immediately plunged into the subject so near her.

"Have you heard anything about Lord Neville, Sir Thomas?" she asked. "I must tell you that he is my lover; we were betrothed with my parents' consent, and I am very, very unhappy at his long delay."

"So am I," answered Sir Thomas. "I sent a trusty man to The Hague, and it seems Lord Neville collected the money due me there, six weeks ago. A singular circumstance in this connection is that he refused a note on the Leather Merchants' Guild of this city, and insisted on being paid in gold, and was so paid. Now, Jane, a thousand sovereigns are not easily carried,—and—and——"

"Well, sir? Please go on."

"A ship left that night for the Americas—for the Virginia Colony."

"But Lord Neville did not go to America. Oh, no, sir! That is an impossible thought."

"Well, then, there is this alternative: the merchant who paid him the money died a few days afterwards of smallpox. Was there infection in the money? Did Lord Neville take the smallpox and die?"

"But if he had been sick he would have known the danger, and written some letter and provided for the safety of the property in his charge. He knew many people in The Hague. This supposition is very unlikely."

"Why did he insist on the gold? This is the thing that troubles me."

"Who says he insisted on gold?"

"The widow of the man who paid it."

"She may have been mistaken. She may herself be dishonest. The money may never have been paid at all. I do not believe it has been paid. Did your trusty man see Lord Neville's quittance?"

"I have not thought of that, Jane. I was troubled at the story, and accepted it as it was given. It was too painful and suspicious to examine."

"For that reason it must be sifted to the very bottom. That Dutch widow has the money, doubtless. Did your messenger ask her to describe Lord Neville? Did he ask her any particulars of the interview? It is easy to say the thousand pounds were paid. I do not believe her."

"Well, my little mistress, your faith infects me. I will send again to The Hague."

"Yes, sir, and let your messenger ask to see Lord Neville's quittance. Cluny did not receive from any one a thousand pounds without an acknowledgment of the payment. Let the woman show it."

"You are right. I will make further inquiries at once."

"To-day, sir? Please, to-day, sir."

"I will send a man to The Hague to-day."

"Thank you, Sir Thomas. Can I now see Lady Jevery and Lady Matilda?"

"My dear, they are both at de Wick. A week ago my niece received a letter from the man who bought the estate. He urged them to come and see him. He said he had not long to live, and that before he went away he had some most important intelligence, vitally affecting the de Wicks, to communicate. My niece thought it prudent, even necessary, to make the visit; and Lady Jevery went with her. In a couple of weeks I shall go for them."

"But before you go——"

"I have said 'to-day,' Mistress Jane. I will keep my promise. Why do you not see the Protector? He was fond of the young man; he believed in him."

She only answered, "Yes, sir," and then adding, "Good-morning, sir," she turned to go. Her face was so white and so full of hopeless disappointment, he could not endure to keep its memory a moment. Hastening after her, he said, "My dear little mistress, I am certain of one thing—if there is any wrong about this matter it is not Lord Neville's fault, it is his misfortune."

She received this acknowledgment with a grateful smile, yet her whole appearance was so wretched Sir Thomas could not rid himself of her unhappy atmosphere. His walk was spoiled; he went into his private room and smoked a pipe of Virginia, but all his thoughts set themselves to one text: "There are many sorrowful things in life, but the hardest of all is loving."

CHAPTER XII

HOLD THOU MY HANDS

"Hold Thou my hands:
In grief and joy, in hope and fear,
Lord let me feel that Thou art near;
Hold Thou my hands."

There are two ways to manage a day that begins badly; we may give the inner man or woman control, and permit them to compel events; or we may retire until unpropitious influences have passed us by. It is perhaps only in extremes the first alternative is taken; usually the soul prefers withdrawal. Jane felt that it was useless for her to attempt a visit to the Protector that day, and she hastened to the covert of her home. Her mother's kind face met her at the threshold, and the commonplace domestic influences of the set dinner-table, and the busy servants, recalled her thoughts from their sad and profitless wandering among possible and impossible calamities.

Mrs. Swaffham had a letter in her hand, and she said as soon as she saw her daughter, "What do you think, Jane? Cymlin has got his discharge, and instead of coming here, he has gone to Swaffham. And he says Will and Tonbert are in the mind to join a party of men who will pay a visit to the Massachusetts Colony; and Cymlin says it is a good thing, and that he will stay at Swaffham and keep everything up to collar."

"I was at Jevery House, mother," said Jane, "and Lady Jevery and Matilda are gone to de Wick."

"Never! That accounts for Cymlin's being so thoughtful for Swaffham. Reasons for all things, Jane, and some woman at the bottom of all. I am sorrier than I can tell you. Matilda will take her sport out of Cymlin, and leave him with a laugh. I know her. I will write to Cymlin this night."

"But why, mother? You can do no good. A word, a look from Matilda, and a fig for all advices!" Then she told her mother of Anthony Lynn's message, and they talked awhile of its probable meaning, Mrs. Swaffham being of the opinion that Lynn's conscience was troubling him, and that he wanted, as far as he was able, to propitiate the de Wicks.

"You see," she said, "it is not only the living de Wicks, Jane, there is a powerful gathering of the family on the other side. And the late Earl was very good to Anthony. From his boyhood he was fostered by the de Wicks, and then to think of his buying out the young Earl and Matilda!"

"If he had not bought out de Wick, somebody else would; and perhaps the de Wicks would rather have an old retainer there than some unknown stranger," said Jane.

"It is hard to tell what the dead like, and how they feel; but it is a wise thing to treat every one in this world so that you won't be afraid to meet them in the next world. I wouldn't wonder if Anthony Lynn felt a bit afraid to meet Earl Marmaduke; anyway, he ought to be ashamed. Anthony was always known for a prudent man; he is going to make his peace at the gates of death, for fear of what is beyond them."

"I do not know. Sir Thomas offered no opinion; and he said some cruel

things about Cluny, though he followed me to unsay them."

Then Jane told her mother what suspicions evidently existed in the mind of Sir Thomas, and Mrs. Swaffham laughed at their absurdity, and was then angry at their injustice; and finally she sent Jane up-stairs to dress for dinner in a much more hopeful and worldlike temper. This day was followed by a week of wretched weather. Jane could do nothing but wait. Her soul, however, had reached its lowest depth of despondence during her visit to Sir Thomas Jevery, and on reviewing it, she felt as if she had betrayed her inner self—let a stranger look at her grief and see her faint heart, and suspect that she, also, had a doubt of her lover. She was mortified at her weakness, and fully resolved when she visited Cromwell, to show him the heart of a fearless woman—brave, because she doubted neither God nor man.

It was, however, the month of March before this visit could be made. The bad weather was the precursor of a bad cold, and then she had to consider the new domestic arrangements of the Cromwell family. The royal apartments in Whitehall and in the palace of Hampton Court were being prepared for the Protector's family, and Jane knew from her father's reports, as well as from her own acquaintance with her Highness and her daughters, that all the changes made would be of the utmost interest to them. She was averse either to intrude on their joy or to have them notice her anxiety.

But one exquisite morning in March she heard General Swaffham say that the Cromwell ladies were going to Hampton Court. The Protector would then be alone in Whitehall, and she might see him without having to share her confidences with the family. She prepared a note asking for an interview, and then called on Mr. Milton and induced him to go with her to the palace and deliver it into Cromwell's hand. In her simplicity she considered this little plan to be a very wise one, and so it proved. Mr. Milton had no difficulty in reaching the Protector, who, as soon as he read Jane's appeal, was ready to receive her. She had been much troubled about this audience, how she was to behave, and with what words she should address Cromwell, but her fear left her as soon as the door closed, and she was alone with her old friend.

"Jane," he said kindly, "Jane, what is the trouble?"

"It is Lord Neville, sir. Nothing has been heard of him, and I wish to tell you what Sir Thomas Jevery said." She did so, and Cromwell listened with a smile of incredulity. "We know Neville better than that," he answered. "It would be a great wonder if he should think of America, Jane. Would a man in his senses leave you, and his estate, and his good friends and good prospects to go into the wilderness? Truly he would not. His home and land in Fife are worth more than Jevery's gold and jewels, and I do think my favour may count for something. And more than these things there is your love. You do love him, Jane?"

"Better than my life, your Highness."

"And he loves you?"

"Indeed, I am most certain of it."

"When did you hear last from him?"

Jane had expected this question and she offered Cromwell Cluny's last letter, and asked him to read it. He read it aloud, letting his voice become sweet and tender as he did so.

"My dearest and most honoured mistress, I am just on the moment of leaving Paris; my horse is at the door; but by a messenger that will come more directly than myself, I send you a last word from this place. My thoughts outreach all written words. I am with you, my own dear one, in all my best moments, and my unchangeable love salutes you. Graciously remember me in your love and prayers.

"CLUNY NEVILLE."

"A good letter, Jane. I do think the man that wrote it is beyond guile, beyond dishonour of any kind. I will not hear a doubt of him. I will not——" With these words he rose, and taking Jane's hand in his, he began to walk with her, up and down the room. His clasp was so hot and tight she could have cried out, but glancing into his face she saw it was only the physical expression of thoughts he did not care to give words to. In a few minutes he touched a bell, and when it was answered said, "Mr. Tasburg to my presence—without delay." Mr. Tasburg came without delay, and Cromwell turned to him in some passion.

"Mark Tasburg," he said scornfully, "I know not whether you have been alive or dead. I have not once heard from you in the matter of Lord Neville's delay; I have not, and that you know. The commission for your search is more than a month old; it is, sir; and I like not such delays. I will not have them."

"My Lord Protector, I reported to Mr. Thurloe and Mr. Milton that my search had been of no avail."

"Who gave you the order to make this search?"

"Your Highness."

"Did I give you an order to report to Mr. Thurloe or Mr. Milton? Did I?"

"No, your Highness."

"See, then, what you have taken upon yourself. Be not so forward again, or you may go back to St. Ives and make clay pipes. What date does Lord Neville's last letter bear?"

"It was written at Paris on the eleventh day of November."

"The same date as your last letter, Mistress Swaffham. Four months ago. This is serious." Then turning to Tasburg he said, "Find Colonel Ayrton and send him here, to me, without delay."

During the interval between Tasburg's departure and Ayrton's arrival, Cromwell was occupied in writing a letter, and when it was finished, Colonel Ayrton entered.

"Colonel," he said, "I think you know Lord Cluny Neville?"

"Your Highness, I know him well. His mother was my fifth cousin."

"He has disappeared, I do fear, in some unfortunate way. On the eleventh of last November he left Paris, after despatching the business he was sent on with Cardinal Mazarin. No one has heard of him since. He was going to The Hague, but whether by land or water, does not appear. I have written to his Eminence, the Cardinal; here is the letter, and if his reply be not to the point, go next to the lodging of Lord Neville, and from there follow his steps as closely as it may be in your power. The treasurer will honour this order for your expenses. Waste no time. Be prudent with your tongue. Say not all your mind, and send me some tidings with all convenient speed."

"I am a willing messenger, your Highness. I am bound to my cousin by many kind ties, and I have been most uneasy at his silence and absence."

"Farewell, then, and God go with you."

He waited until the door closed, and then he said, "I owe you this and more, Jane; and I like the youth—a dear, religious youth, of a manly spirit and a true heart. He was always counted fortunate, for in all our battles he went shot free. I wish, I do wish, we could hear of him! And you love him, Jane? And he loves you. My heart aches for both of you; it does indeed. But I think I can do somewhat in this matter, and truly I will use my endeavour. Why does he not come? What can have hindered him?" he cried impatiently as if to himself.

"Oh, sir, he is sick or wounded—perhaps at death's door in some poor man's cottage, in some lonely place far from help or friends," and here Jane burst into passionate weeping.

"You must not, you must not cry, Jane; I beg it as a favour—not in the sight of men and women. Tears are for the Father of spirits. Retire to Him who is a sure resting-place, and there weep your heart empty; for He can, and He will wipe all tears away. As for your dear lord and lover, he is within God's knowledge, and if God saves souls, surely He can save bodies."

"It is four months, sir. 'Tis beyond my hope; and I fear Cluny is now beyond human help."

"Well, then, Jane, we will trust to the miraculous. We do not do that enough, and so when our poor help is not sufficient, we tremble. Where is the hope and

trust you sent to me when I lay between life and death in Scotland? Oh, what poor creatures we are, when we trust in ourselves! nothing then but tears and fears and the grave to end all. But I confess I never expected Jane Swaffham to be down in the mire. Jane knows she is the daughter of the everlasting, powerful, infinite, inscrutable God Almighty; she knows this God is also one of goodness and mercy and truth without end, to those who love Him. You love Him, you do love Him?"

"I have loved Him ever since I could speak His Holy Name. But He never now answers me; when I pray to Him the heavens seem to let my prayers fall back to me. Has He forgotten me?"

"Jane, Jane, oh, Jane! What a question for you to ask! I could chide you for it. Have you forgotten the teaching of your Bible, and your catechism, of your good pastor, John Verity, and your father and mother? Do you believe for one moment that God has any abortive children? He has not. He is the father of such souls as, according to His appointment, come to perfection. If you have ever, for one moment, felt the love of the Ineffable Nameless One, I do assure you it is a love for all eternity! It is, Jane, it is, surely. He does not love and withdraw; no, no; we may deserve to be denied, we may deserve to be abandoned, but just because it is so, He seeks and He saves the children lost, or in danger." And then he stooped and dried her eyes with his kerchief, and seating her on a sofa, he brought a glass of wine, and said,

"Drink, my dear; and as you drink, ask for strength no juice of earthly fruit can give. Do not pray for this thing, or that thing; if you will say only, 'Thy will be done,' you will find mercy at need; you will indeed. I do know it."

"All is so dark, sir."

"And will be, till He says, 'Let there be light.' I scruple not to say this."

"Oh, sir, what shall I do? What shall I do?"

"Put a blank into God's hand, and tell Him to fill it as He chooses—Cluny or no Cluny, love, or death of love, joy or sorrow, just what He wills. In my judgment this is the way of Peace. Do you think, Jane, that I have chosen the path I now walk in? I have not, God knows it. God knows I would be a far happier man with my flocks in the Ouse meadows; I would, I say what is in my heart. Is this greatness laid on me for my glory and honour? Truly, it is only labour and sorrow. If I did not find mercy and strength at need, I should faint and utterly fail under the burden, for indeed I am the burden-bearer of all England this day. I need pity, I do need it; I need God's pity, yes, and human pity also."

There was the shadow of unshed tears in his sad, gray eyes, and an almost childlike pathos in his dropped head. Jane could not bear it. She stroked and kissed his big hand, and her tears fell down upon it. "I will go home," she said softly, "and pray for you. I will not pray for myself, but for you. I will ask God to

stand at your right hand and your left hand, to beset you behind and before, and to lay His comforting, helping hand upon you. And you must not lose heart, sir, under your burden, because many that were with you have gone against you, or because there are constant plots to take your life. There is the ninetieth Psalm. It is yours, sir."

And Cromwell's face shone, and he spoke in an ecstasy, "Truly, truly, he that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. How did David reach that height, Jane?"

"He was taught of God, sir."

"I am sure of that. I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress; my God, in Him will I trust—thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night, nor for the arrow that flieth by day—He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways."

"My dear lord, is not that sufficient?" and Jane's face was now full of light, and she forgot her fears, and her sorrow was lifted from her. She found a strange courage, and the words were put into her mouth, so that she must needs say them:

"It is most true, our Protector, that you have a great burden, but are you not glad of heart that God looked down from heaven, and seeing poor England bound and suffering, chose you—you, from out of tens of thousands of Englishmen—and called you from your sheep and oxen and wheat-fields, and said unto you, '*Oliver Cromwell, free My people*,' and then so filled your heart with the love of freedom that you could not help but answer, '*Here am I, Lord*.' The other night I listened to some heavenly discourse from Doctor Verity, and he said that from henceforth, every flying fold of our English flag would have but one spoken word for all nations, and that word *Freedom*. Some may be ungrateful, but your faith and valour and labour for England will never be forgotten. Never!"

Her face gathered colour and light beyond the colour and light of mere flesh and blood as she spoke, and Cromwell's reflected it. He was "in the spirit," as this childlike woman with prescient vision prophesied for him, and looking far, far off into the future, as one seeing things invisible, he answered confidently—

"I know, and I am sure, Jane, that time will be the seal to my faithfulness. I know, and I am sure, that my name shall mix with every thought and deed of Freedom, even in lands now unknown, and in ages yet to come. Then, brave freemen shall say in my ears, 'Well done my son.' And shall not the dead ears hear? They shall. Indeed they shall! I know, and am sure, Jane, that English speaking men will take in trust, not only my name, but the names of all who, with me, held their lives less than Freedom, and gave them a burnt-offering and blood sacrifice without price or grudging. These men dying, mixed their breath and names with Freedom's, and they shall live forever. For this is the truth, Jane:

thrones shall fall and nations pass away, but death has no part in Freedom."

And as he spoke, his words rang and sounded like music, and stirred the blood like a trumpet; and Jane's face was lifted to the rough, glorified visage of the warrior and the seer, who saw yet afar off his justification, saw it in the Red Cross of St. George flying over land and sea, and carrying in all its blowing folds only one glorious word—"FREEDOM."

In such moments Cromwell's spirit walked abreast of angels; he looked majestic, he spoke without pause or ambiguity, and with an heroic dictation that carried conviction rather than offense, for it had nothing personal in it, and it suited him just as hardness suits fine steel.

In this enthusiasm of national feeling, Jane forgot her personal grief, and as she went homeward, she kept repeating to herself Cromwell's parting words, "Don't doubt, Jane. God nor man nor nature can do anything for doubters. They cannot." She understood what was included in this advice, and she tried to realise it. The moment Mrs. Swaffham saw her daughter, she took notice of the change in her countenance and speech and manner, and she said to herself, "Jane has been with Oliver Cromwell. No one else could have so influenced her." And very soon Jane told her all that had been done and said, and both women tried to assure themselves that a few more weeks of patience would bring them that certainty which is so much easier to bear than suspense. For the very hope of suspense is cruel, but in the face of a sorrow, sure and known, the soul erects herself and finds out ways and means to mitigate or to bear it.

States of enthusiasm, however, do not last; and they are not often to be desired. The disciples after the glory of Mount Tabor were not able to go with Christ up Calvary. Jane felt the very next day that she had mentally promised herself to do more than she was able to perform. She could not forget Cluny, or put in his place any less selfish object; and though the days came laden with strange things, she did not take the fervid interest in public events her father and mother did. For there are in nature points of view where a cot can blot out a mountain, and on our moral horizons a personal event can put a national revolution in the background. In the main, she carried a loving, steadfast heart, that waited in patience, sometimes even in hope; but there were many days when her life seemed to be tied in a knot, and when fear and sorrow crept like a mist over it. For there was nothing for her to do; she could only wait for the efforts of others, and she longed rather for the pang of personal conflict. But human beings without these tidal fluctuations are not interesting; people who always pursue the "even tenor of their way" leave us chilled and dissatisfied; we prefer that charm of uncertain expectation, which, with all its provocations, made Matilda dear and delightful to Jane, and Jane perennially interesting, even to those who did not think as she thought or do as she did.

At length April came, and the bare brown garden was glorious with the gold and purple of the crocus flowers and the moonlight beauty of the lilies. Birds were building in the hedges, and the sun shone brightly overhead. The spirit of spring was everywhere; men and boys went whistling along the streets, the watermen were singing in their barges, and a feeling of busy content and security pervaded London, and, indeed, all England.

Suddenly, this atmosphere of cheerful labour and abounding hope was filled with terror and with a cry of murder, of possible war and another struggle for liberty. A gigantic plot for the assassination of the Protector was discovered—that is, it was discovered to the people; Cromwell himself had been aware of its first inception, and had watched it grow to its shameful maturity. He had seen the wavering give it aid, and those who were his professed friends, strike hands with those pledged to strike him to the heart. Two months previously he had retired a number of foolish Royalist officers, broken to pieces their silly plans, and given them their lives; but this drama of assassination came from Charles Stuart and Prince Rupert, and from the headquarters of royalty in the French capital. Its programme in Charles' name giving "liberty to any man whatsoever, in any way, to destroy the life of the base mechanic fellow, Oliver Cromwell," had been in Cromwell's possession from the time of its printing, and he knew not only every soul connected with the plot, but also the day and the hour and the very spot in which, and on which, his life was to be taken. But to the city of London the arrest of forty conspirators in their midst, was a shock that suspended for a time all their business.

Israel Swaffham was the first person called into the Protector's presence. He found him in great sorrow, sorrow mingled with a just indignation. Standing by the long table in the Council Chamber, he struck it violently with his clenched hand as he pointed out to Israel the personalities of the conspirators. At one name he paused, and with his finger upon it, looked into Israel's face. And as iron struck by iron answers the blow, so Israel answered that sorrowful, inquiring gaze.

"It is a burning shame," he said angrily. "You have pardoned and warned and protected him for years."

"I must even now do what I can; I must, Israel, for his father's sake. A warrant will be issued to-night, and I cannot stay that; and personally I cannot warn him of it. Israel, you remember his father?"

"Yes, a noble, upright man as ever England bred."

"You and he and I fought some quarrels out for our country together."

"We did."

"And this son is the last of the name. He played with my boys."

"And with mine."

"They went fishing and skating together."

"Yes; I know."

"One day I saved this man's life. He was a little lad, twelve years or about it, and he went through the ice. At some risk I saved him, and he rode home behind me; I can feel, as I speak, his long childish arms around my waist; I can indeed, Israel. These are the thorns of power and office. On these tenter-hooks I hang my very heart every day. What am I to do?"

