

morning's draught;—and they set forth together for the habitation of Anthony Foster.

The village of Cumnor is pleasantly built on a hill, and in a wooded park closely adjacent was situated the ancient mansion occupied at this time by Anthony Foster, of which the ruins may be still extant. The park was then full of large trees, and, in particular, of ancient and mighty oaks, which stretched their giant arms over the high walls surrounding the demesne, thus giving it a melancholy, secluded, and monastic appearance. The entrance to the park lay through an old-fashioned gateway in the outer wall, the door of which was formed of two huge oaken leaves, thickly studded with nails, like the gate of an old town.

'We shall be finely helped up here,' said Michael Lambourne, looking at the gateway and gate, 'if this fellow's suspicious humour should refuse us admission altogether, as it is like he may, in case this linsey-wolsey fellow of a mercer's visit to his premises has disquieted him. But no,' he added, pushing the huge gate, which gave way, 'the door stands invitingly open, and here we are within the forbidden ground, without other impediment than the passive resistance of a heavy oak door, moving on rusty hinges.'

They stood now in an avenue overshadowed by such old trees as we have described, and which had been bordered at one time by high hedges of yew and holly. But these, having been untrimmed for many years, had run up into great bushes, or rather dwarf-trees, and now encroached with their dark and melancholy boughs upon the road which they once had screened. The avenue itself was grown up with grass, and, in one or two places, interrupted by piles of withered brushwood, which had been lopped from the trees cut down in the neighbouring park, and was here stacked for drying. Formal walks and avenues, which, at different points, crossed this principal approach, were, in like manner, choked up and interrupted by piles of brushwood and billets, and in other places by underwood and brambles. Besides the general effect of desolation which is so strongly impressed, whenever we behold the contrivances of man wasted and obliterated by neglect, and witness the marks of social life effaced gradually by the influence of vegetation, the size of the trees, and the outspreading extent of their boughs, diffused a gloom over the scene, even when the sun was at the highest, and made a proportional impression on the mind of those who visited it. This was felt even by Michael Lambourne, however alien his habits were to receiving any impressions, excepting from things which addressed themselves immediately to his passions.

'This wood is as dark as a wolf's mouth,' said he to Tressilian, as they walked together slowly along the solitary and broken approach, and had just come in sight of the monastic front of the old mansion, with its shafted windows, brick walls overgrown with ivy and creeping shrubs, and twisted stalks of chimneys of heavy stonework. 'And yet,' continued Lambourne, 'it is fairly done on the part of Foster too; for since he chooses not visitors, it is right to keep his place in a fashion that will invite few to trespass

upon his privacy. But had he been the Anthony I once knew him, these sturdy oaks had long since become the property of some honest wood-monger, and the manor-house here had looked lighter at midnight than it now does at noon, while Foster played fast and loose with the price, in some cunning corner in the purlieus of Whitefriars.'

'Was he then such an unthrift?' asked Tressilian.

'He was,' answered Lambourne, 'like the rest of us, no saint, and no sinner. But what I liked worst of Tony was, that he loved to take his pleasure by himself, and grudged, as men say, every drop of water that went past his own mill. I have known him deal with such measures of wine when he was alone, as I would not have ventured on with aid of the best toper in Berkshire;—that, and some sway towards superstition, which he had by temperament, rendered him unworthy the company of a good fellow. And now he has earthed himself here, in a den just belittling such a sly fox as himself.'

'May I ask you, Master Lambourne,' said Tressilian, 'since your old companion's humour jumps so little with your own, wherefore you are so desirous to renew acquaintance with him?'

'And may I ask you, in return, Master Tressilian,' answered Lambourne, 'wherefore you have shown yourself so desirous to accompany me on this party?'

'I told you my motive,' said Tressilian, 'when I took share in your wager,—it was simple curiosity.'

'La you there now!' answered Lambourne; 'see how you civil and discreet gentlemen think to use us who live by the free exercise of our wits! Had I answered your question by saying that it was simple curiosity which led me to visit my old comrade Anthony Foster, I warrant you had set it down for an evasion, and a turn of my trade. But any answer, I suppose, must serve my turn.'

'And wherefore should not bare curiosity,' said Tressilian, 'be a sufficient reason for my taking this walk with you?'

'O, content yourself, sir,' replied Lambourne; 'you cannot put the change on me so easy as you think, for I have lived among the quick-stirring spirits of the age too long, to swallow chaff for grain. You are a gentleman of birth and breeding—your bearing makes it good; of civil habits and fair reputation—your manners declare it, and my uncle avouches it; and yet you associate yourself with a sort of scant-of-grace, as men call me; and, knowing me to be such, you make yourself my companion in a visit to a man whom you are a stranger to,—and all out of mere curiosity, forsooth!—The excuse, if curiously balanced, would be found to want some scruples of just weight, or so.'

'If your suspicions were just,' said Tressilian, 'you have shown no confidence in me to invite or deserve mine.'

'O, if that be all,' said Lambourne, 'my motives lie above water. While this gold of mine lasts,—taking out his purse, chucking it into the air, and catching it as it fell,—'I will make it buy pleasure, and when it is out, I must have more. Now, if this mysterious Lady of the