

made respecting the condition of the manor, of the queen's rights there, and of the advantages and disadvantages which might attend her occasional residence at the royal seat of Woodstock, seemed to show that he had most earnestly investigated the matter of the petition of the inhabitants, and with a desire to forward the interest of the place.

'Now, the Lord love his noble countenance,' said the bailiff, who had thrust himself into the presence-chamber; 'he looks somewhat pale. I warrant him he hath spent the whole night in perusing our memorial. Master Toughyarn, who took six months to draw it up, said it would take a week to understand it; and see if the Earl hath not knocked the marrow out of it in twenty-four hours.'

The earl then acquainted them that he should move their sovereign to honour Woodstock occasionally with her residence during her royal progresses, that the town and its vicinity might derive, from her countenance and favour, the same advantages as from those of her predecessors. Meanwhile he rejoiced to be the exponent of her gracious pleasure, in assuring them that, for the increase of trade, and encouragement of the worthy burgesses of Woodstock, her Majesty was minded to erect the town into a staple for wool.

This joyful intelligence was received with the acclamations not only of the better sort who were admitted to the audience-chamber, but of the commons who awaited without.

The freedom of the corporation was presented to the earl upon knee by the magistrates of the place, together with a purse of gold pieces, which the earl handed to Varney, who, on his part, gave a share to Lambourne, as the most acceptable earnest of his new service.

The earl and his retinue took horse soon after, to return to court, accompanied by the shouts of the inhabitants of Woodstock, who made the old oaks ring with re-echoing, 'Long live Queen Elizabeth, and the noble Earl of Leicester!' The urbanity and courtesy of the earl even threw a gleam of popularity over his attendants, as their laughing deportment had formerly obscured that of their master; and men shouted, 'Long life to the Earl, and to his gallant followers!' as Varney and Lambourne, each in his rank, rode proudly through the streets of Woodstock.

CHAPTER VIII.

Host. I will hear you, Master Fenton; and I will, at least, keep your counsel.

MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR.

It became necessary to return to the detail of those circumstances which accompanied, and indeed occasioned, the sudden disappearance of Tressilian from the sign of the Black Bear at Cumnor. It will be recollected that this gentleman, after his encounter with Varney, had returned to Giles Gosling's caravansary, where he shut himself up in his own chamber, demanded pen, ink, and paper, and announced his purpose to remain private for the day: in the evening he

appeared again in the public room, where Michael Lambourne, who had been on the watch for him, agreeably to his engagement to Varney, endeavoured to renew his acquaintance with him, and hoped he retained no unfriendly recollection of the part he had taken in the morning's scuffle.

But Tressilian repelled his advances firmly, though with civility—'Master Lambourne,' said he, 'I trust I have recompensed to your pleasure the time you have wasted on me. Under the show of wild bluntness which you exhibit, I know you have sense enough to understand me, when I say frankly, that, the object of our temporary acquaintance having been accomplished, we must be strangers to each other in future.'

'*Foto!*' said Lambourne, twirling his whiskers with one hand, and grasping the hilt of his weapon with the other; 'if I thought that this usage was meant to insult me'—

'You would bear it with discretion, doubtless,' interrupted Tressilian, 'as you must do at any rate. You know too well the distance that is betwixt us, to require me to explain myself further—Good evening.'

So saying, he turned his back upon his former companion, and entered into discourse with the landlord. Michael Lambourne felt strongly disposed to bully; but his wrath died away in a few incoherent oaths and ejaculations, and he sank unresistingly under the ascendancy which superior spirits possess over persons of his habits and description. He remained moody and silent in a corner of the apartment, paying the most marked attention to every motion of his late companion, against whom he began now to nourish a quarrel on his own account, which he trusted to avenge by the execution of his new master Varney's directions. The hour of supper arrived, and was followed by that of repose, when Tressilian, like others, retired to his sleeping apartment.

He had not been in bed long, when the train of sad reveries, which supplied the place of rest in his disturbed mind, was suddenly interrupted by the jar of a door on its hinges, and a light was seen to glimmer in the apartment. Tressilian, who was as brave as steel, sprang from his bed at this alarm, and had laid hand upon his sword, when he was prevented from drawing it, by a voice which said, 'Be not too rash with your rapier, Master Tressilian—It is I, your host, Giles Gosling.'

At the same time, unshrouding the dark lantern, which had hitherto only emitted an indistinct glimmer, the goodly aspect and figure of the landlord of the Black Bear was visibly presented to his astonished guest.

'What mummerly is this, mine host?' said Tressilian; 'have you supped as jollily as last night, and so mistaken your chamber? or is midnight a time for masquerading it in your guest's lodging?'

'Master Tressilian,' replied the host, 'I know my place and my time as well as ever a merry landlord in England. But here has been my hang-dog kinsman watching you as close as ever cat watched a mouse; and here have you, on the other hand, quarrelled and fought either with him or with some other person, and I fear that danger will come of it.'