"My dear lord, do nothing. I can do all you wish. There needs no more words between us. In two hours Abel Dewey—you know Abel—will be on the road. Nothing stops Dewey. Give him a good horse and he will so manage himself and the beast as to reach his journey's end in twenty-four hours."

"But charge him about the good horse, Israel. These poor animals—they have almost human troubles and sicknesses."

Israel then went quickly home. He called Jane and explained to her in a few words what she was to do; and by the time her letter to Matilda was ready, Abel Dewey was at the door waiting for it. Its beginning and ending was in the ordinary strain of girls' letters, but in the centre there were some ominous words, rendered remarkable by the large script used, and by the line beneath them—"I must tell you there has been a great plot against the Protector discovered. Charles Stuart and Prince Rupert are the head and front of the same, but there is a report that Stephen de Wick is not behindhand, and my father did hear that a warrant was out for Stephen, and hoped he would reach French soil, ere it reached him. And I said I thought Stephen was in France; and father answered, 'Pray God so; if not, he cannot be there too soon if he would not have his head off on Tower Hill.'" Then the letter went on to speak of the removal of the Protector's family to Hampton Court palace, and of the signing of the Dutch peace, and the banquet given to the Dutch Ministers. "I was at the table of the Lady Protectoress," she said, "and many great people were present, but the Protector seemed to enjoy most the company of the Rev. Mr. Wheelwright, who was the only one who could beat the Protector at football when they were at college together. Some New England Puritans also were there, and I heard with much pleasure about their cities in the wilderness; and Mr. Thurloe smoked and said nothing; and Mr. John Milton played some heavenly music, and lastly we all sung in parts Mr. Milton's fine piece, '*The Lord has been our dwelling-place*.' Ladies Mary and Frances Cromwell were beautifully dressed, but the Lady Elizabeth Claypole is the light of Whitehall."

At these words Jane stopped. "Do I not know," she asked herself, "how Matilda will have flung away my letter before this? And if not, with what scorn she will treat 'the light of Whitehall'?" And these reflections so chilled her memories, that she hasted to sign her name and close the letter. Abel Dewey was ready for it; and as she watched him ride away, her thoughts turned to de Wick,

and she wondered in what mood Matilda might be, and how she would receive the information sent her. Would it be a surprise?

"Not it," answered Mrs. Swaffham. "Matilda knows all about the plot; that is most certain; but its discovery may be news to her, and if so, she will not thank you for it, Jane. Why will she burn herself with fire not on her hearthstone?"

"Prince Rupert is her lover. She will do anything he desires her to do."

"If he truly loved her, he would not permit her to be put in danger."

"We do not know all, mother."

"That is the truth, Jane. We know very little about ourselves, let alone our friends. Doctor Verity would say to us, 'Judge not; every man's shoes must be made on his own last.'"

Then Jane smiled, and the smile filled the silence like a spell. Mrs. Swaffham went out of the room, and soon afterwards Doctor Verity came in, asking cheerily as he entered, "How is it with you to-day, Jane?"

"I live as best I can, Doctor. I watch from the morning to the midnight for a footstep that does not come."

"There is a desire that fulfils itself by its own energy, but this desire is born of unfailing Hope, and of that unfaltering Faith that can move mountains. Have you got it, Jane?"

"I am so weak, Doctor John. Pray for me."

"Pray for yourself. Why should any one pray for you? Pray for yourself, though it be only to say, with the old Acadians, '*Hold Thou my hands!*' When you were a baby, and were fretful and restless, then your mother held your hands. That steadied you. You were not used to the whirling earth, or you had that sense of falling into the void all babies have, and you trembled and cried out in your fear, and then your mother instinctively held your little hands in hers, and you felt their clasp strong as the everlasting hills, and went peacefully to sleep. Go to God in the same way, Jane; you are only a little babe in His sight; a little babe crying in the vast void and darkness, and trying to catch hold of something to which you may cling. Say to the Father of your spirit, '*Hold my hands!*'"

And she rose and kissed him for his sweet counsel, and that night, and many a night afterwards, she fell asleep whispering, "*Hold Thou my hands.*"

CHAPTER XIII

CHANGES AT DE WICK

"Friendship, of itself a holy tie,
Is made more sacred by adversity."

"A form of senseless clay—the leavings of a soul."

When Matilda received Anthony Lynn's letter, she was immediately certain that the old man's conscience troubled him in the presence of death, and that he wished to return de Wick to its rightful owners. Sir Thomas and Lady Jevery were of the same opinion. "He can leave the estate to you, Matilda," said Sir Thomas; "you have never been 'out' for either Stuart, and the Commonwealth takes no action on private opinions, only on overt acts. Stephen is barred, but Lynn can leave de Wick to you, and having neither kith nor kin, I think he ought to do so. He owes everything to your father's help and favour."

This idea took entire possession of Matilda; she thought it a duty to her family to answer the request of Anthony Lynn favourably. It had been a surprise to her, and there were more surprises to follow it. As soon as Lady Jevery and her niece arrived at the gates of de Wick, they were confronted with a remarkable change in the appearance of the place. The great iron gates had been painted and rehung; the stone griffins that ornamented the posts had felt the stone-cutter's chisel in all their parts, and been restored to their proper shape and position. The wide walks were free of weeds, freshly graveled and raked, and the grass of the chase was in perfect order. There were plenty of deer, also, though Matilda knew well all the deer had disappeared long before her father's death.

As they came close to the house, they saw the flower garden aglow with spring flowers and in such fine order as would have satisfied even Sir Thomas Jevery. Anthony Lynn stood at the door to meet them. He looked ill and frail, but hardly like death, and when he witnessed the delight of the ladies at the changes made in de Wick, his face grew almost young in its pleasure. Every room in the house was a fresh surprise; for though all that was venerable through age of family association, and all that was valuable and beautiful had been preserved, yet so much of modern splendour and worth had been mingled with the old that the rooms were apparently newly furnished. Magnificent draperies of velvet, chairs covered with Spanish leather stamped in gold, carpets of richest quality, pictures by rare masters, Venetian mirrors and glassware, all that a luxurious and lavish taste could imagine and desire, were gathered with fitting and generous profusion in the ancient rooms of de Wick. Anthony Lynn accompanied the ladies through the house, finding a fresh and continual joy in their exclamations of delight; and Matilda, filled with astonishment at the exquisite daintiness of the suite called the "Lady Matilda's Rooms," said enthusiastically,

"Mr. Lynn, no man could better deserve to be lord of de Wick than you. And seeing that the de Wicks had to leave their ancient home, I am glad it has fallen to you—and I am sure my father is glad, also."

Then the old man burst into that thin, cold passion of weeping so significant of age, and so pitiful in its helplessness. "It is your father's doing, Lady Matilda," he sobbed. "It is my dear lord's wisdom. Pardon me now. This evening I will tell you all." He went away with these words, and the two women looked at each other in amazement.

In the evening he came to them. They were sitting by the fire in the now magnificently furnished great salon, and he asked permission to place his chair between them. Matilda made room for him, and when he had sat down and placed his terribly thin hand on its arm, she laid her lovely young hand upon his; and he looked into her face with that adoring affection which is often seen in the eyes of a favourite mastiff.

"When these dreadful wars first began," he said, "Earl de Wick foresaw their ending; and after Marston Moor he said to me, 'I know this man, Oliver Cromwell, and there is none that will stand against him. It is my duty to save de Wick; will you help me?' And I said to him, 'My dear lord, I owe you all I am, and all I have.' Then we had many long talks, and it was agreed that I should join the Puritan party, that I should pretend a disapproval of the Earl and his ways—but a disapproval tempered with regret—so that men might not suspect my opposition. The King was even then sending to de Wick for money, and I was supposed to supply it on the de Wick silver and valuables. In reality, the Earl sent these things to my care, and he himself gave the gold. For in those years he had much specie, the result of his trading partnership with Sir Thomas Jevery. The silver, the old pictures, the fine tapestries, and Eastern pottery all came to my home in St. Ives. People said unkind things of me, but my dear lord loved me. Then there came a time when de Wick was bare, and the King still wanted money. And the Earl promised to borrow from me one thousand pounds, in consideration of letters royal making the Lady Matilda Countess de Wick in her own right, if her brother Stephen had no heirs of his body. His Majesty being in great straits, readily granted the request, and the proper papers were made. And I looked well to it that no necessary formality was lacking, and the thousand pounds were paid, not by me, but by Earl de Wick. His store was then gone, but he had secured the succession of de Wick in his own blood and name; for you will see, my dear lady, if ever you have to assume this title, when you marry, your husband must take the name of de Wick."

"But if I never marry any one?"

"Oh, that is an impossible contingency! You would owe that debt to all the de Wicks that ever lived and died; and you would pay it, whether you liked to,

or not."

"Yes, I should," she answered promptly.

"Here are the papers relating to your succession," he continued; "and here are those relating to my trust in the matter of the de Wick silver and valuables. They are all now in their proper places, and when I go to my old friend, I can tell him so. When he was dying, he said to me, 'Anthony, the next move will be the sale of de Wick house and lands. Stephen is already outcast, but I have given you the money to buy it. Let no one outbid you. Keep it in your own care until my King comes back to his throne, and my children to their home.' I bought de Wick for seven hundred pounds less than the money entrusted to me for its purchase. The balance is here at your hand. The only contingency not provided for, was my death, and as I know that is speedily certain, I wish your promise that these papers be placed in Sir Thomas Jevery's charge. I know it is what my lord would advise."

Matilda took the papers silently. Her father's loving thoughtfulness and Anthony's loving fidelity, affected her deeply. Lady Jevery was weeping, and the old man himself raised a face wet with tears to Matilda. She stooped and kissed him. She promised all he asked. "But," she added, "you have made no mention of the refurnishing of the house, nor yet of the money that must have been spent on the garden and chase."

"That outlay was my own little pleasure," he answered. "It has made the long, lonely months here full of hope. I always thought I knew how to make a great house look like a great house should look;" and with pardonable pride he added, "I think you both liked it."

He found in their hearty admiration all the recompense he wished. "You will let me die here?" he asked, "here, where my old friend died? you will let me sit in his chair, and die in his bed? It is all I ask, unless you will stay awhile and brighten my last days."

The favours asked were affectionately granted, and Matilda virtually became mistress of her old home. Anthony was seldom seen, but Stephen de Wick came and went, and brought with him men whose names were not spoken, and whose business meant much more than the packs of cards which appeared to be all they cared for. In fact, Matilda was soon neck deep in Prince Rupert's plot, and there was no doubt in her mind that the month of May would end the life of Oliver Cromwell, and bring the King to his throne and the de Wicks to their earldom.

She was sitting, one afternoon, talking to Stephen about advices he had just received from his confederates in London, when a servant entered. "My lady," he said, "here has come a man with a letter, which he will deliver to none but you." Matilda's first thought was, "It is some private word from Rupert;" and she or-

dered the messenger to her presence at once. When she saw it was Jane's writing, she was much annoyed. "I will wager it is some bad news, or it had not come through this gate," she said; and she opened the letter with angry reluctance. Hastily she glanced over the lines, until she came to the discovery of the plot.

"Oh, indeed, here is the burden of Jane Swaffham!" she cried in a passion. "We are discovered. All is known—all has been known from the very first. Stephen, you are in instant danger. You must away at once."

"I do not believe it."

"Fool! How else could Jane have sent this word? She says Cromwell has known it from its beginning. The man has a devil; who can circumvent him? You must fly at once. The warrant for your arrest will doubtless come by to-night's mail. My God, are our troubles never to cease? Is everything not countersigned by Cromwell to be a failure? It is unendurable!"

"Everything with which Prince Rupert meddles is unfortunate," answered Stephen. "He assigns all he touches with failure. I said so from the beginning. He is, and was, the King's evil genius."

"You lie! You lie downright, Stephen! But this is no time for quarreling. You must away, and that at once."

"And, pray, how? or where? I will not run. I will stand or fall with the rest."

"What drivel, what nonsensical bombast are you talking? It is 'I,' 'I' and still 'I' with you. Have you no consideration for others—for uncle and aunt, and for poor, dying Anthony? Think of all he has done, and at least let him go in the belief that he has saved de Wick."

"It is better to stand together."

"It is already—I'll wager that much—every man for himself. You must take the North Road to Hull; you are sure of a ship there."

"And how the devil, sister, am I to reach Hull?"

"Take the sorrel horse; if any one sees you, you are for Squire Mason's;" then hastily unlocking a drawer, she brought a little bag of gold and put it in his hand. "There is enough and to spare for your road to Paris." He flung the gold from him, and Matilda clasping her hands frantically, cried "My God, Stephen, are you not going?"

"Storm your utmost, Matilda. I care not a rap; I will not budge from this spot."

"But you must go! Stephen, Stephen, for my sake," and she burst into passionate tears and sobs.

"Be quiet, Matilda. Women's counsel is always unlucky, but I will run, if you say so. I feel like an ever-lasting scoundrel to do it."

"They will all run—if they can. There is a little time yet in your favour.

The mail-rider does not pass here till eight o'clock, or after. You have four or five hours' grace."

He rose as she spoke, and she kissed him with passionate tenderness. When he left the room, she ran to the roof of the house to watch which road he took. If he went northward, he was for Hull, and bent on saving his life; but if he went south, he was for London, and would doubtless have the fate on Tower Hill he had been warned against. In about a quarter of an hour she saw him riding at great speed northward, and after watching him until he became a speck on the horizon, she went back to her room, and she was weeping bitterly though quite unconscious of it.

Her first act was to tear Jane's letter into minute pieces. She did it with an inconceivable passion. Every shred of the paper fluttered into the fire as if in conscious suffering, and when the last particle was consumed, she stood with her folded hand on her mouth, looking at the white ashy films, and considering what next to do. Her face was set and frowning; she was summoning to her aid, by the very intensity of her feeling, whatever power she possessed to counsel her perplexity.

Suddenly her face lightened; she smiled, nodded her handsome head with satisfaction, and then in a leisurely manner put on her garden hat and walked to the stables. She was a daily visitor there, and her appearance caused no surprise. She went at once to a young man known to be Stephen de Wick's constant attendant whenever he was in the neighbourhood. She knew he could be relied on, and as they stood together by Matilda's Barbary mare, she said with the critical air of one talking about a favourite animal, "Yupon, can you help in a matter for Earl Stephen? It is life or death, Yupon, and I know of no one but you to come to—also, there will be a few gold pieces."

"With or without gold, my lady, I am your servant. What is to be done?"

"You know the three large oak trees, just beyond the boundary of de Wick?"

"I know them well, my lady."

"Be under the oaks to-night, at eight o'clock. Have with you a lanthorn and a coil of strong rope. You will see Earl de Wick there, and when he speaks, join him on the instant. Can he rely on you?"

"By my soul, he can; even to blood-letting."

"Be this our bargain then. Eight o'clock—no later. And on my honour, I promise, there shall no guilt of blood-letting stick to your hands."

"Let me perish, if I am not there."

All the man's words had the savour of a strong, faithful spirit, and Matilda went back to her room satisfied. The principal part of her plan for Stephen's safety was accomplished; she had no doubts now as to its prosperous carrying out. So she lay down and tried to compose herself; and as the day darkened and

the time for action came, she found a strength and calmness that was sufficient. Without a sign of anxiety in her heart, she eat her evening meal with her aunt, and then said,

"I am going to dismiss Delia, go to bed early, and sleep a headache away." Lady Jevery said she was "in the same mind"; and this circumstance, being much in Matilda's favour, gave her that satisfactory feeling of "having the signs favourable," which we all appreciate when we intend important work.

About seven o'clock she went to her brother's room, and brought away a suit of his clothing; and when she had dressed herself in it, and put a pistol and hunting-knife in her belt, and a large plumed hat on her head, she looked in the mirror with the utmost satisfaction. She was her brother's double; quite his height, and singularly like him in carriage, face and manner. Of this resemblance she had soon a very convincing proof, for as she passed through the hall, her own maid Delia curtsied to her, and said, "My lady is sick to-night, sir, and will not be disturbed." And Matilda bowed and passed on. As for the other servants, in and out of the house, they knew they were to have eyes and see not; and ears, and hear not. Therefore, though several met, as they supposed, the young Earl leaving the house, there was no further recognition of the fact among themselves, than a lifting of the eyebrows, or some enigmatical remark, only to be understood by those *en rapport* with the circumstances.

Matilda walked quickly through the garden, and still more quickly through the lonely chase. She was not afraid of the thing she was going to do, but she was afraid of the toads and snails, and the unknown deer and dogs that thought the wooded space their own. But without molestation she arrived at the three oaks. Yupon Slade was already there. He showed her the light of the lanthorn for a moment, and then his black-cloaked figure and masked face blended indeterminately with the darkness around him. For nearly an hour Matilda walked up and down the road, keeping well within call of her companion. But about nine o'clock the sound of a horse coming at an easy gallop was heard, and Yupon was softly called. He was at Matilda's side as the rider came near them. She advanced to meet him, calling pleasantly, "Miles Watson, a word, if it please you."

The voice was familiar and kind, and Miles drew rein and asked, "Who calls me? I am on the Commonwealth's business, and cannot be delayed."

Then Matilda, pointing the pistol in his face said, "You must light from your horse, Miles Watson." Miles tried then to proceed, but Yupon had whispered to the animal he rode, and the creature took no notice of his rider's persuasions. The pistol was dangerously near; Yupon's rough order "to tumble" was not unaccompanied by threats, and Watson thought it best to obey quietly, where he could not resist. When Yupon had bound him securely, Matilda took the lanthorn, and drawing from her girdle the sharp hunting-knife, she cut open the leathern mail-

bag, and turned the light upon its contents. The small private letters she hardly noticed, but there were three ominous-looking papers closed with large red seals, and these she instantly seized. They were all directed to the Sheriff of Ely; and she felt sure they were the authority for Stephen's arrest. She took possession of the whole three, bade Yupon set loose the horse, and leaving the other contents of the rifled mail-bag on the grass by the side of the bound carrier, she put into her companion's hand the promised gold pieces, and then slipped away into the shadows and darkness of de Wick chase.

"Three ominous-looking papers."

"THREE OMINOUS-LOOKING PAPERS."

Once within its boundaries she ran like a deer till she reached the house. All was shut and silent, but she was prepared for this emergency. She had a key to her private rooms, and she reached them without sight or sound that could betray her. Indeed, she felt reasonably certain that neither Yupon nor the mail-

rider had suspected her disguise. When she put the gold in Yupon's hand he had said quite naturally, "Thanks to you, Earl Stephen;" and twice over Miles Watson vowed, "I shall be equal to you yet, Earl de Wick. I know who you be, Earl de Wick."

There was still fire on her hearth, and she pushed the dying logs together, and lit a candle by their blaze. Then she opened one of the letters. It was a warrant for the arrest of Squire Mason. The next opened was a warrant for the arrest of Lord Frederick Blythe; but the third was, truly enough, the warrant for the arrest of Stephen de Wick, for treason against the Commonwealth and conspiracy against the life of the Protector. She drew her mouth tightly, and tore the whole three warrants across, and threw them into the flames. When they were ashes, she turned quickly, divested herself of her brother's clothing, and put on her own garments. Then she carried Stephen's suit to his room, and afterwards put out the candle and went to bed.

But it was dawn before she could sleep. She lay calculating the time that it would take to get fresh warrants, and her conclusion was, "If Stephen have the least bit of good fortune, he will be out of danger, before they know in London that their lying warrants are beyond looking after. And I am glad I have done Mason and Blythe a good turn. At dawn I will send them a message they will understand. Oh, indeed, Mr. Cromwell, if you can spy, others can spy also!" She was a little troubled when she thought of her aunt and Anthony Lynn. "But, Lord!" she said audibly, "it is not time yet to face the question; I shall be ready for it when it comes."

She did not anticipate this trial for some days. "They will begin to wonder in two days what the sheriff has done in the matter; in three days they may write to ask; about the fifth day he may let them know he never got the warrants; then there will be new warrants to make out, and to send, and all this net spread in the sight of the birds, and the birds flown. In all conscience, I may take my ease for one clear week—then—perhaps I may be in London. I will consider of it."

Her plan had, however, been too hastily formed and carried out to admit of a thorough consideration, and in her hurry of rifling the mail, it had not occurred to her that one of those small, unimportant-looking letters might also be for the sheriff. This in fact was the case. When daylight brought rescue to the bound carrier, the rejected letters were gathered up, and one of them was a letter of instructions regarding the three warrants to be served. It directed the sheriff to take Mason and Blythe to Ely for trial, but to bring Stephen de Wick to the Tower of London.

Now the overtopping desire and ambition of Sheriff Brownley's heart was to visit London officially; and this shameful theft had at least put a stay on the golden opportunity of going there with a prisoner of such high rank and high

crimes as Stephen de Wick. He was in a passion of disappointment, and hastily securing a warrant to arrest Stephen de Wick for mail robbery, he went to de Wick to serve it.

For no one had a doubt as to the culprit. The mail-rider swore positively that it was Stephen de Wick. "He minced and mouthed his words," he said, "but I knew his face and figure, and also the scarlet beaver with the white plumes with which he joys to affront the decent men and women of Ely; yes, and his doublet, I saw its white slashings and white cords and tassels. Till I die, I will swear it was Stephen de Wick; he, and no other, except Yupon Slade, or I am not knowing Slade's way with horses. He whispered a word to my beast, and the creature planted his forefeet like a rock; no one but Yupon or his gypsy kin can do that. And Slade has been seen often with de Wick; moreover, he has work in Anthony Lynn's stables—and as for Anthony Lynn God only knows the colour of his thoughts."

