

CHAPTER XXXII

THE MARCH TOWARDS ENGLAND

But these are chimes for funerals: my businessAttends on fortune of a sprightlier triumph;For love and majesty are reconciled,And vow to crown thee Empress of the West.

FORD.

The royal party returned to Edinburgh, where the nuptials of Richard of England and the Lady Katherine were celebrated with splendour. Festivities of all kinds, tournaments, hunting parties, balls, succeeded to each other; but far beyond every outward demonstration was the real happiness insured by this marriage. Graced by Katherine, the little English court became a paradise. The princess assumed her new character among the exiles with facility; yet the phrase is bad, for Katherine could assume nothing, not even a virtue, if she had it not. In every position she was not princess, queen, patroness, or mistress; but woman merely—a true-hearted, gentle, refined woman. She was too young for the maternal character to be appropriate to her, yet the watchfulness and care she had for all resembled it. Her new subjects felt as if before they had been a disconnected, vagabond troop, and that dignity and station were assigned to them through her; through her the charities and elegances of life hallowed and adorned them. The quality most peculiarly her own was the divine simplicity which animated her look, her manners, her acts. Taintless simplicity, that best of fascinations, whose power is not imperious and sudden, but gradual and changeless, where every word spoken is but the genuine interpreter of the feelings of the heart, to which not only falsehood, but even the slightest disguise or affectation, is wholly foreign; and which is the more delicate, winning and kind, from being spontaneous—so that, as in describing her, her royal cousin had said, "you almost questioned her authority from its want of pretension, yet yielded to it in all its extent."

Richard's political position stood higher than ever. The ever-watchful duchess of Burgundy had sent a renowned Burgundian captain, Sir Roderick-de-Lalayne, with two hundred German mercenaries. The king of France, at the request of Henry the Seventh, had despatched an embassy to King James, to advise a peace between England and Scotland. The ambassador was the Sire de Concessault, York's ancient friend, who continued to espouse his cause warmly, and gave it all the grace and honour of his high influence. King James was eager to collect his army, and to prepare for an invasion. If Richard had lost any part of his open-hearted confidence and personal friendship, he had gained in his esteem and consideration. The change that

had been operating was imperceptible to York, who naturally found in his marriage a barrier to the hourly intercourse they had formerly had, when both were free. Yet change there was, greater even than the king himself suspected; the causes were easily traced.

The Tudor party in Scotland, instigated by bribes and large promises, were very active in their enmity to the White Rose. They had been obliged to let the torrent of royal favour force its headlong way, but they watched the slightest pause in its flow, to throw impediments in the way of the abundant stream. Soon after his return from the North, it became apparent that the king continued no unsuccessful suitor to the Lady Jane Kennedy. This a good deal estranged him from his English friend, who no longer reprov'd, but whose tacit condemnation he feared, as well as that of his fair cousin. Nay, more, Lady Jane had drawn from him the cause of their transient quarrel, and, now that she had yielded, felt angry and disdainful at the attempt made to estrange her lover. One of those lower eddies or currents of intelligence, so in use at courts, had reported an angry expression of hers to the earl of Buchan, one of York's most active enemies. This grasping-place in their difficult way was eagerly laid hold of by the conspirators. A coalition was formed between Lady Jane and this party, which insured the aggravation of any ill-feeling that might arise between the late brothers in heart. Soon after another agent or tool was added to their number.

The most subtle, the most politic, the most wily, are sometimes the slaves of impulse; nay, very often those who fancy that they measure their actions the most narrowly by the rules, either of self-interest or ambition, are more easily influenced to unwise passion by any obstacle thrown in their path. The Secretary Frion had hitherto considered himself of primal import to the English prince: no project was conceived, that was not first concocted in his brain, and insinuated by him; every new partizan had been enticed by his silvery speeches; whatever of difficult, crooked, and hidden was to be done, Frion was consulted, and employed, and deeply trusted in its accomplishment. On his first arrival in Scotland, the intimacy between the king and York destroyed half his influence. James's discernment and experience was not duped by the insinuating flatteries of Frion: as a proud man he disdained, as a conscientious and pious one, he disliked him. It was worse when Katherine's influence became paramount; she put him exactly in his right place, yet was so kind that there was no room for complaint: all his former patrons were her worshippers; her praises were re-echoed from all; and assuredly no intrigue could exist where she was. Yet it was neither comprehensible, nor to be endured, that this banished prince and his friends should walk straight forward in their allotted route, unaided by plot or manœuvre. The subtlety of the man quickly revealed to him the existence of the opposing party; he

was ready to foment it, were it only to gain reputation afterwards by its destruction. He made one step, and became the confidant of Balmayne, and apparently the tool of the higher confederates: at first he rather perplexed than served them, spinning spiders' webs in their way, and elevating himself in their eyes by brushing them off at his pleasure. He was exactly the man to shine in a dark conspiracy: soon nothing could be done but by his advice, nothing known but as he informed them, nothing said but as he dictated. Balmayne, who, fierce and moody, entered more zealously into these discontents than any other, yet took his counsel—little knew they Maître Etienne Frion: he only watched the while, sage fisher of men as he was, for the best opportunity of betraying them for his own advantage. In the midst of festivity, of gallant, warlike preparation, Frion had, like a witch gathering poisonous herbs by the silvery light of the quiet moon, sought to extract all that was baleful in what, but for the uses to which he strove to put it, had died innocuous.

The winter grew into spring: these were the happiest months of young Richard's life. He had traversed many a pass of danger and tract of sorrow—falsehood had blotted—loss of friends, who had died for him, had darkened the past years: often during their course he had believed that he gave himself up to despair; he had fancied that he had doubted every one and every thing; he imagined that he was tired of existence—vain ideas! Sanguine, confiding, full to the very brim of that spirit of life which is the happiness of the young, he sprang up a fresh Antæus, each time that Fortune with Herculean power had thrown him to the earth. And now he congratulated himself even on every misery, every reverse, every sentiment of despondency that he experienced: they were so many links of the chain that made him what he was—the friend of James, the husband of Katherine. It was this best attribute of sunny-hearted youth, this greenness of the soul, that made Richard so frank, so noble, so generous; care and time had laboured in vain—no wrinkle, no deforming line marked his mind, or, that mind's interpreter, his open, candid brow.

With the spring the Scottish troops drew together, and encamped near Edinburgh. The occasion seemed seasonable; for news arrived of disturbances which had taken place in England, and which had caused Henry the Seventh to recall the earl of Surrey (who was conducting an army northward to oppose the expected attack from Scotland), to check and defeat enemies which had arisen in the west of his kingdom. The inhabitants of Cornwall, vexed by increasing taxes, had long been in a state of turbulence; and now, instigated by two ringleaders from among themselves, combined together, and rose in open and regulated rebellion—sedition, it might have been called; and had perhaps been easily crushed, but for the interference of one,

who acted from designs and views which at first had made no part of the projects of the insurgents.

Lord Audley had not forgotten the White Rose. On his return westward, however, he found all so quiet, that no effort of his could rouse the rich and satisfied men of Devon, from their inglorious repose. His imprudence attracted attention; he had notice of the danger of an arrest, and suddenly resolved to quit the post he had chosen, and to join the duke of York in Ireland. He came too late; the English squadron had sailed; and he, changeful as the winds and as impetuous, despising a danger now remote, resolved to return to England, and to Devonshire. His voyage from Cork to Bristol was sufficiently disastrous; contrary and violent winds drove him from his course into the Atlantic; here he beat about for several days, till the wind, shifting a point or two to the west, he began to make what sail he could in the opposite direction. Still the weather was tempestuous, and his skiff laboured frightfully amidst the stormy waves; not far from them, during the greatest fury of the gale, was a larger vessel, if such might be called the helmless, dismasted hull, tossed by the billows, the sport of the winds, as it rose and fell in the trough of the sea. At length the wind lulled; and the captain of the caravel, which indeed might be called a wreck, lowered a boat, and came alongside Lord Audley's vessel, asking whither he was bound? To England, was the answer; and the vast reef of clouds lifted on the southern horizon, and showing beyond a streak of azure, gave promise of success in their voyage. The questioner, who spoke English imperfectly, went on to say, that in spite of the miserable state of the caravel, he was resolved not to desert her, but to carry her, God willing, into the nearest French port he could make. But there was on board one sick, a woman, whom he wished to spare the dangers and privations of the voyage. Would the commander take her to England, and bestow her in some convent, where she might be tended and kept in honourable safety? Lord Audley gave a willing consent, and the boat went off speedily, returning again with their stranger passenger. She was in the extremity of illness, even of danger, and lay, like a child, in the arms of the dark, tall, weather-beaten mariner, who, though squalid in his appearance from fatigue and want, stood as a rock that has braved a thousand storms; his muscles seemed iron—his countenance not stern, but calm and resolved—yet tenderness and softness were in the expression of his lips, as he gazed on his fragile charge, and placed her with feminine gentleness on such rude couch as could be afforded; then addressing Lord Audley, "You are an Englishman," he said, "perhaps a father?"

"I am an English noble," replied the other; "confide in my care, my honour; but, to be doubly sure, if you feel distrust, remain with us; yonder wreck will not weather another night."

"She has seen the suns of two worlds," said the sailor, proudly, "and the blessed Virgin has saved her at a worse hazard. If she perish now, it were little worth that her old captain survived: better both go down, as, if not now, some day we shall, together. I will confide my poor child to you, my lord. If she recover, she has friends in England; she would gain them, even if she had them not. Not one among your boasted island-women is more lovely or more virtuous, than my poor, my much-suffering Monina."

Lord Audley renewed his protestations. De Faro listened with the ingenuous confidence of a sailor; he placed several caskets and a well-filled bag of gold in the noble's hand, saying, "The Adalid fills a-pace. You but rob the ocean. If my child survives, you can give her the treasure you disdain. If she does"—and he bent over her; she almost seemed to sleep, so oppressed was she by feebleness and fever. A tear fell from her father's eye upon her brow: "And she will: Saint Mary guide us, we shall attain."

Suck was the strange drama acted on the wide boundless sea. Such the chances that restored the high-minded Andalusian to England, to the White Rose, to all the scenes, to every hope and fear which she had resolved to abandon for ever. For good or ill, we are in the hands of a superior power:

"There's a divinity that shapes our ends, Rough-hew them how we will."

We can only resolve, or rather endeavour, to act our parts well, such as they are allotted to us. Little choice have we to seek or to eschew our several destinations.

With Monina at his side, and his own restless ambition as a spur, it may be easily imagined what Lord Audley's projects were in joining the Cornish insurgents. He led them from the western extremity of the island towards Kent, where he hoped to find the seeds of rebellion to Lancaster, which he had sown the year before, ripened into harvest. News of the unimpeded march of the insurgents from Cornwall to the neighbourhood of London was brought to Edinburgh, freshening the zeal and animating the preparations for war.

Already the Scottish army was encamped south of Edinburgh. The English troops set up their tents among them. The day was fixed for the departure of the king, the prince, and the noble leaders. They quitted Edinburgh in all the pompous array of men assured of victory. James loved the hopes and stirring delights of war: Richard saw his every good in life dependent on this expedition, and fostered sanguine expectation of triumph. The burning desire of asserting himself, of rewarding his faithful friends, of decorating Katherine with the rank and honours due to her—the belief that he should achieve all this—gave dignity and even gladness, to his last adieu to his lovely wife.

Her heart mirrored his hopes; not that she entertained them for her own, but for his sake: yet the quicker sensibilities of a woman imparted fears unknown to him. She concealed them, till when, as her last office and duty, she had fastened an embroidered scarf around him. Softly, whisperingly, as fearful of paining him, she said, "You will return—you have a kingdom here: though England prove false, you must not disdain to be sole monarch of Katherine."

These words had been spoken—earl, baron, and gallant knight thronged the courts of Holyrood. There was the sound of warlike trump and the streaming of painted banners, among which, that of the White Rose waved conspicuous. The king vaulted on his saddle; the prince of England rode at his side. He was surrounded by the rude northern warlike chiefs, ancient enemies of his native land, whose fierce eyes were lighted up by the expectation of meeting their old adversaries in the field. Could he fancy that, through such aid, he might win back the crown usurped from him?

King James and Richard rode side by side. At this moment, when the one was spending the riches of his kingdom and the lives of his subjects for the other's sake, while the hearts of both were softened by regret for their abandoned home, and both anticipated the joys of victory or perils of defeat to be shared between them, the sentiment of friendship was rekindled. Never had they been more cordial, more confidential, more happy in each other's society. After several hours' ride, the short spring day declined to evening, which was accompanied by a drizzling rain: the bad roads and the darkness impeded their progress; and it was night before the twinkling camp-lights appeared in the distance and the hum of men was heard. To the right of the camp, surrounded by the tents of his nobles, the royal pavilion was pitched. On their arrival, the earl of Buchan was in readiness to hold the king's stirrup. "Nay," said James, "first we will see our royal guest lodged; where is the tent of his grace of England? we commanded it to be pitched in close neighbourhood to our own?"

"Please you, my liege," said Buchan, "Lord Moray, gave direction it should be placed out of our line; it is set up a mile eastward of us."

"My uncle forgot himself; and you also, sir earl, were bound rather to obey our order," said the king.

"There were reasons," returned Buchan: "your majesty, I dare aver, will approve the change, and his highness of England also. There was a brawl between the Scottish borderers and the English; blood has been shed. We feared that the peace of the encampment, not to say the life of his highness, would be endangered if he were in the midst of our savage Southrons."

"I like not this," said James, moodily, "but it is too late to change to-night. The rain-drops begin to freeze upon my hair; your highness would rather be in year tent, far though it be from mine, than quarrel about its position at this inclement hour. Lord Buchan, you will attend him thither. Prince, goodnight; to-morrow we will be more brotherly in our fashion; now the fiat of my lord of Moray must be obeyed."

The king dismounted, and entered his pavilion: as the cloth was raised, a blazing fire, the apparel of silver flagons and golden cups, the trim appearance of silken-suited pages were visible, making strong contrast with the cheerless blank without. One slight glimpse revealed the cause, and partly excused the inhospitality of James, in not inviting his guest to partake his warm cheer. One in a kirtle sat somewhat retired from view; the quick motion of her head, the glance of her dark eye, showed that the monarch had been impatiently expected, and was gladly welcomed by the lovely daughter of the earl of Cassils.

Lord Buchan accompanied Richard, Lord Barry, and Plantagenet to their quarters; talking, as he went, of the contention, which had terminated fatally to several. They rode down the elevated ground on which the king's tent was placed, over a plashy, low plain, through a little wood of stunted larch, across a narrow dell, in whose bottom a brook struggled and murmured, to the acclivity on the other side, on which the tents of the English troops were pitched; considerably apart from the rest was Richard's own pavilion: all looked tranquil and even desolate, compared to the stirring liveliness of the Scotch camp, Richard was received by Sir George Neville, who looked more than usually cold and haughty as he bent to Lord Buchan's salutation: the Scotchman uttered a hasty good night, galloped down the upland and across the dell, and was lost to sight in the wood.

"What means this, Sir George?" was the prince's first remark: "what discipline is yours—brawling and bloodshed with our allies?"

"Did your highness name them our enemies," said Neville, "it were more appropriate. Suspend your displeasure, I beseech you, until I can lay before you the reality of what you name a brawl; my honour, and I fear all our safeties are concerned in the discovery. Now, your grace is wet and fatigued; you will repose?"

Richard desired solitude, not rest: he wished to be alone; for a thousand intricate ideas possessed him, clamouring to be attended to. He dismissed his friends. Frion only remained—Frion, who lately had almost become surly, but who was now smooth, supple as ever; his eye twinkling as of yore, and his ready laugh—that most characteristic part of him—again showing the old secretary returned. To the prince's warm heart, the appearance of discontent and moodiness was peculiarly grating; the

smile or frown even of Frion had power over him; and he felt grateful to the man for his glossy and satisfactory speeches, now that, spite of himself, a feeling—it was not fear, but an anticipation of evil—disturbed his mind.

At length, he dismissed him; yet still he felt utterly disinclined for sleep. For some time he paced his tent; images of war and battle floated before him—and then the vision of an angel with golden hair, came, not to calm, but to trouble him with unquiet regret. In vain he strove to awaken the flock of gentle thoughts that usually occupied him; his ideas seemed wolf-visaged; unreal howlings and cries rung in his ears. This unusual state of mind was intolerable: he folded his cloak round him, and stepped into his outer tent. Frion, two pages, and his esquire, were to occupy it; but he found it solitary. This seemed a little strange; but it was early yet. He lifted the outer cloth; a sentinel was duly at his post; the prince saluted him and passed on. The fitful winds of spring had dispersed the storm: the scarcely waning moon, encircled by the dark clear ether, was in the east; her yellow light filled the atmosphere, and lay glowing on the trees and little hill-side. The prince stepped onwards, down the declivity, across the dell, into the wood. He thought he heard voices; or was it only the swinging branches of the pines? The breeze raised his hair and freshened his brow. Still he walked on, till now he came in view of the Scottish camp, which lay tranquil as sheep in a fold, the moon's bright eye gazing on it. The sight brought proud Granada and all its towers, with the Christian camp sleeping at her feet, before his mind; and he still lingered. Now the tramp of horses became audible: a troop wound down the hill: the leader stopped exclaiming in some wonder, "My lord of York! does your highness need any service? do you bend your steps to the royal tent?"

"I blush to answer, Sir Patrick," replied the prince; "for you will scoff at me as the moon's minion: I came out but to visit her. Yet a knight need not feel shame at loitering beneath her ray, dreaming of his lady-love. You are more actively employed?"

"I was on my way to your highness's encampment," replied the knight. "His majesty is not quite satisfied with Lord Buchan's report, and sent but now his esquire to me, to bid me visit it. With your good leave, I will escort you thither."

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE ASSASSIN

Traitor, what hast thou done? how ever may Thy cursed hand so cruelly have swayed Against that knight? Harrow and weal-away? After so wicked deed, why liv'st thou longer day!

SPENSER.

When he had been dismissed by his royal master, Frion called aside the esquire, and sent him on an errand, it would seem of some import and distance; for the youth uttered a few forcible interjections, and with a lowering brow drew on the riding-boots he had just doffed, muttering, "I must treat my horse better than my lord treats me; so, master, seek a fresh steed. By my fay! this is to become a squire of dames—a love-token to the duchess, in good hour!"

Having got rid of this young gentleman, Frion's next care was to give distant employment to the pages, saying he would wait their return. But scarcely had they entered the most crowded part of the camp, before with quick cautious steps the secretary took the same path which the prince trod half an hour later—he crossed the dell, and arriving at the little wood of larches, instead of traversing, he skirted it, till the gentle eminence on which the English camp was pitched, grew higher and more abrupt, the murmuring brook took the guise of a brawling torrent, grey rocks peeped out from the soil, and the scene became wilder and more mountainous: he walked on, till he arrived where a rustic bridge spanned the stream; under its shadow were three horsemen, two of whom dismounted, and a tall servitor held the bridles. One of these men Frion knew at once to be him who called himself Lord Bothwell, King Henry's spy, and Richard's fierce, motiveless, but ruthless enemy; the other—his bonnet was drawn over his brow—a cloak obscured his person. Frion's quick eyes scrutinized it vainly, for the moon, cloudy at intervals, gave uncertain light; besides, the man had stationed himself within the deepest shadow of the bridge.

"Good befall your watch," said Frion; "your worship is before your time."

"Is not all ready?" asked Balmayne.

"That question is mine," replied the other. "You know our treaty—not a hair of my lord's head must be injured."

"Tush! tush! fear not, good conscience-stickier," replied Bothwell, with a contemptuous laugh; "no ill will befall the boy; we but ferry him over the Tweed a few hours earlier than he dreamed of, and land him all gently on the shore he seeks. As for thy reward, I have said, name it thyself."

"Fair words are these, Sir John Ramsay," said Frion; "but I said before, I must have surer pledge, both for my reward and my lord's safety. King Henry will haggle about payment when the work is done, and the steel you wear is a toper in its way."

"How now, sir knave?" cried Balmayne; "thinkest thou that I will turn midnight stabber?"

The man in the cloak started at these words. He uttered some sound, but again drew back; while the person who continued on horseback said, and his voice was that of the bishop of Moray, King James's uncle, "A truce to this contention, Master Good-fellow—whatever thy name be: I will answer for thy pay, and here is earnest of my truth." He threw a purse at Frion's feet. "The peace of two kingdoms—the honour of a royal, too long dishonoured house are at stake. No time is this to squabble for marks, or the paltry life of a base impostor. I, a prince of Scotland, avouch the deed. It were more friendly, methinks; to unlock his life with the steel key of our friend Wiatt, than to devote him to the gallows. Let Scotland be rid of him, I reckon not how."

Again Frion fixed his eyes on the other;—the clouds had fallen low in the sky; the moon was clear; the western breeze murmured among the bushes and the trees, and the beams of the silvery planet played upon the unquiet waters. "We have no time for delay. Sir John," said Frion, "prithee introduce me to our fellow-labourer—this is the king's emissary? You call yourself Wiatt, Master Black Cloak?"

The other made a gesture of impatience as he stepped aside. Balmayne and Moray discoursed aside, till the former bade the secretary lead on; as they went, the Scotchman and Frion conversed in whispers concerning their plans, while their companion followed as if doggedly. Once he cast an impatient glance at the moon—Frion caught that look. "Have I found you, good friend," he thought; "then by our lady of Embrun, you shall acquit you of the debt I claim this night."

