

## THE SIEGE OF LICHFIELD.

## CHAPTER VII.

## THE NIGHT ADVENTURE.

WHEN the enthusiasm of the moment was over, Archbold again ascended to his lofty station on the battlements, not to renew the engagement, for the assailants had drawn off their forces, but with a far different object. The elevated position which he had occupied commanded a full view of the town and the surrounding country. But Archbold looked not at the scene below him, nor around him: he regarded not the havoc made by the artillery on the town, or on the spire and battlements of the Cathedral; but his eye rested on the Church of St. Chad's, and the little group of houses which were a few furlongs distant across the meadows. There they lay, reflected in the glassy surface of the pool. The millwheel, which generally enlivened the scene with its cheerful motion, had stopped; the willows bent over the pool in drooping loneliness; and of the groups of children from the adjacent city, which might commonly have been seen strolling round the margin of the pool in cheerful sport, not one was now to be seen. All was deserted by both friend and foe; the whole attention of the besiegers during the day having been directed to the south gate of the fortress, and their forces having been waiting under arms to storm it, if a breach could have been effected.

Often during the day had the eyes of Archbold been directed to the spot where it was possible the object of his dearest thoughts might yet remain. Once he had thought he had seen Mr. Morley and his daughter come out from their house into the garden; but it was only for a moment; and the distance was too great for him to distinguish plainly. Henry's heart was full of deep anxiety. What was the fate of his beloved Catharine? Had she taken refuge in the town? or was she still at her own home? He well knew that, though the enemy had not apparently as yet taken possession of that point, yet that being baffled in their attack upon the south gate, they would, in all probability, during the night, or on the next day, extend their forces round the Cathedral, and occupy the church and houses at St. Chad's. A sudden thought struck him. Could he not, now that the engagement was over, obtain permission to sally forth with his little band, and bring away Mr. Morley and Catharine? But then where could he take her? The Close was no place of safety. The besiegers would certainly renew the attack; and even should they not succeed in taking it, yet those who were within would be exposed to imminent peril from their shots, and to still greater danger if the place were taken by storm.

As he was thus pondering in his mind what course he should pursue, he observed a considerable body of the enemy's soldiers leave the town by way of the Moat-hall in the direction of St. Chad's, and winding round the head of the pool, take possession of the mill and church and little knot of houses. No one, of course, opposed them; they were evidently sent there for quarters, and in order to secure the position. It was now too late to attempt to bring Catharine into the Close, even had it been desirable before. He earnestly prayed that they might have escaped and reached some place of safety. It was now nearly sunset; and Henry was about to descend with a heavy heart from his station, when his attention was again arrested by a movement in the quarter upon which he was looking. He saw a patrol of soldiers leave St. Chad's in the direction of the town, apparently leading with them a prisoner. Archbold was in an agony of despair. What could be the meaning of this proceeding? Could it be that they had separated Mr. Morley from his daughter? and if so, for what purpose? Oh, that he were on the spot to defend his beloved from the spoilers or the assassins! The most horrible thoughts crowded on his mind, and drove him almost frantic.

The sun had now sunk beneath the horizon, and he was still straining his eyes, in hope of seeing some object through the gathering darkness, which might convey a gleam of hope, when he heard a step ascending the stone staircase of the tower, and his friend Glasier stood before him.

"I expected I should find you here," said he. "Your thoughts, I see, are wandering to St. Chad's. I have been making inquiry amongst the townspeople who have come in here, and not one of them had seen Mr. Morley or his daughter in the town. I hope, therefore, they got away before the roundheads came." "Alas!" said Henry, "if she is not in the town, she is yet at her father's house. I know Mr. Morley's resolution to stand at his post, unless forced to quit it; and I am sure that Catharine would never leave her father."

He then detailed to his friend what he had observed from the battlements, and told him that he was resolved to make an attempt to ascertain what was her situation, and, if possible, to rescue her from the

hands of the rebels. Glasier saw that it was needless to attempt to dissuade Archbold from his purpose; nor, indeed, was he the man to do so, but, on the contrary, entered heartily into his scheme, and offered to accompany him, or to render him any assistance in his power.