It was Delia who, about the noon hour, came flying into her lady's presence with the news that the sheriff was in the stables talking to Yupon Slade, and that he had two constables with him.

"What do they want, Delia? I suppose I must say whom do they want? Is it Mr. Lynn, or Lady Jevery, or myself?"

"I think it will be Earl de Wick they are after, my lady."

"'Tis most likely. Bid them to come in and find Earl de Wick. Give me my blue velvet gown, Delia, the one with the silver trimmings." Silently she assumed this splendid garment, and then descended to the main salon of the house. Her great beauty, her majestic presence, her royal clothing produced an instant impression. The sheriff—hatted before Anthony Lynn—bared his head as she approached. He explained to her his visit, the robbery committed, the certainty that Stephen de Wick was the criminal, and the necessity he was under to make a search of the house for him. She listened with disdainful apathy. "Mr. Lynn," she said, tenderly placing her hand on his shoulder; "let the men search your house. Let them search even my private rooms. They will find nothing worse than themselves anywhere. As for Earl de Wick, he is not in England at all."

The old man gave a gasp of relief and remained silent. It was evident that he was suffering, and Matilda felt a great resentment towards the intruders. "Why do you not go about your business?" she asked scornfully. "Under the King, an Englishman's house was his castle; but now—now, no one is safe whom you choose to accuse. Go!" she said with an imperious movement, "but Mr. Lynn's steward must go with you. You may be officers of the law—who knows?—and you may be thieves."

"Anthony Lynn knows who we be," answered the sheriff angrily. "We be here on our duty—honest men all of us; say so, Anthony."

"You say it," replied Lynn feebly.

"And the lady must say it."

"Go about your business," interrupted Matilda loftily. "It is not your business to browbeat Mr. Lynn and myself."

"Thieves, indeed! Stephen de Wick is the thief. He robbed the mail at nine o'clock, last night."

"You lie! You lie damnably!" answered Matilda. "Earl de Wick was miles and miles away from de Wick at nine o'clock last night." Then she bent over Anthony Lynn, and with an intolerable scorn was deaf and dumb and blind to the sheriff and his companions. Only when the steward entered, did she appear to be aware of their presence. "Benson," she said, "you will permit these men to search every room and closet, and pantry and mouse hole for the Earl. And you will see that they touch neither gold nor silver, pottery nor picture, or anything whatever—but Earl de Wick. They may take the Earl—if they can find him."

The men were about an hour making their search, and during this interval Lady Jevery had been summoned, and Anthony had received the stimulating drug on which he relied. But he was very ill; and Lady Jevery, who adored her nephew, was weeping and full of anxious terror. Matilda vainly assured her Stephen was safe. She insisted on doubting this statement.

"You thought he went north at four o'clock, but I feel sure he only went as far as Blythe. No one but Stephen would have dared to commit such a crime as was committed at nine o'clock. But 'tis most like him and Frederick Blythe; and they will be caught, I feel sure they will."

"They will not be caught, aunt. And if it were Stephen and Blythe, they did right. Who would not steal a warrant for his own beheading, if he could? I sent a message to Blythe and Mason at dawn this morning, and they are far away by this time."

At this point the sheriff reentered the room. He was in a vile temper, and did not scruple to exercise it. "The man has gone," he said to Anthony Lynn; "and I believe you know all about the affair."

"About what affair? The mail robbery?"

"Just that. What are you doing with profane and wicked malignants in your house? I would like to know that, Anthony Lynn."

"To the bottomless pit with your liking," answered Anthony shaking from head to feet with passion. "What have you to do with me and my friends? This is my house, not yours."

"You are none of Cromwell's friend. Many people beside me say that of you."

"I am glad they do me so much honour. Cromwell! Who is Cromwell? A man to joy the devil. No, I am not his friend!" and with a radiant smile—"I thank

my Maker for it."

He spoke with increasing difficulty, scarcely above a whisper, though he had risen to his feet, and believed himself to have the strong, resounding voice of his healthy manhood. The sheriff turned to his attendants—

"You hear the traitor!" he cried. "You heard Anthony Lynn turn his back on himself! I knew him always for a black heart and a double tongue. We must have a warrant for him, and that at once."

"Fool!" said the trembling, tottering old man, with a superhuman scorn, as his clay-like face suddenly flamed into its last colour. "Warrant! warrant! Oliver Cromwell has no warrant to fit my name. I go now on the warrant of the King of kings. Put me in the deepest dungeon, His *habeas corpus* sets me free of you. Matilda! Stephen! I am going to my dear lord—to my dear King—to my dear God!" and as a strong man shakes off a useless garment, so Anthony Lynn dropped his body, and in that moment his spirit flew away further than thought could follow it.

"What a villain!" cried the sheriff.

"Villain, in your face," answered Matilda passionately. "Out of the presence of holy death! You are not fit to stand by his dead body! Go, on this instant! Sure, if you do not, there are those who will make you!"

With these words she cried out for her servants in a voice full of horror and grief, and the first person to answer her cry was Cymlin Swaffham. He came in like some angry young god, his ruddy face and blazing eyes breathing vengeful inquiry. Matilda went to his side, clung to his arm, pointed to the dead man on the hearth and the domineering figure of the sheriff above it, and cried, "Cymlin, Cymlin, send him away! Oh, 'twas most unmercifully done!"

"Sir," said Cymlin, "you exceed your warrant. Have you arrested Stephen de Wick?"

"The man has run, Mr. Swaffham, and madame there knows it."

"You have nothing to do with Lady Matilda. If the house has been searched, your business here is finished. You can go."

"Mr. Swaffham, if you don't know, you ought to be told, that Anthony Lynn—just dead and gone—was a double-dyed Royalist scoundrel; and I and my men here will swear to it. He confessed it, joyed himself in the death struggle against the Lord Protector; we all heard the man's own words;" and the sheriff touched with the point of his boot, the lifeless body of Anthony Lynn.

"Touch off!" cried Matilda. "How dare you boot the dead? You infinite scoundrel!"

"Sheriff, your duty is done. It were well you left here, and permitted the dead to have his rights."

"He is a traitor! A King's man! A lying Puritan!"

"He is nothing at all to us, or to the world, now. To his Master above he will stand or fall; not to you or me, or even to the law of England."

Then he turned to Matilda and led her to a sofa, and comforted her; and the men-servants came and took away the dead body and laid it, as Anthony wished, on his old master's bed. Lady Jevery went weeping to her room, and the sound of lamentation and of sorrow passed up and down the fine stairway, and filled the handsome rooms. But the dead man lay at peace, a smile of gratified honour on his placid face, as if he yet remembered that he had, at the last moment, justified himself to his conscience and his King.

And in the great salon, now cleared of its offending visitors, Cymlin sat comforting Matilda. He could not let this favourable hour slip; he held her hand and soothed her sorrow, and finally questioned her in a way that compelled her to rely, in some measure, upon him.

"Stephen was here yesterday?" he asked.

"Part of the day. He left here at four in the afternoon."

"Yet the mail-rider, under oath, swore this morning that it was Stephen who robbed the mail."

She laughed queerly, and asked, "What did Yupon Slade say?"

"Yupon proved that he was in the tinker's camp at Brentwick from sunset to cock-crowing. Half-a-dozen men swore to it. People now say it was Stephen and Frederick Blythe. But if it was not Stephen, who was it?" and he looked with such a steady, confident gaze into Matilda's face, that she crimsoned to her finger-tips. She could not meet his eyes, and she could not speak.

"I wonder who played at being Stephen de Wick," he said gently. And the silence between them was so sensitive, that neither accusation nor confession was necessary.

"I wish that you had trusted me. You might have done so and you know it."

Then they began to talk of what must be done about the funeral. Cymlin promised to send a quick messenger for Sir Thomas, and in many ways made himself so intimately necessary to the lonely women that they would not hear of his leaving de Wick. For Matilda was charmed by his thoughtfulness, and by the masterful way in which he handled people and events. He enforced every tittle of respect due the dead man, and in obedience to Matilda's desire had his grave dug in the private burying-place of the de Wicks, close to the grave of the lord he had served so faithfully. As for the accusations the sheriff spread abroad, they died as soon as born; Cymlin's silent contempt withered them, for his local influence was so great that the attending constables thought it best to have no clear memory of what passed in those last moments of Anthony's life.

"Lynn was neither here nor there," said one of them; "and what he said was just like dreaming. Surely no man is to be blamed for words between sleeping

and waking—much less for words between living and dying." But the incident made much comment in the King's favour; and when Sir Thomas heard of it, he rose to his feet and bared his head, but whether in honour of the King or of Anthony Lynn, he did not say.

After Anthony was buried, his will was read. He left everything he possessed to the Lady Matilda de Wick, and no one offered a word of dissent. Sir Thomas seemed unusually depressed and his lady asked him "if he was in any way dissatisfied?"

"No," he answered; "the will is unbreakable by any law now existing. Lynn has hedged and fenced every technicality with wonderful wisdom and care. It is not anything in connection with his death that troubles me. It is the death of the young Lord Neville that gives me constant regret. It is unnatural and most unhappy; and I do blame myself a little."

"Is he dead? Alas! Alas! Such a happy, handsome youth. It is incredible," said Lady Jevery.

"I thought he had run away to the Americas with your gold and my aunt's jewels," said Matilda.

"I wronged him, I wronged him grievously," answered Sir Thomas. "That wretch of a woman at The Hague never paid him a farthing, never even saw him. She intended to rob me and slay him for a thousand pounds, but under question of the law she confessed her crime."

"I hope she is hung for it," said Lady Jevery.

"She is ruined, and in prison for life—but that brings not back poor Neville."

"What do you think has happened to him?"

"I think robbery and murder. Some one has known, or suspected, that he had treasure with him. He has been followed and assassinated, or he has fought and been killed. Somewhere within fifty miles of Paris he lies in a bloody, unknown grave; and little Jane Swaffham is slowly dying of grief and cruel suspense. She loves him, and they were betrothed."

There was a short silence, and then Matilda said, "Jane was not kind to poor Stephen. He loved her all his life, and yet she put Lord Neville before him. As for Neville, the nobility of the sword carry their lives in their hands. That is understood. Many brave young lords have gone out from home and friends these past years, and never come back. Is Neville's life worth more than my brother's life, than thousands of other lives? I trow not!"

But in the privacy of her room she could not preserve this temper. "I wonder if Rupert slew him," she muttered. And anon—

"He had money and jewels, and the King and his poverty-stricken court cry, 'Give, give,' constantly.

"He would think it no wrong—only a piece of good luck.

"He would not tell me because of Jane.

"He might also be jealous of Cluny. I spoke often of the youth's beauty—I did that out of simple mischief—but Rupert is touchy, sometimes cruel—always eager for gold. Poor Jane!"

Then she put her hand to her breast. The portrait of Prince Rupert that had lain there for so many years was not in its place. She was not astonished; very often lately she had either forgotten it, or intentionally refused to wear it. And Stephen's assertion that failure was written on all Rupert touched had found its echo in her heart. When she dressed herself to secure the warrant, she purposely took off Rupert's picture and put it in her jewel box. She went there now to look for it, and the haunting melancholy of the dark face made her shiver. "Stephen told me the very truth," she thought. "He has been my evil genius as well as the King's. While his picture has been on my heart, I have seen all I love vanish away." A kind of terror made her close her eyes; she would not meet Rupert's sorrow-haunted gaze, though it was only painted. She felt as if to do so was to court misfortune, and though the old love tugged at her very life, she lifted one tray and then another tray of her jewel case, and laid Prince Rupert under them both.

CHAPTER XIV
A LITTLE FURTHER ON

"Like ships, that sailed for sunny isles,
But never came to shore."

"I could lie down like a tired child,
And weep away the life of care
Which I have borne, and yet must bear."

"He is most high who humblest at God's feet
Lies, loving God and trusting though He smite."

The settlement of the affairs of Anthony Lynn occupied Sir Thomas much longer than he expected, and the autumn found the family still at de Wick. For other rea-

sons, this delay in the retirement of the country had seemed advisable. Stephen had escaped, as had also his companion conspirators, Mason and Blythe; and Matilda could not but compliment herself a little on her share in securing their safety. But the plot and its consequences had kept London on the alert all summer. Little of this excitement reached them. Sir Thomas was busy laying out a garden after a plan of Mr. Evelyn's; Lady Jevery was making perfumes and medicinal waters, washes for the toilet and confections for the table. Matilda was out walking or riding with Cymlin Swaffham, or sitting with him in the shady garden or in the handsome rooms of de Wick. Her uncle had presented her with a fine organ, but her lute suited her best, and she knew well what a beautiful picture she made, singing to its tinkling music.

If Cymlin was in the hall, she came down the stairway—flooded with coloured lights from its painted windows—lute in hand, singing—singing of young Adonis or cruel Cupid; her rich garments trailing, her white hands flashing, her face bent to her adorer, her voice filling the space with melody. Or she sat in the window, with the summer scents and sun around her, musically mocking Love, as if he never had or never could touch her. Cymlin knew all her entrancing ways, and followed her in them with wonderful prudence. No word of his great affection passed his lips; he let his eyes and his actions speak for him; and there had been times when Matilda, provoked by his restraint, had used all her fascinations to compel his confession. But she had to deal with a man of extraordinary patience, one who could bide his time, and he knew his time had not yet come.

Towards the middle of September Sir Thomas roused himself from his life among flowers and shrubs, and said he must go back to London. He was expecting some ships with rich cargoes, and the last flowers were beginning to droop, and the rooks were complaining, as they always do when the mornings are cold; the time for the outdoor life was ended; he had a sudden desire for his wharf and his office, and the bearded, outlandish men that he would meet there. And as the ladies also wished to return to London, the beautiful home quickly put on an air of desertion. Boxes littered the hall; they were only waiting until the September rain-storm should pass away, and the roads become fit for travel.

At this unsettled time, and in a driving shower, Cymlin and Doctor Verity were seen galloping up the avenue one evening. Every one was glad at the prospect of news and company, Sir Thomas so much so, that he went to the door to meet the Doctor. "Nobody could be more welcome," he said; "and pray, what good fortune brings you here?"

"I come to put my two nephews in Huntingdon Grammar school. I want them to sit where Cromwell sat," he answered.

Then he drew his chair to the hearth, where the ash logs burned and blazed

most cheerfully, and looked round upon the company—the genial Sir Thomas, and his placid, kindly lady, and the beautiful girl, who was really his hostess. Nor was he unmindful of Cymlin at her side, for in the moment that his eyes fell on the young man, he seemed to see, as in letters of light, an old description of Englishmen, and to find in Cymlin its expression—"*a strong kind of people, audacious, bold, puissant and heroical; of great magnanimity, valiancy and prowess.*"

As he was thinking these things, Sir Thomas said, "You must make us wise about events. We have had only the outlines of them, and we are going into the midst of we know not what. As to the great plot, was it as black as it was painted?"

"Like all the works of the devil, it grew blacker as it was pulled into the light. It was soon an indisputable fact, that de Baas, Mazarin's envoy extraordinary in London, was head over heels in the shameful business. I can tell you, de Baas had a most unpleasant hour with the Protector; under Cromwell's eyes and questions, he wilted away like a snail under salt."

"What did Cromwell do to him?"

"Sent him back to King Louis and to Mazarin with a letter. *They* have done the punishing, I have no doubt. He would better have thrown himself on Cromwell's mercy than face Mazarin with his tale of being found out. More like than not he is at this hour in the Bastile. No one will hear any more of M. de Baas."

"Then you think Mazarin was really in the plot to assassinate?"

"No doubt of it; de Baas was only his creature. Both of them should be rolled into their graves, with their faces downward."

"And King Louis the Fourteenth?"

"He knew all about the affair. Kings and Priests! Kings and Priests! they would trick the world away, were it not that now and then some brave yeoman were a match for them."

"And Prince Rupert?"

"Neck deep. That was fortunate, for he is a luckless blackguard, and dooms all he touches."

"If a man is unfortunate, he is not therefore wicked, Doctor. These men were plotting for what they believed a good end," said Matilda with some temper.

"Good ends never need assassination, my lady; if evil is done, evil will come from it."

"I think we ought to pity the men."

"Pity them, indeed! Not I! The scaffold and the halter is their just reward."

"Forty, I heard, were arrested."

"Cromwell had only three brought to trial. Gerard was beheaded, Vowell hung, Fox threw himself on Cromwell's mercy and was pardoned."

"Was not that too much leniency?"

"No. Cromwell poked the fire to let them see he could do it; but he did not want to burn every one. He has made known to England and to Europe, and especially to France, his vigilance. He has escaped the death they intended for him. He has proved to the Royalists, by Gerard's and Vowell's execution, that he will not spare them because they are Englishmen. Beyond this he will not go. It is enough. Most of the forty were only tools. It is not Cromwell's way to snap at the stick, but at the cowardly hands that hold it."

"If he can reach them," muttered Matilda.

"Then, Sir Thomas, we have united Scotland to the Commonwealth. Kingship is abolished there; vassalage and slavish feudal institutions are swept away; heritors are freed from military service. Oh, 'tis a grand union for the Scotch common people! I say nothing of the nobles; no reparation has been made them—they don't deserve any; they are always invading England on one pretext or another. But they cannot now force the poor heritors to throw down their spades and flails, and carry spears for them. The men may sow their wheat and barley, and if it will ripen in their cold, bleak country, they can bake and brew it, and eat and drink it in peace."

"I do not believe Englishmen like this union, Doctor. I do not—it is all in favour of Scotland. They have nothing to give us, and yet we must share all our glory and all our gains with them. They do not deserve it. They have done nothing for their own freedom, and we have made them free. They have no commerce, and we must share ours with them. And they are a proud, masterful people; they will not be mere buttons on the coat-tails of our rulers. Union, indeed! It will be a cat and a dog union."

"I know, Sir Thomas, that Englishmen feel to Scotchmen very much as a scholar does to Latin—however well he knows it, it is not his mother tongue. What we like, has nothing to do with the question. It is England's labour and duty and honour to give freedom to all over whom her Red Cross floats; to share her strength and security with the weak and the vassal, and her wine and her oil and her purple raiment with the poverty-stricken. England must open her hands, and drop blessings upon the deserving and the undeserving; yes, even where the slave does not know he is a slave, she must make him free."

"And get kicked and reviled for it."

"To be sure—the rough side of the tongue, and the kick behind always; but even slavish souls will find out what freedom means, if we give them time."

"But, Doctor——"

"But me no buts, Sir Thomas. Are we not great enough to share our greatness? I trow we are!"

"I confess, Doctor, that in spite of what you say, my patriotism dwells be-

tween the Thames and the Tyne."

"Patriotism! 'Tis a word that gets more honour than it deserves. Half the wars that have desolated this earth have come from race hatreds. Patriotism has been at the bottom of the bloodiest scenes; every now and then it threatens civilisation. If there were no Irish and no Scotch and no French and no Dutch and no Spanish, we might hope for peace. I think the time may come when the world will laugh at what we call our 'patriotism' and our fencing ourselves from the rest of mankind with fortresses and cannon."

"That time is not yet, Doctor Verity. When the leopard and the lamb lie down together, perhaps. But all men are not brothers yet, and the English flag must be kept flying."

"The day may come when there will be no flags; or at least only one emblem for one great Commonwealth."

"Then the Millennium will have come, Doctor," said Sir Thomas.

"In the meantime we have Oliver Cromwell!" laughed Matilda, "and pray, Doctor, what state does his Highness keep?"

"He keeps both in Hampton Court and Whitehall a magnificent state. That it due to his office."

"I heard—but it is a preposterous scandal—that the Lady Frances is to marry King Charles the Second," said Lady Jevery.

"A scandal indeed! Cromwell would not listen to the proposal. He loves his daughter too well to put her in the power of Charles Stuart; and the negotiation was definitely declined, on the ground of Charles Stuart's abominable debauchery."

"Imagine this thing!" cried Matilda striking her hands together. "Imagine King Charles refused by Oliver Cromwell's daughter!"

"It was hard for Charles to imagine it," replied the Doctor.

"I hear we have another Parliament," said Sir Thomas.

"Yes; a hazardous matter for Cromwell," answered the Doctor. "All electors were free to vote, who had not borne arms against the Parliament. Most of them are Episcopalians, who hate Cromwell; and Presbyterians, who hate him still worse; and Republicans, who are sure he wants to be a King; and Fifth Monarchy men and Anabaptists, who think he has fallen from grace. Ludlow, Harrison, Rich, Carew, even Joyce—once his close friends—have become his enemies since he was lifted so far above them. And they have their revenge. Their desertion has been a great grief to the Protector. 'I have been wounded in the house of my friends,' he said to me; and he had the saddest face that ever mortal wore. Yet, it is a great Parliament, freely chosen, with thirty members from Scotland, and thirty from Ireland."

"After Cromwell's experience with the Irish," said Matilda, "I do wonder

that he made them equal with Scotland."

"I do wonder at it, also. John Verity would not have done it, not he! But the Protector treads his shoes straight for friend or foe. He will get no thanks from the Irish for fair dealing; that is not enough for them; what they want is all for themselves, and nothing for any one else; and if they got that, they would still cry for more."