With quicker steps the Provençal proceeded, till they readied the opening of the valley, and came opposite the slope on which the English camp was pitched. Furthest off and far apart was the royal pavilion, the banner of England flapping in the breeze, and this the only sign of life; but for this, the white silent tents looked like vast Druidical stones piled upon a wild moor. They paused. "I must go first," said Frion; "we have wasted more time than I counted for—you will await me here."

"Listen, Master Frion," said Balmayne. "I would hardly trust you, but that I think you are a wise man; silver angels and golden marks, as a wise man, you will love: one thing you will hardly seek, a shroud of moonbeams, a grave in the vulture's maw. Look ye,

one soars above even now; he scents dainty fare: twenty true men are vowed that he shall sup on thee, if thou art foresworn: thou wilt give some signal, when all is ready."

"That were difficult," said Frion; "I will return anon if there be any let to your enterprise; else, when the shadow of that tall larch blackens the white stone at your feet, come up without fear: have ye bonds ready for your prisoner?"

"An adamantine chain—away!" Frion cast one more glance at him called Wiatt. "It is even he, I know him, by that trick of his neck; his face was ever looking sideways:" thus assured, the Frenchman ascended the hill. Balmayne watched him, now visible, and now half-hid by the deceptive light, till he entered the folds of the pavilion; and then he glanced his eyes upon the shadow of the tree, yet far from the white stone; and then paced the sward, as if disdainingly to hold commune with Wiatt. Whatever thoughts possessed this hireling's breast he made no sign, but stood motionless as a statue; his arms folded, his head declined upon his breast. He was short, even slight in make, his motionless, half-shrinking attitude contrasted with the striding pace and the huge, erect form of the borderer. Who that had looked down upon these two figures, sole animations visible on the green earth beneath the moon's bright eye, would have read villany and murder in their appearance; the soft sweet night seemed an antidote to savageness, yet neither moon nor the sleeping face of beauteous earth imparted any gentleness to the Scot; he saw neither, except when impatiently he glanced at the slow-crawling shadow, and the moonlight sleeping on the signal-stone. Many minutes passed—Bothwell gave one impatient look more—how slowly the dusky line proceeded! He walked to the edge of the brook; there was no movement about the pavilion: tranquil as an infant's sleep was the whole encampment. Suddenly a cry made him start, it was from Wiatt; the man, heretofore so statue-like, had thrown his arms upward with a passionate gesture, and then recalled by Bothwell's imprecation, shrunk back into his former quiet, pointing only with a trembling finger to the stone, now deep imbedded in the black shadow of the larch. The Scot gave a short shrill laugh, and crying "Follow!" began the ascent, taking advantage of such broken ground and shrubs, as blotted the brightness of the rays that lit up the acclivity. Bothwell strode on with the activity of a mosstrooper; Wiatt was scarce able to walk; he stumbled several times. At length they reached the pavilion; the Frenchman stood just within, lifting the heavy cloth; they entered. Frion whispered, "I have cleared the coast; my lord sleeps; we need but cast a cloak around him, to blind him, and so bear him off without more ado on his forced journey."

"There is wisdom in your speech," said Balmayne, with something of a grin. "My friend Wiatt has a cloak large and dark enough for the nonce."

Frion drew back the silken lining of the inner tent, saying, "Tread soft, my lord ever sleeps lightly; he must not be waked too soon."

"*Never* were the better word," muttered Bothwell: the dimmest twilight reigned in the tent. The prince's couch was in shadow; the men drew near; the sleeper was wrapt in his silken coverlid, with his face buried in his pillow: his light-brown hair, lying in large clusters on his cheek, veiled him completely. Ramsay bent over him; his breathing was heavy and regular; he put out his large bony hand, and, as gently as he might, removed the quilt, uncovering the sleeper's right side; then turning to Wiatt, who had not yet advanced, he pointed to the heaving heart of his victim with such a glance of murderous callousness, that the very assassin shrunk beneath it; yet he approached; his hand held an unsheathed dagger, but it shook even to impotence; he raised it over his prey, but had no power to strike. Frion had crept round behind; a sound just then, and tramp of feet was heard in the outer tent; as by magic, in one brief second of time the mute dread scene changed its every characteristic. The assassin cried aloud, "It is not he!" Frion had seized his arm—the dagger fell—the pretended sleeper (one of York's pages) leaped from the couch; and the muffling cloak, dropping from the murderer's shoulders, disclosed the wretched, degraded Clifford. Ramsay drew his sword, and rushed towards the outer tent, when at the same moment Richard of York and Sir Patrick Hamilton showed themselves from beneath the hangings, which their attendants had raised. This sight startled Frion, and Clifford, restored to life and energy, tore himself from his grasp, and in a moment had rushed from beneath the pavilion; he was forgotten; all eyes were turned on Bothwell; the dagger at his feet, his drawn sword, his appearance in the retirement of the prince of England, all accused him. He saw at once his danger, drew himself proudly up, and returned Hamilton's look with a fierce, haughty glare.

"Thy act is worse than thy enemies' speech," said Sir Patrick, sternly; "thou wilt answer this, recreant, to thy royal master."

"To him, to any, to you," said Balmayne; "there is my glove. Now, on the hill's side, or in the lists anon, I will avouch my deed."

Hamilton answered with a look of sovereign contempt; he bade his men seize the traitor. "Before I sleep," he cried, "the king hears this treason."

Richard had looked on in silence and wonder; he placed his hand on Hamilton's arm, stopping him, "Pardon me, valiant knight," he said; "but, I do beseech you, disturb not the king to-night, nor ever, with this ill tale. Too roughly already has the English prince broken Scotland's rest. No blood is shed; and, strange as appearances are, I take Sir John Ramsay's word, and believe that, as a cavalier, he may maintain his cause, nor

stain by it his knightly cognizance. I take up your glove, fair sir, but only to restore it; without one slightest accusation attaching itself to you therewith. Nay, myself will take up the quarrel, if any blame you. Sir Patrick will not call me to the trial, I am sure. Frion, conduct the gallant gentleman beyond our lines."

Shame for the first time flushed Ramsay's brow as he left the tent. The prince drew up to let him pass, with a mien so dignified and yet so tranquil, with a smile so bland, that thus it seemed an angelic essence, incapable of wound, might have gazed on a mere mortal, armed to injure him.

"Is this recklessness or nobility of soul?" Sir Patrick thought. He did not doubt, when Richard, changing his look to one of anxious appeal, besought him to omit utterly to report this strange scene. "I much fear," he said, "my wily secretary to be most in fault; and I caught a glance of one, whose appearance here proves that Ramsay is not alone guilty. Let me inquire, let me learn—punish, if need be. English gold and English steel were the weapons here, and I alone have power over England. You will pledge me your word. Sir Patrick, not to disquiet our royal cousin by our domestic brawls. We must not put in opposing scales our paltry anger against ruffians like these, and the disquiet of the generous-hearted James. Ramsay was his father's favourite; for his sake he bears with him; and more easily may I. I indeed, who am most in fault, for spending the precious minutes wandering, like a shepherd of Arcadia, in a listless foolishness, instead of acting the general, and guarding my tents from such visitors. The brawl last night might have forewarned me."

"Does it not shame Scotland," cried Hamilton, warmly, "that you should need any guard but our true hearts, while you tread our soil?"

"Were this true," answered York, yet more earnestly, "remember, what shames Scotland, shames her king. Be assured, dear cousin, I speak advisedly. Were this examined, worse might appear; and I and your liege must be the sufferers: I to excite this treason in his subjects' hearts; he to prove that some near him are not true as they seem."

Hamilton yielded to these many pleas; but his heart warmed with admiration and love for the noble being who urged the cause of pardon for his enemies. "Be it as your highness pleases," he exclaimed. "This I the more readily yield, since any new attempt kills Hamilton ere it reach you. I will be your guard, your sentinel, your wide, invulnerable shield; you will not refuse me this post of honour."

"Or let us both fulfil it," cried York, "one to the other; let us be brothers in arms, noble Hamilton. And yet, how can I, a fugitive, almost a tainted man, seek the alliance of one who stands as you do, fair and free in all men's eyes?"

As he spoke, the prince held out his hand; the Scottish knight raised it respectfully to his lips. But now Frion returned; and the clash of arms and trumpets' sound spoke of the advance of night, and change of guard: the noble friends took leave of each other, and Sir Patrick departed. As soon as they were private, the prince questioned his secretary closely and sternly as to the events of the night. Frion had a plausible and ready tale, of artifice and guile, of how he had a pledge even from the king's uncle that York's life was not to be attempted; and that he had but wished to balk and vex them, by causing the page to be carried off: the discovery of their mistake would shame them from any second enterprise against the prince of England.

York was but half satisfied; he had caught a transient glimpse of the fugitive. Was it indeed Clifford, who came a hired murderer to his bedside? A man who had partaken his heart's counsels, long his companion, once his friend? It was frightful, it was humiliating but to imagine how deep the man may fall, who once gives himself over to evil thoughts, and unlawful deeds. Frion here protested his ignorance and surprise. It was almost day before his master dismissed him: and even then, how could Richard repose? That couch, Clifford had marked as his bier—it were a bed of thorns; he threw himself on the bare hard ground, and innocence had more power than his angelic pity for the vice of others; it shed poppy influence on his lids; and the beams of the morning sun stole softly over, but did not disturb his slumbers.

CHAPTER XXXIV

DISAPPOINTMENT

Methinks I see Death and the Furies waiting
What we will do, and all the Heaven at
leisure
For the great spectacle. Draw then your swords!

BEN JONSON.

Faster than the airy slave quicksilver is influenced by the changes of the atmosphere, does the subtle essence of the mind of one, who from love or gratitude hangs upon the smile or frown of another, feel the sunshine or frost of that other's countenance; and an independent disposition speedily revolts from servile obedience to such alteration. On the following day, and afterwards on the succeeding ones, Richard felt

that the heart of James was no longer the same. He was courteous, kind—his friend's interests formed the sole topic of their conversations—but York could neither say the thing he wished, nor do that which he desired; the same objects were before him, apparently the same colouring was upon them; yet a pale sickly hue was cast over the before glowing picture; a chill had penetrated the summer warmth in which he basked; the wave was yet calm, but it was clouded, and no longer showed in its limpid depths that sympathy and affection which made the White Rose's fortunes seem truly and intrinsically Scotland's own.

Friendship was now professed, service tendered; before words had seemed superfluous—the thing was there. James assured his guest that he would not turn back, nor give ear to Henry's propositions; and York felt, with a start, that ear had been, given to them, or this conclusion had not been noted. The disunion and continued separation of the camps was another circumstance that spoke loudly of division of thought and counsel.

Frion believed that he should now resume his ancient position with his royal master: he bore his reproofs humbly, and strove to regain his favour by the importance of his services. The arcana of the Tudor party were, to a great degree, revealed to York; and it was easy to mark the ascendancy it was gaining. The presence of Lady Jane Kennedy might explain the ceremony and regulations observed in the intercourse between the king and his friend; but it was Frion's part to disclose the enmity this lady entertained for the White Rose, and the influence she exerted to its detriment. Moray and Lord Buchan were her friends, and they were frequent visitors in the royal pavilion.

A short time somewhat changed this state of things. The army drew near the frontier; and the king separated himself from the fair mistress of his heart. On the third day they arrived on the banks of the Tweed. It was but crossing a little river—but stepping from one stone to another, and Richard would stand on English ground.

The troops had passed the day before; some had proceeded southward; others were even now to be seen defiling in long lines on the distant plain. The sun was up cheerily; the fresh pleasant green of spring had stolen, more like a tinted atmosphere, than in the guise of foliage, over tree and bush; field flowers and crocusses peeped from under the mossy turf. The scene was a wide moor, varied by broken ground; clumps of trees, where many a bird nestled; and here and there thick underwood, where the wild deer made his lair; this had been the scene of a thousand conflicts, and of mortal carnage between Scot and Englishman, but the skylark above sang of nature's bounty and nature's loveliness, an immemorial and perennial hymn, while

nothing spoke of the butchery and wretchedness which once had made the landscape a tragic corpse-strewn stage.

Reining in his pawing courser, King James, in all the gay array of a high-born knight, paused on the Scottish bank—his lips, proud as the Apollo's—spoke of struggle and victory,

"In his eyeAnd nostril, beautiful disdain and mightAnd majesty flashed their full lightnings by."

Here was he who, in a later day, led the flower of Scotland to die on the English plains; who himself was doomed to lie with mangled limbs, and in blank, cold extinction, a trophy of victory to his enemy, on Flodden Field: he was alive now, and in his strength; he drank in with buoyant spirit every glorious anticipation, and laughed with fond delight; spurring on his horse, he crossed the ford, and entered England.

In a moment, as by impulse, York, who had lingered, dashed after him; allies they were; friends in seeming, nay, in truth; for the glance of proud enmity Richard cast on the Scot was perhaps the more factitious feeling: it sprang from patriotism, but its energy was borrowed from the deadly feuds of their ancestors, that natural hate which is said to exist now between the French and English, and which was far more envenomed between the near-rival people. Notwithstanding James's change towards him, York felt in the core of his affectionate heart, all that was due to him who had raised him when he was fallen; given him state, power—Katherine; he saw in him his kinsman—his benefactor. But the pride of a son of England rose in his breast, when he beheld the haughty Scot caracol in arrogant triumph on her soil. What was he? What had he done? He was born king and father of this realm: because he was despoiled of his high rights, was he to abjure his natural duty to her, as her child? Yet here he was an invader; not arming one division of her sons against the other, but girt with foreigners, aided by the ancient ravagers of her smiling villages and plenteous harvests. He looked on each individual Scot, and on their gallant king, and felt his bosom swell with rage and hate. These were unwise, nay, ungrateful sentiments; but he could not repel them. His first commands were to his cousin, to hasten to Randal of Dacre, to learn what Yorkists had gathered together to receive him. "If there be any large company," he said, "without more ado we will thank our kind cousin, invite him to recross the Tweed, and leave us to fight our battles by ourselves."

The satisfaction and triumph James felt made him, so far from participating in York's feelings, turn with renewed cordiality towards him. It was his first care to have the standard of the White Rose set up with martial pomp, to disperse his proclamations, and to invite, by his own manner, the Scottish nobles to increase in observance

towards the prince. Lord Huntley, believing that the prophecy of his daughter's elevation was on the eve of its accomplishment, was prodigal of his shows of honour and service to his son-in-law. For some days the pavilions of the brother kings were pitched side by side, and James each hour thought to hear of the arrival of the Yorkist nobility of England: he had expected so many that he had given orders that care should be taken to recall his own troops, when the English visitants outnumbered his own guard. Day after day passed, and not one came—not one: even Randal of Dacre, Lord Dacre's brother, who had visited Richard in Scotland, seized with panic, had gone southward. Nothing came, save intelligence that the Cornish insurgents had been defeated on Blackheath, their ringleaders taken and executed; among them Lord Audley perished.

Another life!—how many more to complete the sad hecatomb, a useless offering to obdurate fate in Richard's favour! Sir George Neville, gathered up in all the cold pride of disappointed ambition, disdained to regret. Plantagenet saw the hopes and purpose of his life crushed, but dared not give words to his despair; Sir Roderick sneered; Lord Barry was loud in his laments; while the Scots grew taller and prouder, and ceased to frequent the tents of the English exiles. Councils were held by James, in which York had no part; it was only afterwards, that he learnt it had been commanded to the Scotch army to lay waste the country. Now indeed all the Englishman was alive in his heart—he gave sudden orders to raise his camp, and to march forward; he had sat still too long; he would enter the kingdom he claimed; discover for himself his chance of success—and, if there were none, his rights should not be made the pretence of a Scotch invasion.

None cried, "Long live King Richard!" as he passed along. How did his noble, youthful spirit droop at finding that not only he did not meet with, but was judged not to deserve success. It ranks among the most painful of our young feelings, to find that we are justly accused of acting wrong. Our motives—we believed them disinterested or justifiable; we have advanced a wondrous step in life before we can concede even to ourselves that alloy may be mingled with what we deemed pure gold: ignorant of the soil and culture of our own hearts, we feel sure that no base mixture can form a part of what we fancy to be a mine of virgin ore, Richard would have stood erect and challenged the world to accuse him—God and his right, was his defence. His right! Oh, narrow and selfish was that sentiment that could see, in any right appertaining to one man the excuse for the misery of thousands.

War, held in leash during the army's march from Edinburgh, was now let loose; swift and barbarous he tore forward on his way; a thousand destructions waited on him; his track was marked by ruin: the words of Lord Surrey were fulfilled. What a sight for one,

whose best hope in acquiring his kingdom, was to bestow the happiness of which the usurper deprived it. The English troops, about five hundred men, crossed the wide-spread plains in the immediate vicinity of Scotland; they entered a beaten track, where the traces of cultivation spoke of man; a village peeped from among the hedge-row trees—York's heart beat high. Would the simple inhabitants refuse to acknowledge him? A few steps disclosed the truth—the village had been sacked by the Scotch: it was half burnt, and quite deserted; one woman alone remained—she sat on a pile of ashes wailing aloud. The exiles dared not read in each other's eyes the expression of their horror; they walked on like men rebuked. This was England, their country, their native home; and they had brought the fierce Scot upon her. Passing forward, they met trains of waggons laden with spoil, droves of cattle and sheep. They overtook a troop roasting an ox by the burning rafters of a farm-house, whose green palings, trim orchard, and shaved grass-plot, spoke of domestic comfort; the house-dog barked fearfully—a Lowland archer transfixed him with his arrow.

The English marched on; they dared not eye the ravagers; shame and hate contended—these were their allies; while the sarcasm and scornful laugh which followed them, drugged with wormwood the bitter draught. In vain, west or east or south, did they turn their eyes, a sad variety of the same misery presented itself on every side. A stout yeoman, gashed by an Highlander's claymore, was sometimes the ghastly stepping-stone passed over to enter his own abode; women and children had not been spared, or were only left to perish for want. Often during apparent silence, a fearful shriek, or the voice of lamentation, burst upon the air: now it was a woman's cry, now the shrill plaint of infancy. With the exception of these sufferers, the landscape was a blank. Where were the troops of friends Richard had hoped would hail him? Where the ancient Yorkists? Gone to augment the army which Surrey was bringing against the Scot; attached to these ill-omened allies, how could the prince hope to be met by his partizans? He had lost them all; the first North Briton who crossed the Tweed trampled on and destroyed for ever the fallen White Rose.

Resolutely bent on going forward till he should have advanced beyond the Scotch, on the following day York continued his march. They entered the ruins of another village; the desolation here was even more complete, although more recent; the flame was hardly spent upon the blackened rafters; the piles which the day before had been smiling dwellings, still smoked; a few domestic animals were skulking about. There was a church at the end of what had been a street; this was not spared. The English entered the desecrated aisle; an aged bleeding monk was lying at the altar's foot, who scowled even in death upon the soldiery; suddenly he recognized his countrymen;

pleasure gleamed in his sunken eyes, "Ye will avenge us! Deliver the land!—The hand of God will lead ye on!"

Plantagenet rushed forward—"Father!" he cried, "do I find you here?"

The old man spoke, looked faintly; Edmund bent over him: "My father, it is I, Edmund, your boy, your murderer——"

"My son," said the monk, "I behold you again, and die content! You are in arms, but by the blessing of the saints your sword's point is turned against the cruel invader. Not one, oh! not one Englishman will fall by his brother's hand, for not one will fight for that base deceit, the ill-nurtured Perkin, to whom God in his wrath has given such show of right as brings the Scot upon us. Once I thought—but no son of York would ally himself to these cruel border-robbers. God of my country, oh curse, curse him and his cause!"

The dying man spoke with difficulty; a few moments more, a spasm crossed his features, and they settled into stony insensibility. Edmund threw himself on the body; a deathlike silence reigned in the building; every heart beat with breathless horror; the curse uttered by the murdered man was even then breathed before God, and accepted. York spoke first with a calm, firm voice, "Arise, my cousin," he said; "do not thou fix yet more deeply the barbed arrow, which has entered my heart."

There are periods when remorse and horror conquer by their intensity every lesser impulse, and reign kings of the waste; this was no time for words or tears. Oh! welcome the grief or crime, which the bitterest of these could express or extenuate; it would insult this sad effigy of death to imagine that the impiety could be expiated. In silence they bore the reverend corpse to the vaults of the church, and then continued their way; some of the under-officers and men whispered together; but when again the chiefs conversed, they did not allude to this frightful scene, or to the awful imprecation which they felt suspended over their heads, shadowing their souls with unknown horror.

This was but the opening scene to worse wretchedness; hitherto they had seen the waste of war, now they came upon its active atrocities. A dense smoke, the flickering of pale flames, marked the progress of devastation; fierceness gleamed in the open blue eyes of Richard; he bit his lips, and at a quicker pace went forward; screams and horrid shrieks, mixed with shouts—oh! may not a veil be drawn over such horrors—flying children, mothers who stayed to die, fathers who unarmed rushed upon the weapons of the foe; fire and sword, animated by man's fellest spirit, were there to destroy. Kindled to fury, York and his chief friends had outsped their troops: they came to save; they called on the fierce Scot to spare; and, when their words were

unheeded, they drew their swords to beat back their allies. A fresh troop of Borderers, headed by Sir John Ramsay, at this moment poured into the village. The grey eye of the Scot was lighted up to the fiercest rage; but when he saw who and how few were they who had assailed his men, a demoniac expression, half exultation and joy, half deadly hate, animated him. Richard was driving before him a whole troop of camp-followers, cowardly and cruel fellows. Balmayne's hand was on his arm. "Your Highness forgets yourself," he said; "or is the fable ended, and you turned friend of Tudor?"

