

taught thee to understand, and to profit by in no common measure.'

'Say what thou wilt, honest Tony,' replied Varney; 'for be it according to thine absurd faith, or according to thy most villainous practice, it cannot choose but be rare matter to qualify this cup of Alicant. Thy conversation is relishing and poignant, and beats caviare, dried neat's tongue, and all other provocatives that give savour to good liquor.'

'Well, then, tell me,' said Anthony Foster, 'is not our good lord and master's turn better served, and his antechamber more suitably filled with decent, God-fearing men, who will work his will and their own profit quietly, and without worldly scandal, than that he should be manned, and attended, and followed by such open debauchers and rudianly swordsmen as Tidesly, Killigrew, this fellow Lambourne, whom you have put me to seek out for you, and other such who bear the gallows in their face and murder in their right hand—who are a terror to peaceable men, and a scandal to my lord's service?'

'O, content you, good Master Anthony Foster,' answered Varney; 'he that flies at all manner of game must keep all kinds of hawks, both short and long winged. The course my lord holds is no easy one, and he must stand provided at all points with trusty retainers to meet each sort of service. He must have his gay courtier, like myself, to ruffle it in the presence-chamber, and to lay hand on hilt when any speaks in disparagement of my lord's honour.'

'Ay,' said Foster, 'and to whisper a word for him into a fair lady's ear, when he may not approach her himself.'

'Then,' said Varney, going on without appearing to notice the interruption, 'he must have his lawyers—deep subtle pioneers—to draw his contracts, his pro-contracts, and his post-contracts, and to find the way to make the most of grants of church-lands and commons, and licences for monopoly—And he must have physicians who can spice a cup or a caudle—And he must have his cabalists, like Dee and Allan, for conjuring up the devil—And he must have ruffling swordsmen, who would fight the devil when he is raised and at the wildest—And, above all, without prejudice to others, he must have such godly, innocent, puritanic souls as thou, honest Anthony, who defy Satan, and do his work at the same time.'

'You would not say, Master Varney,' said Foster, 'that our good lord and master, whom I hold to be fulfilled in all nobleness, would use such base and sinful means to rise, as thy speech points at?'

'Tush, man,' said Varney, 'never look at me with so sad a brow—you trap me not—nor am I in your power, as your weak brain may imagine, because I name to you freely the engines, the springs, the screws, the tackle and braces, by which great men rise in stirring times.—Sayest thou our good lord is fulfilled of all nobleness?—Amen, and so be it—he has the more need to have those about him who are unscrupulous in his service, and who, because they know that his fall will overwhelm and crush them, must wager

both blood and brain, soul and body, in order to keep him aloft; and this I tell thee, because I eat not who knows it.'

'You speak truth, Master Varney,' said Anthony Foster; 'he that is head of a party, is but a boat on a wave, that raises not itself, but is moved upward by the billow which it floats upon.'

'Thou art metaphorical, honest Anthony,' replied Varney; 'that velvet doublet hath made an oracle of thee—we will have thee to Oxford to take the degrees in the arts.—And, in the mean time, hast thou arranged all the matters which were sent from London, and put the western chambers into such fashion as may answer my lord's humour?'

'They may serve a king on his bridal-day,' said Anthony; 'and I promise you that Dame Amy sits in them yonder, as proud and gay as if she were the Queen of Sheba.'

'Tis the better, good Anthony,' answered Varney. 'We must found our future fortunes on her good liking.'

'We build on sand, then,' said Anthony Foster; 'for supposing that she sails away to court in all her lord's dignity and authority, how is she to look back upon me, who am her jailor as it were, to detain her here against her will, keeping her a caterpillar on an old wall, when she would fain be a painted butterfly in a court garden?'

'Fear not her displeasure, man,' said Varney. 'I will show her that all thou hast done in this matter was good service, both to my lord and her; and when she chips the egg-shell and walks alone, she shall own we have hatched her greatness.'

'Look to yourself, Master Varney,' said Foster, 'you may misreken folly in this matter—She gave you but a frosty reception this morning, and, I think, looks on you, as well as me, with an evil eye.'

'You mistake her, Foster—you mistake her utterly—To me she is bound by all the ties which can secure her to one who has been the means of gratifying both her love and ambition. Who was it that took the obscure Amy Robsart, the daughter of an impoverished and dotard knight—the destined bride of a moon-struck, moping enthusiast like Edmund Tressilian, from her lowly fates, and held out to her in prospect the brightest fortune in England, or perchance in Europe? Why, man, it was I, as I have often told thee, that found opportunity for their secret meeting—It was I who watched the wood while he beat for the deer—It was I who, to this day, am blamed by her family as the companion of her flight, and, were I in their neighbourhood, would be fain to wear a shirt of better stuff than Holland linen, lest my ribs should be acquainted with Spanish steel. Who carried their letters?—I. Who amused the old knight and Tressilian?—I. Who planned her escape?—it was I. It was I, in short, Dick Varney, who pulled this pretty little daisy from its lowly nook, and placed it in the proudest bonnet in Britain.'

'Ay, Master Varney,' said Foster; 'but it may be she thinks that, had the matter remained with you, the flower had been stuck so slightly into the cap, that the first breath of a changeable breeze of passion had blown the poor daisy to the common.'