At this point Matilda rose and went into an adjoining parlour, and Cymlin followed her. Lady Jevery, reclining in her chair, closed her eyes, and the Doctor and Sir Thomas continued their conversation on Cromwell and on political events with unabated spirit until Lady Jevery, suddenly bringing herself to attention, said—

"All this is very fine talk, indeed; but if this great Oliver has ambassadors from every country seeking his friendship, if he has the wily Mazarin at his disposal, why can he not find out something about that poor Lord Neville? It was said when we were in Paris that Mazarin knew every scoundrel in France, and knew also how to use them. Let him find Neville through them. Has Colonel Ayrton returned, or is he also missing?"

"He returned some time ago. He discovered nothing of importance. It is certain that Neville left the Mazarin palace soon after noon on the seventh of last November; that he went directly to the house in which he had lodged, eat his dinner, paid his bill, and gave the woman a silver Commonwealth crown for favour. She showed the piece to Ayrton, and said further that, soon after eating, a gentleman called on Neville, that in her presence Neville gave him some letters, and that after this gentleman's departure, Neville waited very impatiently for a horse which he had bought that morning, and which did not arrive on time; that when it did arrive, it was not the animal purchased, but that after some disputing, Neville agreed to take the exchange. The horse dealer was a gypsy, and Ayrton spent some time in finding him, and then in watching him. For Ayrton judged—and I am sure rightly—that if the gypsy had followed and slain and robbed Neville, he could not refrain himself from wearing the broidered belt and sapphire ring of his victim. Besides which, your jewels would have been given to the women of his camp. But no sign of these things was found—kerchief, or chain or purse, or any trifle that had belonged to the unfortunate young man."

"Was there any trace of him after he left Paris?"

"Yes. Ayrton found out that he stayed half-an-hour at a little inn fourteen miles beyond Paris to have his horse fed and watered. One of the women at this house described him perfectly, and added that as he waited he was singing softly to himself, a thing so likely, and so like Cluny, that it leaves no doubt in my mind of his identity; and that he was really there 'between gloaming and moonshine' on the eleventh of last November. Beyond that all is blank—a deaf and dumb

blank."

"How far was it to the next house?"

"Only two or three miles; but no one there remembered anything that passed on that night. They said that horsemen in plenty, and very often carriages, were used to pass that way, but that unless they stopped for entertainment, no attention was paid to travelers."

"Who was the gentleman who visited Cluny and received his letters?"

"Menzies of Musselburg, an old friend of Neville's mother. Ayrton went to Scotland to question him, but to no purpose."

"Then I suppose we shall see no more of Lord Neville. I am very sorry. He was a good youth, and he loved Jane Swaffham very honestly. And my jewels, too, are gone, and if it were worth while, I could be sorry for them also; one set was of great value and singular workmanship. But they count for little in comparison with Neville's life and little Jane's sorrow."

A week after this evening the Jeverys were in their own house, and Matilda had sent word to Jane Swaffham that she wanted to see her. Why she did this, she hardly knew. Her motives were much mixed, but the kindly ones predominated. At any rate, they did so when the grave little woman entered her presence. For she came to meet Matilda with outstretched hands and her old sweet smile, and she expressed all her usual interest in whatever concerned Matilda. Had she met her weeping and complaining, Matilda felt she would almost have hated her. But there was nothing about Jane suggestive of the great sorrow through which she was passing. Her eyes alone told of her soul's travail; the lids drooped, and there was that dark shadow in them, which only comes through the incubation of some long, anxious grief in the heart. But her smile was as ready and sweet, her manner as sympathetic, her dress as carefully neat and appropriate as it had always been.

Matilda fell readily under the charm of such a kind and self-effacing personality. She opened her heart on various subjects to Jane, more especially on Anthony Lynn's dramatic life and death, and the money and land he had left her. "Of course," she said, "it is only temporary. When the King comes home, Stephen will be Earl de Wick, and I shall willingly resign all to him. In the meantime I intend to carry out Anthony's plans for the improvement of the estate; and for this end, I shall have to live a great deal at de Wick. Lynn often said to me, 'Some one must own the land, and the person who owns it ought to live on it.'"

When this subject had been talked well over, Jane named cautiously the lover in France. Much to her surprise, Matilda seemed pleased to enlarge on the topic. She spoke herself of Prince Rupert, and of the poverty and suffering Charles' Court, were enduring, and she regretted with many strong expressions Rupert's presence there. "All he makes is swallowed up in the bottomless Stuart

pit," she said; "even my youth and beauty have gone the same hopeless road."

"Not your beauty, Matilda. I never saw you look lovelier than you do to-day."

"That I credit to Cymlin," she answered. "He would not let me mope—you know how masterful he is"—and Matilda laughed and put her hands over her ears; "he *made* me go riding and walking, *made* me plant and gather, *made* me fish and hawk, *made* me sing and play and read aloud to him. And I have taught him a galliard and a minuet, and we have had a very happy summer—on the whole. Happiness breeds beauty."

"Poor Cymlin!"

"There is no need to say 'poor Cymlin,' Jane Swaffham. I am not going to abuse poor Cymlin. He is to be my neighbour, and I hope my catechism has taught me what my duty to my neighbour is. Is it true that Will and Tonbert have thrown their lives and fortunes into the Massachusetts Colony?"

"Yes," answered Jane; "and if my parents were willing, I would like to join them. The letters they send make you dream of Paradise. They have bought a dukedom of land, father says, hills and valleys and streams, and the great sea running up to their garden wall."

"Garden?"

"Yes, they have begun to build and to plant. There is no whisper of their return, for they are as content as if they had found the Fortunate Islands. Father is much impressed with their experience, and I can see he ponders it like one who might perhaps share it. I am sure he would leave England, if the Protector died."

"Or the King came back?"

"Yes. He would never live under a Stuart."

"The poor luckless Stuarts! They are all luckless, Jane. I have felt it. I have drunk of their cup of disappointments, and really the happiest time of my life has been the past summer, when I put them out of my memory—king and prince, and all that followed them. Had it not been for your kind note of warning, Stephen also had been a sacrifice to their evil fate. It has to be propitiated with a life now and then, just like some old dragon or devil."

"There was a queer story about Stephen robbing the mail, and tearing up the three warrants for the arrest of Blythe and Mason and himself," said Jane.

"Did you believe that, Jane?"

"The mail was robbed. The warrants were never found. Stephen has a daredevil temper at times. I think, too, he would risk much to save his friends. When did you hear from him?"

"I hear very often now, Jane, for it is the old, old story—money, money, money. The King is hungry and thirsty; he has no clothes; he cannot pay his washing bill; he has no shoes to go out in, and his 'dear brother,' King Louis

of France, is quite oblivious. In fact he has made, or is going; to make, an alliance with Cromwell; and the Stuarts, bag and baggage, are to leave French territory. But for all that, I am not going to strip de Wick a second time for them;" then drawing Jane close to her, and taking her hand she said with an impulsive tenderness—

"Jane, dear Jane, I do not wish to open a wound afresh, but I am sorry for you, I am indeed! How can you bear it?"

"I have cast over it the balm of prayer; I have shut it up in my heart, and given my heart to God. I have said to God, 'Do as Thou wilt with me.' I am content; and I have found a light in sorrow, brighter than all the flaring lights of joy."

"Then you believe him to be dead?"

"Yes. There is no help against such a conclusion; and yet, Matilda, there comes to me sometimes, such an instantaneous, penetrating sense of his presence, that I must believe he is not far away;" and her confident heart's still fervour, her tremulous smile, her eyes like clear water full of the sky, affected Matilda with the same apprehending. "My soul leans and hearkens after him," she continued; "and life is so short and so full of duty, it may be easily, yes, cheerfully, borne a few years. My cup is still full of love—home love, and friends' love; Cluny's love is safe, and we shall meet again, when life is over."

"Will you know? Will he know? What if you *both* forget? What if you cannot find him? Have you ever thought of what multitudes there will be there?"

"Yes; a great crowd that no man can number—a throng of worlds—but love will bring the beloved. Love hath everlasting remembrance."

"Love is a cruel joy! a baseless dream! a great tragedy! a lingering death!"

"No, no, no! Love is the secret of life. Love redeems us. Love lifts us up. Love is a ransom. The tears of love are a prayer. I let them fall into my hands, and offer them a willing sacrifice to Him who gave me love. For living or dead, Cluny is mine, mine forever." And there was such a haunting sweetness about the chastened girl, that Matilda looked round wonderingly; it was as if there were freshly gathered violets in the room.

She remained silent, and Jane, after a few minutes' pause, said, "I must go home, now, and rest a little. To-morrow I am bid to Hampton Court, and I am not as strong as I was a year ago. Little journeys tire me."

"And you will come and tell me all about your visit. The world turned upside down is an entertaining spectacle. By my troth, I am glad to see it at second hand! Ann Clarges the market-woman in one palace, and Elizabeth Cromwell in another——"

"The Cromwells are my friends, Matilda. And I will assure you that Hampton Court never saw a more worthy queen than Elizabeth Cromwell."

"I have a saucy tongue, Jane—do not mind when it backbites; there is no one like you. I love you well!"—These words with clasped hands and kisses between the two girls. Then Matilda's face became troubled, and she sat down alone, with her brows drawn together and her hands tightly clasped. "What shall I do?" she asked herself, and she could not resolve on her answer; not, at least, while swayed by the gentle, truthful atmosphere with which Jane had suffused the room. This influence, however, was soon invaded by her own personality, dominant, and not unselfish, and she quickly reasoned away all suggestions but those which guarded her own happiness and comfort.

"If I tell about the duel with Rupert," she thought, "it can do no good to the dead, and it may make scandal and annoyance for the living. Cromwell will take hold of it, and demand not only the jewels and money and papers, but also the body of Neville. That will make more ill feeling to the Stuarts, and it is manifest they are already very unwelcome with the French Court. It will be excuse for further unkindness, and they have enough and more than enough to bear."

For a long time she sat musing in this strain, battling down intrusive doubts, until at last she was forced to give them speech. She did so impatiently, feeling herself compelled to rise and walk rapidly up and down the room, because motion gave her a sense of resistance to the thoughts threatening to overwhelm her.

"Did Rupert kill Neville?" she asked herself. "Oh, me, I do fear it. And if so, I am to blame! I am to blame! I told Rupert Neville was going to take charge of my aunt's jewels. Why was I such a fool? And Rupert knew that Neville had papers Charles Stuart would like to see, and money he would like to have. Oh, the vile, vile coin! I do fear the man was slain for it—and by Rupert. He lied to me, then; of course he lied; but that was no new thing for him to do. He has lied a thousand times to me, and when found out only laughed, or said 'twas for my ease and happiness, or that women could not bear the truth, or some such trash of words; and so I was kissed and flattered out of my convictions. Faith in God! but I have been a woman fit for his laughter! What shall I do?" She went over and over this train of thought, and ended always with the same irresolute, anxious question, "What shall I do?"

It was not the first time she had accused Rupert in her heart. She knew him to be an incomparable swordsman; she knew he regarded duelling as a mere pastime or accident of life. The killing of Neville would not give him a moment's discomfort,—quite otherwise, for he was a trifle jealous of him in more ways than one; and there were money and information to be gained by the deed. Politically, the man was his enemy, and to kill him was only "satisfaction." The story Rupert told her of the duel had always been an improbable one to her intelligence. She did not believe it at the time, and the lapse of time had impaired whatever of likelihood it possessed.

"Yes, yes," she said to herself. "Rupert undoubtedly killed Neville, and gave the jewels and money and papers to Charles Stuart. But how can I tell this thing? I cannot! If it would restore the man's life—perhaps. Oh, that I had never seen him! How many miserable hours I can mix with his name! The creature was very unworthy of Jane, and I am glad he is dead. Yes, I am. Thousands of better men are slain, and forgotten—let him be forgotten also. I will not say a word. Why should I bring Rupert in question? One never knows where such inquiries set on foot will stop, especially if that wretch Cromwell takes a hand in the catechism." But she was unhappy, Jane's face reproached her; she could not put away from her consciousness and memory its stillness, its haunting pallor and unworldlike far-offness.

The next day Jane went to Hampton Court. The place made no more favourable impression on her than it had done at her first visit. Indeed, its melancholy, monastic atmosphere was even more remarkable. The forest was bare and desolate, the avenues veiled in mist, the battlemented towers black with rooks, the silence of the great quadrangles only emphasised by the slow tread of the soldier on guard. But Mrs. Cromwell had not lived in the Fen country without learning how to shut nature's gloom outside. Jane was cheered the moment she entered the old palace by the blaze and crackle of the enormous wood-fires. Posy bowls, full of Michaelmas daisies, bronzed ferns, and late autumn flowers were on every table; pots of ivy drooped from the mantel, and the delicious odour of the tiny musk flower permeated every room with its wild, earthy perfume.

She was conducted to an apartment in one of the suites formerly occupied by Queen Henrietta Maria. It was gaily furnished in the French style, and though years had dimmed the gilding and the fanciful paintings and the rich satin draperies, it was full of a reminiscent charm Jane could not escape. As she dressed herself she thought of the great men and women who had lived and loved, and joyed and sorrowed under this ancient roof of Wolsey's splendid palace. Henry the Eighth and his wives, young Edward, the bloody Queen Mary, and the high-mettled Elizabeth; the despicable James, and the tyrant Charles with his handsome favourite, Buckingham, and his unfortunate advisers, Strafford and Laud. And then *Oliver Cromwell*! What retributions there were in that name! It implied, in its very simplicity, changes unqualified and uncompromising, reaching down to the very root of things.

It seemed natural to dress splendidly to thoughts touching so many royalties, and Jane looked with satisfaction at her toilet. It had progressed without much care, but the result was fitting and beautiful: a long gown of pale blue silk, with white lace sleeves and a lace tippet, and a string of pearls round her throat. Anything more would have been too much for Jane Swaffham, though when the Ladies Mary and Frances came to her, she could not help admiring their bows

and bracelets and chains, their hair dressed with gemmed combs and their hands full of fresh flowers. She thought they looked like princesses, and they were overflowing with good-natured happiness.

Taking Jane by the hand, they led her from room to room, showing her what had been done and what had been added, and lingering specially in the magnificent suite which was all their own. It was very strange. Jane thought of the little chamber with the sloping roof in the house they occupied in Ely, and she wondered for a moment, if she was dreaming. On their way to the parlours they passed the door of a room Jane recollected entering on her previous visit, and she asked what changes had been made in it?

"None," said Mary with a touch of something like annoyance.

"None at all," reiterated Frances. "You know Charles Stuart tried to sleep in it, and he had dreadful dreams, and the night lamp was always put out, and he said the place was full of horror and suffering. *It was haunted*," the girl almost whispered. "My father said 'nonsense,' and he slept in it two nights, and then——"

"Father found it too cold," interrupted Mary impatiently. "He never said more than that. Listen! Some one is coming at full gallop—some two, I think," and she ran to the window and peered out into the night.

"It is the Protector," she said; "and I believe Admiral Blake is with him. Let us go down-stairs." And they took Jane's hands and went together down the great stair-way. Lovelier women had never trod the dark, splendid descent; and the soft wax-lights in the candelabra gave to their youthful beauty a strange, dreamlike sense of unreal life and movement. Mary and Frances were talking softly; Jane was thinking of that closed room with its evil-prophesying dreams, and its lights put out by unseen hands, and the mournful, superstitious King in his captivity fearing the place, and feeling in it as Brutus felt when his evil genius came to him in his tent and said, "I will meet thee again at Philippi." Then in a moment there flashed across her mind a woeful dream she had one night about Cluny. It had come to her in the height of her hope and happiness, and she had put it resolutely from her. Now she strove with all her soul to recollect it, but Frances would not be still, and the dream slipped back below the threshold. She could have cried. She had been on the point of saying, "Oh, do be quiet!" but the soul's illumination had been too short and too impalpable for her to grasp.

The next moment they were in a brilliantly lighted room. Mr. and Mrs. Claypole, and Mr. and Mrs. Richard Cromwell, and Doctor John Owen, and Mr. Milton, and Doctor Verity were grouped around her Highness the Protector's handsome wife. And she was taking their homage as naturally as she had been used to take attention in her simple home in Ely, being more troubled about the proper serving of dinner than about her own dignity. She sat at the Protector's right hand, and Jane Swaffham sat at his left.

"The great men must scatter themselves, Jane," he said; "my daughter Dorothy Cromwell wants to be near Mr. Milton, and Lady Claypole will have none but Doctor Owen, and one way or another, you will have to be content with my company," and he laid her hand under his hand, and smiled down into her face with a fatherly affection.

He was in an unusually happy mood, and Doctor Owen remarking it, Admiral Blake said, "They had been mobbed—mobbed by women—and the Protector had the best of it, and that was a thing to pleasure any man." Then Mrs. Cromwell laughed and said,

"Your Highness must tell us all now, or we shall be very discontented. Where were you, to meet a mob of women?"

"We were in London streets, somewhere near the waterside. Blake was with me, and Blake is going to Portsmouth to take command of an expedition."

"Where to?" asked Mrs. Claypole.

"Well, Elizabeth, that is precisely the question this mob of women wanted me to answer. You are as bad as they were. But they had some excuse."

"Pray what excuse, sir, that I have not?"

"They were the wives of the sailor men going with our Admiral on his expedition. And they got all round me, they did indeed; and one handsome woman with a little lad in her arms—she told me to look well at him because he was called Oliver after me—took hold of my bridle, and said, 'You won't trample me down, General, for the lad's sake; and 'tis but natural for us to want to know where you are sending our husbands. Come, General, tell us wives and mothers where the ships are going to?' And there was Robert Blake laughing and thinking it fine sport, but I stood up in my stirrups and called out as loud as I could, 'Women, can you be quiet for one minute?' They said, 'Aye, to be sure we can, if you'll speak out, General.' Then I said to them, 'You want to know where the ships and your men are going. Listen to me! The Ambassadors of France and Spain would, each of them, give a million pounds to know that. Do you understand, women?' And for a moment there was a dead silence, then a shout of comprehension and laughter, and the woman at my bridle lifted the boy Oliver to me, and I took him in my arms and kissed the rosy little brat, and then another shout, and the mother said, 'General, you be right welcome to my share of the secret;' 'and mine!' 'and mine!' 'and mine!' they all shouted, and the voices of those women went to my heart and brain like wine, they did that. They made me glad; I believe I shouted with them."

"I haven't a doubt of it," said Doctor Verity. "Well, Robert, did they have nothing to say to you?" he asked, turning to Admiral Blake.

"They asked me to treat my men well; and I said, 'I'll treat them like myself. I'll give them plenty of meat and drink, and plenty of fighting and prize money;'

and so to their good will we passed all through the city, and, as I live, 'twas the pleasantest 'progress' any mortal men could desire."

Then Doctor Verity began to talk of the American Colonies, and their wonderful growth. "John Maidstone is here," he said; "and with him that godly minister, the Rev. Mr. Hooker. We have had much conversation to-day, and surely God made the New World to comfort the woes of the old one."

"You have expressed exactly, sir, the prophetic lines of the pagan poet, Horace," answered Mr. Milton. And Cromwell looked at him and said, "Repeat them for us, John; I doubt not but they are worthy, if it be so that you remember them." Then Milton, in a clear and stately manner, recited the six lines from Horace's "Patriotic Lament" to which he had referred—

> "'Merciful gift of a relenting God,
> Home of the homeless, preordained for you,
> Last vestige of the age of gold,
> Last refuge of the good and bold;
> From stars malign, from plague and tempests free,
> Far 'mid the Western waves, a secret Sanctuary.'"

And as Cromwell listened his face grew luminous; he seemed to look through his eyeballs, rather than with them, and when Milton ceased there was silence until he spoke.

"I see," he said, "a great people, a vast empire, from the loins of all nations it shall spring. And there shall be no king there. But the desire of all hearts shall be towards it, and it shall be a covert for the oppressed, and bread and wine and meat for those ready to perish." Then, sighing, he seemed to realise the near and the present, and he added, "'Twas but yesterday I wrote to that good man, the Rev. John Cotton of Boston. I have told him that I am truly ready to serve him and the rest of the brethren, and the churches with him. And Doctor Verity, I wish much to have some talk with Mr. Hooker. I have a purpose to ask him to be my chaplain, if he be so minded, for his sermons first taught me that I had a soul to save, and that I must transact that business directly with God, and not through any church or clergy." And when Cromwell made this statement, he little realised that Hooker, founding a democracy in America, and he himself fighting for a free Parliament and a constitutionally limited executive in England, were "both of them of the same spirit and purpose"; and that the Hartford minister and the Huntingdon gentleman were preeminently the leaders in that great movement of the seventeenth century which made the United States, and is now transforming England.

Doctor Verity shook his head at the mention of the Chaplainship. "Your

Highness will give great offense to some not of Mr. Hooker's precise way of thinking," he said.

"I care not, John Verity," Oliver answered with much warmth; "one creed must not trample upon the heels of another creed; Independents must not despise those under baptism, and revile them. I will not suffer it. Even to Quakers, we must wish no more harm than we do our own souls."

With these words he rose from the table, and Mr. Milton, the Ladies Mary and Frances Cromwell, and Jane Swaffham went into the great hall, where there was an exceedingly fine organ. In a short time Mr. Milton began to play and to sing, but the girls walked up and down talking to Jane of their admirers, and their new gowns, and of love-letters that had been sent them in baskets of flowers. And what song can equal the one we sing, or talk, about our own affairs? Mr. Milton's glorious voice rose and fell to incomparable melodies, but Jane's hand-clasp was so friendlike, and her face and words so sympathetic, that the two girls heard only their own chatter, and knew not that the greatest of English poets was singing with enchanting sweetness the songs of Lodge, and Raleigh, and Drayton.