York's blood was up; his cheek, his brow were flushed; the word "assassin" burst from his lips, as he wheeled round and assailed his midnight foe. Thus a natural war began; English and Scotchmen, bent on mutual destruction, spurred on by every feeling of revenge, abhorrence, and national rivalry, dealt cruel blows one on the other. Richard's troops began to arrive in greater numbers; they far out-told their adversaries. Lord Bothwell, with his marauders, was obliged to retreat, and York was left in possession of his strange conquest. The peasantry gathered round him: they did not recognize the White Rose, they but blessed him as their deliverer: yet the sufferers were many, and the flames still raged. One woman with a wild shriek for her children, threw herself into the very heart of her burning cot; while, statue-like, amidst a little helpless brood, his wife at his feet a corpse, his dwelling in ashes, a stout yeoman stood; tears unheeded flowing down his weather-beaten cheeks. During the whole day Richard had striven against his own emotions, trying to dispel by pride, and indignation, and enforced fortitude, the softness that invaded his heart and rose to his eyes, blinding them; but the sight of these miserable beings, victims of his right, grew into a tragedy too sad to endure. One young mother laid her infant offspring at his feet, crying, "Bless thee; thou hast saved her!" and then sunk in insensibility before him; her stained dress and pallid cheeks speaking too plainly of wounds and death. Richard burst into tears, "Oh my stony and hard-frozen heart!" he cried, "which breakest not to see the loss and slaughter of so many of thy natural-born subjects and vassals!"

He spoke—he looked: Plantagenet was there, grief and horror seated in his dark, expressive eyes; Neville, who had lost his lofty pride; it was shame and self-abhorrence that painted their cheeks with blushes or unusual pallor. "We must hasten, my lord," said Barry, "after those evil-doers: they but quit one carcase, to pounce upon another."

"Do we fight the king of England's battles?" cried the Burgundian Lalayne, in unfeigned astonishment: "this will be strange intelligence for James of Scotland."

"So strange, Sir Roderick," said Richard, "that we will be the bearers of it ourselves. Give orders for the retreat, gentlemen. His majesty is engaged in the siege of Norham Castle. We will present us before him, and demand mercy for our unhappy subjects."

CHAPTER XXXV

THE RETREAT

Why didst thou promise such a beauteous day,
And make me travel forth without my
cloak,
To let base clouds o'ertake me on the way,
Hiding thy bravery in their rotten
smoke?

SHAKSPEARE.

It was York's characteristic to be sanguine beyond all men. Pain impressed him more deeply and sorely, than could be imagined by the cold of spirit; but show him the remedy, teach him the path to redress, and he threw off the clogging weight of care, and rose free and bright as in earliest youth. His impatience to behold his royal friend, to speak the little word, which he felt assured would recall the Scots from their ravages, and take from him the guilt of his subjects' blood, grew like a torrent in the spring:—he outsped his main troop; he left all but his chiefest friends behind; one by one even these grew fewer; he mounted a fresh horse, it was the third that day—
"May-flower is worse than blown," said Neville; "will not your highness repose till to-morrow?"

"Repose!"—this echo was his only answer, and already he was far and alone upon his way.

The Scottish lines were passed, and the embattled walls of Norham, grey and impenetrable as rock, were before him; the royal pavilion occupied the centre of the camp. The wearied steed that bore York dropt on one knee as he reined him up before it, flushed, with, every mark of travel and haste—he threw himself from his saddle, and entered the tent: it was thronged; he saw not one face, save that of the monarch himself, who was conversing with a churchman, whose dark foreign countenance Richard had seen before; now it was like a vision before him. James, in an accent of surprise, cried, "My lord, this is an unexpected visit."

"Excuse ceremony, my dear cousin," said York; "I come not to speak to the majesty of Scotland: man to man—a friend to his dearest friend—I have a suit to urge."

James, who was aware that his actual occupation of listening and even acceding to the suggestions of his foreign visitant, in favour of peace with Henry, was treason to York's cause, thought that news of Don Pedro D'Ayala's arrival was the secret of these words: he blushed as he replied, "As friend to friend, we will hear anon—to-morrow."

"There is no anon to my dear plea," said York; "even now the hellish work is about which you must check. Oh, what am I, king of Scotland, that I am to be made the curse and scourge of my own people? The name of Richard is the bye-word of hate and terror, there, where I seek for blessings and filial love. You know not the mischief your fierce Borderers achieve—it is not yet too late; recall your men; bid them spare my people; let not the blood of my subjects plead against my right; rather would I pine in exile for ever, than occasion the slaughter and misery of my countrymen, my children."

Richard spoke impetuously; his eyes filled with tears, his accents were fraught with passionate entreaty, and yet with a firm persuasion that he spoke not in vain: but his address had the very worst effect. James believed that, hearing that he was in treaty with his foe, he had come to re-urge his suit, to enforce the many promises given, to demand a continuation of the war. James, a Scotchman, bred in civil strife among fierce Highlanders and ruthless Borderers, saw something contemptible in this pity and supplication for cottagers and villains: the shame he had felt, or feared to feel, at the idea of being accused of treachery by his guest, was lightened; his lips were curled even to scorn, as in a cold tone he replied, "Sir, methinketh you take much pains, and very much strive to preserve the realm of another prince, which, I do believe, never will be yours."

A momentary surprise set open wide York's eyes; he glanced round him; the earl of Huntley's brow was clouded; a smile curled Lord Buchan's lips; the emotion that had convulsed the prince's features, gave place to the calmest dignity. "If not mine," he said, "let me yield the sway to the lady Peace: the name and presence of a Plantagenet shall no longer sanction the devastation of his country. I would rather be a cotter on your wild Highlands, than buy the sovereignty of my fair England by the blood of her inhabitants."

The warm, though capricious heart of James, was quietly recalled by the look and voice of his once dearest friend, to a sense of the ungraciousness of his proceeding: he frankly stretched out his hand; "I was wrong, cousin, forgive me, we will confer anon. Even now, orders have been issued to recall the troops; a few words will explain everything."

York bent his head in acquiescence. The king dismissed his nobles, and committed to the care of one among them the reverend D'Ayala. With a strong sentiment of self-defence, which was self-accusation—a half return of his ancient affection, which acted like remorse—James set himself to explain his proceedings. Fearful, unaided by any of the natives, of proceeding with an inadequate force farther into the heart of the country, he had set down before the castle of Norham, which was defended undauntedly by the bishop of Durham. He had wasted much time here; and now the Cornish insurgents being quelled, the earl of Surrey was marching northwards, at the head of forty thousand men. Surrey, Howard, might he not be a masked friend? "who," continued James, "has surely some personal enmity to your highness; for the reverend Father D'Ayala, an ambassador from Spain, visited him on his journey northward, and it seems the noble indulged in despiteful language; saying, that he who could bring the fell Scot (I thank him) into England, wore manifest signs of—I will not say—I remember not his words; they are of no import. The sum is, my dear lord, I cannot meet the English army in the open field; walled town—even those paltry towers—I cannot win: with what shame and haste I may, I must retreat over the border."

Many more words James, in the heat of repentant affection, said to soothe his English friend. York's blood boiled in his veins; his mind was a chaos of scorn, mortification, and worse anger against himself. The insult inflicted by James before his assembled lords, the bitter speech of Surrey; he almost feared that he deserved the one, while he disdained to resent the other; and both held him silent. As speedily as he might, he took leave of the king: he saw signs in the encampment of the return of the foragers; they were laden with booty: his heart was sick; to ease his pent-up burning spirit, when night brought solitude, though not repose, he wrote thus to the Lady Katherine:—

"Wilt thou, dear lady of my heart, descend from thy lofty state, and accept an errant knight, instead of a sceptered king, for thy mate? Alas! sweet Kate, if thou wilt not, I may never see thee more: for not thus, oh not thus, my God, will Richard win a kingdom! Poor England bleeds: our over-zealous cousin has pierced her with dismal wounds; and thou wouldst in thy gentleness shed a thousand tears, hadst thou beheld the misery that even now, grim and ghastly, floats before my sight. What am I, that I should be the parent of evil merely? Oh, my mother, my too kind friends, why did ye not conceal me from myself? Teaching me lessons of humbleness, rearing me as a peasant, consigning me to a cloister, my injuries would have died with me; and the good, the brave, the innocent, who have perished for me, or through me, had been spared!

"I fondly thought that mine was no vulgar ambition. I desired the good of others; the raising up and prosperity of my country. I saw my father's realm sold to a huckster—his subjects the victims of low-souled avarice. What more apparent duty, than to redeem his crown from Jew-hearted Tudor, and to set the bright jewels, pure and sparkling as when they graced his brow, on the head of his only son? Even now I think the day will come when I shall repair the losses of this sad hour—is it the restless ambitious spirit of youth that whispers future good, or true forebodings of the final triumph of the right?"

"Now, O sweetest Kate, I forget disgrace, I forget remorse; I bury every sorrow in thought of thee. Thy idea is as a windless haven to some way-worn vessel—its nest in a vast oak-tree to a tempest-baffled bird—hope of Paradise to the martyr who expires in pain. Wilt thou receive me with thine own dear smile? My divine love, I am not worthy of thee; yet thou art mine—Lackland Richard's single treasure. The stars play strange gambols with us—I am richer than Tudor, and but that thy husband must leave no questioned name, I would sign a bond with fate—let him take England, give me Katherine. But a prince may not palter with the holy seal God affixes to him—nor one espoused to thee be less than king; fear not, therefore, that I waver though I pause—Adieu!"

CHAPTER XXXVI

TIDINGS FROM IRELAND

Yet noble friends, his mixture with our blood,
Even with our own, shall no way
interrupt
A general peace.

FORD.

Pedro D'Ayala was ambassador from Ferdinand and Isabella to the king of England. There was something congenial in the craft and gravity of this man with the cautious policy of Henry. When the latter complained of the vexation occasioned him by the counterfeit Plantagenet, and the favour he met with in Scotland, D'Ayala offered to use his influence and counsel to terminate these feuds. He found James out of humour with York's ill success among the English, weary of a siege, where impregnable stone walls were his only enemies, uneasy at the advance of Surrey; pliable, therefore, to all his arguments. A week after D'Ayala's arrival, the Scots had

recrossed the Tweed, the king and his nobles had returned to Edinburgh, and York to Katherine.

Richard's northern sun was set, and but for this fair star he had been left darkling. When the English general in his turn crossed the Tweed, and ravaged Scotland, *he* was looked on by its inhabitants as the cause of their disasters; and, but that some loving friends were still true to him, he had been deserted in the land which so lately was a temple of refuge to him. The earl of Huntley exerted himself to prevent his falling into too deep disgrace in the eyes of Scotland, and was present at the consultations of the exiles to urge some new attempt in some other part of King Henry's dominions. York was anxious to wash out the memory of his overthrow; so that this check, which seemed so final to his hopes, but operated as an incentive to further exertions. Yet whither should he go? the whole earth was closed upon him. The territory of Burgundy, which had so long been his home, was forbidden. France—Concessault, who was his attached friend, dissuaded him from encountering a mortifying repulse there. Even his own Spain would refuse to receive him, now that D'Ayala had shown himself his enemy; but, no, he was not so far reduced to beg a refuge at the limits of civilization; still he had his sword, his cause, his friends.

A stranger came, an unexpected visitant from over the sea, to decide his vacillating counsels. The man was aged and silver-haired, smooth in his manners, soft-voiced, yet with quick grey eyes and compressed lips, indications of talent and resolution and subtlety. Frion saw him first, and, deceived by his almost fawning manners into an idea of his insignificance, asked his purpose and name. The stranger with the utmost gentleness refused to disclose his object to any but the prince; and Frion, with great show of insolence, refused to introduce him to his presence. "Then without thy leave, sir knave," said the old man calmly, "I must force my way."

Astley, the poor scrivener of Canterbury, was present. This honest, simple-hearted fellow, had shown so much worth, so much zeal, so much humbleness with such fidelity, that he had become a favourite in York's court, and principally with the Lady Katherine. Frion hated him, for he was his opposite, but pretended to despise him, and to use him as an underling. Astley meekly submitted, and at last gained a kind of favour in the Frenchman's eyes by the deference and respect of his manner. The stranger, with the readiness of one accustomed to select agents for his will, addressed him, bidding him announce to his highness a gentleman from Ireland. "And be assured," he said, "the duke will ill-requite any tardiness on thy part."

An angry burst from Frion interrupted him. This man, rarely off his guard, but roused now by recent mortifications, forgot himself in the violence he displayed, which

strangely contrasted with the soft tranquillity of the stranger, and Astley's modest, but very determined annunciation of his resolve to convey the message to the prince. Frion, from loud words, was about to proceed to acts, when Lord Barry entered—Barry, who felt Scotland as a limbo of despair, who was for ever urging Richard to visit Ireland, to whom the court life of the English was something like a trim-fenced park to a new caught lion. Barry saw the stranger—his eyes lighted up, nay, danced with sudden joy: with no gentle hand he thrust Frion away, and then bent his knee, asking a blessing of the prior of Kilmainham; and in the same breath eagerly demanded what had brought the venerable man from Buttevant across the dangerous seas.

Keating's presence gave new life to York's councils: he brought an invitation from Maurice of Desmond to the duke. The earl had, since Richard's departure, been occupied in training troops, and so fortifying himself as to enable him to rise against Poynings, whose regular government, and above all, whose predilection for the Butlers, caused him to be detested by the Geraldines. Hurried on by hatred and revenge, Desmond resolved to do that which would be most dreaded and abhorred of Henry—to assume the badge of the White Rose, and to set up the pretensions of young Richard. The tidings were that York was a loved and honoured guest in Edinburgh; and the impetuous Desmond feared that he would hardly be induced to abandon King James's powerful alliance, for the friendship of a wild Irish chieftain. The very invitation must be committed to no mean or witless hands: the difficulties appeared so great, that the measure was on the point of being abandoned, when the prior of Kilmainham, who, in the extreme of age, awoke to fresh life at a prospect of regaining his lost consequence, offered himself to undertake the arduous task. His views went far beyond the earl's: he hoped to make the king of Scotland an active party in his plots, and to contrive a simultaneous invasion of England from the north and from the west. Already his turbulent and grasping spirit saw Irish and Scotch meeting midway in England, and with conjoined forces dethroning Tudor, and dictating terms to his successor. He came too late: he came to find a peace nearly concluded between James and Henry; the White Rose fallen into disregard; and his arrival looked, upon as the best hope, the last refuge of his fallen party.

Richard on the instant accepted his invitation. To a generous heart the feeling of enforced kindness succeeding to spontaneous affection, is intolerable. The very generosity of his own disposition made him recoil from exacting a reluctant boon from his sometime friend. To live a pensioner among the turbulent, arrogant Scots, was not to be thought of. The earl of Huntley, in fond expectation of his daughter's greatness, would have despised him had he remained inactive. Even Katherine was solicitous to leave Scotland—she knew her countrymen; and, ready as she was to give up every

exalted aim, and to make her husband's happiness in the retired quiet of private life, she knew that insult and feud would attend his further tarrying among the Scotch.

York had been for nearly a year the guest of King James; twelve months, in all their long-drawn train of weeks and days, had paced over the wide earth, marking it with change: each one had left its trace in the soul of Richard. There is something frightful, to a spirit partly tired of the world, to find that their life is to be acquainted with no durable prosperity; that happiness is but a modification of a train of events, which, like the fleeting birth of flowers, varies the year with different hues. But York was still too young to be aweary even of disappointment; he met the winter of his fortunes with cheerful fortitude, so that a kind of shame visited James, inspired by the respect his injured friend so well merited.

The capricious, but really noble heart of the Scottish king was at this time put to a hard trial. One of the preliminaries of peace, most insisted upon by Henry, was, that his rival should be given up to him:—this was, at the word, refused. But even to dismiss him from his kingdom, seemed so dastardly an act towards one allied to him by his own choice, that the swelling heart of the cavalier could not yet tame itself to the statesman's necessity. Some of his subjects, meanwhile, were ready enough to cut the Gordian knot by which he was entangled. Tudor had many emissaries in Edinburgh; and Lord Moray, Lord Buchan, and the dark Bothwell, whose enmity had become fierce personal hate, were still egged on by various letters and messages from England to some deed of sanguinary violence.

Sir John Ramsay was sought out by Frion. That goodly diplomatist must have entertained a high opinion of his mollifying eloquence, when he dared encounter the hot temper of him he had dishonoured in the eyes of the English prince, and of his own countryman Hamilton. But Frion knew that in offering revenge he bought pardon: he was of little mark in Ramsay's eyes, while the man he had injured, and whom he consequently detested beyond every other, survived to tell the grating tale of the defeated villany of the assassin, and the godlike magnanimity of him who pardoned.

Frion's own feelings, which had vacillated, were now fixed to betray the prince. He had wavered, because he had a kind of personal affection for the noble adventurer. Somehow he managed to fancy him a creature of his own: he had worked so long, and at one time so well for him, that he had fostered the vain belief that his dearest hopes, and best pretensions, would vanish like morning mist, if he blew unkindly on them. It was not so: James had been his friend; Huntley had given him his daughter without his interference; and the Irish project, with Keating at its head, who treated Frion with galling contempt, filled up the measure of his discontents. If anything else had been

needed, the Lady Katherine's favour to Astley, and some offices of trust, in which York himself had used him, sufficed to add the last sting to malice. "If they will not let me make, they shall rue the day when I shall mar; learn shall they, that Frion can clip an eagle's wings even in its pride of flight."

It is common to say that there is honour among thieves and villains. It is not honour; but an acknowledged loss of shame and conscience, and a mutual trust in the instinctive hatred the bad must bear the good, which strongly unites them. In spite of the Frenchman's former treachery, Balmayne felt that he could now confide, that his guilt would stretch far enough to encircle in its embrace the very act he desired; and he again trusted, and used him as the chief agent of his plots.

The earl of Surrey was ravaging Scotland; and King James, with the chivalrous spirit of the times, challenged him to single combat. The earl, in answer, refused to place his master's interests at the hazard of his single prowess, though ready for any other cause to accept the honour tendered him. The herald that brought this reply, Frion reported to Richard to be charged with a letter to him. Its purpose was to declare, that though, while aided and comforted by the enemies of England, the earl warred against him, yet the Howard remembered the ancient attachments of his house; and that, if the White Rose, wholly renouncing the Scotch, would trust to the honour of the representative of a race of nobles, the army now in the field to his detriment should be turned to an engine of advantage. "Time pressed," the letter concluded by saying—"and if the duke of York were willing to give his sails to the favouring wind, let him repair with a small company to Greenock, where he would find zealous and powerful friends."

At first this intimation filled the prince with exultation and delight. The time was at last come when he should lead the native nobility of England to the field, and meet his enemy in worthy guise. There was but one check; he could not join Surrey, while Surrey was in arms against his once generous friend; so that, by a strange shifting of events, he now became anxious for peace between Scotland and England; eager that the seal should be set that destroyed the alliance and amity which had so lately been the sole hope of his life. Neville and Plantagenet entered into his views; and while, seemingly at the bottom of Fortune's scale, a new spirit of gladness animated this little knot of Englishmen.

For one thing young Richard was not prepared: the preliminaries of peace he knew were arranged, and he was aware that its conclusion would take the sword out of James's hand. They had rarely met lately; and this, while it lessened the familiarity, rather added to the apparent kindness of their interviews. There was in both these

young princes a genuine warmth of heart, and brightness of spirit, that drew them close whenever they did meet. James honoured the integrity and the unconquered soul of the outcast monarch, while his own genius, his vivacity, and polished courtesy, in spite of his caprice and late falling off, spread a charm around that forced admiration and affection even from him he injured. It was at this period, that, notwithstanding their real disunion, Richard felt it as strange to find his royal host confused in manner, and backward of speech. They had been at a hunting party, where Lord Moray's haughty glance of triumph, and the sneer that curled the earl of Buchan's lip, would have disclosed some victory gained by them, had York deigned to regard their aspects. At length, after much hesitation, while riding apart from his peers, James asked—"If there were any news from the Lady Margaret of Burgundy?"

"Sir Roderick Lalayne returned to her a month ago," replied York, "and with him went my dear and zealous Lady Brampton, to urge fresh succour for one, to whom fortune has so long shown a wintry face, that methinks spring must at last be nigh at hand, herald of bright, blossoming summer."

"What promises then my lady duchess?" said the king, eagerly.

"Alas! her promises are as blank as her power," replied Richard. "Even when the old dukes of Burgundy were as emperors in Christendom, they were but as provosts and city-magistrates in the free towns of Flanders; and these towns resolve on peace with England."

"It is the cry of the world," said James, with a sigh; "this Tudor is a mighty man. Why, even I, a Scot, a warrior, and a king, am forced to join the universal voice, and exclaim, 'Peace with England,' even though my honour is the sacrifice."

"Your majesty imparts no strange truth to me," said York. "I have long known that this must be; but surely you speak in soreness of spirit, when you speak of the sacrifice of honour. I thought the terms agreed on were favourable to Scotland?"

"King Henry demanded, in the first place, the delivery of your highness into his hands." James blushed deeply as he said these words.

"Or he will come seize me," rejoined the duke, with a laugh. "In good hour I will deliver myself, if he will walk through the bristling lances, and set at naught the wide-mouthed cannon that will bellow in his path."