"I know I may count on your help, my dear friend, and perhaps I may want it; but first, I will try what I can do myself,—at least, in the way of seeing how the land lies. We must have an order from Lord Chesterfield to let us out at the south postern. I will get Sir Richard to speak to him."

"You will not be able to leave the Close, I fear, either by the south or west gate," said Glasier, "as the roundheads have placed guards upon both."

"No matter," said Archbold: "you and I have climbed over the battlements into the moat a hundred times when we were schoolboys; and I will try and put some of my school-learning into practice." So saying, he proceeded immediately to carry his scheme into execution. He went first to the lodgings of the worthy knight, who, seeing him bent on his object, accompanied him to the governor, and obtained the requisite leave of absence. Having so far succeeded in his wish, Archbold was much more calm and satisfied. His spirit, which before was depressed with grief, now became exhilarated at the prospect of his enterprise; and, with the cool sagacity for which he was distinguished, he began to prepare everything to ensure the success of his undertaking. He went first to the great hall of the palace, where the officers who were not on duty were assembled at mess, and soon occupied himself on the remains of a baron of beef, which was placed on the table for all comers; for he had tasted no food since sunrise, and knew that he had a good night's work before him. Having taken the necessary refreshment, he went to his home, and divesting himself of his heavy corslet, put on a more convenient dress of a dark colour, reloaded and primed his pistols, and took his trusty sword.

It was now eight o'clock; the night was pitch dark, and the wind boisterous, all which favoured his enterprise. Everything being prepared, Archbold, accompanied by his friend Glasier, went into the bishop's garden, where he found a sentinel pacing the battlements.

"I have an order to leave the fortress," said he, "and am going to climb down the bastion."

"I am afraid you will not be able, sir," said the sentinel; "for the rebels have posted their patrols along all this side;" and, as he spoke, they could hear distinctly the voice of the men at no great distance in the thick darkness before them.

This was a sad blow to Archbold's scheme, but did not divert him from his purpose; only he was obliged to proceed with the greater caution. Fastening his coil of knotted ropes, therefore, to the stem of a tree in the angle formed by the wall and the projecting bastion, he silently raised himself to the top of the battlement, and being muscular and active, let himself down without difficulty to the bottom of the moat. The next thing was to climb the opposite bank, and pass the sentinel who was stationed upon it. The man seemed to have ceased pacing to and fro, as if his attention had been arrested; but Archbold remaining quite still for a few minutes, he again resumed his walk. Henry watched each turn which the sentinel took, and gradually climbed the bank when he was at the furthest end of his beat. He had now reached the top of the moat, when the sentinel suddenly stopped within a few paces of the spot where he was; and Henry distinctly heard the click of the trigger as the soldier cocked his musket. Not a moment was to be lost. Springing suddenly on his feet, he seized the weapon, and endeavoured to wrest it from the soldier's hand; but the man was strong, and not easily mastered. Henry, therefore, adroitly dashed open the pan of the musket, so that the priming was spilt; and then quitting his hold, sprang into the open meadows. The sentinel shouted loudly to his comrades for aid; but, long before they could render it, Archbold was far away across the fields. Being perfectly acquainted with the ground, though it was pitch dark, Henry skirted rapidly along the margin of the pool, and a few minutes brought him to St. Chad's. Here he was obliged to proceed more cautiously, in order to avoid observation, and reconnoitre the position of the enemy. The old church was full of lights. As he drew near, he heard within it a loud voice, interrupted occasionally by the snorting of horses; and, looking through the window, he saw, to his astonishment, Jonas Morley, in a trooper's uniform, occupying the pulpit, and haranguing the soldiers who were stretched on the straw, some taking their meal, some sleeping, and some listening. Henry could only distinguish a few words of the speaker. "Down with the Amalekites!—smite them hip and thigh!—lay waste the house of Baal!"—exhortations which elicited a loud hum of applause from the uncouth congregation. Finding them so well employed, he withdrew from the window, and approached the house of Mr. Morley. The library, opening on a little garden, was occupied by several soldiers, who were sitting round a table with remains