But Cromwell knew it; he came to the entrance frequently and listened, and then went back to the group by the hearth, who were smoking and talking of the glorious liberating movements of the century—the Commonwealth in England, and the free commonwealths Englishmen were planting beyond the great seas. If the first should fail, there would still be left to unslavish souls the freedom of the illimitable western wilderness.

When the music ceased, the evening was far spent; and Cromwell said as he drew Frances and Jane within his arms, "Bring me the Bible, Mary. Mr. Milton has been giving us English song, now we will have the loftier music of King David."

"And we shall get no grander music, sir," said Doctor Owen, "than is to be found in the Bible. Sublimity is Hebrew by birth. We must go to the Holy Book for words beyond our words. Is there a man living who could have written that glorious Hymn,

"'Lord, Thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations;

"'Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever Thou hadst formed the earth and the world; even from everlasting to everlasting Thou art God'?"

"The prophets also," said Doctor Verity, "were poets, and of the highest order. Turn to Habakkuk, the third chapter, and consider his description of the Holy One coming from Mount Parem: 'His glory covered the heavens. His brightness was as the light. He stood and measured the earth: He beheld and drove asunder the nations: the everlasting mountains were scattered, the perpetual hills did bow.' And most striking of all about this Holy One—'Thou didst cleave the earth with rivers.'"

Cromwell did not answer; he was turning the leaves of the dear, homely-

looking volume which his daughter had laid before him. She hung affectionately over his shoulder, and when he had found what he wanted, he looked up at her, and she smiled and nodded her approbation. Then he said,

"Truly, I think no mortal pen but St. John's could have written these lines; and I give not St. John the honour, for the Holy One must have put them into his heart, and the hand of his angel guided his pen." And he began to read, and the words fell like a splendid vision, and a great awe filled the room as they dropped from Cromwell's lips:

"'And I saw heaven opened, and beheld a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.

"'His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew but himself.

"'And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God.

"'And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.

"'And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; and he treadeth the wine-press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.'"

And when he finished these words he cried out in a transport, "Suffer Thy servant, oh, Faithful and True, when his warfare here is accomplished, to be among the armies which are in heaven following the Word of God upon white horses clothed in fine linen white and clean." And then turning the leaf of the Bible he said with an unconceivable solemnity, "Read now what is written in Revelations, chapter 20th, 11-15 verses:

"'And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.

"'And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

"'And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.'"

And when he ceased there was a silence that could be felt, a silence almost painful, ere Dr. Owen's silvery voice penetrated it with the words of the Benediction. Then the Protector and Mrs. Cromwell kissed the girls, and the clergymen blessed them, and they went to their rooms as from the very presence of God.

But Mrs. Cromwell lingered a long time. She could not rest until she had seen the silver and crystal and fine damask put away in safety; and she thought

it no shame to look—as her Lord did—after the fragments of the abundant dinner.

"I will not have them wasted," she said to the steward, "nor given to those who need them not. The Lady Elizabeth hath a list of poor families, and it is my will that they, and they only, are served."

Then she went to her daughter Claypole's apartments, and talked with her about her children, and her health; also about the disorders and thieving of the servants, wrong-doings, which caused her orderly, careful nature much grief and perplexity. Elizabeth was her comforter and councilor, and the good daughter generally managed to infuse into her mother's heart a serene trust, that with all its expense and inefficiencies the household was conducted on as moderate a scale as was consistent with her father's dignity.

When they parted it was very late; the palace was dark and still, and Mrs. Cromwell, with careful economies in her mind, and a candle in her hand, went softly along the lonely, gloomy corridors—the very same corridors that a few years before had been the lodging-place of the Queen's thirty priests and her seventy-five French ladies and gentlemen. Had it been the war-like Oliver thus treading in their footsteps, he would have thought of these things, and seen with spiritual vision the black-robed Jesuits slipping noiselessly along; he would have seen the painted, curled, beribboned, scented men and women of that period; and he would also have remembered the insults offered the Queen and her English attendants by the black and motley crew, ere the King in a rage ordered them all off English soil. And 'tis like enough he would have said to himself, "If Charles Stuart had been on all occasions as straightforward and positive as he was on that one, he had been King of England yet." But Elizabeth Cromwell did not either see or remember. Her little grandson had a slight fever; she was not satisfied with her daughter's health, and the care of the great household she ruled was a burden she never wholly laid down. In this vast, melancholy pile of chambers, she thought of her simple home in St. Ives with longing and affection. Royal splendours had given her nothing she cared for; and they had taken from her the constant help and companionship that in humbler circumstances her good, great husband had given her.

She paused a moment before the door of his room. She wondered if he was asleep. If so, she would on no account awaken him, for in these days he slept far too little. All was still as death, but yet something of the man's intense personality escaped the closed door. The giant soul within was busy with heart and brain, and the subtile life evolved found her out. Quiet as the room was, it was not quiet enough for Oliver to be asleep. She opened the door softly and saw him sitting motionless by the fire, his eyes closed, his massive form upright and perfectly at rest.

"Oliver," she said, "dear Oliver, you ought to be in bed and asleep."

His great darkling soul flashed into his face a look of tenderest love. "Elizabeth," he answered, "I wish that I could sleep. I do indeed. I need it. God knows I need it, but my heart wakes, and I do fear it will wake this night—if so, there is no sleep for me. You see, dearest, how God mingles our cup. When I was Mr. Cromwell, I could sleep from night till morning. When I was General Cromwell, my labours gave me rest. Now that I am Lord Protector of three Kingdoms, sleep, alas! is gone far from me! In my mind I run to and fro through all the land. I have a thousand plans and anxieties, Elizabeth, my dearest; great place is not worth looking after. It is not."

"But if beyond our will we be led into great place and great honour, Oliver?"

"That is my comfort. I brought not myself here; no, truly, that would be an incredible thing. Once, my God led me in green pastures and by still waters, and I was happy with my Shepherd. Then He called me to be Captain of Israel's host, and He went before me in every battle and gave me the victory. Now, He has set me here as Protector of a people who know not yet what they want. Moses leading those stiff-necked, self-willed Israelites was not harder bestead than I am, trying to lead men just as stiff-necked out of victory into freedom. Every one thinks freedom means 'his way, and no other way,' and they break my heart with their jealousies and envyings, and their want of confidence in me and in each other. Yet I struggle day and night to do the work set me as well as mortal man may do it."

"What troubles you in particular, Oliver?"

"One of the things that troubled my Great Master, when He wept and prayed and fainted in Gethsemane. He knew that those whom He loved and who ought to strengthen and comfort Him, would soon forsake and flee from Him. I think of the men who have trusted me to lead them in every battle; who never found me wanting; the men with whom I have taken counsel, with whom I have prayed; the men who were to me as Jonathan to David; and when I think of them, my heart is like to burst in twain. They are beginning to forsake me, to flee from me, and their cold looks and formal words hurt me like a sword thrust; they do, Elizabeth, they do indeed."

"But see how God cares for you. Charles Stuart and his men spend their time in devising plots to kill you, and they are always prevented."

"I care nothing about Charles Stuart and the men with him. They can do nothing against me. My life is hid with Christ in God, and until my work is done, there is no weapon formed that can hurt me. I say this, for I do know it. And when I have fulfilled all His Will, I shall not be dismissed from life by any man's hatred. God Himself will have a desire for the work of His Hand; He will call me, and I will answer. That will be a good day, Elizabeth, for I am weary—weary and sorrowful, even unto death."

"If you had made yourself King, as you might have done, as you ought to have done, you would have had less opposition. John Verity said so to me. He said Englishmen were used to a king, but they did not know what to make of a protector."

"King! King! I am king in very truth, call me what they like. And for that matter, why should I not be king? Doctor Owen tells me the word king comes from König and means '*the man that can*.' I am that man. Every king in Europe came from some battle-field, that was their first title to kingship. Our William, called the Conqueror, won the Kingdom of England by one successful battle. How many battles have I fought and won? I never lost a single field—how could I, the Lord of Hosts being with me? As a hero of battle, there is no man to stand before me. Why should I not be king over the three countries I have conquered? My title to kingship is as good as any ruler I know. And perhaps—who can tell—had I crowned myself, it had been a settlement much needed. John Verity is right. Englishmen think a protector is a ruler for emergency. They feel temporary and uncertain with a protector. A kingship is a settled office. The laws are full of the king; they do not name a protector—and men feel to the law as they do to a god."

"Take the crown, Oliver. Why not?"

"I have no orders to take it. My angel told me when I was a boy, that I should become the greatest man in England, but he said not that I should be king. And I know also from *One* who never lied to me, that this nation will yearn after its old monarchy. I am here to do a work, to sow seeds that will take generations to ripen, but my reign is only an interregnum. I shall found no dynasty."

"Oh, Oliver! You have two sons."

"Richard cannot manage his own house and servants. Harry is a good lieutenant; he can carry out instructions, it is doubtful if he could lead. My desire for my sons is, that they live private lives in the country. I know what I know. I have what I have. The crown of England is not to be worn by me, nor do I want it; I do not—neither for myself nor my children." Then taking his wife's hand tenderly between his own, he said with intense fervour, "There is not a man living can say I sought this place—not a man or woman living on English ground. I can say in the presence of God, I would have been glad to have lived with thee under my woodside all the days of my life, and to have kept my sheep and ploughed my land rather than bear the burden of this government."

"Do you think the Puritan government will die with you, Oliver?"

"I think it will; but the Puritan principles will never die. The kings of the earth banded together cannot destroy them. They will spring up and flourish like 'the grass that tarrieth not for man'—spring where none has sowed or planted them—spring in the wilderness and in the city, until they possess the whole earth. This I know, and am sure of."

"Then why are you so sad?"

"I want my old friends to trust in me and love me. Power is a poor exchange for love. I want Lambert and Harrison and Ludlow and the others to be at my right hand, as they used to be. Ludlow tells me plainly, he only submits to my government because he can't help himself; and Harrison, who used to pray with me, now prays against me. Oh, Elizabeth, you know not how these men wound me at every turn of my life!"

"Oh, indeed, Oliver, do you think the women are anything behind them? I could tell you some things I have had to suffer, and the poor girls also. What have they not said of me? Indeed I have shed some tears, and been sorely mortified. The women I knew in the old days, do they come near me? They do not. Even if I ask them, they are sick, or they are gone away, or their time is in some respect forespoken. It is always so. Only little Jane Swaffham keeps the same sweet friendship with us. I say not that much for Martha Swaffham. Very seldom she comes at my request—and I have a right now to request, and she has the obligation to accept. Is not that so, Oliver? But she thinks herself——"

"Never mind Martha Swaffham; Israel stands firm as a rock by me. After all, Elizabeth, there is nothing got by this world's love, and nothing lost by its hate. This is the root of the matter: my position as Protector is either of God, or of man. If I did not firmly believe it was of God, I would have run away from it many years ago. If it be of God, He will bear me up while I am in it. If it be of man it will shake and tumble. What are all our histories but God manifesting that He has shaken and trampled upon everything He has not planted? So, then, if the Lord take pleasure in England, we shall in His strength be strong. I bless God I have been inured to difficulties, and I never yet found God failing when I trusted in Him. Never! Yea, when I think of His help in Scotland, in Ireland, in England, I can laugh and sing in my soul. I can, indeed I can!"

"My dearest, you are now in a good mind. Lie down and sleep in His care, for He does care for you." And she put her arms around his neck and kissed him; and he answered,

"Thou art my comfort, and I thank God for thee! When He laid out my life's hard work, He thought of thee to sweeten it."

She left him then, hoping that he would shelter his weariness in darkness and in sleep. But he did not. The words he had spoken, though so full of hope and courage, wanted that authentication from beyond, without which they were as tinkling brass to Oliver. He locked his chamber door, retired his soul from all visibles, and stood solemnly before God, waiting to hear what He would say to him. For the soul looks two ways, inward as well as outward, and Oliver's soul gazed with passionate spiritual desire into that interior and permanent part of his nature, wherein the Divine dwells—that inner world of illimitable calm, apart

from the sphere of our sorrowful unrest. And in a moment all the trouble of outward things grew at peace with that within; for he stood motionless on that dazzling line where mortal and immortal verge—that line where all is lost in love for God, and the beggar Self forgets to ask for anything. The austere sweetness of sacrifice filled his soul. The divine Hymn of Renunciation was on his lips.

"Do as Thou wilt with me," he cried, "but, oh, that I knew where to find Thee! Oh, that I might come into Thy presence!"

Then there was suddenly granted to his longing that open vision, open only to the spirit, that wondrous evidence that very near about us lies the realm of spiritual mysteries, and the strong man bowed and wept great tears of joy and sorrow. And after that Peace—peace unspeakable and full of gladness; and he slept like a sinless child while his angel came in a dream and comforted him. For so God giveth to His beloved while they sleep.

CHAPTER XV

THE FATE OF LORD CLUNY NEVILLE

"From heaven did the Lord behold the earth; to hear the groaning of the prisoner."—*Ps.* 102: 20.

"Make haste unto me, O God: Thou art my help and my deliverer; O Lord make no tarrying."—*Ps.* 70: 5.

On tides of glory England was borne the next three years, to a national honour and strength which had never before been dreamed of. Never in her whole history had the government been at once so thorough and so penetrated with a desire for honesty and capacity. For the first time, the sense of social duty to the State took the place of the old spirit of loyalty to the sovereign. For the first and only time in the history of Europe, morality and religion were the qualifications insisted on by a court; Oliver Cromwell was "the one ruler into whose presence no vicious man could ever come, whose service no vicious man might enter."

Abroad, the Red Cross of England was flying triumphantly on every sea. Blake's mysterious expedition had soon been heard from. He had been at Leghorn, getting compensation in money for English vessels sold there by Prince

Rupert. He had been thundering almost at the gates of the Vatican, getting twenty thousand pistoles from Pope Alexander for English vessels sold in the Roman See by the same prince. He had been compelling the Grand Duke of Tuscany to give freedom of worship to Protestants in his dominions. He had been in the Barbary States demanding the release of Christian slaves, and getting at Algiers and Tripoli all he asked.[1] Hitherto, naval battles had been fought out at sea; Blake taught Europe that fleets could control kingdoms by dominating and devastating their seaboard. While opening up to peaceful commerce the Mediterranean, England had begun a war with Spain, and Blake's next move was to take his fleet to intercept the Spanish galleons coming loaded with gold and silver from the New World. His first seizure on this voyage was thirty-eight wagon loads of bullion, which he brought safely into the Thames, and which went reeling through the old streets of London to the cheerful applause of the multitude. Again, under the old peak of Teneriffe, Blake performed an action of incredible courage; for, finding in that grand, eight-castled and unassailable bay sixteen Spanish ships laden with gold and silver, lying in crescent shape under the guns of the eight castles and forts, he took his fleet directly into the crescent, and amid whirlwinds of fire and iron hail, poured his broadsides in every direction and left the whole sixteen Spanish ships charred and burning hulks. Indeed, from the Baltic to the Mediterranean, from Algiers to Teneriffe, from Newfoundland to Jamaica, the thunder of British cannon was heard and obeyed.

[1] One hundred and sixty years after Blake's punishment, England and America united to finally put an end to the pirates of the Mediterranean.

In the meantime Spain was helping Charles with money which was spent in plots to assassinate the Protector. The effect of this underhand, contemptible warfare was several petitions and addresses offered in Parliament begging Cromwell to assume the ancient office of King, if only for the settlement of the nation. He was quite strong enough to have taken it, and there was nothing unmanly either in his desire for the crown or in his refusal of it. His conscience, not his reason, decided the question. He waited many a long, anxious night on his knees for some sign or token of God's approbation of the kingship, but it did not come; and Cromwell was never greater than when, steadily, and with dignity, he put the glittering bauble aside—"Because for it, he would not lose a friend, or even a servant." He told the Parliamentary committee offering him the title that he "held it as a feather in a man's cap;" then burst into an inspired strain, and quoting Luther's psalm, "that rare psalm for a Christian," he added, "if Pope and Spaniard

and devil set themselves against us, yet the Lord of Hosts is with us, and the God of Jacob is our refuge." One thing he knew well, that the title of King would take all meaning out of the Puritan revolution, and he could not so break with his own past, with his own spiritual life, and with the godly men who had so faithfully followed and so fully trusted him.

Why should he fret himself about a mere word? All real power was in his hands: the army and the navy, the churches and the universities, the reform and administration of the law, the government of Scotland and of Ireland. Abroad, the war with all its details, the alliance with Sweden, with France, with the Protestant princes of Germany, the Protestant Protectorate extending as far as Transylvania, the "planting" of the West Indies, the settlement of the American Colonies, and their defense against their rivals, the French,—all these subjects were Cromwell's daily cares. He was responsible for everything, and his burden would have been lightened, if he could have conscientiously taken on him the "divinity which doth hedge a king." The English people love what they know, and they knew nothing of an armed Protector making laws by ordinance, and disposing of events by rules not followed by their ancestors. But Oliver knew that he would cross Destiny if he made himself King, and that this "crossing" always means crucifixion of some kind.

"To be a king is not in my commission," he said to Doctor Verity. "It squares not with my call or my conscience. I will not fadge with the question again; no, not for an hour."

The commercial and national glory of England at this time were, however, in a manner incidental to Oliver's great object—the Protection of Protestantism. This object was the apple of his eye, the profoundest desire of his soul. He would have put himself at the head of all the Protestants in Europe, if he could have united them; failing in this effort, he vowed himself to cripple the evil authority of Rome and the bloody hands of Inquisitorial Spain. His sincerity is beyond all doubt; even Lingard, the Roman Catholic historian, says, "Dissembling in religion is contradicted by the uniform tenor of his life." He wrote to Blake that, "The Lord had a controversy with the Romish Babylon, of which Spain is the underpropper;" and he made it his great business to keep guard over Protestants, and to put it out of the power of princes to persecute them. It is easy to say such a Protestant league was behind the age. It was not. Had it been secured, the persecutions of the Huguenots would not have taken place, and the history of those hapless martyrs—still, after the lapse of two hundred years, read with shuddering indignation—would have been very different. Cromwell knew well what Popery had done to Brandeburg and Denmark, and what a wilderness it had made of Protestant Germany, and his conception of duty as Protector of all Protestants was at least a noble one. Nor was it ineffective. On the very day he should have

signed a treaty of alliance with France against Spain, he heard of the unspeakably cruel massacre of the Vandois Protestants. He threw the treaty passionately aside, and refused to negotiate further until Louis and Mazarin put a stop to the brutalities of the Duke of Savoy. As the details were told him, he wept; and all England wept with him. Not since the appalling massacre of Protestants in Ireland, had the country been so moved and so indignant. Cromwell instantly gave two thousand pounds for the sufferers who had escaped, and one hundred and forty thousand pounds was collected in England for the same purpose. It was during the sorrowful excitement of this time that Milton—now blind—wrote his magnificent Sonnet,

> "Avenge, O Lord, Thy slaughtered saints, whose bones
> Lie scattered on the Alpine Mountains cold."

Furthermore, it was in Milton's luminous, majestic Latin prose that Cromwell sent his demands to King Louis for these poor, pious peasants,—demands not disregarded, for all that could be found alive were returned to their desolated homes.

For the persecuted Jews his efforts were not as successful. They had been banished from England in A.D. 1290, but three hundred and sixty-five years of obstinate prejudice had not exhausted Christian bigotry. Cromwell made a noble speech in favour of their return to England, but the learned divines and lawyers came forward to "plead and conclude" against their admission, and Cromwell, seeing no legal sanction was possible, let the matter drop for a time. Yet his favour towards the Jews was so distinct that a company of Oriental Jewish priests came to England to investigate the Protector's genealogy, hoping to find in him "the Lion of the tribe of Judah."

So these three years were full of glory and romance, and the poorest family in England lived through an epic of such national grandeur as few generations have witnessed. Yet, amid it all, the simple domestic lives of men and women went calmly on, and birth, marriage, and death made rich or barren their homes. Jane Swaffham attained in their progress to a serene content she had once thought impossible. But God has appointed Time to console the greatest afflictions, and she had long been able to think of Cluny—not as lying in a bloody grave, but as one of the Sons of God among the Hosts of Heaven. And this consolation accepted, she had begun to study Latin and mathematics with Doctor Verity, and to give her love and her service to all whom she could pleasure or help. Indeed, she had almost lived with the Ladies Mary and Frances Cromwell, who had passed through much annoyance and suffering concerning their love affairs. But these were now happily settled, Lady Mary having married Viscount Fanconburg, and

Lady Frances the lover for whom she had so stubbornly held out—Mr. Rich, the grandson of the Earl of Warwick.

Matilda's life during this interval had been cramped and saddened by the inheritance from her previous years. Really loving Cymlin, she could not disentangle the many threads binding her to the old unfortunate passion, for, having become wealthy, the Stuarts would not resign their claim upon her. Never had they needed money more; and most of their old friends had been denuded, or worn out with the never-ceasing demands on their affection. Thus she was compelled, often against her will, to be aware of plots for the assassination of Cromwell—plots which shocked her moral sense, and which generally seemed to her intelligence exceedingly foolish and useless. These things made her restless and unhappy, for she could not but contrast the splendour of the Protector's character and government with the selfishness, meanness and incapacity of the Stuarts.

She loved Cymlin, but she feared to marry him. She feared the reproaches of Rupert, who, though he made no effort to consummate their long engagement, was furiously indignant if she spoke of ending it. Then, also, she had fears connected with Cymlin. When very young, he had begun to save money in order to make himself a possible suitor for Matilda's hand. His whole career in the army had looked steadily to this end. In the Irish campaign he had been exceedingly fortunate; he had bought and sold estates, and exchanged prisoners for specie, and in other ways so manipulated his chances that in every case they had left behind a golden residuum. This money had been again invested in English ventures, and in all cases he had been signally fortunate. Jane had told Matilda two years previously that Cymlin was richer than his father, and she might have said more than this and been within the truth.