"Have you then new hopes?" cried the king; "oh! say but so; and half my shame, and all my sorrow vanishes. Say that you have hope of speedy good in some other country;

for I have sworn, ere April wear into May, Scotland shall be made poor by your highness's absence."

A long pause followed these words. James felt as if he had given words to his own concealed dishonour, and struck his iron-girdled side with the bitter thought. "O! spirit of my father, this may not atone; but I must pay also in shame and torturous self-contempt for my heavy guilt." A sudden blow, a precipitous fall when unaware his feet had reached the crumbling brink of a beetling precipice, would not have made such commotion in Richard's heart, as the forced and frightful conviction that the friend he had trusted heaped this insult on him. For the first time in his life, perhaps, pride conquered every other feeling; for reproach had been more *friendly*, than the spirit that impelled him, with a placid voice, and a glance of haughty condescension, to reply:—"Now that your majesty dismisses me, I find it fittest season to thank you heartily for your many favours. That you deny me to the suit of your new ally, and send me forth scathless from your kingdom, is the very least of these. Shall I forget that, when, a wanderer and a stranger, I came hither, you were a brother to me? That when an outcast from the world, Scotland became a home of smiles, and its king my dearest friend? These are lesser favours; for your love was of more value to me than your power, though you used it for my benefit; and, when you gave me the Lady Katherine, I incurred such a debt of gratitude, that it were uncanceled, though you cast me, bound hand and foot, at Tudor's footstool. That I am bankrupt even in thanks, is my worst misery; yet, if the eye of favour, which I believe Fortune is now opening on me, brighten into noon-day splendour, let James of Scotland ask, and, when England shall be added to his now barren name, Richard will give, though it were himself."

"Gentle cousin," replied the king, "you gloss with horrid words a bitter pill to both; for though the scath seem yours, mine is the punishment. I lose what I can ill spare, a kinsman and a friend."

"Never!" cried York; "Scotland bids a realmless monarch, a beggar prince, depart: the king of Scotland, moved by strong state necessity, is no longer the ally of the disinherited orphan of Edward the Fourth: but James is Richard's friend; he will rejoice, when he sees him, borne with the flowing tide, rise from lowness to the highest top at which he aims. And now, dear my lord, grant me one other boon. I am about to depart, even of my own will; dismiss then every rankling feeling; lay no more to your generous, wounded heart, a need, which is even more mine than yours; but let smiles and love attend your kinsman to the end, unalloyed by a deeper regret, than that fate wills it, and we must separate."

CHAPTER XXXVII

TREACHERY

I am your wife, No human power can or shall divorce
My faith from duty.

FORD.

—With My fortune and my seeming destiny, He made the bond, and broke it not with
me. No human tie is snapp'd betwixt us two.

SCHILLER'S WALLENSTEIN.

Frion believed that he held the strings, which commanded the movements of all the puppets about him. The intrigues of party, the habitual use of ill means to what those around him deemed a good end, had so accustomed him to lying and forgery, that his conscience was quite seared to the iniquity of these acts; truth to him was an accident, to be welcomed or not according as it was or was not advantageous to his plots.

King James prepared a fleet for the conveyance of the prince; and the earl of Huntley, as a matter of course, promised to entertain his daughter royally, until, in a palace in Westminster, she should find her destined title and fit abode. The Lady Katherine thanked him, but declared that she was nothing moved from her bridal vow, and that she never would desert Richard's side. All that her father urged was of no avail. State and dignity, or their contraries, humiliation and disgrace, could only touch her through her husband; he was her exalter or debaser, even as he rose or fell; it was too late now to repine at degradation, which it ill beseemed the daughter of a Gordon to encounter; it was incurred when she plighted her faith at the altar; wherever she was it must be hers. As a princess, she was lost or redeemed by her husband's fortunes. As a woman, her glory and all her honour must consist in never deviating from the straight line of duty, which forbade her absence from his side.

The earl disdained to reason with a fond doting girl, as he called the constant-minded lady, but applied to the king, representing how it would redound to his discredit, should a princess of his blood wander a vagrant beggar over sea and land. James had passed his royal word to Katherine, that she should have her will on this point; and when, at her father's suit he tried to dissuade her, he was at once silenced by her simple earnest words; "Ask me not," she said, "to place myself on the list of unworthy

women: for your own honour's sake, royal cousin, permit your kinswoman to perform a wife's part unopposed. You and my father bestowed me, a dutiful subject, an obedient daughter, according to your will; you transferred my duty and obedience; and truly as I paid it to you, so will I keep it for my lord."

"What can we reply, my good earl marshal," said James, turning to Huntley, "I rebelled against the religion through which I reign, did I deny our sweet Kate free allowance to follow the dictates of her generous heart. Nor let us grudge the White Rose this one fair bloom. Love, such as Katherine feels, love, and the dearest, best gift of God—alas! too oft denied to poor humanity, and most to me—self-complacency, arising from a good conscience, will repay her every sacrifice."

Huntley retired in high indignation; his will was opposed; his word, which he deemed a law, had but a feather's weight. The blood of the Gordon was stirred to rage; and he broke forth in fierce and cruel expressions of anger, calling his daughter ingrate—her lord base, and a traitor. Such muttered curses were reported to Lord Buchan: in the scheme on foot, they had somewhat dreaded to incur Huntley's displeasure and revenge, knowing how dearly he prized the hope of royalty for his daughter; but now they fancied that they might draw him in ere he was aware to approve their deed. The crafty Frion was set on to sound him; the iron was hot, most easily to their eyes, it took the desired form.

Huntley was a Scot, cunning even when angry—cautious when most passionate. The first intimations of the conspiracy were greedily received by him. He learnt the falsehood of the letter pretending to come from the earl of Surrey; and the use that was to be made of this decoy to seize on the duke of York's person. He did not scruple to promise his assistance; he reiterated his angry imprecations against his unworthy son-in-law; he thanked Frion with cordial warmth for affording him this opportunity for revenge; he declared his gratitude towards the confederate nobles; and the Frenchman left him, with the full belief that he was ready to lend his best aid to deliver over the English prince to ignominy and death.

Such was the end of King Henry's last scheme to obtain possession of his too noble, too excelling rival, by means of Scottish fraud, and the treason of York's dependants. The earl of Huntley conducted the whole affair with the utmost secrecy. Apparently he acted the part designed for him by the conspirators. He reconciled himself to the prince; he urged an instant compliance with Surrey's invitation. The English had asked for some guarantee of Surrey's truth. Huntley obviated this difficulty. Through his intervention a new and sufficing impulse was given. Richard appointed the day when he should repair to Greenock, there to meet the envoy who was to lead him to Lord

Surrey's presence. In the harbour of Greenock rode the bark which was to convey him to his English prison. King Henry's hirelings were already there: Frion conducted the victims blindfold into the net: they had meant to have gathered together a troop of ruffian borderers to prevent all resistance; but Huntley promised to be there himself with a band of Highlanders. The whole thing only seemed too easy, too secure.

The wily secretary had overshot his mark in taking so readily for granted Huntley's assent to the ruin of the duke of York. He had come upon him in his angry hour: his honied words were a dew of poison; his adjurations for peace, oil to fire. Then, as the noble strode through the hall, imprecating vengeance, he slid in words that made him stop in full career. Men are apt to see their wishes mirrored in the object before them; and, when the earl bent his grey eyes upon the Provençal and knit his time-furrowed brow in attention and interest, Frion saw the satisfaction of a man on the brink of dear revenge. He was far a-field. The very rage in which the earl had indulged, by a natural reaction, softened him towards his children; and when the traitor spoke of schemes ripe to deliver York into his adversary's hands, he recoiled at once from the path of vengeance opened before him, and listened with horror to the detail of a conspiracy which would tear the very shadow of a diadem from his daughter's brow; yet he listened, and his words still enticed the over-wily Frion. "Balmayne," said the earl, "all must succeed even to the death. Where he intermeddles, he is ruthless;" thus ran his comments: "My good Lord Buchan, what the foul fiend makes him so busy? English gold! Yes: Buchan loves the gilding better than the strong iron that it hides. The honour of the royal house, my most reverend uncle! Is his animosity so stirring? Oh! priests are your only haters. So Richard's tale is told. The chroniclers will speak of Duke Perkin, of the canker that ate out the heart of Gordon's fair rose, the gibbet, instead of a throne, to which she was wed; a fair eminence! My Kate will hardly ascend it with him: she must halt at the gallows' foot." These words, said with bitterness, seemed to Frion the boiling sarcasm of an exasperated parent. The man's vanity was the trap in which he was caught: he could not believe that a savage Scot, an untaught Highlander, could enter the lists with one nurtured in the subtle atmosphere of Provence, with the pupil of Louis the Eleventh; a man schooled in eastern lore, who had passed a whole life of contrivance and deceit.

The Scottish nobles, Moray, Buchan, and Bothwell, were satisfied in having given their countenance to the English hirelings; and now that the more powerful Huntley promised to watch over the execution of their designs, they were glad enough to withdraw from the rude and inhospitable act. Huntley had everything in his own hands. He, with a party of Highlanders, escorted the duke and duchess of York, with their friends and attendants, to Greenock. Frion had never shown himself so humble

or so courteous; he seemed afraid that any one of his victims should escape: he was particularly anxious to entice his old enemy, the prior of Kilmainham, into the snare. His readiness and vivacity were remarked by all: it was attributed to the high hopes he entertained of his royal master's success through the alliance of the earl of Surrey; and, while York expressed his affectionate approbation, he smiled blandly, and painted every feature in the very colouring he wished it to wear.

The vessel rode at anchor; the English sailors, on the arrival of York, went on board, got her under weigh, and dropped down the coast. With the dawn Lord Howard of Effingham, with a chosen troop, was, according to the false hopes of Richard, to arrive at the rendezvous, a wood about two miles south of the town, bordering the sands of the sea. Here the English emissaries were congregated, and here a score of Highlanders were in ambush, to assist in the capture of the White Rose. Hither, even before dawn, the wakeful Frion came, to announce the speedy arrival of his lord. He found his English friends in some anxiety. Clifford, who, under the name of Wiatt, had been chief among them, was seized with panic or remorse, and had gone on board the vessel, which had east anchor but a few furlongs from the shore. The others were mean underlings: Frion's presence gave them courage; he was elated; his laugh was free; he had neither doubt nor scruple; no, not even when he turned from the vulgar, brutalized countenances of these ruffians, to behold the princely victim in all the splendour of innocence, with one beside him so lovely, that the spirit of good itself had selected her form for its best earthly bower; or to see Edmund, whose dark eyes beamed with unknown joy, and Neville, whose haughty glance was exchanged for a glad smile. The man's sole thought was exultation at his own cleverness and success, in having inveigled so many of the noble and the brave to this dark fate.

"What tidings of Effingham?" asked York.

"Are ye ready?" cried Huntley.

"All!" replied Frion; "all save him ye name Wiatt. Sir Robert, forsooth, is but half a man, and never does more than half deed, though that half makes whole crime. All is ready. I hear the sound of oars; the boat nears the shore."

Through the tall bare trunks of the trees, a glimpse of the beach might be gained; the roaring of the surges was distinct, now mingled with the cry of sailors.

"Then lose we no time," said Huntley. "My lord of York, these words sound strange. You expected a noble countryman to lead you to victory; you find nameless fellows, and the prince of knaves, most ready and willing to lead you to everlasting prison. Lo, the scene shifts again! Never be cast down, Master Frion; you are as subtle as any of your

race—only to be outwitted by a niggard Scotchman, who can ill read, and worse write; except when villany is blazoned in a man's face, and his sword indites a traitor's fate. Your clerkship will find none among us learned enough to afford you benefit of clergy."

Huntley drew his sword; and at the signal his Highlanders arose from their ambush. Prion was seized and bound. None, who even a moment before had seen the smooth-faced villain, could have recognized him; he was pale as the snow on Ben Nevis. A Highlander, an adept in such acts, dexterously threw a knotted rope over his head, and cast his eye up to the trees for a convenient branch. Such had been the orders; such the summary justice of the earl.

Richard meanwhile looked on the blanched visage and quailing form of his betrayer in mere compassion. "Is it even so, Etienne!" he said; "and after long companionship we part thus."

The trembling craven fell on his knees, though he tightened the halter by the movement, so that when Richard turned away, saying, "I had thought better of thee: Jesu pardon thee as readily as I—farewell!" he had scarce voice to cry for mercy.

"Aye," cried the Gordon; "such mercy as we grant the wolf and thievish fox. Short shrift be thine, Master Secretary!"

"By Our Lady's grace, stay!" said Katherine; "do not kill the false-hearted knave. He is a coward, and dares survive his honour; let him live."

Richard looked sternly on the kneeling slave. To the good there is something awful in the sight of a guilty man. It is a mystery to them how the human heart can be so perverted. Is it a spirit from hell that incorporates itself with the pulsations of our mortal bosom; a darkness that overshadows; a fiendish essence that mingles with the breath God gave to his own image? York felt a shrinking horror. "Thou hast pursued me since my youth," he said, "forcing thyself into my councils; sometimes as a wily enemy; at others befriending me in seeming, raising my soul, that flagged beneath the world's unkind ministry; dropping balm by thy words into a wounded heart; to end thy office thus! Was this thy purpose ever; or what demon whispered thee to betray? Die! oh no! too many, the good, the great, the true, have died for me; live thou a monument—a mark to tell the world that York can pardon, York can despise—not so base a thing as thee—that were little, but even thy employer. Go, tell my sister's husband that I bear a charmed life; that love and valour are my guards. Bid him bribe those, nor waste his ill-got crowns on such as thee. Unbind him, sirs; make signal to the boat; let him on board; the wind stands fair for England."

The fall of many a hope, roused by the forgery on Surrey's name, was forgotten by Richard, as he sickened at this other mark of man's wickedness and folly. He was surely the dear sport of fortune, a tale to chronicle how faithless friends may be. If such thoughts, like summer clouds, darkened his mind, they vanished, driven by the winds of life that bore him onward. This was no time for mere gloomy meditation. Though he was obliged to return to his forgotten Irish scheme, and to dismiss the glorious anticipation in which he had indulged, of leading the chivalry of England to the field; though no real defeat had ever visited him so keenly as this mockery of one; yet he was forced to forget himself, and to apply himself to console and rouse his downcast friends; but his skill was well repaid, and soon he again awoke to those feelings of buoyant hope, unwearied energy, and unshaken confidence which were the essence of his character.

In this last trial he felt how much good he might derive from the sweetness and constant spirit of the Lady Katherine. She hoped for none of the world's blessings, except they came in the shape of loves from him to whom she was united; happiness—all hers as centred in her blameless affections; and her confidence was placed in the belief and knowledge, that by devoting herself to her lord, to the wandering outcast who so dearly needed her sacrifice, she fulfilled her destiny upon earth, and pleased "the great Task Master," who for happiness or misery, but certainly for good, had given her life. All her gentle eloquence was spent in dissuading Richard from those unkind thoughts towards his species, which the treason of these base men, the caprice of James, the harsh sentence (for this was again brought home to him by disappointment) of Surrey, awakened in his bosom. It proved no hard task; soon the princely adventurer, with eagle flight, soared from the sad prostration of spirit, the birth of his disasters, to fresh hopes and lofty resolves.

It was necessary immediately to prepare for his departure. The earl of Huntley, struck by his magnanimity, no longer opposed his daughter's wish. The English exiles were eager for a new, and, they believed (for untired is hope in man), for a prosperous career. Scotland grew rude, confined, and remote in their eyes. In Ireland were placed for them the portals of the world, to be opened by their swords; the dancing sea-waves invited them; the winds of heaven lent themselves to their service. "My friends," said Richard, "dear and faithful partners of my wayward fortunes, I would fondly believe that we are favoured of Heaven. We are few; but the evil and the treacherous are no longer among us. And does old Time in all his outworn tales tell any truer, than that the many, being disunited, and so false, have ever been vanquished by the loving, bold, and heroic few? That a child may scan with its fingers our bare arithmetic, will therefore be to us the source of success, as assuredly it will be of glory. The English

were few when they mowed down thickly-planted French at Cressy and Poitiers. Which among us, armed as we are in the mail of valour, but would encounter ten of Tudor's scant-paid mercenaries? For me! I do believe that God is on my side, as surely as I know that justice and faith are; and I fear no defeat."

It is thus that man, with fervent imagination, can endue the rough stone with loveliness, forge the misshapen metal into a likeness of all that wins our hearts by exceeding beauty, and breathe into a dissonant trump soul-melting harmonies. The mind of man—that mystery, which may lend arms against itself, teaching vain lessons of material philosophy, but which, in the very act, shows its power to play with all created things, adding the sweetness of its own essence to the sweetest, taking its ugliness from the deformed. The creative faculty of man's soul—which, animating Richard, made him see victory in defeat, success and glory in the dark, the tortuous, the thorny path, which it was his destiny to walk from the cradle to the tomb.

Oh, had I, weak and faint of speech, words to teach my fellow-creatures the beauty and capabilities of man's mind; could I, or could one more fortunate, breathe the magic word which would reveal to all the power, which we all possess, to turn evil to good, foul to fair; then vice and pain would desert the newborn world!

It is not thus: the wise have taught, the good suffered for us; we are still the same; and still our own bitter experience and heart-breaking regrets teach us to sympathize too feelingly with a tale like this; which records the various fortunes of one who at his birth received every gift which most we covet; whose strange story is replete with every change of happiness and misery; with every contrast of glorious and disgraceful; who was the noble object of godlike fidelity, and the sad victim of demoniac treason; the mark of man's hate and woman's love; spending thus a short eventful life. It is not spent; he yet breathes: he is on the world of waters. What new scene unfolds itself? Where are they who were false, where those who were true! They congregate around him, and the car of life bears him on, attended by many frightful, many lovely shapes, to his destined end. He has yet much to suffer; and, human as he is, much to enjoy.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

DEPRESSION

One moment these were heard and seen; another Past, and the two who stood beneath that night, Each only heard, or saw, or felt the other.

SHELLEY.

The hour had now arrived when Richard took leave of Scotland. The king was humbled by the necessity he felt himself under, of sending forth his friend and kinsman into the inhospitable world; and he felt deep grief at parting with his lovely cousin. She grew pale, when for the last time she saw the friend of her youth. But Katherine looked upon life in a mode very different from the usual one: the luxuries and dignities of the world never in her mind for a moment came in competition with her affections and her duty; she saw the plain path before her; whatever her father's or her royal cousin's idea had been in giving her to the duke of York, she knew that, being his, her destiny upon earth was to share his fortunes, and soothe his sorrows. This constant looking on, giving herself up to, and delighting in one aim, one object, one occupation, elevated her far above the common cares of existence. She left

—"All meaner things, The low ambition and the pride of kings,"

—to shroud herself in love; to take on herself the hallowed state of one devoting herself to another's happiness. Cleopatra, basking in sunny pomp, borne, the wonder of the world, in her gilded bark, amidst all the aroma of the east, upon the gently-rippling Cydnus, felt neither the pride nor joy of Katherine, as, on the poor deck of their dark weather-beaten skiff, she felt pillowed by the downy spirit of love, fanned by its gentle breath.

The duke of York was more depressed; he thought of how, since his miserable childhood, he had been the sport of Fortune and her scorn. He thought of the false, the cold, the perished: a dark wall seemed to rise around him; a murky vault to close over him: success, glory, honour, the world's treasures, which he had been brought up to aspire to as his dearest aim, his right, were unattainable; he was the defeated, the outcast; there was a clog in his way for ever; a foul taint upon his name. Thus seated on the deck, his arm coiled round a rope, his head leaning on his arm, while the stars showered a dim silvery radiance, and the sparkling sea mocked their lustre with brighter fires; while the breeze, that swelled his sail, and drove him merrily along, spent its cold breath on him; he, painting all natural objects with the obscure colouring suggested by his then gloomy spirit, distorting the very scenery of heaven and vast ocean into symbols of his evil fate, gave himself up to the very luxury of woe,—meanwhile the shadow of a lovely form fell on him, soft fingers pressed the curls of his hair, and Katherine asked, "Are the nights of Andalusia more glorious than this?"

At the voice of the charmer the demon fled; sky and sea cast off the dim veil his grief had woven, and creation was restored its native beauty. Hitherto the halls of palaces,

the gaiety of a court, the council-chamber, had been the scenes in which the princely pair had lived together; linked to an engrossing state of things, surrounded by their partisans, they had been friends, nay lovers, according to the love of the many. But solitary Nature is the true temple of Love, where he is not an adjunct, but an essence; and now she alone was around them, to fill them with sublime awe, and the softest tenderness. In Richard's eyes, the kingdom of his inheritance dwindled into a mere speck; the land of her nativity became but a name to Katherine. It sufficed for their two full hearts that they were together on the dark wide sea; the bright sky above, and calm upon the bosom of the deep. They could ill discern each other in the shadowy twilight; a dream-like veil was cast over their features, as sleep curtains out the soul, so that we look on the beloved slumberer, and say, "He is there, though the mystery of repose wraps me from him;" so now darkness blinded and divided them: but hand clasped hand; he felt that one existed who was his own, his faithful; and she rejoiced in the accomplishment of the master-sentiment of her soul, the desire of self-devotion, self-annihilation, for one who loved her. The passion that warmed their hearts had no fears, no tumult, no doubt. One to the other they sufficed; and, but that the trance is fleeting, Happiness, the lost child of the world, would have found here her home; for when love, which is the necessity of affectionate hearts, and the sense of duty, which is the mystery and the law of our souls, blend into one feeling, Paradise has little to promise save immortality.

