

ber of an old and respectable family of Wiltshire; her husband had fallen while gallantly repelling an attack of the combined Dutch and French fleets on the English ships in the river Thames, A. D. 1666. Since then she had remained a widow, preferring to the restrictions of a married life, the single state, in which she might engage in those works of charity the ample fortune left by her husband enabled her to perform. The house she occupied, situate in the neighbourhood of Salisbury, was an antique structure—built seemingly with the view of defence against the attacks of midnight marauders; for although its walls were high and thick, and its doors were oaken, and well studded with bolts and bars, and its windows partook more of the character of embrasures for military engines, than apertures for the admission of light—it did not appear capable of resisting the onset of a large or well organized force.

The inmates of Mrs. Gaunt's family were assembled, as was their constant custom, shortly after the rout of Sedgemoor, in the great room of this estimable woman's mansion, for the purpose of religious worship. They seemed to pay little attention to the angry strife of the elements raging without, with a fury that threatened annihilation to the inventions of man. During the pauses of the storm, a slight noise was heard at the door, but so feeble as to negative the supposition that any one sought admission. The services had concluded, and all had found oblivion of the impending calamities of the times, except their mistress, who remained reading at a small and richly carved table by the light of a solitary lamp, which, every time the wind forced itself through the chinks and keyholes, flamed over the ample page before her with an intenser light, and then flickered up towards the lofty ceiling, amid heavy wreaths of smoke, casting a funereal gloom over the time-worn draperies and massive relics of a former time. The attention of the reader had more than once been diverted by the noise without, and at last she raised her head and listened attentively. "Can it be," she said to herself—"can it be that any one seeks admission at this hour, and on such a night, and yet fears to make his wants known by a bolder application?" Rising from her seat, but without raising the lamp, she proceeded to the door, and on opening it started back at the sight of a tall man wrapped in the folds of an ample cloak. Gathering courage on perceiving he awaited her invitation to enter, she demanded the nature of his business.

"Protection, lady," was the answer; "a shield from danger, greater than that threatened by the inclemency of the elements."

"Enough," was the cheering rejoinder; and Mrs. Gaunt led the way to the sitting room, without further questioning.

"I have been some time at the door," he said, in a low voice, while he followed her through the hall—"but not daring to trust myself to others than yourself, I delayed making myself heard until assured that all but you had gone to rest." Here he threw off his cloak, long since saturated with rain, and discovered the dress of a subordinate officer in Monmouth's service. The stranger was well made, and might have been called handsome, had there not existed a certain knowing familiarity between his habitually upturned mouth and the outer corner of his left eye, that suggested the idea that they two were leagued together for purposes known only to themselves, and the long hooked nose, acting as a sort of go-between, and not unfrequently shielding the confederacy from the approach of a too minute curiosity from the other side of their owner's person. In spite of wind, cold and rain, enough to have banished all other expression from an ordinary countenance, than that of weariness: in spite of a desperate effort to look grateful, the light of the lamp falling full on his countenance revealed something there innate and evil, that carried a sort of warning to the bosom of his hostess; but she rejected the monitor on looking at his torn and dripping garments, and bethought herself that toil and care had engendered the expression; and certainly, the tale of suffering he then related fully bore out the benevolent construction.

"Madam," he commenced, "since the day that Monmouth met a death-blow to his hopes, and such of his followers as escaped the slaughter of Sedgemoor, were left without a leader, I have been driven from hole to hiding place by the instrumentality of Kirkes Lambkins, and have only now, aided by the darkness of the night, succeeded in reaching the roof of one, who, if report speaks truth, will not refuse shelter to the homeless wanderer."

The knowledge that she risked her all—that life and property were at stake, weighed naught with this estimable woman, whose hopes of happiness were placed on another than an earthly king. Reason had gone abroad upon the world, and the light of the reformation bursting in upon the dark superstition of centuries, had swept away a monstrous superstructure of fraud and tyranny, and by it man