of food and jugs of ale before them. It was in great disorder, having evidently been plundered, the books and papers lying about on the ground in sad confusion. Henry glided silently round the house, and saw, to his satisfaction, a light in Catharine's window. It was in the second storey, but not high from the ground. With anxious yet determined heart he climbed up by the creepers which clung to the buttress, and there found it as he indeed expected. Catharine was there alone, her hair dishevelled, kneeling with hands uplifted in an attitude of prayer. He gazed a moment in admiration; but time was precious.

"Catharine," he said, in a low but distinct voice.

"Ha, Henry!" said the kneeling girl, starting on her feet; "can that be you? God has indeed heard my prayers."

"Hush! it is I," said Henry: "come nearer, and speak in a whisper."

She drew close to him and grasped his hand. "Alas, Henry! they have taken away my father: know you what they have done with him?"

"I know not for certain; but are not you yourself in danger?"

"Yes, O yes! Even before my father's face have they insulted me. I have the most horrible fears. Oh, save me—save me!"

"You must descend, then, from the window, and I will protect you with my life. The house is full of soldiers. This is the only way of escape. Stay, throw something over you, for the night is cold."

Catharine quickly caught up a mantle with a hood; and, placing a chair at the window, stepped from it without hesitation.

"God be thanked!" said he, as he placed her gently on the turf. "we are safe so far."

Scarcely had they set foot on the ground, when the door of the church opened; and, by the glare from within, they discerned a man in an officer's dress come forth from the porch.

"Ah, that is he!" said Catharine: "save me—save me!"

"Let us stand back," said Henry, "and allow him to pass."

Archbold drew Catharine behind the shrubs, but not in time to avoid the observation of the soldier, who caught a glimpse of her dress.

"Who goes there?" said he, starting forward and grasping her wrist; but, at the same instant, Henry's sword descended with its full force on his head, on which he wore a light foraging cap, having divested himself of his helmet; and the rebel rolled senseless on the ground.

"Haste!" said Archbold; "we have not a moment to lose. The soldiers will probably be disturbed."

It was even as he said. The men in the parsonage came out with lights, and finding their commander lying apparently dead rushed instantly into the church and gave the alarm, upon which the roundheads poured out in numbers to pursue the fugitives. Henry half led, half carried his fair charge along in a dark lane, trusting for escape chiefly to his knowledge of the locality and the darkness of the night. Unfortunately, four of the soldiers took the same direction and gained upon them. Henry strained every nerve to escape; and, as they approached nearer, he led his companion over a stile into the field by the side of the lane, and there leaving her for a moment, he drew forth his pistols, prepared to sell his life dearly, and defend her to the utmost. To his great relief, the pursuers continued their course along the lane which he had quitted, and were soon out of hearing.

(To be continued.)

## THE MOTHERLESS.

Sitting in the school-room, I overheard a conversation between a sister and a brother. The little boy complained of insults or wrongs received from another little boy. His face was flushed with anger. The sister listened awhile, and then turning away, she answered, "I do not want to hear another word; Willie has no mother." The brother's lips were silent; the rebuke came home to him, and stealing away, he muttered, "I never thought of that." He thought of his own mother, and the loneliness of "Willie" compared with his own happy lot. "He has no mother." Do we think of it when want comes to the orphan, and rude words assail him? Has the little wanderer no mother to listen to his little sorrows? Speak gently to him then.

## GOOD ENOUGH FOR HOME.

"Why do you put on that forlorn old dress?" asked Emily Manners of her cousin Lydia, one morning after she had spent the night at Lydia's house.

The dress in question was a spotted, faded old summer silk, which only looked the more forlorn for its once fashionable trimmings, now crumpled and frayed. "Oh, anything is good enough for home!" said Lydia, hastily pinning on a soiled collar; and twisting