For many days this state of forgetful ecstasy lasted. Plantagenet and Neville spoke of wars in England; Lord Barry and Keating of their Irish schemes—the prince listened and replied; but his soul was far away—Oh, that for ever they might sail thus on the pathless, shoreless sea!—Nothing mean or trivial or ignoble could visit them; no hate, no care, no fear—this might not be, but to have felt, to have lived thus for a few short days, suffices to separate mortal man from the groveling part of his nature—no disgrace, no despair can so bring him back to the low-minded world, as to destroy the sense of having once so existed. And Richard, marked for misery and defeat, acknowledged that power which sentiment possesses to exalt us—to convince us that our minds, endowed with a soaring, restless aspiration, can find no repose on earth except in love.

CHAPTER XXXIX

SIEGE OF WATERFORD

"Now for our Irish wars!"

SHAKSPEARE.

Again the duke of York approached the rocky entrance of the Cove of Cork, again he passed through the narrow passage, which opening, displayed a lovely sheet of tranquil water, decked with islands. The arrival of his fleet in the harbour was hailed with joy. Old John O'Water had returned to his civic labours, and had contrived to get himself chosen mayor for this year, that he might be of greater assistance to the White Rose in his enterprise.

As soon as the arrival of his ships off the coast was known, O'Water despatched messengers to the earl of Desmond, and busied himself to give splendour to Richard's entrance into Cork. Tapestry and gay-coloured silks were hung from the windows; the street was strewn with flowers—citizens and soldiers intermixed crowded to the landing-place. York's heart palpitated with joy. It was not that thence he much hoped for success to his adventure, which required more than the enthusiasm of the remote inhabitants of the south of Ireland to achieve it: but Cork was a sort of home to him; here he had found safety when he landed, barely escaped from Trangmar's machinations—here he first assumed his rightful name and title—here, a mere boy, ardent, credulous, and bold—he had seen strangers adopt his badge and avouch his cause. Five years had elapsed since then—the acclaim of a few kind voices, the display of zeal, could no longer influence his hopes as then they had done, but they gladdened his heart, and took from it that painful feeling which we all too often experience—that we are cast away on the inhospitable earth, useless and neglected.

He was glad also in the very first spot of his claimed dominions whereon he set foot, to see the Lady Katherine received with the honours due to her rank. Her beauty and affability won the hearts of all around, and O'Water, with the tenderness that an old man is so apt to feel towards a young and lovely woman, extended to her a paternal affection, the simplicity and warmth of which touched her, thrown as she was among strangers, with gratitude.

Lord Desmond arrived—he was struck by the improvement in York's manner, still ingenuous and open-hearted: he was more dignified, more confident in himself than before—the husband of Katherine also acquired consideration; as an adventurous boy, he might be used according to the commodity of the hour—now he had place—station in the world, and Desmond paid him greater deference, almost unawares.

But the earl was sorely disappointed; "Reverend Father," said he to Keating, "what aid does Scotland promise? Will they draw Tudor with his archers and harquebusiers, and

well-horsed knights, to the north, giving our Irish kern some chance of safe landing in the west?"

"Peace is concluded between Scotland and England," replied Keating.

Desmond looked moody. "How thrives the White Rose over the water? How sped the duke, when he entered England? Some aid somewhere we must have, besides yonder knot of wanderers, and our own hungry, naked kerns."

"By my fay!" replied Keating, "every budding blossom on the Rose-bush was nipped, as by a north-east wind. When Duke Richard sowed his hopes there, like the dragon's teeth of Dan Cadmus, they turned into so many armed men to attack him."

"Sooth, good prior," said the earl, with a sharp laugh, "we shall speed well thereby: would you a re-acting of the gleeful mime at Stowe?"

"Wherefore," said Keating, "fix your thoughts on England? The dark sea rolls between us, and even the giants of old broke their causeway, which in the north 'tis said they built, ere it laid its long arm on the English shore. The name of Ireland reads as fair as England; its sons are as brave and politic, able to defend, to rule themselves: blot England from the world, and Ireland stands free and glorious, sufficing to herself. This springal, valorous though he be, can never upset Tudor's throne in London; but he can do more for us by his very impotence. He is the true lord of Ireland: we are liegemen in maintaining his right. Plant his banner, rally round it all men who wish well to their country; drive out the good man Poynings; crush the Butlers—aye, down with them; and when Richard is crowned King of Erin, and the Geraldines rule under him, our native land will stand singly, nor want England for a crutch—or, by'r Lady! for a spear to enter her heart, while she leaneth on it; so the wars of York and Lancaster may free us from the proud, imperious English; and the Irish, like the Scotch, have a king and a state of their own."

Desmond's eyes flashed for a moment, as Keating thus presented before them the picture he most desired to behold; but they grew cold again. "The means, reverend prior, the arms, the money, the soldiers?"

"A bold stroke brings all: strike one blow, and Ireland is at our feet. We must not tarry; now the Butlers and their party are asleep in their security; gather men together; march forward boldly; strike at the highest, Dublin herself."

"Father," replied the earl, "long before I were half way there, my litter would be abandoned even by its bearers, and we left alone among the bogs and mountains, to feed as we may, or die. If there be any sooth in your scheme, it can only prove good,

inasmuch as we secure Connaught to ourselves, and turn this corner of the island into a kingdom; but neither one word, nor one blow, will gain Dublin. You are right so far,— something must be done, and speedily; and, if it be well done, we may do more, till by the aid of the blessed St. Patrick and white-tooth'd Bridget! we tread upon the necks of the Butlers."

This one thing to be undertaken, after much consultation among the chieftains, was the siege of Waterford: it had been summoned to acknowledge Duke Richard as its lord, and had refused: Keating was very averse to spending time before a fortified town. "On, on, *boutez en avant!*" He reminded Lord Barry of his device, and strove to awaken ambition in him. The prior of Kilmainham had spent all his life in Dublin, a chief member of the government, a seditious, factious but influential man: the capital to him was all that was worth having, while, to these lords of Munster, the smallest victory over their particular rivals, or the gaining a chief city in a district, which was their world, appeared more glorious than entering London itself victoriously, if meanwhile Waterford, or any one of the many towns of Ireland, held out against them.

On the fifteenth of July, 1497, the duke of York, the earl of Desmond, and the other many chief of many names, some Geraldines, all allied to, or subject to them, as the O'Briens, the Roches, the Macarthy's, the Barry's, and others, assembled at Youghall, a town subject to the earl of Desmond, and situated about midway between Cork and Waterford, at the mouth of the river Blackwater.

On the twenty-second of July the army was in movement, and entered the county of Waterford; the chiefs, at the head of their respective followers, proceeded to the shrine of St. Declan at Ardmore, to make their vows for the success of their expedition. The church at Ardmore, the round tower, the shrine, and healing-rock, were all objects of peculiar sanctity. The countess of Desmond, and her young son, and the fair duchess of York, accompanied this procession from Youghall. After the celebration of mass, the illustrious throng congregated on the rocky eminence, on which the mysterious tower is built, overlooking the little bay, where the calm waters broke gently on the pebbly beach. It was a beauteous summer-day; the noon-day heat was tempered by the sea breeze, and relieved by the regular plash of the billows, as they spent themselves on the shore. A kind of silence—such silence as there can be among a multitude, such a silence as is preserved when the winds sing among the pines—possessed the crowd: they stood in security, in peace, surrounded by such objects as excited piety and awe; and yet the hopes of the warrior, and, if such a word may be used, a warrior's fears, possessed them; it was such a pause as the mountain-goat makes ere he commits himself to the precipice. A moment afterwards all was in motion; to the sound of warlike instruments the troops wound up the Ardmore

mountains, looking down on the little fleet that stemmed its slow way towards the harbour of Waterford. The ladies were left alone with few attendants. The young duchess gazed on that band of departing warriors, whose sole standard was the spotless rose; they were soon lost in the foldings of the hills; again they emerged; her straining eye caught them. That little speck upon the mountain-side contained the sole hope and joy of her life, exposed to danger for the sake of a little good; for Katherine, accustomed to the sight of armies, and to the companionship of chiefs and rulers, detected at once the small chance there was, that these men could bring to terms a strongly fortified city; but resignation supplied the place of hope; she believed that Richard would be spared; and, but for his own sake, she cared little whether a remote home in Ireland, or a palace in England received them. She looked again on the mountain path; no smallest moving object gave sign of life; the sunlight slept upon the heathy uplands; the grey rocks stood in shadowy grandeur; Katherine sighed and turned again to the chapel, to offer still more fervent prayers, that on this beautiful earth, beneath this bright genial heaven, she might not be left desolate: whatever else her fortune, that Richard might be hers.

The army which the earl of Desmond led against Waterford, did not consist of more than two thousand men. With these he invested the western division of the city. Richard, with his peculiar troop, took his position at the extremity of this line, nearest Passage, close to Lumbard's Marsh, there to protect the disembarkment of troops from the fleet.

Neither party failed in zeal or activity. The first days were actively employed in erecting works and bringing the cannon to play upon the town. On the third, in the very midst of their labours, while the earl in his litter was carried close under the walls among the pioneers, and Lord Barry in his eagerness seized a spade and began to work, signals of attack were made from the town, and the troops poured out from the nearest gate. The advanced guard were too few to contend with them; they were driven back on the entrenchments. The citizens were full of fury and indignation; they rushed forward with loud cries, and created a confusion, which Desmond and Lord Barry were not slow to encounter; they brought a few regular troops to stand the assault; a well pointed cannon from the town swept the thin lines; they fell back; a yell of victory was raised by the men of Waterford; it reached the outpost of Duke Richard: he, with a score of men, five among them, with himself, being cavaliers armed at all points, were viewing a portion of the walls that seemed most open to assault; the roar of cannon and the clash of arms called him to more perilous occupation; he galloped towards the scene of action; and, while still the faltering men of Desmond were ashamed to fly, yet dared not stand, he, with his little troop, attacked the enemy on their flank. The

white steed, the nodding plume, the flashing sword of York were foremost in the fray; Neville and Plantagenet were close behind; these knights in their iron armour seemed to the half-disciplined Irish like invulnerable statues, machines to offend, impregnable to offence; twenty such might have turned the fortunes of a more desperate day: their antagonists fell back. The knight of Kerry led on at this moment a reinforcement of Geraldines, and a cannon, which hitherto had been rebel to the cannoneer's art, opened its fiery mouth with such loud injurious speech, that for many moments the dread line it traced remained a blank. Richard saw the post of advantage, and endeavoured to throw himself between the enemy and the city: he did not succeed; but, on the contrary, was nearly cut off himself by a reinforcement of townsmen, sent to secure the retreat of their fellows. Those who saw him fight that day spoke of him as a wonder: the heart that had animated him in Andalusia was awake; as there he smote to death the turbaned Moor, so now he dealt mortal blows on all around, fearless of the pressing throng and still increasing numbers. While thus hurried away by martial enthusiasm, the sound of a distant trumpet caught his ear, and the echo of fire-arms followed; it came from the east—his own post was attacked: now, when he wished to retreat, he first discerned how alone and how surrounded he was; yet, looking on his foes he saw, but for their numbers, how despicable they were; to a knight, what was this throng of half-armed burghers and naked kerns, who pell-mell aimed at him, every blow ineffectual? But again the loud bellow of distant cannon called him, and he turned to retreat—a cloud of missiles rattled against him; his shield was struck through; the bullets rebounded from his case of iron, while his sword felled an enemy at every stroke; and now, breaking through the opposing rank on the other side, his friends joined him—the citizens recoiled. "Old Reginald's tower," they averred, "would have bled sooner than these Sir Tristans—they were charmed men, and lead and good arrowheads were softer than paper-pellets on their sides." The first movement of panic was enough; before their leaders could rally them again to the attack, the English knights were far, riding at full speed towards the eastern gate.

Here Richard's presence was enough to restore victory to his standard—flushed, panting, yet firm in his seat, his hand true and dangerous in its blows, there was something superhuman in his strength and courage, yet more fearful than his sharp sword. The excess of chivalrous ardour, the burning desire to mingle in the thickest fight, made danger happiness, and all the terrible shows of war entrancing joys to York. When reproached for rashness by his cousin, his bright eye was brighter for a tear, as he cried, "Cousin, I must have some part of my inheritance: my kingdom I shall never gain—glory—a deathless name—oh, must not these belong to him who

possesses Katherine? The proud Scots, who looked askance at my nuptials, shall avow at least that she wedded no craven-hearted loon."

With the morrow came a new task. Their little fleet had made its way up Waterford Harbour into the river Suir; and the troops destined to join his were partly disembarked. To protect the landing, he and Neville rode across the marsh to the strand. On their return a fresh sight presented itself—the ponds of Kilbarry were filled, the besieged having raised a mound of earth to stop the course of the river which flows from Kilbarry into the Suir; and the road back to their camp was completely cut off. There was no mode of getting round save by the road to Tramore; yet to the active mind of Richard, it seemed that even this disaster might be turned into a benefit. He re-embarked the troops; he himself went on board the principal vessel; he called to secret council the captains:—the conclusion was not immediately divulged, but some adventure of peril was assuredly planned among them.

The long summer day went slowly down; the hum of men from Waterford reached the ships; the quay was thronged with soldiers: several vessels were anchored in the advance, and manned with troops; but the English fleet, their anchors cast, their sails furled, seemed peacefully inclined. As night came on, the quay became a desert; the ships were worked back to their former stations. It grew darker; the city, with its old rough tower and spires, was mirrored indistinctly in the twilight tide; the walls grew dim and gigantic; the sound of fire-arms ceased; the last roll of the drum died away; the city slept, fearless of its invaders. At this moment, the ebbing tide began to flow. Assisted by the rising waters, Richard and Neville ran a small boat under the cover of the opposite bank of the river, to observe what defences the quay might possess. The low tide at that hour was its best defence; a watch-tower or two with their sentinels, completed the guard of a part of the town, whose defence on that side was neglected; by midnight also the tide would have risen, but it was necessary to wait for the following night; for first he must communicate with Desmond, that a night attack in the opposite direction might effectually leave the water-side deserted. The vessels meanwhile dropped down below Little Island, at once to get out of shot of Reginald's Tower, which commands the harbour, and to remove from the citizens any apprehensions they might entertain of attack. The winding of the river concealed them entirely from the town.

The next day, a burning August day, declined into a dewy night; imperceptibly during the dark the vessels were nearer the city; and while the warders of the city fancied that the troops on board the fleet were finding a circuitous path over land to Desmond's camp, the stars of night twinkled through the shrouds upon decks crowded with men, arming themselves in busy silence. Suddenly it was reported to Richard that a stranger

caravel was among them; she was the only vessel with set sails, and these were enlarged by night, till as she neared, she seemed a giant, a living thing stalking between heaven and the element beneath. A sudden shiver convulsed the prince; to his eye it was the likeness of that vessel which long ere this had traversed, he hoped in safety, the western sea, stemming its mountainous waves towards the beautiful Indian Isles. Had it been wrecked, and this the spectre? It was the illusion of a moment; but it was necessary to ascertain the nature and intentions of the stranger, who was now close among them. York's vessel, at his command, got alongside of her; he leapt upon the deck, and saw at once him whom the dim night had concealed before, Hernan de Faro upon the deck.

A thousand emotions—wonder, fear, delight—rushed into the youth's heart; while the mariner, yet more weather-beaten, thin to emaciation, but still erect, still breathing the same spirit of fortitude and kindness, grasped his hand, and blessed the Virgin for the meeting. The questions, the anxiety of Richard, could not be uttered in this hour of action; he only said, "You will join us, and we will be doubly strong; or must you remain to guard your daughter?"

"I come from her—she is not with me—more of this anon."

Rapidly he asked and obtained information of the meditated attack; in part he disapproved, and, with all the sagacity of a veteran in such enterprises, suggested alterations. Now every boat was lowered with silent expedition, each received its freight of troops, and was rowed with the tide up the Suir. One skiff contained York and the Moor. The prince, in the anticipation of the hazardous contest, looked serious; while every feature of De Faro's face was bright, his animated, glad smile, his flashing eyes—all spoke the exhilaration of one engaged in his elected pleasure. Richard had never seen him thus before: usually he appeared kind, almost deferential; yet, except when he talked of the sea, heavy and silent, and speaking of that in a subdued tone. He now stood the picture of a veteran hero, self-possessed and calm, but for the joyousness that the very feeling of his sword's weight, as his right hand grasped the hilt, imparted to his warlike spirit.

Had an angel, on poised wings of heavenly grain, hovered over the city of Waterford, gazing on its star-pointing spires, the reflecting waters of the Suir, the tranquil hills and woods that gathered round the river, he would have believed such quiet inviolate, and blessed the sleep that hushed the miserable passions of humanity to repose. Anon there came the splash of waters, the shout of men, the sentinels' startled cry, the sudden rush of the guard, the clash of swords, the scream, the low groan, the protracted howl, and the fierce bark of the watch-dog joining in. The celestial angel

has soared to heaven, scared; and yet honour, magnanimity, devotion, filled the hearts of those who thus turned to hell a seeming paradise. Led by Richard and De Faro, while a party was left behind to insure retreat, another rushed forward right through the town, to throw open the western gate, and admit Desmond, before the terrified citizens had exchanged their nightcaps for helmets; in vain: already the market-place was filled with soldiers ready for the encounter; guided by a native, they endeavoured to find a way through the bye-streets; they lost themselves; they got entangled in narrow alleys; the awakened citizens cast upon their heads tiles, blocks of wood,—all they could lay hands upon. To get back to the square was their only salvation; although the storm and yell that rose behind, assured them that Desmond had commenced the attack. With diminished numbers York regained the market-place; here he was furiously attacked: the crowd still increased, until the knot of assailants might have been crushed, it seemed, by mere numbers; day, bright day, with its golden clouds and swift-pacing sun, dawned upon the scene. In one of those pauses which sometimes occur in the most chaotic roar, a trumpet was heard, sounding as it seemed Desmond's retreat from the walls. Richard felt that he was deserted, that all hope was over; and to secure the retreat of his men was a work of sufficient difficulty. Foot to foot the young hero and the veteran mariner fought; one by the quickness of his blows, the other by his tower-like strength, keeping back the enemy; while retreating slowly, their faces to the foe, they called on their men to make good their escape. They reached the quay—they saw the wide river, their refuge; their vessels near at hand, the boats hovering close, their safety was in sight, and yet hope of safety died in their hearts, so many and so fierce were those who pressed on them, Richard was wounded, weary, faint; De Faro alone—Reginald's old tower, which, dark and scathless, frowned on them, seemed his type. They were at the water's edge, and the high tide kissed with its waves the very footway of the quay: "Courage, my lord,—a few more blows and we are safe:" the mariner spoke thus, for he saw Richard totter; and his arm, raised feebly, fell again without a stroke. At that moment, a flame, and then a bellowing roar, announced that the tardy cannoneer had at last opened his battery on the fleet, from the tower. One glance De Faro cast on his caravel; the bolt had struck and damaged one of the vessels, but the Adalid escaped, "Courage, my lord!" again he shouted; and at that moment a blow was struck at Richard which felled him; he lay stretched at De Faro's feet. Ere it could be repeated, the head of the assailant was cleft by a Moorish scimitar. With furious strength, De Faro then hurled his weapon among the soldiers; the unexpected act made them recoil; he lifted up the insensible form of Richard with the power of an elephant; he cast him into the near waves, and leapt in after: raising him with one hand, he cut the waters with the other, and swam thus towards his vessel, pursued by a rain of missiles; one arrow glanced

on Richard's unstrung helmet, another fixed itself in the joint at the neck; but De Faro was unhurt. He passed, swimming thus, the nearest vessels: the sailors crowded to the sides, imploring him to enter: as if it had been schoolboy's sport, he refused, till he reached the Adalid, till his own men raised Richard, revived now, but feeble, to her worn deck: and he, on board her well-known planks, felt superior to every sovereign in the world.

CHAPTER XL

AN ESCAPE

Farewell, Erin! farewell all
Who live to weep our fall!

MOORE.

On the height of the tower of Ardmore, the White Rose of young Richard kept her vigils, and looked across the calm sea, and along the passes of the mountains of Drum, in anxious expectation of the event of the expedition. Sad forebodings oppressed her; the sentiment that mastered every other, was that her lord should require her presence, her assistance, while she was far. He had promised to send a post each day; when these failed, her heart sank within her. The only change that occurred, was when she saw the Adalid proceed slowly in the calm towards Waterford.

One sunny morn she from her watch-tower perceived several straggling groups descending the mountains. She strained her eyes: no banners waved; no martial music spoke of victory. That was secondary in her eyes; it was for Richard's safety that she was solicitous; yet she would not, did not fear; for there is an instinctive sense in human nature which, in time of doubt, sallies forth from the ark of refuge, and brings back tidings of peace or sorrow to the expectant on the perilous flood; a prophetic spirit which, when it despairs—woe the while!—the omen proves not false. The Lady Katherine watched anxiously but not in despair. At length heavy footsteps ascended the tower-stairs; and to answer the beatings of her heart, Edmund Plantagenet and the mayor of Cork presented themselves; they eagerly asked, "Is he not here?"

"Nay, he has not fled?" she replied, while for the first time she grew pale.