But in this rapid accumulation of wealth, Cymlin had developed the love of wealth. He was ever on the alert for financial opportunities, and, though generous wherever Matilda was concerned, not to be trifled with if his interests were in danger. So Matilda knew that if she would carry out her intention of making over de Wick house and land to Stephen, it must be done before she married Cymlin. Yet if she surrendered it to Stephen under present circumstances, everything would go, in some way or other, to the needy, beggarly Stuart Court. If Cromwell were only out of the way! If King Charles were only on the throne! he would have all England to tax and tithe, and Stephen would not need to give away the home and lands of his forefathers.

She was fretfully thinking over this dilemma in its relation to a new plot against Cromwell's life, when Jane Swaffham visited her one morning in February of 1658. Jane's smiling serenity aggravated her restless temper. "Does nothing on earth ever give you an unhappy thought, Jane?" she asked. "You look as if you

dwelt in Paradise."

"Indeed, I am very unhappy this morning, Matilda. Mr. Rich is thought to be dying."

"And, pray heaven, *who is* Mr. Rich?"

"You know who Mr. Rich is, perfectly. Why do you ask such a foolish question? Lady Frances is broken-hearted. I am going now to Whitehall. The Cromwells are in the greatest distress."

"On my word, they have kept others in the greatest distress for many years! I am not sorry for them."

"I only called to tell you there is another plot."

"I have nothing to do with it."

"Some one you know may be in danger."

"Stephen is at Cologne. If you are thinking of Stephen, thank you. I will write and tell him to keep good hope in his heart, that Jane Swaffham remembers him."

"Dear Matilda, do not make a mock of my kindness. The Protector's patience is worn out with this foolish animosity. He is generous and merciful to no purpose. I myself think it is high time he ceased to warn, and begin to punish. And poor Lady Rich! It would grieve you to the heart to see her despair. She has only been three months married, and it was such a true love match."

"Indeed it was a very 'good' match, love match or not. Frances Cromwell to be Countess of Warwick. Faith, 'tis most easy to fall in love with that state!"

"She might have chosen far greater state; you know it, Matilda. She was sought by Charles Stuart, and by the Duke Enghien, and the Duke of Buckingham, and by the Protector's ward, William Dutton, the richest young man in England; but for love of Mr. Rich, and in spite of her father's long opposition, she would marry no one else."

"Mr. Rich was good enough for her, surely!"

"Her father did not think so. There were reports of his drinking and gaming."

"And the Puritan Dove must not, of course, marry a man who threw dice or drained a glass. Those are the works of the profane and wicked malignants. However was the marriage made at all?"

"You know all about it, Matilda. What is the use of pretending ignorance?"

"My dear sweet Jane, do you think I keep the Cromwell girls and their affairs in my memory? They are in their kingdom now; I do not pretend to keep foot with them—and I have troubles of my own; pray God they be not too many for me!"

It was evident Matilda was not in an amiable mood, and Jane having said the few words that brought her to Jevery House that morning, left her friend. She

went away with a troubled look, and Matilda watched the change and smiled to herself at it. "I am quite content to have her made a little unhappy," she thought; "her constant air of satisfaction is insufferable. And if my Lady Rich loses her husband, Jane can assure her that such griefs do not kill. On my honour! Jane looks younger and prettier than when Neville was alive and worrying her. Lovers die and husbands die, and 'tis a common calamity; and better people than either Jane or Frances have endured it. I will go now to my aunt's parlour; I dare say she will have some visitor chock full of the new plot—and I may hear something worth while."

These thoughts filled her mind as she went to Lady Jevery's parlour. She found there an acquaintance whom they had known in Paris, the Countess Gervais.

"I have but now sent a messenger for you, Matilda," said Lady Jevery; "the Countess desired greatly to see you." Then the conversation became reminiscent, and the new plot was not named, and Matilda began to be bored. Suddenly, however, her interest was roused to the highest pitch, for the Countess, touching a bracelet which Lady Jevery wore, said,

"I must tell you a strange thing. I was lately at a dinner where the niece of his Eminence, Cardinal Mazarin, sat at my side. And she wore a necklace and brooch and one bracelet precisely like the bracelet you are now wearing. I cannot help noticing the circumstance, because the jewelry is so exceedingly singular and beautiful."

"Yes," replied Lady Jevery. "And what you say is also very curious, for I once possessed a necklace, brooch and two bracelets like the one I am now wearing. All the pieces were lost excepting this bracelet."

"But how?—let me inquire; where were they lost?"

"Somewhere near Paris. I had intrusted them to a friend who has never since been heard of."

"But the bracelet you are wearing?—this is so singular—you will please pardon——"

"This bracelet," said Laid Jevery, "was more fortunate. Some of the gems were loose, and I sent it to my jeweler for repair, just before we left for Paris. He was to forward it to me if he found a safe messenger; luckily he kept it until I returned to London."

"But this is most strange—most strange——"

"Most strange and most suspicious," said Matilda indignantly. "I should say it was evidence that Lord Neville was murdered, and that his Eminence bought jewelry for Hortense Mancini in some irregular way. If I were Lady Jevery, I would insist on knowing from whom."

"Oh, you do make one great mistake, I do assure you! Mademoiselle

Mancini is impeccable. You must rest content that the jewels came into her possession in the most correct manner."

Barely listening to these words, Matilda curtsied and abruptly left the room. She was in the greatest distress, and forced to conclusions it drove her distracted to entertain. All now seemed plain to her intelligence. Rupert had lied to her. He had slain and robbed Neville, and the jewels had been sold to Mazarin. The Cardinal's passion for rare jewels was well known, and these opals and rubies in their settings of fretted gold work were unique and precious enough, even for the extravagant taste of Hortense Mancini.

A sudden passion of pity for the handsome young lord came over her. "It was too mean, too savagely cruel for anything!" she almost sobbed. "Men who can do such things are not fit to be loved by women. They are brutes. I will write to Rupert at once. I must know the truth of this matter. If such a crime has been committed, there is no king or prince or priest on earth to absolve it, and I will wash my hands forever of the Stuarts."

She did not wait for any second or more prudent thoughts. She wrote Rupert that hour a letter, every word of which was flame and tears. When it was finished, she sent a man with it on the instant to catch the Dover mail packet; and all this was accomplished before she had any opportunity to talk over the affair with her uncle. When she did so, he regretted her precipitancy, and refused to move in the matter at all. "It would be the height of imprudence," he said. "The young man is dead and gone, and we cannot bring him back, though England went to war with France on that quarrel. The Protector is ill, worn out with sorrow and anxiety, and if one of his old attacks should seize him at this time, it would have the mastery. I count not his life worth a year's purchase. Last week I talked a few minutes with him, and there is the shadow of death on his face. He said to me, 'I am weary. Oh, that I had wings like a dove, then would I flee away and be at rest!' And when Cromwell dies, there is no question of what will happen. The nation will give Charles the Second a trial. Then Matilda, when Charles comes back, Prince Rupert comes with him. They have been one in adversity, they will be one in the hour of triumph. We may need the friendship of Prince Rupert to save ourselves. No one can tell how this reputedly good-natured Charles will act, when his hands are able to serve his will. I will not then make an enemy of so powerful a man as Prince Rupert is like to be. If he slew Neville, he must answer to God for the deed. As for the jewels, I will not be inquisitive after them. And I pray you keep your influence over Prince Rupert. I am not used to forecast evil, but I do think within one year we shall see the world turn round again. It may also be suggested that Neville himself returned to Paris and sold the jewels. Who can prove different? You see how the case lies."

It was rarely Sir Thomas spoke with such decision, and Matilda was much

impressed by his words. They made her hesitate still more about her marriage with Cymlin. She did not believe Rupert could now induce her to break with Cymlin; and she doubted very much whether Rupert would be permitted to marry her, even though her title to de Wick was confirmed. But Rupert's ill-will would be dangerous; and the result of thought in every direction was the wisdom of delay.

During the first hours of her discovery, Matilda had wondered if she ought to tell Jane what proof of Cluny's death had come to them; for in her heart she scoffed at the idea of Cluny returning to Paris to sell the jewels. But Jane did not visit her for some time, and she was daily expecting an answer from Prince Rupert. This letter might be of great importance, one way or another, and she resolved to wait for it. It came more rapidly than she had anticipated, and its contents temporarily fanned to a feeble flame her dying illusions concerning her first lover. In this letter Rupert "on his honour" reiterated his first statement. He declared that he left Neville in health and safety, having at the last moment urged upon him his own swift Barb, which offer Neville refused. He said he should seek mademoiselle's presence until he saw her wearing the jewels, and then make question concerning them; and if not satisfied, go at once to her Uncle Mazarin. He was sure it was now only a few weeks ere the truth would be discovered. These promises were blended with his usual protestations of undying devotion, and Matilda was pleased, though she was not satisfied. For to Rupert's letter there was a postscript, and in this postscript one word, which sent the blood to her heart, cold with terror—

"P.S. It may be the *Bastile*, and not the grave, which holds the Neville secret."

The Bastile! She had heard enough in Paris of that stone hell to make her tremble at the word. And now it kept upon her heart a persistent iteration that was like blow upon blow. All night she endured it, but in the morning; she was resolved to throw the intolerable burden on some one more able to bear it. But on whom? Sir Thomas would not have the subject named in his presence. Cymlin did not like Neville, and would probably "talk down" all her fears and efforts. It would be cruel to tell Jane,—but there was Cromwell. There was the Protector. It was his business to look after Englishmen, else what was the use of a Protector? And if any man had power to question the Bastile, Cromwell had it. Mazarin was just at this time seeking his aid against the Spaniards, who were on French soil, and Cromwell was about to send his own famous troop of Ironsides to help the French. Besides which, Cromwell loved Neville. Taking all these things together, Matilda easily satisfied herself that interference was Cromwell's bounden duty, and that all which could be asked of her was to make Cromwell aware of this duty.

She could not tell how much or how little Cromwell knew of her meddling

in a variety of plots against his life and government, but she expected her father's name would secure her an audience, and she had such confidence in herself as to believe that an "opportunity" to influence the Protector was all she needed. Her first request, however, was met with a prompt refusal. She was not to be daunted. If her own name was not sufficient, she had others more potent. So she wrote on a card these words: "Lady Matilda de Wick has important information regarding Lord Cluny Neville; and for Mistress Jane Swaffham's sake, she asks an interview."

This message was instantly effective. While Matilda was telling herself that "she would not do the least homage to the Usurper," the door opened hastily, and he entered her presence. In the twinkling of an eye all her resolves vanished. His grave, sorrowful face, his majestic manner, and the sad, reproachful tenderness of the gaze that questioned her were omnipotent against all her prejudices. She fell at his feet, and taking his hand kissed it, whether in homage or in entreaty, she knew not.

"My lord," she said, and then she began to sob. "My lord, I crave of you so many pardons—so much forbearance—I will never offend again."

He raised her with an imperious movement, and leading her to a chair, remained standing at her side. "We will forget—the past is to be forgot—for your dear father's sake. Quickly tell me what you know, I am in a great hurry."

Without one unnecessary word she related all, and then put into his hands Prince Rupert's letter, with her finger directing his attention to the terrifying postscript. And she saw with fear the rising passion in his countenance, and for a moment trembled when he looked into her eyes with such piercing inquiry that she could not resist nor misunderstand their question.

"Sir," she cried, with a childlike abandon, "in this matter I am single-hearted as I can be. I wish only to put a great wrong right."

"You tell me the truth, I believe you," he answered; "and I will take upon me *to see that it is done.* Say not a word to Jane Swaffham until there be a surety in the matter."

Then she rose, and looking with eyes full of tears into his face, said, "Sir, I remember the day you pulled down the hazelnuts for me in de Wick park. My father walked with you, arm in arm, and I had your hand until you lifted me at the gates and kissed me. Sir, I entreat you, forget all that has come and gone since that hour, and dismiss me now, as then,"—and she lifted her lovely face, wet with the tears of contrition, and Cromwell took it between his broad, strong hands, and kissed it, even as he had kissed it in her childhood.

"Go home, my dear," he said softly. "All that can be done I will do, and without delay. You believe in the God of your fathers, and you pray to Him?"

"Yes, sir."

”Then pray for Cluny Neville. I may speak, but it is God that setteth the prisoner free. His blessing be on you. I am glad to have seen your face, I am truly. A good-day to you!”

Matilda curtsied and went out. Her cheeks burned, her heart was flooded with a thousand feelings. She marveled most at herself; all her scorn had turned into respect, all her hatred into something very like affection. Yet mingling with these new-born emotions was an intense contempt for herself. ”A nice Royalist you are, Matilda de Wick!” she muttered angrily. ”You went on your knees to the Regicide! You gave him your cheek to kiss! You shed tears! You asked his pardon! You contemptible woman, I am ashamed of you! The man is a wizard—he has a charm from the devil—why did I go into his presence? I hope I may be able to keep the secret of my own fall. I vow it is as deep as Eve’s! I am mortified beyond words,—and if Cymlin knew, what volumes there would be in his eyes and his mouth, and—his silence!”

And yet there was in her heart a strong belief that this time Cromwell’s inquiries would be as effective as they were sure to be prompt. Indeed the first thing the Protector did, was to dictate the following letter to Mazarin:

”TO His EMINENCE CARDINAL MAZARIN,

”Sir:—In a manner most providential it has been made known to me that Lord Neville is at this present moment in the Bastile prison. I know not why my friends should be treated as enemies, seeing that I have been faithful to you in all difficulties. Truly my business is now to speak things that I will have understood. The danger is great, if you will be sensible of it, unless Lord Neville be put at once in charge of those by whom I send this message. For if any harm come to him, I will make inquisition for his life—for every hair of his head that falls wrongfully to the ground. And in regard to sending more troops to Boulogne against the Spaniards, look not for them, unless, by the grace of God and your orders, Lord Neville is presently, and without hinderance, in England. Then, I will stand with you, and I do hope that neither the cruelty, nor malice of any man will be able to make void our agreement concerning the Spaniard; for as to the young man’s return, it is the first count in it, and I shall—I must—see that he is restored to that freedom of which he has been unjustly deprived. It cannot be believed that your Eminency has had anything to do with this deed of sheer wickedness, yet I must make mention of the jewels which disappeared with Lord Neville, and the money, and the papers. As for the two last items I make no demand, seeing that particular persons may have spent the one and destroyed the other; but I have certain knowledge that the jewels are in the possession of mademoiselle your

Eminency's niece. I have some reluctance to write further about them, believing that you will look more particularly than I can direct, into this matter. By the hand of my personal friend, General Swaffham, I send this; and in all requisites he will stand for

"**Sir**, "**Your Eminency's** "**Most Humble Servant**, "OLIVER P."

When this letter was sealed, he sent for Israel, and telling him all that he had heard, bade him take twelve of their own troop, go to Paris, and bring back Cluny with them. Israel was very willing. He had always believed Mazarin had, at least, guilty knowledge of Cluny's murder; and all he asked was, that his daughter might be kept in ignorance until hope became a certainty, either of life or death.

Cromwell's summons affected Mazarin like thunder out of a clear sky. He had forgotten Lord Neville. It was necessary to bring to him the papers relating to the mission on which he had come, and even then he was confused, or else cleverly simulated confusion. But he had to do with a man, in many respects, more inflexible than Cromwell.

"I will make inquiries," he said to Israel. "In two or three days—or a week—"

"I must be on my way back to London, sir, in two or three days."

"I cannot be hurried,—I have much other business."

"I have only this business in Paris, sir; but it is a business of great haste. This very hour, if it please your Eminence, I would make inquiries at the Bastile."

"It does not please me. You must wait."

"Waiting is not in my commission, sir. I am to work, or to return to London without an hour's delay. Lord Neville is particularly dear to his Highness; and if my inquiries meet not with attention,—on the moment,—I am instructed to waste no time. We must then conclude the envoy of the Commonwealth of England has been robbed and slain, and it will be the duty of England to take redress at once."

"You talk beyond your commission."

"Within it, sir."

"Retire to the anteroom. They will serve you with bread and wine while I make some inquiries."

"It is beyond my commission to eat or drink until I have had speech with Lord Neville. I will wait in this presence, the authority of your Eminence," and Israel let his sword drop and leaned upon it, gazing steadfastly the while into the face of the Cardinal. The twelve troopers with him, followed as one man, his attitude, and even Mazarin's carefully tutored composure could not long endure

this silent battery of determined hearts and fixed eyes. He gave the necessary order for the release of Lord Cluny Neville,—"if such a prisoner was really in the Bastile,"—and sending a body of his own Musketeers with it, directed Israel to accompany them.

"These insolent, domineering English!" he muttered; "and this Cromwell, by grace of the devil, their Protector! If I get not the better of them yet, my name is not Mazarin. As for the young man, I meant not this long punishment; I wanted only his papers. As for the jewels, I was not told they came out of his bag,—I did suspect, but what then? I am too much given to suspicions, and the jewels were rare and cheap, and Hortense became them well. I will not give up the jewels—the man may go, but the jewels? I fear they must go, also, or Spain will have her way. Cromwell wants an excuse to withdraw, I will not give him it. And by Mary! I am sorry for the young man. I meant not such injury to him; I must make some atonement to the saints for it."

This sorrow, though brief and passing, was genuine; cruelty was perhaps the one vice unnatural to Mazarin, and he was relieved in what he called his conscience, when he heard that Lord Neville still lived,—if such bare breathing could be called life. For the Bastile seemed to be the Land of Forgetfulness. The Governor had so forgotten Cluny, that his name called up no recollection. He did not know whether he was in the prison or not. He did not know whether he was alive or dead. The head gaoler also had forgotten. Men lost their identity within those walls. The very books of the prison had forgotten Cluny. Their keeper grew cross, and positive of Neville's non-entering, as volume after volume refused to give up his name. But Israel and his men, standing there so determined and so silent, forced him to go back and back, until he came to that fateful day when, before the dawning, the young man had been driven within those terrible gates.

"On whose order?" asked Israel, speaking with sharp authority.

"On the order of his Eminence, Cardinal Mazarin," was the answer.

"I thought so;" then turning to the head gaoler he added, "you have the order for release. We are in haste."

"Time is not counted here. We know not haste," was the answer.

"Then," said Israel, flaming into passion, "you must learn how to hasten. I give you ten minutes to produce Lord Neville. After that time, I shall return to his Eminence and report your refusal to obey him."

The gaoler had never before been accosted in such language. As word by word was translated to his intelligence, he manifested an unspeakable terror. It was impossible for him to conceive the manner of man and the strange authority that dared so to address the head gaoler of the Bastile. He left the chamber at once, and within the time named there were sounds heard which made all hearts stand still,—the slow movement of feet hardly able to walk,—the dismal clangor

of iron, and anon the mournful sound of a human voice. But nothing could have prepared Cluny's comrades for the sight of their old companion. His tall form was attenuated to the last point; his eyes, unaccustomed to much light, would not at once respond, they looked as if they had lost vision; his hair straggled unkempt over his shoulders, and the awful pallor of the prison on his face and neck and hands was more ghastly than the pallor of death. His clothing had decayed; it hung in shreds about his limbs; but there was a glimmer of his old self in the pitiful effort he made, as soon as conscious of human presence, to lift up his head and carry himself without fear. An irrepressible movement of arms, a low wail of pity, met him as he entered the room, and he looked before him, anxious, intent, but not yet seeing anything distinctly.

"*Cluny! Cluny! Cluny!*" cried Israel; and then Cluny distinguished the buff and steel uniforms, and knew who it was that called him. A long, sharp cry of agony, wonder, joy, answered the call, and he fell senseless into Israel's arms.

They brought him wine, they lifted him to the open window, they laid bare the skeleton form of his chest, they called him by name in voices so full of love and pity that his soul perforce answered their entreaties. Then the Governor offered him some clothing, but Israel put it passionately away. They were worse than Babylonish garments in his sight; he would not touch them. He asked only for a public litter, and when it was procured, they laid Cluny in it, and his comrades bore him through the streets of Paris to their lodging on the outskirts of the city.

When they left the gates of the prison there was a large gathering of men, and it increased as they proceeded,—a pitiful crowd, whose very silence was the highest eloquence. For they understood. Cluny lay prone and oblivious to their vision. They had seen him come from the Bastile. He was dead, or dying, and these angry, weeping soldiers were his comrades. They began to mutter, to exclaim, to voice their sympathy more and more intelligibly. Women, praying and weeping audibly, joined the procession, and Israel foresaw the possibility of trouble. He felt that in some way order must be restored, and inspired by the wisdom within, he raised his hands and in a loud, ringing voice, began the favourite hymn of his troopers; and to the words they had been used to sing in moments of triumphal help or deliverance they carried Cluny, with the solemn order of a religious service, safely into their camp. For when the hymn began, the crowd followed quietly, or dropped away, as the stern men trod in military step to their majestic antiphony:

"Lift up your heads, O ye gates,
And the King of glory shall come in."
"Who is the King of glory?"
"The Lord strong and mighty; the Lord mighty in battle.

Lift up your heads, O ye gates,
And the King of glory shall come in."
"Who is this King of glory?"
"The Lord of hosts; the Lord mighty in battle,
He is the King of glory!"

"'Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and the King of Glory shall come in.'"

"'LIFT UP YOUR HEADS, O YE GATES, AND THE KING OF GLORY SHALL COME IN.'"