"Weigh our words as mere air," said O'Water; "for we know nothing, gentle dame, but that I must to Cork, to bar out the men of Waterford. His highness left us for the fleet; and the filling up of those cursed ponds of Kilbarry—ill luck to them!—cut off his

return. Last night—Saint Patrick knows the deeds of the last night!—weary from our labour the day before, we were all too carelessly asleep, when our camp was assaulted. Earl Maurice had ridden to Lismore to hasten his cousin, the Knight of the Valley. There was some report of an attack upon the town from the ships. Havoc was the cry that roused the welkin from east to west. The sum I know not, save that we are runaways—the siege of Waterford is raised."

"What skiff is that?" interrupted the duchess. Round the point of Minehead first peeped the bowsprit, then the prow; and last the complete form of a vessel in full sail, yet scarcely touched by the wind, weathered the promontory. "Haste we, my friends," she continued; "the duke may be on board; at least we shall have intelligence."

"I know that craft full well," said O'Water; "her captain is a converted Moorish pagan."

"The White Rose waves from her mast-top," cried Katherine; "oh, he is there!"

"Holy angels!" exclaimed Edmund; "it is the Adalid! I will on board on the instant."

Already the duchess was descending the steep narrow stairs; the villagers of Ardmore, with many of the soldiers who had fled from Waterford, were on the shingles, watching the caravel, now full in sight, yet fearful to venture too near the shelving shore. "They are bound for Cork," cried a man.

"Oh, not till I first speak to them," said Katherine; "the day is fair, the sea calm, put off a boat. Ah, my cousin Edmund, take me with thee."

Plantagenet had already got a boat from its moorings. O'Water was beside the princess to beseech vainly that she would be patient; and poor Astley, who had been left in special attendance on her, waited near with blanched cheeks. Accompanied by these dear or humble friends, the White Rose was borne with the speed of ten oars towards the Adalid. On the deck, half reclining on a rude bed, very pale, yet with lively, wakeful eyes, lay the prince of England. In a moment Katherine was assisted on board. There was no death for Richard; she was there, life of his life; so young, so beautiful, and true; the celestial goodness that beamed in her eyes, and dimpled her cherub countenance, was not like that of an inhalant of this sad planet; except that spirits of beauty and love ever and anon *do* animate the frames of the earth-born; so that we behold in the aspects of our fellow-beings glances and smiles bright as those of angels. De Faro himself looked with admiration on the bending form of this lovely one, till accosted by Edmund, whose first question was, "Don Hernan here—where then is——"

"My beloved Monina you would ask for," said De Faro; "she, who to please her vagrant father would have crossed the wild Atlantic to visit the savage Western Isles. Poor child, even at the threshold of this adventure we were nearly wrecked. She is now in England; she sent me here—to tell of rebellion against King Henry; to invite Duke Richard to his kingdom."

Thus they were occupied on the sunny deck; the sea was calm, the keel almost stationary in the water; they were bound for Cork; Plantagenet and the mayor gathered eagerly from De Faro the history of the combat. They learned that it had been expected that Desmond would have assaulted from land, while York invaded the city from the river; but the fellow sent with Richard's missive had been taken, the city put on her guard. Nothing but the desire of the citizens to do too much, and his own desperate valour, had saved Richard; they resolved at once to receive and destroy him, and to sally unawares on the earl's camp: they hoped to make prisoners of all the chiefs. They failed in this, but succeeded in raising the siege of their city.

Towards evening a land-breeze sprung up, and two others of York's vessels hove in sight, and passed them quickly; for the Adalid was much disabled, and made slow way. Soon in pursuit appeared a ship and two corvettes, which O'Water recognized as belonging to Waterford. The corvettes proceeded on their way; but the larger vessel spied out the Adalid, and, being now in advance of her, hove to, with the manifest resolve of attacking her on her watery way towards Cork. De Faro, with his keen eyes fixed on the enemy's movements, stood on the forecastle in silence; while Plantagenet and O'Water eagerly demanded arms, and exhorted the sailors to a most vain resistance. From the vessel of the foe the Moorish mariner cast his eyes upwards; the wind was shifting to the west. With a loud voice he shouted to his crew to man the yards; then, seizing the rudder, gave the swift orders that made the caravel go about. Sailing near the wind, her canvass had flapped lazily, now it filled; the keel felt the impulse, and dashed merrily along, bounding forward like a courser in the race; the ship, which had furled its sails in expectation of the combat, was in an instant left far behind; the other vessels from Waterford were still further to the west, towards Cork.

All these manœuvres were mysteries to the landsmen: they gladly hailed the distance placed between them and a superior enemy; but as with a freshening gale the Adalid still held her swift course towards the east, and the land began to sink on the horizon, O'Water asked with some eagerness whither they were bound.

"To safety," De Faro replied, laconically.

"An idle answer," said Edmund; "we must judge where our safety lies?"

"I have ever found best safety on the wide ocean sea," cried the mariner, looking round proudly on his beloved clement. "Your safeties and your lords are, methinks, English born; if this wind hold, on the third morning we shall see the coast of Cornwall."

The mayor was aghast, exclaiming—"Cornwall! England! we are betrayed?"

De Faro looked on him with contempt:—"I do not command here," he continued, "I obey the prince of England; let him decide. Shall we engage superior force; be boarded; taken by the enemy: or land, be wrecked, perchance, upon this savage coast; alive with vengeful kerns—defeated men among a victorious angry people? Or go where we are called by your leader's cause, where thousands of men are up in arms to receive you like brothers, to fight for you, with you; where England, the long-desired kingdom, makes you welcome to her green, sunny shores? Ask ye your prince this question; let his word be law."

This statement, upheld by York, brought conviction to the minds of Plantagenet and O'Water. The latter was aware of the risk he ran from the awakened vengeance of Henry, to pursue his having fostered rebellion in the city of which he was magistrate; and a moment's reflection showed him that there was no security for him, except in flight from Ireland. Meanwhile the wind, increasing in its strength, and right astern, carried them over the foaming waters. The early dawn showed them far at sea: they had outrun or baffled their pursuers; and though, now and then, with anxious thought, they reflected on the comrades left behind, on the poor equipage, and diminished numbers with which they were about to land in England, still there was something so miraculous in their escape, so unforeseen in the destiny that cut them off, and carried them, a remnant merely of the war, away from its dangers, that they felt as if they were under the immediate direction of a ruling Providence, and so resigned themselves; greedily drinking in the while the highly coloured picture De Faro painted of the Yorkist army which awaited them in Cornwall.

Again upon the sea—again impelled by winds and waves to new scenes—new hopes, tossed here and there by Fortune, it was Richard's fate to see one frustrated expectation give place to another, which, in its turn, faded and died. This constant succession of projects kept alive within him that sanguine spirit which never could be vanquished. Eagerly he passed from one idea to another, and almost welcomed the last disaster, which appeared but to pioneer the way to future success. During this voyage, weak as his wounds had made him, he talked of England as his own—the dearer because he must spend his blood to win it. Circumstances had an exactly contrary effect upon Katherine. The continual change of schemes convinced her of the futility of all. She felt that, if the first appearance of the duke of York,

acknowledged and upheld by various sovereigns and dear high-born relatives, had not animated the party of the White Horse in his favour, it was not now, after many defeats and humiliations on his side, and after triumphs and arrogant assumptions on that of his enemy, that brilliant success could be expected. This conviction must soon become general among the Yorkists, Richard would learn the sad lesson, but she was there to deprive it of its sting; to prove to him, that tranquillity and Katherine were of more worth than struggles, even if they proved successful, for vain power.

It was strange that a girl of royal birth, bred in a palace, accustomed to a queen-like sovereignty over her father's numerous vassals in the Highlands, should aim at restricting the ambitious York to mere privacy; while Monina, the humble daughter of a Moorish mariner, would have felt honour, reputation, all that is dear to man, at stake, if her friend had dreamed of renouncing his claims to the English crown. His cause was her life; his royalty the main spring of all her actions and thoughts. She had sacrificed love to it—she taught her woman's soul to rejoice in his marriage with another, because his union with a princess was pledge to the world of his truth. Perhaps, had the time ever come when he renounced his struggles, she had felt with a pang that his lowly fortunes might not incongruously be shared by her, and self had mingled in the religion of her heart, which was virtuous devotion to him; but as it was, the idea never presented itself. He must win or die. Did he win, her happiness would result from the contemplation of his glory; were he to die, the young hero's grave would not be watered by her tears: she believed that in that hour her life would cease.

The Lady Katherine saw a vain mask in all the common-place pomp of palaces; she perceived that power failed most when its end was good; she saw that in accomplishing its purpose in the cottage, or in halls of state, felicity resulted from the affections only. It was but being an actor in different scenes, to be a potentate or a peasant; the outward garb is not the livery of the mind: the refinement of taste which enables us to gather pleasure from simple objects; the warmth of heart which necessitates the exercise of our affections, but which is content when they are satisfied; these, to her mind, were the only, but they were the complete ingredients of happiness; and it was rarer to find and more difficult to retain them, among false-hearted, ambitious courtiers, and the luxury of palaces, than among simple-minded peasantry and a plain natural style of living. There was some romance in this idea; Katherine felt that there was, and subdued herself not to lay too much store by any change or guise of outward circumstance. She taught herself to feel and know, that in the tumult of camps and war, in the anxieties of her present vagrant life, on the throne which she might possess, or in the prison she might share, by devoting herself to the happiness of him to whom she was united, whose heroism, goodness and love

merited all her affection, she was performing the part assigned to her on earth, and securing a portion of happiness, far beyond the common lot of those whose colder, harder natures require something beyond sympathy to constitute their misnamed felicity.

CHAPTER XLI

ARRIVAL IN ENGLAND

From Ireland thus comes York to claim his right. If I am not ashamed of my soldiers, I am a soused gurnet.

SHAKSPEARE.

On the deck of the sea-worn Adalid, watching the renovated strength, and attending on the still remaining weakness of her lord, the soft heart of the princess possessed to fulness all its desires; while Monina, among the wild rude Cornish rebels, exerted herself to inspire zeal for his cause, and to increase the number of his partisans, winning them by her thrilling eloquence, ruling them by her beauty and enthusiasm. She had found the whole population ready to second him; but fitting leaders, noble and influential men, were absolutely wanting. She sent her father to urge Richard to this new attempt, and when he should appear, attended, as she fondly hoped, by a train of high-born Irish lords, of gallant Scotch cavaliers, and devoted English warriors; he would be able to give a martial form to the rout of Cornish insurgents, to discipline their wild, untamed valour, to attract others by name and rank, and Tudor at last must grow pale upon his throne. With eagerness she awaited the fleet that was to bring the chosen band of heroes; when, after a long and calm voyage, on the third of September, the Adalid ran into White Sand Bay, on the western coast of Cornwall, and Plantagenet, at Richard's command, disembarked and proceeded forthwith to Bodmin.

It was strange that the chief partizan of the White Rose should, on his invasion of the island, find a Spanish girl the main source of information—the chief mover of the rebellion by which he was to profit. Yet Plantagenet almost forgot his mortal struggle for a kingdom, in the anticipation of seeing Monina. Plantagenet, prouder, more ambitious for his cousin than Richard for himself—Plantagenet, who had but one object, to be the guardian, supporter, defender of York, now wandered in thought far back through many years to their Spanish home; to his tenderness for the sweet child

of Madeline; to the development of the beauty and virtues of the lovely Moor. Thrown apart by their several destinies, he had scarcely seen her since then; and now, in place of the dark, laughing-eyed girl, he beheld a woman, bright with intelligence and sensibility; whose brow wore somewhat the sad trace of suffering, whose cheek was a little sunk, but in whose eyes there was a soul, in whose smile an enchantment not to be resisted. She was all life, vivacity, and yet softness: all passion, yet yielding and docile. Her purpose was steady, stubborn; but the mode of its attainment, her conduct, she easily permitted to be guided. Edmund scarcely recognized her, but she instantly knew him; her elder brother, her kind but serious guardian, whom she had loved with awe, as the wisest and best of men. Now he bore a dearer name, as the unfailing friend of him she loved. To both their hearts this meeting was an unexpected joy. Monina had thought too much of Richard to remember his cousin. He had half forgotten his own sensations; or, at least, was quite unprepared for the power and effect of her surpassing beauty.

After the first overflowing of affection, Monina eagerly detailed the forces raised, and dwelt on the spirit and courage of the insurgents. "They are poor fellows," she said, "but true; burning with zeal to right themselves, and to avenge their losses at Blackheath. They are gathered together by thousands. They want merely leaders, discipline, arms, money, ammunition, and a few regular troops to show them the way: these, of course, you bring."

"Alas! no," said Edmund, "we bring merely ourselves."

"Could Ireland, then, furnish no warlike stores?" continued the zealous girl, "But this can be remedied, doubtless. Yourself, your leader, Lord Desmond, Lord Barry, the gallant Neville; tell me who else—who from Burgundy—what Irish, what Scottish knights?"

The last word was said with difficulty: it made a pause in her rapid utterance; while Edmund, aghast, replied, "Indeed! none of all these, or very few: in a word, we have fled from Waterford in the Adalid. His highness and myself are the sole English knights. The good old mayor of Cork must represent all Ireland, gentle and simple, to your eyes—our fair duchess, Scotland: her attendants will follow in due time, but these are but needy servitors." Monina laughed. "We came to seek, not bring aid," continued Plantagenet, gravely.

"Do not be angry," replied Monina. "There is more bitterness and sorrow in my laugh, than in, methinks, a widow's tears. My dear friend, God send we are not utterly lost. Yet his highness and yourself may work wonders. Only report truly our state, that the duke be not too dissatisfied with our appearance. Tell him Lord Audley headed a

worse organized troop: tell him that Master Heron, the mercer, has no silken soul—that Master Skelton, the tailor, disdains a smaller needle than a cloth-yard shaft."

"And is it to head men like these we have been drawn from our Irish friends?" cried Edmund; "better return. Alas! our path is besieged; the very sea is subject to our enemy; in the wide world the king of England has no refuge."

"That he is king of England," said Monina, "let not him, let none of us forget. The very name is powerful: let him, on his native shores, assume it. Surely, if their liege king stand singly in the land of his forefathers, at his sacred name thousands will congregate. He has dared too little, when he had power: at the worst, even now, let him dare all, and triumph."

Her bold, impetuous language had its effects on Edmund; it echoed his own master passion, which ever cried aloud, "He is a king! and, once give himself that sacred name, submission and allegiance from his subjects must follow." Buoyed up by these thoughts, his report on board the Adalid was free from those humiliating details, which, even if he had wished, he would have found no voice to communicate to his royal cousin.

Monina's task of imparting to her friends the destitute condition in which their sovereign arrived, was even easier. "He is come among tall men," said the pompous Heron, "who can uphold him for the better king, even to the satin of his doublet."

"And fight for him, even to the rending of our own," cried Skelton.

"And die for him, as he must too, when all's done," said Tereife. "A soldier's death is better than a dastard's life."

"We will have our men in goodly array," said Heron. "Master Skelton, are the doublets cut from that piece of sad-coloured velvet, last of my wares, slashed with white, as I directed?"

"Slash me no doublets but with a Spanish rapier," squeaked Skelton, "Have I not cast away the shears? Yet, look you now, good lack! I lie. Here in my pouch be a sharp pair, to clip Master Walter of Hornbeck's ears—if, by the help of the saints, we can lay him as flat on the field as his own grey suit was on my board when a shaping; by the same token that he never paid for it."

"In good hour, Sir Taylor," said Monina: "but the talk now is, how duly to receive his grace, how induce him to accept your aid."

"Ay, by Saint Dunstan!" cried Trereife, "he has ruffled in France and Burgundy, my masters, and will look on you as clowns and base-born burghers; but no man has more to give than his life, and if he waste that heartily, time was, and time may be, when villains trod on the necks of knights, as the ghost of Charles of Burgundy could tell us. Courage is the beginning and end of a soldier's catechism."

Such were the chiefs Monina found desirous, and in their own conceit capable, of placing England's diadem on Duke Richard's head. Heron, the bankrupt mercer, who fancied himself the base-born offspring of the late earl of Devonshire, and whose first deed of arms would find him Heron no more, but Sir John Courtney; Skelton, a luckless wight, whose shears ever went astray (the true cause why Walter of Hornbeck paid not for his misshapen suit), and who, therefore, believed himself born for greater things; and Trereife, the younger prodigal son of a rural Franklin, who, cast off and disinherited, had served in the wars in Flanders, gaining in that country no small reverence for the good Duchess Margaret, and ready therefore to right her nephew; besides, like a true hero, he abhorred this silken time of peace, and hoped to gather spoil, if not laurels, in the meditated insurrection.

The noble passengers disembarked from the Adalid. "Welcome to England, sweet Kate! welcome to the country of which thou art queen," said York; "and even if her reception be cold or rough, love her for my sake, for she is my mother."

"A stepmother I will not call her, dear my lord," replied the princess, "but the maternal embrace is strangely wanting on these deserted sands: the narrow deck of yonder caravel, were, methinks, a kindlier home: may we go on and prosper; but, if we fail, my lord will pardon me, if I welcome the day when I embark again on board the Adalid; to find, when the wide earth proves false, safety and happiness on the free waves of ocean."

CHAPTER XLII

RECEPTION IN CORNWALL

SKELTON. 'Tis but going to sea, and, leaping ashore, cut ten or twelve thousand unnecessary throats, fire seven or eight towns, take half a dozen cities, get into the market-place, crown him. Richard the Fourth, and the business is finished.

FORD.

Am I not king? Awake, thou coward majesty! thou sleepest. Is not the king's name forty thousand names?

SHAKSPEARE.

These doughty leaders drew out their followers in a plain just without Bodmin. There were about two hundred men decently clad from the remnants of the mercer's wares, tolerably well armed and disciplined by Trereife; this troop obtained the distinction of being selected as King Richard's body-guard. Skelton was their captain, a rare commander, whose real merit was that he felt happiest when stuck close as a burr to Trereife; for at heart he was an arrant coward, though a loud braggart, and talked of slaying his thousands, while the very wounding of his doublet had made him wince.

Heron was brave in his way; a true Cornishman, he could wrestle and cast his antagonist with the strength of a lion; he loved better, it is true, to trust to his arm than to his sword, which, in spite of his strength, Trereife always made fly from his hand in their fencing lessons; not the less did he consider himself a gallant knight, and had cut up many a yard of crimson cramoisy to make a rich suit for himself. He wore Monina's glove in his cap and large yellow roses at his knees; he called himself generalissimo, and marshalled under him full three thousand men, who in truth had never set a squadron in the field nor the division of a battle knew more than a spinster; but they were sturdy discontented spirits, who valued life at its worth, which was even nothing to them, who had laboured with all their hearts, till labour was of no avail, and who then left the mine and the furrow to carry their loud complaints to the foot of Henry's throne—they were better pleased with the prospect of overthrowing it.

"Now, my masters, make yourselves heard," cried Heron, as he shuffled down a little eminence on a short-legged Welsh pony, the only steed he found he could back in safety. "His grace is within ear-shot, so you be loud. Long life to King Richard!—down with the taxes—Saint Michael and Cornwall for ever!"

The din was prolonged, ended, began, went on, as the prince arrived at the summit of the hill with his little train—fair Katherine was at his side—Plantagenet, O'Water, De Faro, with some dozen soldiers who fled from Waterford; sure never invader came so ill equipped. On the hill-top the illustrious wanderers paused, Richard hastily scanned the rough-suited multitude—then, turning to Plantagenet, "Cousin," he said, "you told me that the insurgent army would be drawn out for my view; is it not strange that yonder rabble should hide it from us? As far as my eye can reach, I see no martial discipline, no banners, no lordly crest; fie on those drums! they have no touch of military concord. What makes our army so slack of duty, cousin?"

Though no fault of his, Edmund blushed deeply in very shame—the approach of Heron, Skelton, Trereife, and three or four other principal rebels, cut off his reply. It had been agreed that Skelton, who had a gift of eloquence, should speak, and many words he used to welcome his liege. "We will have every man with a red rose in his cap, in a drag chain, please your grace, and give a sound lesson to the saucy burghers of Exeter withal. Not a knight shall live in the land, but of your majesty's dubbing. We have but to put to rout King Henry's army, to hang the false loon for a traitor, and to set fire to London and the Parliament. Such nobles as please to doff their silken cloaks, and don miners' jackets, may work, the rest shall hang. Their mere wardrobes, bless the day! will find us and your grace in cloth of gold, embroidery, and other rich garniture to the end of our lives."

"We thank your zeal, my worthy master," said Richard, courteously; "if our good troops do half your saying, King Henry must look to it."

"Are those men to be worse than their word?" cried Skelton. "There is not one among us but has the arms of ten. We are of a race of giants, please your majesty, and could knock the walls of Exeter down with, our fists. Please you to enter Bodmin, whose very stones will cry for King Richard louder than King Hal's cannon;—to-morrow, God willing, we are for the wars."

The royal party passed on—the dark ferocity or sturdy obstinacy painted on the faces of the ill-armed rout, struck Richard as he passed—he became meditative, while Edmund, shamed and angry, his cheeks burning, his eyes on the ground, listened in indignant silence to Master Skelton, who fastened on him with such talk, that whether a soldier spoke of killing doublets, or a tailor prattled of fashioning a field of slaughter, was a riddle ill to be devised. At length they passed the gates of Bodmin; and here was a louder cry of welcome from the shrill voices of women, who held up their thin hands and half-starved children, crying for vengeance on Tudor, blessing the sweet faces of Richard and his lovely wife. York's eyes flashed again with their wonted fires; his creative spirit had found materials here to work some project, all poor and rude as they might seem.

They entered the town-hall; when, by some sudden revulsion, in the tide of the crowd, every Cornishman fell back, closed the doors, and left the wanderers alone.

Something was forgotten surely; for Heron had paced pompously up to Richard, when suddenly he turned on his heel, crying, "A word, my masters!" and all were gone. The Lady Katherine had marked their backing and hurrying with becoming gravity; but, when the door was fairly shut, she could restrain no longer a heartfelt laugh. Richard

joined in her mirth, while Plantagenet strode through the hall angrily; muttering, "an army, a rout of shirtless beggars; is this England's reception for her king?"

"It were fine mumming," said Richard, "under a hedge with the green sward for a stage."

"By our Lady, this passes patience!" reiterated Edmund; "where are the gentlemen of England? Where the sons of those who fell for York? Are we to oppose these half-naked knaves to the chivalry of Henry?"

"It would seem that such is expected," replied the prince; "and, verily, cousin, we might do worse. I pray you, treat the honest rogues well; better may come of it; keep we our secret, and have we not an array?"

"My lord!" cried Plantagenet, in wonder.

"Patience, dear friend," said York; "I have not been apprentice to adversity so many long years, without becoming an adept in my calling. I say, I have an army; bold, though poor—ragged truly, but exceeding faithful. Methinks it were more glorious to put Tudor down with such small means, than to meet him in equal terms, like a vulgar conqueror. I do beseech you, Edmund, put a good face on it; speak to our Cornish giants, as if they had souls of mettle, and bodies decked like Ponce de Leon and his peers, when they welcomed Queen Isabel to the Spanish camp. You remember the golden array of the knights, cousin?"

Edmund was impatient of the prince's gay humour; while Katherine, seeing in his bright eyes heroism and lofty resolve, felt a dewy moisture gather in her own: there is something at once awful and affecting, when a man, the sport of fortune, meets her rudest blow unshrinking, and turns her very spite into arms against herself. The whole secret of Richard's present thoughts she could not divine, but she saw that their scope was worthy of his birth, his aim: her respect—her love augmented; and her gentle heart at that moment renewed its vow to devote herself to him entirely and for ever.

In the same spirit, York answered the deputation that waited on him. He commanded a proclamation to be made, in which he assumed the title of Richard the Fourth. He announced his intention of immediately penetrating England, and seizing on some walled town or city, before Henry could be aware of his having landed. Nor did he confine his energy to words; he examined the state of his men; their arms and furniture; he provided for their better discipline, and animated his cousin to take an active part in marshalling them to order. He went among them, learned the causes of their dissatisfaction, promised them better days, and so raised a glad spirit in them,

that their hearts, overleaping both time and circumstance, paid him the honour and the love he might have claimed, had he already led them through fertile England, and planted his victorious standard on the Tower of London. Tereife swore by his beard, he was a proper youth; the old soldier awoke to the remembrance of harvests of spoil he had gathered in the Netherlands, the stern encounters and the joys of success; he gazed on the rough Cornish men, and wondered how they should withstand the nobility of England: but, when Richard glanced hope and triumph from his bright eyes, when he spoke of the omnipotence of resolved valour, when he drew a picture of their ghastly poverty, and showed them how, by standing firm merely, they might redeem themselves;—while the poor fellows answered with a prolonged shout, or better still, grasped their arms more fiercely, and trod the earth with free and decided steps;—a thousand facilities seemed to be discovered; a thousand resources for the war displayed, undreamt of before. Were these mere words? or at his voice did soldiers rise from the clods, and victory obey the sound?

Plantagenet, seeing his royal cousin's resolve, strove to second it. With a party of men he assaulted a near fortress, carried it, and seized on a store of arms. This success looked like a mighty victory; Richard exalted it as such; and the very fellows who handled awkwardly their booty, fancied themselves heroes at the mere sight of it.

On the third day they were to proceed to Exeter, it being determined that they should besiege this city. De Faro offered to sail to Cork to invite the warlike chieftains of Munster to come over with their power; and at least himself to bring back in the Adalid, Neville, and the rest of the English exiles. While Edmund, who looked glad at the thought, counselled that they should entrench themselves in this corner of England, which was so entirely devoted to them, till these forces were added to their number, and till by discipline, they should have made regular troops of the rabble, by courtesy ycleped an army.

"Wherefore, cousin," asked Richard, "do you desire others to share in our disasters?"

"My lord!" cried Edmund, astounded.

"I have but one wish," continued the prince, "that you and my good O'Water were even now in Ireland; so that I might stand the brunt of this war alone. You look amazed. Yet it were more amazing if I expected to do battle against the Veres, the Howards, the Berkeleys, the Courtneys, and ten thousand other names of high renown, backed by their train of martial adherents, with ragged regiments like those we are about to lead to the field;—even though the kerns of Ireland made their number double, and the Geraldines, Barry and Neville added by their nobleness dignity to our victor's conquest. Remember Stoke, my cousin Edmund; you may well remember it.

Remember my honoured kinsman the earl of Lincoln and my lamented Lovel. Ah! that I did not now peril your life, then spared!"

"Yet, if your grace fight at all," said O'Water, bluntly; "methinks we were not the worse for being better appointed for the fray. For victims, even those poor honest varlets are too many."

"That one other life should be wasted for me," replied Richard, fervently, "is my saddest thought. I fear it must be so; some few lives, each as dear to him that spends it, as is the life-blood to our own hearts, I can say no more. I have a secret purpose, I confess, in all I do. To accomplish it—and I do believe it to be a just one—I must strike one blow; nor fail. Tudor is yet unprepared; Exeter vacant of garrison; with stout hearts for the work, I trust to be able to seize that city. There the wars of York shall end. So far I confide in your discretions, that you may not deem me mad. More is the single property of my own soul. Will you help me so far, dear friends—so far hazard life—not to conquer a kingdom for Richard, but to redeem his honour?"

The warm-hearted, grey-headed Irish O'Water, with gushing eyes, swore to adhere to him the last.

Edmund replied, "I am but a bit of thee; deal with me as with thyself; and I know thou wilt be no niggard in giving me away to danger."

De Faro cried, "I am a sailor, and know better how to face death on the waves than victory on shore; but, Santiago! may our blessed Lady herself look shy on me at the great day, if the mariner of the wreck prove false to your grace."

"Now then to our work," cried York, "to speak fair to my faithful fellows and their braggart leaders. They at least shall be winners in our game; for my hand is on my prize; a spirit has whispered success to me; my hope and its consummation are married even at their birth."

CHAPTER XLIII

MISGIVINGS

Dost thou hear, lady? If from the field I shall return once more
To kiss these lips, I will appear in blood;
I and my sword will earn our chronicle;
There is hope in it yet.

SHAKSPEARE.

Richard was obliged to plead his cause yet once again. Katherine had watched all his movements; she had eyed curiously the army he mustered to the field: she talked to its leaders, and while they vaunted her affability, she was diving with earnest mind, into the truth of things. No fear that it could be hid from her; love for Richard was the bright light that dispelled every deceptive shadow from the scene. She saw the bare reality; some three thousand poor peasants and mechanics, whose swords were more apt to cut themselves than strike the enemy, were arrayed against the whole power and majesty of England. On the morrow they were to set forward. That night, while at the casement of his rude chamber, Richard gazed upon the congregated stars, trying to decipher in their intricate bright tracery the sure omen of the good he was told they characterized for him, Katherine, after a moment's hesitation, with a quivering voice, and hand that shook as it pressed his, knelt on a cushion at his feet, saying, "My sweet Richard, hear me; hear your faithful friend—your true wife; call not my councils weak and feminine, but weigh them sagely ere you resolve. May I speak?"

"Lady of my heart, arise," said Richard; "I speak, my soft-voiced Katherine—my White Rose of beauty—fair flower, crowning York's withered tree. Has not God done all in giving you to me? yet we must part, love, for a while. Your soldier is for the wars, Kate, while you sit in your bower, weaving victorious garlands for his return."

"My ever dear lord," said Katherine, "I speak with fear, because I feel that I shall not address myself to your concealed thought. I do not wish to penetrate your secrets, and yet I tremble at their event. You have not so far deceived yourself as to imagine, that with these unfortunate men you can ride over the pride and the power of this island; did I see on what else you founded the lofty hope, that has, since we came here, beamed in your eyes, I would resign myself to your better wisdom. But, wherever I turn my view, there is a blank. You do not dream of conquest, though you feel secure of victory. What can this mean, save that you see glory in death?"

"You are too quick-sighted, sweet Kate," said Richard, "and see beyond the mark. I do not set my cast upon falling in this fray; though it may well happen that I should: but I have another aim."

"Without guessing at what that may be," replied the lady, "since you seem desirous to withhold the knowledge, permit me to present another object to your choice; decide between them, and I submit: but do not carelessly turn from mine. There is all to lose, nought to win, in what you now do. Death may blot the future page, so that we read neither disgrace nor prison in its sad lines; but wherefore risk to die. While yet, dear love, we are young, life has a thousand charms, and one may be the miserable survivor, whose heart now bleeds at the mere surmise."

She faltered; he kissed her soft cheek, and pressed her to his heart. "Why may we not—why should we not live?" continued Katherine; "what is there in the name or state of king that should so take captive our thoughts, that we can imagine no life but on a throne? Believe me, careful nights and thorny days are the portion of a monarch: he is lifted to that awful height only to view more clearly destruction beneath; around, fear, hate, disloyalty, all yelling at him. The cold, heartless Tudor may well desire the prize, for he has nothing save the gilt crown to ennoble him; nothing but the supple knees of courtiers to present to him the show of love. But—ah! could I put fire into my weak words—my heart's zeal into my supplicatory voice—persuasion would attend upon me, and you would feel that to the young, to two united as we are, our best kingdom is each other's hearts; our dearest power that which each, without let or envy, exercises over the other. Though our palace-roof be the rafters of a lowly cot, our state, the dear affection we bear each other, our attendants the duty and observance of one to the other—I, so served by King Edward's son—you, by the rightful queen of this fair island—were better waited on than Henry and Elizabeth, by their less noble servitors. I almost think that, with words like these, I might draw you from the uneasy throne to the downy paradise of love; and can I not from this hard struggle, while death yet guards the palace-gate, and you will be pierced through and through long ere you can enter."

"Thus, my gentle love," said Richard, "you would have me renounce my birth and name; you desire that we become the scorn of the world, and would be content that, so dishonoured, the braggart impostor, and his dame Katherine, should spend their shameful days in an ignominious sloth, misnamed tranquillity. I am a king, lady, though no holy oil nor jewelled crown has touched this head; and such I must prove myself."

"Oh, doubt it not," she replied, "it is proved by your own speech and your own nobleness; my heart approves you such; the whole earth, till its latest day, will avouch that the lord of Katherine is no deceiver; but my words avail not with you."

"They do avail, my best, my angel girl, to show me that the world's treasure is mere dross compared with thee: one only thing I prize, not as thy equal, but as that without which, I were a casket not even worthy to encase this jewel of the earth—my honour! A word taught me by my victim brother, by my noble cousin Lincoln, by the generous Plantagenet; I learnt its meaning among a race of heroes—the Christian cavaliers—the Moorish chivalry of Spain; dear is it to me, since without it I would not partake your home of love—a home, more glorious and more blessed than the throne of the universe. It is for that I now fight, Katherine, not for a kingdom; which, as thy royal

cousin truly said, never will be mine. If I fall, that cousin, the great, the munificent James, will be your refuge."

"Never," interrupted the lady. "Scotland I shall never see again; never show myself a queen and no queen, the mock of their rude speech; never put myself into my dear, but ambitious father's hands, to be bartered away to another than my Richard; rather with your aunt of Burgundy, rather in Tudor's own court, with your fair sister. Holy angels! of what do I speak? how frightfully distinct has the bereft world spread itself out as my widowed abode!"

A gush of tears closed her speech. "Think of brighter days, my love," said Richard, "they will be ours. You spoke erewhile of the difficulty of giving true imagery to the living thought; thus, I know not how to shape an appropriate garb (to use a trope of my friend Skelton) for my inmost thoughts. I feel sure of success. I feel, that in giving up every prospect of acquiring my birthright, I make the due oblation to Fortune, and that she will bestow the rest—that rest is to rescue my name from the foul slur Henry has cast on it; to establish myself as myself in the eyes of England; and then to solicit your patience in our calamity—your truth and love as the only sceptre and globe this hand will ever grasp. In my own Spain, among the orange and myrtle groves, the flowery plains and sun-lit hills of Andalusia, we will live unambitious, yet more fortunate than crowned emperors."

With such words and promises he soothed her fears; to the word honour she had no reply. Yet it was a mere word here; in this case, a barren word, on which her life and happiness were to be wrecked.

The prince and Monina had met with undisguised delight. No Clifford would now dare traduce her; she need not banish herself from countries where his name enriched the speech of all men; nor even from that which, invited by her, he had come to conquer. He was glad to be able to extend his zealous fraternal protection over her, to feel that he might guard her through life, despite of the fortune that divided them. He obtained for her the Lady Katherine's regard, which she sought opportunities to demonstrate, while they were avoided by Monina, who honoured and loved her as Richard's wife and dearest friend, yet made occasion to absent herself from both. Nothing beautiful could be so unlike as these two fair ones. Katherine was the incarnate image of loveliness, such as it might have been conceived by an angelic nature; noble, soft, equable from her tender care not to displease others; in spite of the ills of fate, gay, because self-satisfied and resigned; the bright side of things was that which she contemplated: the bright and the tranquil—although the hazards run by him she loved, at this period informed her thoughts with terror. Monina—no, there was no evil

in Monina; if too much self-devotion, too passionate an attachment to one dear idea, too enthusiastic an adoration of one exalted being, could be called aught but virtue. The full orbs of her dark eyes, once flashing bright, were now more serious, more melancholy; her very smile would make you weep; her vivacity, all concentrated in one object, forgot to spend itself on trifles; yet, while the princess wept that Richard should encounter fruitless danger for a mistaken aim, gladness sat on Monina's brow: "He goes to conquer; God will give victory to the right: as a warrior he treads his native land; as a monarch he will rule over her. The very name of king he bears will shame the lukewarm English; they will gather round the apparent sun, now that he shows himself unclouded, leaving the false light, Tudor, to flicker into its native nothingness."

"Monina," said the prince, "you in the wide world can bestow richest largess on the beggar. King Richard." She looked on him in wonder. "I go to conquer or to die: this, lovely one, is no new language for you; a warrior's friend must hear such words unflinching. I die without a fear if you take one charge upon you." Her beaming, expressive eyes replied to him. He continued: "The Adalid and safety are images most firmly united in my mind; if I cannot find security on board of her myself, let those dear to me inherit my possession there. The hardest thought that I bear with me, is that my fair queen should become captive to my base-minded foe. May I not trust that if I fall, the Adalid will be her home and refuge to convey her to her native country, or any whither she may direct? I intrust this charge to you, my sister, my far more than sister, my own kind Monina. You will forget yourself in that fateful hour, to fulfil my latest wish?"

"My prince," she replied, "your words were cruel, did I not know that you speak in over-care, and not from the impulse of your heart. In the same spirit, I promise that your desire shall be accomplished: if you fall, my father will protect—die for my lady the queen. But why speak these ill-omened words? You will succeed; you will hasten the lagging hand of Fate, and dethrone one never born to reign, to bestow on England its rightful king. The stars promise this in their resplendent, unfailing scowl—the time-worn student in his lore has proclaimed it—the sacred name of monarch which you bear is the pledge and assurance of predestined victory."

"And you, meanwhile, will stay, and assure Katherine's destiny?"

"My dear lord, I have a task to accomplish. If I leave her grace, it is because all spirits of good and power watch over her, and my weak support is needed elsewhere. I am bound for London."

They parted thus. The temerity of their designs sometimes inspired them with awe; but more usually animated them to loftier hopes. When the thickening shadows of

"coming events" clouded their spirits, they took refuge in the sun-bright imaginations which painted to each the accomplishment of their several hopes. Monina felt assured that the hour of victory was at hand. Richard looked forward to a mortal struggle, to be crowned with success: a few short weeks or briefer days would close the long account: his word redeemed, his honour avenged, he looked forward to his dear reward: not a sceptre—that was a plaything fit for Henry's hand; but to a life of peace and love; a very eternity of sober, waking bliss, to be passed with her he idolized, in the sunny clime of his regretted Spain.

CHAPTER XLIV

A CHALLENGE

Oh, that stern, unbending man! In this unhappy marriage what have I not suffered—not endured!

SCHILLER'S WALLENSTEIN.

Once more unto the breach, dear friends, once more,
Or close the wall up with our English dead!

SHAKESPEARE.

The lapse of years had confirmed Henry on his throne. He was extortionate and severe, it is true; and thus revolts had been frequent during the earlier portion of his reign; but they took their rise in a class which, even in modern days, it is difficult to keep within the boundaries of law. The peasantry, scattered and dependent on the nobles, were tranquil: but artificers, such as the miners of Cornwall, who met in numbers, and could ask each other, "Why, while there is plenty in the land, should we and our children starve? Why pay our hard earnings into the regal coffers?" and, still increasing in boldness, demand at last, "Why should these men govern us?"

"We are many—they are few!"

Thus sedition sprung from despair, and assumed arms; to which Henry had many engines to oppose, bulwarks of his power. A commercial spirit had sprung up during his reign, partly arising from the progress of civilization, and partly from so large a portion of the ancient nobility having perished in the civil wars. The spirit of chivalry, which isolates men, had given place to that of trade, which unites them in bodies.

Among these the White Rose of England had not a single partizan—the nobles who once had upheld the house of York were few; they had for the last eight years been intent upon restoring their fortunes, and were wholly disinclined to the endangering them afresh for a stranger youth. When Fitzwater, Stanley, and their numerous fellow-conspirators and fellow-victims, sided with the duke of York, nearly all England entertained a timid belief in his identity with lung Edward's lost son—but those times were changed. Many were glad to soothe their consciences by declaring him an impostor; many so desired to curry favour with Henry; a still greater number either feared to say their thought, or were averse to disturb the tranquillity of their country by a contest which could benefit one man alone, and which must entail on them another war like that so lately ended. Abroad, in France, Burgundy, and Scotland, the prince might be discountenanced from political motives; but he was treated with respect, and spoken of as being the man he named himself: in England it was otherwise—contempt followed hard upon fear, giving birth to derision, the best weapon against the unhappy, which Henry well knew how to wield. He had two motives in this—one was, that by affixing disgrace and scorn to his adversary, he took away the glitter of his cause, and deterred the young and ambitious from any desire to share in his obloquy. The other was a feeling deeper-rooted in his mind—an intense hatred of the house of York—an exultation in its overthrow and disgrace—a gloating over every circumstance that blotted it with ignominy. If Richard had really been an impostor, Henry had not used half the pains to stigmatize him as low-born—to blast his pride with nicknames, nor have looked forward with the joy he now did, to having him in his power—to the degradation—the mortal stain of infamy he intended to taint him with for ever.

Secure in power—fearless of the result, Henry heard with unfeigned joy that his young rival had landed in England, and was advancing into the interior of the island, at the head of the Cornish insurgents. He himself announced the rising to his nobles. Laughing, he said, "I have tidings for you, gentlemen, a flight of wild geese clad in eagles' feathers, are ready to pounce upon us. Even now they hover over our good city of Exeter, frightening the honest burghers with their dissonance."

"Blackheath will witness another victory," said Lord Oxford.

"And my kitchen receive a new scullion," replied the king; "since Lambert Simnel became falconer, our roast meat thinks itself dishonoured at not being spitted by a pretender to my crown; for no Audley heads these fellows, but the king of Rakehells himself, the most noble Perkin, who, to grace the more the unwashed rogues, calls himself Richard the Fourth for the nonce. I have fair hope to see his majesty this bout, if he whiz not away in a fog, or sink underground like Lord Lovel, to the disappointment of all merry fellows who love new masks and gaudy mumming."

"Please your majesty," said the young Lord William Courtney, "it is for the honour of our house that not a stone of Exeter be harmed. With your good leave, my father and myself will gather in haste what force we may: if fortune aid us, we may present your grace with your new servitor."

"Be it so, my lord," replied the king, "and use good despatch. We ourselves will not tarry: so that, with less harm to all, we may tread out these hasty lighted embers. Above all, let not Duke Perkin escape; it is my dearest wish that he partake our hospitality."

"Yes," so ran Henry's private thoughts; "he must be mine, mine alive, mine to deal with as I list." With even more care than he put in the mustering his army, he ordered that the whole of the southern sea-coast of England should be guarded; every paltry fishing village had its garrison, which permitted no boat to put off to sea, nor any to land, without the strictest investigation; not content with this, he committed it to the care of his baser favourites to forge some plot which might betray his enemy without a blow into his hands.

"Give me your benison, good Bess," said the monarch, with unwonted gaiety of manner; "with daylight I depart on the ungentle errand of encountering your brother Perkin."

Elizabeth, not less timid than she had ever been, was alarmed by his show of mirth, and by this appellation bestowed on one she knew to be so near of kin. That very morning she had seen Monina—the enthusiastic Monina, who, confiding in her royal friend's success, visited London to watch over the fate of Elizabeth and her children. The queen smiled at her offers of service; she felt that no such army could endanger Henry's reign; but she feared for Richard, for her ill-fated brother, who had now entered the net, for whom she felt assured there was no escape. Trembling at her own boldness, she answered the king, "Whoever he may be, you will not destroy him in cold blood?"

"You would have me spare the impostor?" asked Henry. "Spare him who claims your son's throne? By Our Lady of Walsingham, the maternal virtues of the daughter of York deserve high praise."