CHAPTER XVI
OLIVER THE CONQUEROR

"O Heart heroic, England's noblest son!
At what a perfect height thy soaring spirit burns
Star-like! and floods us yet with quickning fire."

* * * * *

"Cromwell is dead: a low-laid Heart of Oak."

* * * * *

"There the wicked cease from troubling, there the weary are at rest."

"Cheer up, Jane! You and Lord Neville will yet arrive at the height of your wishes. This is my judgment, and if it be not true, you may burn me in the ear for a rogue."

"And you will marry Cymlin?"

"Perhaps I shall, perhaps I shall not; perhaps 'tis time enough next year to consider on it."

"It would be a happy marriage."

"A happy marriage would be so much of heaven that I think it was never enjoyed in this world. 'Tis a weary world, I swear I often cry for myself in it."

"But you will marry Cymlin?"

"Faith, I know not how I am to help the catastrophe! But in all sobriety, I think Cymlin loves me, and you do, too, dear Jane! Oh, I could weep my eyes dry when I think of your dear lover, and all he has so innocently suffered. It is intolerable!"

In her way, Matilda was doing her best to console and encourage Jane as they talked over the sad fate of her rescued lover. Both had been weeping, and there was a more affectionate confidence between them than had existed for many years.

But Matilda had cancelled every fault and every unkindness by her prompt action in the matter of Lord Neville, and Jane had been loving and praising her for it, until the sweetness of their first affection was between them. And Matilda enjoyed praise; she liked the appreciation of her kind deed, and was not therefore disposed to make light or little of what she had done, or of its results.

"For your sake, Jane," she said, "I could not have a moment's peace, after hearing where the jewels were. I said to myself, this is the clue to Neville's fate, and it must be followed. Though my uncle would not interfere, I was resolved to bring the great Cardinal to catechism; and as I knew no one in the world would dare to question him but Cromwell, I went to Cromwell."

"It was a wonderful thing for you to do."

"It was; I must give myself so much credit. Not that I am afraid of Cromwell, or of any other man, but it was a great humiliation."

"Cromwell would not humiliate you; I am sure of that."

"He behaved very well. He knew I had had a share in every plot against him; and he gave me one look so swift, so searching, and so full of reproach, that

it sticks like an arrow in my heart yet. But there were old memories between us, and anon he was as gentle as my mother with me. I will never try to injure him again,—never!"

"It is impossible to tell you how grateful Cluny and I are to you; I think no other woman in England would have been so forgetful of herself, and so brave for others."

"Perhaps not, Jane. But I love you, and I love justice and mercy, even to an enemy. I can always be brave with a good reason. And, pray, how comes my lord on towards recovery?"

"Slowly. Life was nearly gone; body and mind were at death's door; but he can walk a little now, and in two or three weeks we are going away,—far away,—we are going to my brothers in the Massachusetts Colony."

"Jane Swaffham! I will not believe you! And pray what shall I do? You shall not think of such a thing."

"It is necessary. Cluny's mental sufferings have made it so. When he was first imprisoned he tried to write, to compose hymns and essays, to make speeches, to talk aloud; but as time went on, he could not keep control of himself and of his awful circumstances, and now all the misery of those long, dark, lonely years has settled into one idea,—space without end. The rooms are too small. He walks to the walls and trembles. He throws open the doors and windows that he may have room to breathe. In the night he wakes with a cry, he feels as if he were smothering. If he goes into the garden he shrinks from the gates; and the noise of the city, and the sight of the crowds passing fills him with fear and anxiety. He wants to go where there are no limits, no men who may hate and imprison him; and his physician says, 'Let him live for weeks, or months, out on the ocean.' This is what he needs, and he is eager to get away."

"You will come back?"

"I think it is unlikely. Father feels a change approaching. The Protector's health is failing rapidly; he is dying, Matilda, dying of the injustice and ingratitude he meets on every hand. 'Wounded,' yes slain, 'in the house of my friends,' is his constant cry."

"'Tis most strange that a man of war like Oliver Cromwell should care what his friends think or say."

"Yet he does. When he speaks to father about Harrison, Lambert, Alured, Overton and others of his old companions, he wrings his hands and weeps like a woman; or else he protests against them in such angry sorrow as distresses one to see and hear it."

"He ought to know that he has been raised above the love of men who are less noble than himself, and that if beyond and above their love, then they will hate and abuse him. If he dies?——"

"Father will leave England as soon as Cromwell is in his grave. Cymlin will keep old Swaffham fair, for Cymlin will never leave England while you are in it."

"And you can bear to talk of leaving England in that calm way, without tears and without regrets. Jane, it is shameful; it is really wicked."

"I do not leave England without tears and regrets, but there is Cluny, and——"

"Cluny, of course. I suppose you will be married before you leave. But I have a mind not to be your bridesmaid, though I am promised to that office ever since I was a maid in ankle tights."

"Dear Matilda, do not be angry at me because I had to do what I had to do. I was married to Cluny three days after he came home. We all thought he was going to die, and he wished me to be his wife."

"Why was I not sent for? I would have come, Jane. It was cruel wrong in you to pass me by."

"We were married by Doctor Verity at Cluny's bedside. No one was present but my father and mother and the three servants to whom Cluny had become accustomed. He was then frightened at every strange face."

"After this, nothing can astonish me. I was not a stranger——"

"He would not have recognised you, then."

"How could he lose himself so far? He ought to have had more courage. Why did he not do something or other?"

"Oh, Matilda, what would you have done in a room eight feet by ten, and in the dark most of the time—your bread and water given without a word—your attendant deaf and dumb to you—no way to tell the passage of time—no way of knowing how the seasons went, but by the more severe cold—if you had been, like Cluny, really buried alive, what would you have done?"

"I would have died."

"Cluny composed psalms and hymns, and tried to sing; he did not lose heart or hope quite, the gaoler told father, for nearly four years. Then his health and strength gave out, and his heart failed, but he never ceased praying. They heard him at midnight, but Cluny did not know what hour it was. And to the last moment he kept his faith in God. He was sure God would deliver him, though He sent an angel to open the prison doors. He was expecting deliverance the day it came. He had had a message from beyond, and his mother had brought it. Now did I not do right to marry him when, and how, he wished?"

"Yes," she answered, but her face and voice showed her to be painfully affected. "Jane, I cannot bear to lose you. I shall have no one to love me, no one to quarrel with," she added.

"You will have Cymlin."

"Cymlin is Cymlin; he is not you. I will say no more. When a woman is

married, all is over. She must tag after her lord, even over seas and into barbarous places. If the Indians kill you, it will be said that you were in the way of duty; but I have noticed how often people take the way they want to take, and then call it the way of Duty. I shall not marry Cymlin until he can show me the way of peace and pleasantness."

Then Jane rose to go, and Matilda tied her bonnet-strings, and straightened out her ribbons and her gloves, doing these trifling services with a long-absent tenderness that filled Jane's heart with pleasure. "Good-bye, dear!" she said with a kiss; "I will come as often as I can."

"Very kind of you, Lady Neville," answered Matilda with a curtsy and a tearful mockery; "very kind indeed! But will your ladyship consider—" then she broke down and threw her arms round Jane, and called her "a dear, sweet, little Baggage" and bade her give Cluny some messages of hope and congratulation, and so parted with her in a strange access of affection. But true friendship has these moods of the individual and would not be true without them.

Jane walked home through the city, and its busy turmoil struck her as never before. What a vain show it was!—a passing show, constantly changing. And suddenly there was the galloping of horsemen, and the crowd stood still, and drew a little aside, while Cromwell, at the head of his guards, rode at an easy canter down the street. Every man bared his head as the grand, soldierly figure passed by. He saw Jane, and a swift smile chased away for a moment the sorrowful gravity of his face. But he left behind him a penetrating atmosphere of coming calamity. All souls sensitive to spiritual influences went onward with a sigh, and the clairvoyant saw—as George Fox did—the wraith of fast approaching affliction. The man was armed from head to feet, and his sword had never failed him, but it was not with flesh and blood he had now to contend. The awful shadows of the supernatural world darkened the daylight round him, and people saw his sad face and form as through a mist, dimly feeling all the chill foreboding of something uncertain, yet of certain fatality.

His glorious life was closing like a brilliant sun setting in a stormy sky. He had been recently compelled to tell his last Parliament some bitter truths, for danger was pressing on every side. Protestants in the Grisons, in Piedmont and Switzerland, were a prey to the Spanish papists, and their helper, Pope Alexander the Seventh, and the Protestant Dutch—preferring profit to godliness—were providing ships to transport Charles Stuart and his army to English soil.

"The Marquis of Ormond, well disguised, was here on Charles Stuart's interest, only yesterday morning," he said to them. "I did send for Lord Broghill, and I said to him, 'There is an old friend of yours lodging in Drury Lane at the papist surgeon's. It would be well for him if he were gone.' And gone he is." Then with withering scorn he added, "All this is your doing. You will have everything

too high or too low. You don't want a settlement. You are tampering with the army. You are playing the King of Scot's game, helping him in his plans of invasion. You have put petitions through the city to draw London into rebellion. You are plotting for a Restoration. I know these things, I do know them, and I say you have laid upon me a burden too heavy for any poor creature. For I sought not this place. You sought me for it. You brought me to it. I say this before God, angels and men! But I took my oath to see all men preserved in their rights, and by the grace of God I will—I must—see it done. And let God be judge between you and me!"

Many cried "Amen," as they filed out of the ancient halls, chagrined and troubled under his stinging rebuke. And Cromwell felt for the first time the full weight of the refractory kingdom whose government he must bear alone.

He was right; it was too heavy a burden for any one man, and the burden was made still more heavy by his family afflictions. His beloved mother had left him, gone the way of all the earth, saying with her last breath, "I leave my heart with thee, dear son! a good-night!" His son-in-law, Rich, the three months' bridegroom of his "little Frankie," was but a few weeks dead, and the Earl of Warwick, his firmest friend among the nobility, was dying. His favourite daughter, Elizabeth, was very ill, and he himself was feeling unmistakable premonitions of his dissolution. For, day by day, his soul was freeing itself from the ligaments of the body, rising into a finer air, seeing right and wrong with the eyes of immortality. But he would do his duty to the last tittle of strength,—fall battling for the right,—and as to what should come after, God would care for that.

The fifteenth of May had been set for his assassination. On that day, risings were to take place in Yorkshire and Sussex; London was to be set on fire, the Protector seized and murdered, and Charles Stuart land on the southern coast. Cromwell knew all the secret plans of this conspiracy of "*The Sealed Knot*"; knew every member of it; and on the afternoon when Jane Swaffham saw him passing up London streets, so stern and scornful, he had just ordered the arrest of one hundred of them. From these he selected fifteen for trial. They were all Royalists; he would not lay his hand on his old friends, or on any who had once served the Cause. His mercy and his great heart were never so conspicuous as at this time. Only two of the fifteen were condemned to death, Doctor Hewitt, an Episcopal minister, and Sir Henry Slingsby, the uncle of Lord Fanconbridge, who was the husband of his own daughter, Mary;—Doctor Hewitt for issuing commissions in Charles Stuart's name, and Sir Henry Slingsby for endeavouring to bribe the city of Hull to open its gates to the Stuart invaders. Against Doctor Hewitt his anger burned with unusual severity; he would listen to no intercession for him; for, he said,

"The man has eat my bread, and sat on my hearth, and been a familiar friend

of my family. He has been in all our confidences; he has dipped his sop in our dish, and cried 'Hail, master' to me. Like the wickedest of traitors, he betrayed me, even while he called me friend. He shall die the death of a traitor, both to England and to myself."

But though dark clouds from every side were rolling up, they were lit and edged with the fiery glory of the setting sun behind them. Cromwell's troops, under Lockhart in France, were treading their old victorious march, and the flowers of June were wreathed for the taking of Dunkirk, where the Ironsides had stormed unbreached forts and annihilated Spanish battalions, to the amazement of Turenne, Condé and Don John.

Jane heard constantly of these events, but her heart had closer interests. The ship which was to carry Cluny and herself to America was lying at her wharf nearly ready for sea. It was a stout vessel belonging to Sir Thomas Jevery, commanded by a captain of tried skill and great piety. There were to be no other passengers; Cluny and Jane alone were to find in its black-ribbed cabin their home for many weeks, perhaps months. A recent experience had proven the necessity for this exclusion of strange elements. Early in June, Israel had taken Cluny to bid farewell to his old General, and the meeting had tried both men severely. A few days previous, Cromwell had laid in the grave his little grandson, Oliver, and the child's image still lived in his troubled eyes. He could scarcely speak when he saw Cluny. He waived impatiently all ceremony, drew him to his breast and kissed him; but it was quickly evident Cluny could not bear any conversation on his past misery. His excitement became painful to witness, and Cromwell with quick, kind wisdom, began to speak rather of his own great sorrow.

"You know, Israel," he said, "how sweet a little lad my Oliver was. I cannot yet believe that he is dead; I cannot. Only a week ago, when he was ill and restless, I lifted him and carried him to and fro, and his cheek was against my cheek, and his arms around my neck, and suddenly I felt them slip away, and I looked at the child, and so caught his last smile. I thought that night my heart would break; but the consolations of God are not small, and I shall go to the boy, though he will never come back to me. Never! Never! His mother is now very ill; you would pity her, indeed you would. Cluny, you remember the Lady Elizabeth Claypole?"

"My General, I shall never forget her."

"I do fear she is sick unto death. Her little Oliver's removal has been the last blow of the last enemy. You may pity me, Cluny; I need pity, I do indeed; I am a man of many afflictions. But it is the Lord; let Him do whatever seemeth good in His sight." He then went to a desk and wrote a few lines to the officials of the Massachusetts Colony; in them, commending Lord Neville to their kindness and care. His hands trembled—those large strong hands—trembled as he gave the

letter to Cluny. Then he kissed him once more, and with a "Farewell" that was a blessing, he turned away, weeping.

"It is another friend gone," he said mournfully to his own heart; "lover and friend are put far from me and mine acquaintance into darkness." But he went straight to his daughter Elizabeth, and talked to her only of God's great love and goodness, and of the dear boy who had been taken from them because "he pleased God; because he was beloved of God, so that living among sinners he was translated; yea, speedily was he taken away, lest wickedness should alter his understanding or deceit beguile his soul; and being made perfect in a short time, fulfilled a long time."[1]

[1] Wisdom of Solomon, Chap. 4, vs. 10-13.

Cluny was so much troubled and affected by this visit that Israel thought it well to take him to see the ship which was to carry him to the solitudes of the great waters and the safety of the New World. He was impatient to be gone, but there were yet a number of small interests to be attended to; for they were to carry with them a great deal of material necessary to the building and furnishing of their future home. Every day revealed some new want not before thought of, so that it was nearing the end of June when at last all was declared finished and ready.

Then Jane went to Hampton Court to bid her old friends a last farewell. It was a mournful visit. She fancied they did not care as much as she thought they might have done. In fact, the gloomy old palace was a terrible House of Mourning, and the Cromwells' own sorrows consumed their loving-kindness. Frances, in her widow's garb, could only weep and talk of her dead bridegroom. Lady Claypole was dumb under the loss of her son and her own acute suffering, and Mrs. Cromwell's heart bleeding for both her unhappy daughters. Jane was shocked at her white, anxious face; alas, there was only too much reason for it! Whatever others thought, the wife of the great Protector knew that he was dying—dying, even while he was ruling with a puissant hand the destinies of England. Every member of this sad family was in sore trouble; they could find no words of mere courtesy; even friendship was too large a claim upon them.

Jane felt keenly all the anguish in this palace of Pain and Sorrow. She remained only one night, and was as willing to leave it as the sad dwellers therein were willing to be left. They were not unkind, but they could bear no more; their own burden was too heavy. Jane would have regretted her visit altogether, had it not been for the changeless tenderness of the Protector. His face during these

quick gathering trials had become intensely human. It was easy to read in it endless difficulties and griefs, surmounted by endless labours and importunate prayers. With strange, mystical eyes he walked continuously the long rooms and corridors, ever seeking the realisation of his heart's constant cry, "Oh, that I knew where I might find Thee!" He talked to Jane of Cluny and of their prospects; made her kneel at his side during the family service, kept her hand in his, and prayed for her and Cluny by name. And at the last moment he gave her the blessing she hoped for—"God which dwelleth in heaven prosper your journey; and the angel of God keep you company."[2]

[2] Tobit, Chap. 5, v. 16.

The strain had been great; the very atmosphere of the place was too heavy with grief to breathe; she was glad to feel the sunshine and the fresh wind. She had intended to call on Matilda as she passed through the city, but she could not throw off the lassitude of hopeless foreboding that had invaded her mind. It bred fears for Cluny, and she hastened home, resolving to see Matilda on the following day. But when she reached Sandy's House, Mrs. Swaffham met her with a letter in her hand—"Lady Jevery asks you to come to Matilda, who is in great trouble," she said. "Cluny is asleep; if you are not too tired, you would better go at once, for if the wind keep fair, Captain Jonson thinks to lift anchor to-morrow night."

So Jane went to her friend. With her, also, she found the grief Death brings.

"Stephen is slain!" were her first words. She could hardly utter them. But Jane knew how to comfort Matilda; she could talk to her as she could not to the ladies of Cromwell's household. She could take her in her arms and say all kinds of loving words, blending them with promises and hopes that had Divinity as their surety. And she could encourage her to talk away her trouble. "How was Stephen slain?" she asked, "in a duel?"

"No, thank God! He fell, as he himself could have wished, fighting the enemies of his King. He was with Condé and the Dukes of York and Gloucester before Dunkirk, and was killed while meeting the rush of those terrible Ironsides. He died shouting '*For God and King!*' and Camby—one of their officers who comes from Ely—knew Stephen, and he carried him aside, and gave him water, but he died in five minutes. Camby wrote me that he said '*Mother!*' joyfully, with his last breath."

"Poor Stephen!"

"Oh, indeed 'tis very well to cry, 'poor Stephen,' when he is beyond your pity. You might have pitied him when he was alive, that would have been some-

thing to the purpose. All his short, unhappy life has been one constant battle with Puritans and poverty. Oh, how I hate those Stuarts! I am thankful to see you can weep for him, Jane. I think you ought. God knows he loved you well, and most thanklessly. And he is the last, the last de Wick. Root and branch, the de Wick tree has perished. I wish I could die also."

"And Cymlin, Matilda?"

"I shall marry Cymlin,—at the proper time."

"You may have sons and daughters."

"I hope not. I pray not. I have had sorrow enough. My father and his three sons are a good ending for the house. It was built with the sword, and it has been destroyed by the sword. I want no de Wick like the men of to-day—traders and gold seekers. And if they were warriors, the old cares and fears and anxieties would be to live over again. No, Jane, the line of de Wick is finished.[3] Cymlin and I will be the last Earl and Countess de Wick. We shall go to Court, and bow to the Stuart, and be very great people, no doubt."

[3] Matilda's desire was granted her.
She died childless, and the lands
of de Wick reverted to the Crown.
As for Swaffham, Cymlin, at his
death, left it to the eldest son of his brother
Tonbert; but the young man
longed for America, and soon sold it.
During the eighteenth century it
changed hands often; but in the early years
of the nineteenth century the
old house was replaced by a modern structure,
less storied but of extensive
proportions and very handsome design.

"And Prince Rupert?"

"Is a dream from which I have awakened."

"But he may still be dreaming."

"Rupert has many faults, but he is a man of honour. My marriage to Cymlin will be a barrier sacred to both of us. Our friendship can hold itself above endearments. You need not fear for Cymlin; Matilda de Wick will honour her husband, whether she obeys him or not. Cymlin is formed for power and splendour, and he will stand near the throne."

"If there be a throne."

"Of that, who now doubts? Cromwell is falling sick, and you may feel 'God save the King' in the air. If you had married Stephen, he would have been alive to join in the cry. I could weep at your obstinacy, Jane."

"Let it pass, dear. I was suckled on Puritan milk. Stephen and I never could have been one. My fate was to go to the New World. When I was a little child I dreamed of it, saw it in visions before I knew that it existed. Stephen has escaped this sorrowful world and——"

"Oh, then, I would he were here! This sorrowful world with Stephen in it was a better world than it is without him. Jane, Jane, how he loved you!"

"And I loved him, as a companion, friend, brother, if you will. When you lay his body in de Wick, cast a tear and a flower on his coffin for me. God give him peace!"

At length their "farewell" came. Jane dreaded it; she was sure Matilda would wear emotion to shreds and exhaustion. But it was not so. She wept, but she was solemnly silent; and the last words between them were soft and whispered, and only those sad, loving monosyllables which are more eloquent than the most fervid protestations. And so they parted, forever in this life,—and if this life were all, Death would indeed be the Conqueror. But it is not all; even through the death struggle, the Soul carries high her cup of Love, unspilled.

The next afternoon Jane and Cluny rode through London streets for the last time. They were full of busy, happy people, and mingling with them all the bravery and splendid show of the great company of courtiers that were in the train of Mazarin's two nephews, the Duke of Crequin and Monsieur Mancini; Ambassadors from the King of France to congratulate Cromwell—"the most invincible of sovereigns, the greatest and happiest of princes—" on the surrender of Dunkirk.

And Jane on the previous day had heard this "most invincible of sovereigns, the greatest and happiest of princes," declare that "he was weak and weary; that all the waves and billows of a sea of troubles had gone over him," and with tears and outstretched hands entreat his God to "give him rest from his sorrow and from his fear, and from the hard bondage wherein he had been called to serve."