Elizabeth, dreading more to offend, horror-struck at the idea that her husband should shed her brother's blood, burst into tears. "Silly girl," said Henry, "I am not angry; nay, more, I grant your prayer. Perkin, if not slain by a chance blow, shall live. My word is passed, trust to it; I neither inquire nor care whether he be the godson or the base brat

of the libertine Edward. In either case, my revenge stoops not so low as his paltry life: does this content you?"

"May the saints bless your grace," said Elizabeth, "you have eased my every fear."

"Remember then that you prove no ingrate," continued the king, "no dupe of report, no traducer of your children's birth. Betray no interest in the knave's downfall, save as he is my enemy. If you display any emotion that awakens a doubt that this canker rose be aught in your eyes except a base pretender—if you mark any feeling but stern contempt for one so vile—tremble. My vengeance will fall on him; and his blood be on your head."

"Magnanimous prince!" thought Elizabeth, in bitter scorn, when he had left her: "this is your mercy. You fear! My poor Richard—your sister, a monarch's daughter, is finely taught by this earl's son. But you will live; then let him do his worst: the queen of England is not quite a slave; if Henry can bind, Elizabeth may loose; and the duke of York laugh in another land at the malice of his enemy."

We return to this prince, whose lofty spirit was sustained by an aim, an object dearer than a kingdom in his eyes. He arrived before Exeter at the head of seven thousand men. All the discontented in Cornwall and Devonshire joined him. Some of these were younger brothers; some men-at-arms who repined at peace; chiefly they were needy, oppressed men, roused by a sense of wrong, as destitute, but not so hardy as the kerns of Ireland. Still they were many, they were valiant; Exeter was ungarrisoned, unprepared for defence, and there was a possibility that by sudden assault, he might possess himself of the town. With this intent he did not allow his troops time to repose, but at once set on for the attack, endeavouring to scale the lofty walls; unaided by any fitting machinery, scarcely possessed of a single scaling ladder, he was driven back with loss. Foiled, but not vanquished, for his heart was set upon this prize, for three days, though unpossessed of artillery or any warlike engine, he exerted his utmost force to win the city; he contrived rude machinery to cast stones, he planted the ladders himself, he multiplied himself to appear everywhere, flattering, encouraging, leading his troops again and again to the assault. When they found the walls impregnable, he made an attempt on the gates; with fascines and hewed trees he set one of them on fire; his men shouted as they heard the stout oak crackle, and saw it split and crumble, offering a large opening; but the citizens, made desperate, fearful of the ravages this untamed multitude might commit, were true to themselves; they resisted fire by fire, keeping up a fierce blaze within, till with piles of brick and rubbish they had blocked the passage. Richard saw his last hope fail. "This is not the work of the burghers," he cried, "a soldier's skill is here."

"True as my old yard measure!" cried Heron. "It was but last night that my cousin, the earl of Devon, clambered into the city; he came to the northern wall, where Skelton keeps watch; when my valiant tailor heard the noise, he ran to look for Master Trereife, who, poor fellow, lies cold within the moat. The citizens heard and answered my cousin the earl's call; but they were too frightened to let light through the keyhole of a postern; and his lordship, God save him! was obliged to climb the battlements."

"Climb the battlements, noble captain?" said Richard; "that is, a ladder was let down!"

"It was a stone ladder he scaled, my liege," said Heron; "your grace may walk up the same. It will scarce budge, seeing that it is the old part of the wall itself."

"Who knows more of this?" asked the prince.

"I saw the whole," said Skelton; "That is the end. Master Trereife was dead for the nonce, so I came back to lead my men to the fray. There was the earl, perched like a crow, on the boughs of an old thorn-bush that grows at the top of the wall. Surely he must have torn his cloak, for the place is thick with all manner of weeds, and rough stones, and brambles. But more than his broadcloth got a hole; for Clim of Tregothius handled his bow, and let fly a cloth-yard shaft, which was sticking in his shoulder as he got down the other side."

While the tailor talked, Richard was proceeding hastily to the spot. It looked tranquil. The old crumbling wall was green with rank grass and tangled weeds. He drew nearer, and then a whole shower of arrows was discharged against him. The earl had expected that his success would excite their curiosity, and prepared for them, with not the less zeal on account of his own wound. Richard escaped unhurt; but Edmund, who was scantily armed, received an arrow in his side—he fell. That same hour tidings came of the advance of King Henry at the head of a formidable army.

Plantagenet's wound was dressed; it showed signs of danger, and quite disabled him.

"My faithful fellows swear to preserve you in safety, cousin," said Richard; "I must leave you."

"Do you retreat?" asked Edmund.

"No, by my soul! Truly, my hopes have somewhat quailed; yet it is but a lucky blow, and I gain all. I leave you, my friend; but I will not leave you in doubt and ignorance. Read this paper: it is to enforce its contents—to oblige my haughty foe to lay aside his worst weapon, detraction, that I, against all probability and wisdom, will urge my cause to the last. My kingdom, it is his; my honour he must restore, and I cry him quits. Now you have my secret. Pardon for my poor fellows; pardon, and some alleviation of

their cruel lot. For myself, as you will find, I ask little, but I must show no fear, no retreating, to obtain even that. I march forwards, then, towards Taunton: it is a less place than Exeter. The smallest secure port gained, and Henry may grant my boon."

Plantagenet unfolded the paper, and read these words:—

"Richard, legitimate and true son of Edward the Fourth, king of England and France, and lord of Ireland, to Henry, the reigning sovereign of these realms. In my infancy I was made a prisoner by a usurping uncle, escaping from his thrall by aid of the most noble earl of Lincoln. This uncle, this usurper, you conquered, and seized upon his crown. You claim the same by right of Bolingbroke, and strengthen your title through your union with my sister, the Lady Elizabeth. I am poor, and an outcast—you a king. God has destroyed my house, and I submit. But I will not submit to the vile slander that takes from me my name, and brands me a dishonoured man.

"Henry of Richmond, I neither admit nor combat your claim to the crown. Lancaster has many partisans, and the victory is yours. But as duke of York, I challenge and defy you. I call on you, either by person or by champion, to meet me in the lists, that I may defend my honour and maintain the right. Let us spare the people's blood. In single combat let my pretensions be set at issue; and my good sword shall cut to pieces the wicked lies and base traditions you have calumniously and falsely forged to my disgrace.

"Body to body, I will meet you or your champion. Name the day, the hour, and the place. With my lance and my sword, to the death I will maintain my birth. If I fall, I ask that my wife, the Lady Katherine Gordon, be permitted to return to her royal cousin, James of Scotland; that such of my followers as desire it, may be allowed to go beyond seas; that those of your subjects, who, goaded into rebellion by your exactions, have taken up arms, receive free pardon and remission of their imposts. If I conquer, I add but one other demand—that you confess to the wide world how foully you have slandered me; revoke the lies you have published, and acknowledge me to all men, the rightful duke of York.

"If you deny my just demands, be the blood spilt in defence of my honour on your head; England ravaged, your towns destroyed, your realm subject to all the calamities of war; these evils rest with you. I will not sheathe my sword, nor tread one backward step in my undertaking; but as in the lists, so on the dread battle-field, meet your abettors, and conquer or die in defence of my name. Expecting a fitting answer to this just defiance, I bid you heartily farewell.

"RICHARD.

"Written under the walls of Exeter, this twelfth day of September, in the year of our Blessed Lord, 1497."

Plantagenet was deeply affected by his cousin's gallantry. He sighed, saying, "Tudor has not, will not reply to your challenge?"

"He has not, but he may," replied Richard. "I have, I know not why, a firm belief that good will come from it. If not, in a few days all will be over. In a very few days you can be conveyed to St. Michael's Mount, where the queen now is. The Adalid hovers near. Save her, save yourself: save one other, less helpful than my Katherine—be a brother to Monina."

Richard, erring in his mark, was animated by the most sanguine hopes, to which he was seduced by a constant belief that his life was not near its close, and therefore that his claims would be admitted: as otherwise he had resolved to fall in the assertion of them. Leaving the sick couch of his cousin, he prepared to advance to Taunton. A conversation meanwhile which he dreamt not of, and would have scorned, had taken place in an obscure and gloomy spot in London, fraught with fate to him.

After the base desertion of his royal master, Frion had sailed to England with the other hirelings of Henry; among these was Clifford—Clifford, whose need and whose malice armed him against York's life, but who tried to hide his shame under an assumed appellation. There had always been a false fellowship and a real enmity between Frion and the knight. On his first arrival in Brussels, the secretary looked on him as an interloper; and Clifford, while he used the other, tried to force him into his place as an underling, and to blind him to his own designs. When he betrayed his party, spreading death among the partizans of York, and annihilating the cause, Frion, whose fortunes depended on its success, was unmeasured in his expressions of indignation and contempt. They had worked in direct opposition the year before in Kent: and, when Frion saw the hand of this reprobated man uplifted in midnight assassination, he triumphed in the lowness of his fall. Both were traitors now, both baffled: Frion looked on Clifford as the worse villain; and Clifford writhed under the familiar impertinence of a menial. They arrived in London; Sir Robert was dismissed with barren thanks, Frion thrown into prison; how far the knight's account gave intimation of the Frenchman's double-dealing, and so brought this severity upon him was not known, but for three months this mercurial spirit had languished in confinement.

Addicted to scheming, he had now full leisure to spend his whole thoughts that way; a single, simple plot was too plain for his industrious soul; he wore a whole web of them so intricate, that he sometimes lost the clue himself; not the less did he do his endeavour to put them in action. He intended either to lose Richard or make him; either to be the cause of his overthrowing Henry, or of being overthrown by him; in either case, to reap favour and advantage from the triumphant party.

Sad as is ever a prison-house, it was worse in those days of incivilization: this pen could ill describe the squalid figures and dire visages that crowded its tumultuous court. Even here Frion reigned umpire; but he broke from a knot of noisy squabblers, who held tattered cards, and appealed to him on a question of fair-play, as he saw one enter. Even he a wretch, yet many degrees better than the best of his miserable companions; a scarlet suit, trimmed with gold lace, somewhat tarnished, a cloak of ample folds, but threadbare, a dark plumed bonnet, drawn over his brow, above all, a rapier at his side, distinguished him from the prisoners. "This is kind, Sir Robert," said Frion in his softest manner, "I half feared you were too proud or politic to visit a disgraced man; for these last three days I have despaired of your worship; by my fay! you are right welcome."

Clifford cast a shuddering look around the walls; his eyes were hollow; his cheek sunk; he was the mere shadow of bold Robert. "Few words are best thanks, Master Stephen," he replied; "I am kind to you because the dice are cruel to me; you promise largely, and my wants are no dwarfs. What are your designs?"

"This is no place for parley," said Frion; "follow me." He led the way through several narrow passages to a miserable cell; straw was heaped in one corner for a bed; the walls were dank and tattered; the floor broken and filthy. "Welcome to my domicile, sir knight," said Frion: whether it were compunction that he had brought him to this, or distrust that the injury would be revenged, Clifford shrunk back and his lips grew livid. "One would not live here from choice," said Frion, "I allow; yet do not grudge me a few moments, it may stead us both."

"To the point then," said the knight; "it is not the place, Master Frion; but at the hour of noon—"

"No excuses, you like the place as ill as I," said the Frenchman, with a bland smile; "but you are more generous, for I would not dwell an instant's space here of my own will to gain any man's salvation. Now, what news from the west? Is it true that the duke of York is slain? or Exeter taken? both reports are rife. Adam Wicherly and Mat Oldcraft made their escape two days ago, to join the gallant. Mat was seized again, and says that there were bonfires in Southwark for Richard the Fourth."

Clifford, by a brief detail, answered, and then after some hesitation said, "He is not so low but that the king desires him to be lower: he who could bring him, bound hand and foot, to London, would be made a man. Empson saw Garthe yesterday; and he, who calls me Wiatt, came post to consult with me; but it were hazardous to attempt him; he is ten thousand strong."

"You know me, Sir Robert," said Frion; "there are few things I cannot bring about, so that I have room to ruffle in. I have a plot, King Richard is ours in three days, so one word be said; that word is liberty to me. Take you the reward; I ask no further share in your gains than free leave to set the channel between me and this dingy island."

Each despising, each mistrusting the other, these men conspired for the prince's fall: like "mousing owls" they hawked at an eagle with too true an aim. York's thoughts were of honour; but through them they were to be drugged with ignominy and despair. It is melancholy that circumstance and fortune should have power to reach the very shrine of our dearest thoughts; degrading them from their original brightness to a likeness of the foul aspect of the outer world. Richard's free and noble spirit was to become plastic to the touch of such men as the fallen Clifford and crafty Frion. Men, whom he had cast from him as unworthy his regard, could besiege the citadel of his hopes, and garrison it with disgrace; forcing him to occupy himself with ideas as base as those which possessed their own minds. It is the high heart's curse to be obliged to expend its deep and sacred emotions in hatred of, or struggle with things so mean, so very alien to its own aspiring nature.

CHAPTER XLV

ARRIVAL AT TAUNTON

Ah! Richard, with the eyes of heavy mind, I see thy glory, like a shooting star, Fall to the base earth from the firmament.

SHAKSPEARE.

Richard proceeded towards Taunton. Although this was in appearance an advance, his ill success before Exeter, and report of the large force already brought against them by Sir John Cheney, King Henry's chamberlain, had so far discouraged his followers as to occasion the desertion of many, so that of the seven thousand he had with him in Devonshire, he retained but three on his arrival near Taunton. These consisted of the original body of insurgents, Cornishmen, who had proceeded too far

to go back, and who, partly in affection for their leader, partly from natural stubbornness, swore to die in the cause. Poor fellows! rusty rapiers, and misshapen lances were their chief arms; a few had bows; others slings; a still greater number their ponderous tools, implements of labour and of peace, to be used now in slaughter. Their very dress displayed at once their unmartial and poverty-stricken state. In all these might be gathered a troop of three hundred foot, not wholly destitute of arms and discipline. The horse were not less at fault; yet among them there were about one hundred tolerably mounted, the riders, indeed, but too frequently disgracing their steeds.

It required all Richard's energy of purpose to hold him back from despair. The bitter sense of degradation visited him in spite of every effort. Had he ever made one of the chivalry of France and Burgundy? Had he run a tilt with James of Scotland, or grasped in knightly brotherhood the mailed hand of Sir Patrick Hamilton? And were these his comrades? unwashed artificers; ragged and rude peasants; vulgar-tongued traders? He felt "in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes;" and now to obtain pardon for them, to send them back scathless to their own homes, was his chief desire, even to the buying of their safety with his own downfall.

After a two days' march he arrived near Taunton. On reconnoitring the town, its position and weakness gave him hope that he might carry it, even with his sorry soldiery. To check these thoughts, tidings came, that Sir John Cheney was in close neighbourhood, and Henry himself advancing with a chosen body of men. On the evening of their arrival before the town, a detachment of the enemy entered it, cutting off the last hope of Richard.

The next morning it became evident that the crisis of his fortunes was at hand. The whole country teemed with soldiery. As the troops poured towards a common centre, the array and order of a battle-field became apparent in their operations. A battle, between a very myriad of golden-spurred knights, armed at all points, and the naked inhabitants of Richard's camp! call it rather a harvest; there were the reapers, here the bending corn. When in the north Richard wept over the devastation of the land, he felt that a word of his could counteract the harm—but now, his challenge had proved an airy dagger—substance-less—his resolve to encounter his foe, bringing the unarmed against these iron-suited warriors, grew in his eyes into premeditated murder: his heart heaved in his overcharged breast. To add bitterness to his thoughts there were his companions—O'Water brave in despair; Astley pale with fear for his lord; Heron foolish in his unmeaning boasting; Skelton trembling in every joint, and talking incessantly, apparently to deafen himself to "the small still voice" that whispered terror to his heart.

Richard spent the day among his men. They were prepared to fight; if needs must, to fall: protestations of sturdy devotion, the overflowing of the rude, manly heart, always affecting, met him at every turn. He was beloved, for he was generous and kind. Often he had exposed his life, when before Exeter, to save some one among them: when dismayed, he had cheered, when defeated, he had comforted them; nor did he leave the body of the meanest camp-follower uninterred; for one of Richard's characteristics was a quick sympathy with his species, and a reverence for all that bore the shape of man. But, while these qualities rendered him dear to all, they inspired him with a severe sense of his duties towards others, and a quick insight into their feelings; thus increasing to anguish the disquietude that agitated him.

Towards evening he was alone in his tent. At first he was confused by the various aspects, all terrible, that his fortunes assumed. By the caprice of destiny, he, who was descended from a line of kings, who had so long been the inhabitant of courts, a cavalier, honourable in his degree, renowned for his prowess, had not one noble-born partizan near him: not one of his ancient counsellors, to whom he had been used to defer, remained; he was absolutely alone; the sense of right and justice in his own heart was all he possessed, to be a beacon-light in this awful hour, when thousands depended upon his word—yet had he the power to save?

An idea, dim at first as a star on the horizon's verge, struggling through vapours, but growing each second brighter and clearer, dawned upon his mind. All then was over! his prophetic soul had proved false in its presumed foreknowledge; defeat, dishonour, disgrace tracked his steps. To lead his troops forth, and then to redeem them at Henry's hand, by the conditionless surrender of himself, was the thought, child of despair and self-devotion, that, still struggling with the affections and weaknesses of his nature, presented itself, not yet full fledged, but about to become so.

He had been several times interrupted during his meditations by the arrival of scouts, with various reports of the situation and proceedings of the enemy: Richard, better than these untaught recruits, knew the meaning of the various operations. As if on a map, he saw the stationing of a large and powerful army in expectation of battle; and was aware how incapable he was to cope with their numbers and force. At last Astley announced the arrival of two men: one was a Fleming, known to Richard as one of Lalayne's men, but the fellow was stupidly drunk; the other was an English peasant. "Please your worship," he said, "I am this man's guide, and must act as his interpreter besides; nothing would serve the spongy fellow but he must swallow ale at every tavern on the way."

"Speak, then," said Richard; "what is the purport of his journey?"

"Please you, sir, last night three hundred of them came right pop upon us afore we were aware: sore afraid they made us with their tall iron-shafted poles, steel caps, and short swords, calling each one for bread and beer."

"Do you mean," cried the prince, his eye brightening as he spoke, "that three hundred men, soldiers, armed like yonder fellow, are landed in England?"

So the countryman averred; and that even now they were but at the distance of twenty miles from Richard's encampment. They were still advancing, when the report was spread that the prince's forces were dispersed, himself taken prisoner. The rustic drew from the Fleming's pocket a letter, in French, signed by Schwartz, a son of him who fell at Stoke, a man in high favour with the Lady Margaret of Burgundy. It said how he had been despatched by her grace to his succour; how intelligence of the large army of Henry, and his defeat, had so terrified his men, that they refused to proceed, nay, by the next morning would take their way back to Poole, where they had landed, unless Richard himself came to reassure them, and to lead them on. Every word of the letter lighted up to forgotten joy young Richard's elastic spirit. With these men to aid him, giving weight and respectability to his powers, he might hope to enforce the conditions of his challenge. All must be decided on the morrow; that very hour he would set forth, to return before morning with these welcome succours.

It was near midnight; his camp was still: the men, in expectation of the morrow's struggle, had retired to repose; their leaders had orders to visit their commander in his tent at the hour which now the empty hour-glass told was come. Hastily, eagerly, Richard announced the arrival of these German mercenaries; he directed them to accompany him, that with some show of attendance he might present himself to Schwartz. The camp was not to be disturbed; two or three men alone among them were awakened, and ordered to keep guard—in five hours assuredly he must return. In a brief space of time, the troop who were to accompany him, Heron, Skelton, O'Water, and Astley, with some forty more, led their horses to his tent in silence:—there were few lights through all the camp; their honest hearts which beat within slept, while he was awake to succour and save them. This was Richard's last thought, as, mounted on his good steed, he led the way across the dim heath towards Yeovil.

It was such a night as is frequent at the end of September; a warm but furious west-wind tore along the sky, shaking the dark tresses of the tress, and chasing the broad shadows of the clouds across the plains. The moon, at the beginning of her third quarter, sped through the sky with rapid silvery wings; now cutting the dark, sea-like ether; now plunging deep amidst the clouds; now buried in utter darkness; anon spreading a broad halo among the thinner woof of vapours. The guide was at the

prince's side; Heron, upon his short, sturdy pony, was just behind; Skelton tried to get his tall mare to an even pace with Richard's horse, but she fell back continually: the rushing, howling wind and rustling trees drowned the clatter of the hoofs. They reached the extreme edge of the common; Richard turned his head—the lights of his little camp burnt dim in the moonshine, its poor apparel of tents was lost in the distance: they entered a dark lane, and lost sight of every trace of it; still they rode fleetly on. Night, and the obscure shapes of night around—holy, blinding, all-seeing night! when we feel the power of the Omnipotent as if immediately in contact with us; when religion fills the soul, and our very fears are unearthly; when familiar images assume an unknown power to thrill our hearts; and the winds and trees and shapeless clouds have a voice not their own, to speak of all that we dream or imagine beyond our actual life. Through embowered lanes, whose darkness seemed thick and palpable—over open, moonshiny fields, where the airy chase of clouds careered in dimmer shapes upon the earth—Richard rode forward, fostering newly-awakened hope; glad in the belief that while he saved all who depended on him, he would not prove a mere victim led in tame submission, an unrighteous sacrifice to the Evil Spirit of the World.