On the ship they found Jane's father, Doctor Verity and Sir Thomas Jevery. There were no tears at this parting, nor any signs of sorrow; every one seemed resolved to regard it as a happy and hopeful event. For, though not spoken of, there was a firm belief and promise of a meeting again in the future not very far off. Israel held his little daughter to his heart, and then laid her hand in Cluny's without a word; the charge was understood. The young husband kissed the hand, and clasped it within his own, and his eyes answered the loving father in a language beyond deception. When the last few minutes came, and the men were

trooping to the anchor, Doctor Verity raised his hands, and the three or four in the dim, small cabin knelt around him; and so their farewell was a prayer, and their parting a blessing.

Israel and Doctor Verity walked away together, and for a mile neither of them spoke a word. There is a time for speech and a time to refrain from speech, and both men were in the House of Silence for strength, each finding it in his own individual way. As they came near to Sandy's, however, Israel said,

"It is a short farewell, John. It will be my turn next."

"I shall go when you go."

"To the Massachusetts Colony?"

"Yes. I am ready to go when the time comes."

"It is not far off."

"A few months at the longest."

"He is very ill?"

"The foundations of his life are shaken, for he lives not in his power or his fame, or even in the work set him to do. No, no, Oliver lives in his feelings. They are at the bottom of his nature; all else is superstructure. And they have been rent and torn and shaken till the man, strong as he is, trembles in every limb. And Fairfax, as well as Lambert and others, think they can fill great Oliver's place!—no man can."

"For that very reason, when he departs, I will away from England. I have no heart for another civil war. I will draw sword under no less a general than Oliver."

"As I said, I go with you. I have some land, and a little home there already; and Mistress Adair has promised to marry me. She is a good woman, and not without some comeliness of person."

"She is a very handsome woman, and I think surely she will make you a good wife. You have done well. Did you tell Jane this?"

"Yes, I told her."

"My heart is heavy for England."

"She knows not the day of her visitation any better than Jerusalem did."

"She will bring back the Stuarts?"

"That is what Monk, and others with him, are after. They have been at the ears of the army, din, din, din, until their lies against Oliver have been sucked in. They have a rancorous jealousy that never sleeps, and no one can please them that is above them, whether it be Prince, Protector or God. Envy has pursued Oliver like a bird of prey. Its talons, at last, are in his heart."

"Good-night, John."

"Good-night, Israel. Have you told Martha?"

"Not yet. She will fret every day till the change comes. Why should we

have a hundred frets, when a dozen may do?"

But when Israel went into Martha's presence something made him change his mind. The mother had been weeping, and began to weep afresh when she saw her husband. He anticipated her sorrowful questions, and with an assumption of cheerfulness, told her what a good, brave man the captain of the ship was, and how happy and hopeful Jane and Cluny seemed to be. "It did not feel like a parting at all, Martha," he said; "and indeed there was no need for any such feeling. We are going ourselves very soon, now."

The words were spoken and could not be recalled; and he stood, in a moment, ready to face the storm they might raise. He had not intended them, but what we say and what we do beyond our intention, is often more fateful and important than all our carefully prepared words or well laid plans. Martha looked at her husband with speechless wonder and distress, and he was more moved by this attitude than by her usual garrulous anger. He sat down by her side and took her hand, saying,

"My dear Martha, I did not think of telling you this just yet, and especially to-day, but the words were at my lips, and then they were out, without my leave or license. Now there is nothing for it, but letting you know, plump and plain, that you and I, in our gathering years, must up and out of England. Oliver Cromwell is dying; when he is in the grave, what? Either Stuart, or civil war. If it is the Stuart, my head will be wanted; and as for fighting for Lambert, or even Fairfax or Sir Harry Vane, I will not do it—verily, I will not! I have fought under Cromwell; I will fight under no less a general, and in no less a quarrel than he led in. That is settled. You said Martha, 'for better, or for worse.'"

She did not answer, and he dropped her hand and continued, "I will never force thee, Martha, not one step. If thou lovest England better than me——"

"I don't! I don't, Israel! I love nothing, I love nobody better than Israel Swaffham. I was thinking of Swaffham."

"I shall sign the sale of it to Cymlin as soon as Cromwell dies. The deed is already drawn out, and waiting for our names. If the Stuart comes back—and I believe he will—I should lose Swaffham, as well as my life; but Cymlin will marry Matilda, and make obeisance to Charles Stuart, and the old home will be in the family and keep its own name. I and thou can build another Swaffham; thou art but fifty, and my years are some short of sixty. We are in the prime of life yet."

"I am forty-eight,—not quite that,—Israel; and Swaffham was very up and down, and scarce a cupboard in it. I do miss my boys; and how I can bear life without Jane, I don't know. Wherever you go, Israel, I will go; your God is my God, and your country shall be mine."

"I was sure of that, Martha. God love you, dearest! And any country where your home is built, and your children dwell, is a good country; besides which,

this New World is really a land of milk and honey and sunshine. Tonbert and Will could not be bought back here with an earldom. There is another thing, Martha, both of them are going to be married."

"Married! I never heard of such a thing."

"I thought I wouldn't tell thee, till needs be; but 'tis so, sure enough."

"And to what kind of women, Israel?"

"Good, fair women, they tell me; sisters, orphan daughters of the Rev. John Wilmot. Thou seest, then, Martha, there may soon be three families coming up, and not a grandmother among them to look after the children, or give advice to the young mothers. I don't see what Tonbert's wife, or Will's wife, or thy own daughter Jane can do without thee."

She shook her head slightly, but looked pleased and important. The wife and mother was now completely satisfied. And Martha Swaffham was blessed with imagination. She could dream of her new home, and new ties, and give herself, even in London streets, a Paradise in the unknown New World. And, at any rate, in the building of the American Swaffham she would take care that there were plenty of cupboards. Indeed, her plans and purposes were so many, and so much to her liking, that Israel was rather hampered by her expansive hopes and ideas; and though he did not damp her enthusiasm by telling her "she was reckoning without her host," he himself was quite sure there would be many trials and difficulties to tithe her anticipations.

"But it is bad business going into anticipation," he said to himself. "I'll let Martha build and arrange matters in her mind as she wants them; things will be all the likelier to happen so; I have noticed that time and time again. It will be a great water between us, and the sins and sorrows of six thousand years; and if there be a Paradise on earth, it will be where man hasn't had time to turn it into a—something worse."

So the summer days went on, and England had never been so serene and so secure in her strength and prosperity. Throughout the land the farmer was busy in his meadows making hay, and watching the green wheat blow yellow in the warm winds and sunshine. The shepherds were on the fells counting the ewes and their lambs; the traders busy in their shops; the ports full of entering and departing vessels, and the whole nation yet in a mood of triumph over the acquisition of Dunkirk. Cromwell was working feverishly, and suffering acutely. His favourite child, the Lady Elizabeth Claypole was still very ill; he had premonitions and visions of calamity that filled his heart with apprehension, and kept his soul always on the alert, watching, watching for its coming. It might be that he alone could meet it and ward it away from those he loved.

It is certain also that he knew the time for his own departure was at hand. He said to Doctor Verity, "I have one more fight, John. Dunbar was a great vic-

tory; Worcester was a greater one; but my next fight will give me the greatest victory of all—'the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.' Do you understand?" And the Doctor made a movement of affirmation; he could not speak.

Wonderful was the labour the Protector now performed. He directed and settled the English affairs in France; he arranged the government of the new English plantations in Jamaica and the West Indies; and he paid particular attention to the needs and condition of the New England Colonies, being indeed their protector, and the only English protector they ever had. He took time to enunciate to France, more strongly than ever before, the rights of all the Protestants in Europe; and he made all preparations for calling another Parliament to consider, and settle more firmly, the business of the English Commonwealth. His work was a stupendous one, and through it all he showed constantly the feverish haste of a man who has a great task to perform and sees the sun dropping to the western horizon. But his heart bore the heaviest share of the heavy burden. It was as if Death knew that this man's soul could only be delivered from the flesh by attacking the citadels of feeling. In every domestic and social relation—son, husband, father, friend—the tenderness of his nature made him suffer; and when on the twenty-third of July Lady Claypole's illness showed fatal symptoms, he dropped all business, and for fourteen days and nights hardly left her presence. And her death on the sixth of August was a crushing and insupportable blow.

Lady Heneage, who was one of her attendants in these last terrible days, was removed in a fainting condition, when all was over, and taken to her old friend Martha Swaffham, for care and consolation. The two women had drifted apart during the past four years, but there was only love between them, and they reverted at once to their old affectionate familiarity. And such sorrow as that affecting Lady Heneage, is soon soothed by kind companionship and sympathetic conversation. She had much to tell that Martha Swaffham was eager to listen to, though the matter of all was suffering and death.

"The Lord Protector was really her nurse," she said. "When her mother fainted, and her husband and sisters could not look on her sufferings, her father held her in his arms, bore every pang with her and prayed, as I hope, Martha, I may never hear any one pray again. It was as if he clung to the very feet of God, entreating that he, and he alone, might bear the agony; that the cup of pain might pass from his child to him—and this for fourteen days, Martha. I know not how he—how we—endured it. We were all at the last point, when suddenly, a wonderful peace filled the chamber, and the poor Lady Elizabeth lay at ease, smiling at her father as he wiped the death sweat from her brow and whispered in her ear words which none but the dying heard. At the last moment, she tried to say, '*Father*, but only managed one-half the word; the other half she took into heaven with her. It is now the sixth of August, is it not, Martha?"

"Yes."

"The Protector will not live long, I think. I heard him tell her they would not be parted a space worth counting."

"He would say that much for her comfort. He meant it not in respect of his own days; no life is a space worth counting—'of few days and full of trouble, Alice.' How is her Highness, Elizabeth Cromwell?"

"Very quiet and resigned. Blow upon blow has benumbed her. She looks as if she had seen something not to be spoken of. Lady Mary Fanconberg says the family ought to leave Hampton Court; there is a feeling about the place both unhappy and unnatural. I felt it. Every one felt it, even the soldiers on guard."

After the death of his beloved daughter Elizabeth, the life of Cromwell was like the ending of one of those terrible Norse Sagas with the additional element of a great spiritual conflict. He was aware of his own apparition at his side; the air was full of omens; he felt the menace of some shadowy adversary in the dark; he saw visions; he dreamed beyond nature; he had, at times, the wild spirits of a fey man, and again was almost beside himself with unspeakable grief. Israel Swaffham was constantly with him. The two men were friends closer than brothers. They had loved each other when boys, and their love had never known a shadow.

"But I am in great trouble about him," said Israel to his wife. "It cannot last. Since Lady Claypole's death he eats not, drinks not, sleeps not; his strong, masculine handwriting, the very mirror of his courageous spirit, has become weak and trembling. He lives much alone, keeps from his family as if he feared they might be in danger from his danger. And he thinks and thinks, hour after hour; and 'tis thinking that is killing him. I can tell you one thing, Martha, a thinking soul is always sorrowful enough, but when it is a great soul like Oliver's, and it is wretched for any cause, then every thought draws blood."

"For such dismal thought and feeling there is the Holy Scriptures."

"Yes, yes, Oliver knows the Comforter, and sometimes there is a message for him. Last night he made Harvey read him the fourth of Philippians, and he said when he had listened to it, 'This Scripture did once save my life when my eldest son died, which went as a dagger to my heart, indeed it did;' then, with a great joy he repeated the words, 'I can do all things through Christ which strengthened! me;' adding, 'He that was Paul's Christ, is my Christ too!'"

Cromwell had hoped that his great afflictions would bring his friends back to his side; but envy, hatred and greedy ambition are not to be conciliated. Even at this time, Ludlow, Lambert, Vane, Harrison, Marten,—all the men whom he had trusted, and who had trusted him, stood aloof from his sorrow; and their sullen indifference wounded him to the quick. He had a burning fever both of the body and soul, but in two weeks he gathered a little strength and left Hampton Court

for Whitehall. His unfinished work drove at him like a taskmaster. He must make great haste, for he knew that the night was coming.

"I am glad he is back in Whitehall," said Martha to her husband, when she heard of the change. "I remember something that Jane said about that old, gloomy Court; he will get better in London."

"I know not, Martha," answered Israel sadly; "Fairfax was with him to-day, and he might as well have drawn his sword on his old friend,—better and kinder had he done so."

"Fairfax is proud as Lucifer. What did he want?"

"The Duke of Buckingham has been sent to the Tower—where he ought to have been sent long ago; but he is married to the daughter of Fairfax, and the haughty Lord General went to see Cromwell about the matter. He met him in the gallery at Whitehall and asked that the order for Buckingham's arrest should be retracted. And Cromwell told him that if the offense were only against his own life, the Duke could go free that hour, but that he could not pardon plotters against the Commonwealth. It grieved him to the heart to say these words, and Fairfax saw how ill and how troubled he looked. But he had not one word of courtesy; he turned abruptly and cocked his hat, and threw his cloak under his arm in that insolent way he was ever used to when in his tempers. And Oliver looked at me like a man that has been struck in the face by a friend. Then he went to his desk and worked faithfully, inexorably, all day;—but—but——"

"But what, Israel?"

"It is near—the end."

Indeed, this interview with Fairfax seemed to be the last heart-weight he could carry. That night, the man who had been used to shelter his dove-like wife from every trouble in his strong heart, laid his head upon her shoulder and said pitifully, "O Elizabeth, I am the wretchedest creature! Speak some words of hope and peace to me." Then she soothed and comforted him from the deep wells of her tenderness, and never once put into words the fearful thought which lay deep in her heart—"What will become of me when he is gone?" But Oliver had this same anxious boding, and he managed that night to tell his wife that if God, in mercy, called him on the sudden, Israel Swaffham had his last words and advices for her,—words that would then be from Oliver in heaven to Elizabeth on earth. They spoke of their old, free, happy life; of their sons and daughters both here and there, and mingled for the last time their tears and prayers together.

"Let us trust yet in God, dear Oliver," she said, as they rose from their knees; "is He not sufficient?"

"Trust in God!" he cried. "Who else is there in the heaven above, or in the earth beneath? And as our John Milton says—

"'. . . if this truth fail,
The pillared firmament is rottenness,
And earth's base built on stubble.'

Trust in God! Indeed I do! God has not yet spoken His last word to Elizabeth and Oliver Cromwell." Then he drew her close to his heart, kissed her fondly, and said, almost with sobs, "My dearest, if I go the way of all the earth first, thou wilt never forget me?"

"How could I forget thee? How could I? Not in my life days! Not in my eternal days! Heart of my heart! My good, brave, true husband, Elizabeth will never forget thee, never cease to love thee and honour thee, while the Everlasting One is thy God and my God."

The next day he went to his desk and began to write, but speedily and urgently called for Israel Swaffham. When he answered the call, Oliver was in great physical agony, but he took some papers from a drawer and said, "When I am no longer here, Israel, give these to my wife. Thurloe has the key to all State questions; he knows my intents and my judgments on them. And there is one more charge for you: when all is over, speak to the army for me. Tell the men to remember me while they live. Truly, I think they will. Tell them I will take love and boldness to myself, and plead for them when I am nearer to God than I am now. It may be we shall serve together again—among the hosts of the Most High. Say to them my tears hinder my last words, as indeed they do. Now let me lean on you, Israel. I am going to my last hard fight."

When he reached his room, he stood a moment and looked wistfully round it. It was but a narrow chamber, but large enough for the awfully close, near conflict, that he had to fight in it,—a conflict which was to put asunder flesh and spirit, and within its few feet, with strange, strong pains deliver the Eternal out of Time, and set free his Immortal Self from the carnal prison-house of many woes in which he had suffered for more than fifty-nine years. For ten terrible days and nights the anguish of this struggle went on unceasingly, sometimes the great Combatant being "all here" and full of faith and courage, sometimes far down the shoal of life and reason, and wandering uneasily through bygone days of battle and distress and darkness. Then Israel held his burning hands, and listened, while in a voice very far off, he ejaculated such passages as had then been familiar to him:—"The shield of His mighty men is made red, the valiant men are in scarlet. The chariots shall rage in the streets—they shall seem like torches, they shall run like the lightnings."[4] And once at the midnight when all was still he cried, "If the Lord had suffered it, then I had died on the battle-field as His Man of War, with tumult, with shouting and with the sound of the trumpet."[5]

[4] Nahum 2:4.

[5] Amos 2: 2.

He had turned to face his last enemy on the twenty-fourth of August, and on the thirtieth there was such a tempest as had never before been seen in England. Whole forests were laid on the ground; traffic was swept from the roads and the streets, and the ships from the stormy seas; and the tide at Deptford, to the dismay of the superstitious, threw up the carcass of a monstrous whale. The chambers of Whitehall were filled with the roar of the great winds. The guards leaned on their arms, praying or talking solemnly together on the prodigy of the storm.

"Michael and the devil had a dispute about the body of Moses," said one old grizzled trooper to his companion. "Are they fighting about our Cromwell, think ye, Abel?"

"Who knows?" was the answer. "The Prince of the Powers of the Air has His battalions out this night, but Michael and his host will be sufficient. You'll see, Jabez, when the storm is over, our Cromwell will go;" and he drew his hand across his eyes and added, "He'll have company, Jabez, a great bodyguard of ministering angels; and sure a soul needs them most of all between here and there. Evil ones no doubt, to be watched and warded, but the Guard sent is always sufficient."

Israel sat near the men, and heard something of what they said, but he was too inert with grief and weariness to answer them. Presently, however, Doctor Verity joined him. They said a few words about the storm, their words being emphasised by the falling and crashing of trees outside the windows, and by thunder and lightning and driven torrents of rain; and then Doctor Verity said in a low voice, "*He* knows nothing of this—he is still as death; he barely breathes; he is unconscious; *where is he*, Israel?"

"Not quite gone—not quite here—— Is he watching the battle of elements in the middle darkness?" Then he told the Doctor what Abel and Jabez had said, and for some minutes only the pealing thunder and the howling winds made answer. But John Verity was thinking, and as soon as there was a moment's lull in the uproar, he said, "Oliver is no stranger to the Immortals, Israel. They have heard of his fame. In their way, they have seen and helped him already. Oliver has fought the devil all his life long. While his body lies yonder, without sense or motion, where is his spirit? Is it now having its last fight with its great enemy? Israel, I was thinking of what Isaiah says, about hell being moved to meet Lucifer at his coming."

"I remember."

"May not heaven also be moved to meet a good man? May not the chief

ones of the earth arise, each from his throne, to welcome a royal brother, and narrowly to consider him, and ask of the attending angels, 'Is this he who moved nations, and set free his fellows, and brought forth for his Master one hundredfold?'"

"Yet how he has been reviled; and what is to come will be worse."

"He has already forgiven it. I heard him praying ere he 'went somewhere' that God would 'pardon such as desire to trample upon the dust of a poor worm, for they are Thy people too;' and then he added, just as a little child might, 'and give us a good-night.' And somehow, Israel, I do think he is having a good-night. I do surely think so."

"But oh, John, John Verity, all this great life is to be a failure. All our travail and toil and suffering to be a failure!"

"No, indeed! There is no failure. No, no, nothing of the kind! We have ushered in a new era of Freedom. We have made a breakwater against tyranny. Kings will remember forevermore that they have a joint in their necks. Oliver has done, to the last tittle, the work he was sent to do. It is Oliver the Conqueror! not Oliver the Failure. But I could weep my eyes out for the cruelties his tender heart has had to bear. There are some men I could wish a tenfold retribution to, and I think they will get it. Baxter has whined and whined against Cromwell, but he will have plenty of opportunities yet to wish Cromwell back. And there is Vane! he will not find Charles Stuart as forbearing to his fine mystical unreasonableness as Cromwell has been; he may lay his head on the block before long. As for Lambert and Fairfax and the rest, the subtle Monk will be too much for them. Let them alone, their sins will find them out; and we will sail westward in good hope. Remember, Israel, it is not incumbent on us to finish the work; we can leave it in God's hands. And though we have to leave it behind us incomplete, God will use it some way and somewhere, and the news will find us, even in heaven, and sweeten our happy labours there. I believe this, I do with all my soul."

On Thursday night, the second of September, being the ninth day of his hard fight, he bade his wife and children "a good-bye"; but into this sacred scene not even the tenderest imagination may intrude. Afterward he appeared to withdraw himself entirely within the shadow of the Almighty, waiting the signal for his release in a peaceful, even a happy, mood, and saying in a more and more laboured voice, "Truly God is good—indeed He is—He will not—leave. My work is done—but God will be—with His people." Some one offered him a drink to ease his restlessness and give him sleep, but he refused it. "It is not my design to drink or to sleep," he said; "my design is to make what haste I can to be gone." The last extremity indeed! but one full of that longing desire of the great Apostle "to depart and be with Christ, which is far better."

The next morning, the third of September, his Fortunate Day, "the day of

Dunbar Field and Worcester's laureate wreath," he became speechless as the sun rose, and so he lay quiet until between three and four in the afternoon, when he was heard to give a deep sigh. The physician in attendance said softly, "*He is gone!*" And some knelt to pray, and all wept, but unmindful of his tears, Israel Swaffham cried in a tone of triumph—

"Thou good Soldier of God, Farewell! Thou hast fought a good fight, thou hast kept the faith, and there is laid up for thee a crown greater than England's crown, a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give thee."

But Doctor Verity went slowly to the beloved Dead; he put tenderly back his long gray hair, damp with the dew of death, and closed the eyelids over his darkened eyes, and kissed him on his brow, and on his lips; and as he turned sorrowfully away forever, whispered only two words:—

"*Vale* Cromwell!"

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