

thine, thy absence will afford me pleasure—it boots not that I should mention wherefore—thy changing colour tells me it is felt; but I have no wish that thou shouldst go forth into the world unfriended. The present is a time when brave men meet reward, and our King claims the service of all true lieges. I can command a commission in a troop destined for service in the field—it waits thy will.”

“And with thanks, my lord, will I accept the boon from thee, nor will I enquire the motive of thy goodness, since it hath given an aim to my fixed purpose of leaving my native land, for a time, if not forever.

“This is well,” he said, while a gleam of pleasure shot over his countenance; “the military tutor of my son shall for a time attend on thee, and school thee in the mystery of thy new career.”

“My lord,” I answered, “I will not ask thee to forgive my untaught rudeness when last we met; thy actions say that much hath been forgiven; nor will I promise to deserve thy favour, but if the world should ever speak more kindly of me, may it afford thee pleasure, that one wretch at least hath been saved by thee from misery and crime.”

The Baron touched the bell, and the servant was ordered to prepare his carriage; it was in waiting. He bade me farewell, and rose to take his usual drive around his pleasure grounds; and this day his daughter sat beside him. I saw her as they drove off, but she saw me not; and I turned slowly towards my guardian’s cottage.

The flame of war, in one unbroken blaze, swept over the surface of far-extending Europe, and the all-conquering warrior whose ambition kindled the strife, was trampling upon the necks of prostrate emperors. Kingdoms were trodden under the feet of his legions, and vacant thrones were filled by his satellites, made kings by his nod. The world looked on with awe and wonder, and nations admired while they feared the destruction that followed the “fell swoop” of his eagle’s wing.

But the star of a mightier even than he was now rolling onwards to the zenith of its glory. Each the victor in a hundred fields, and conqueror wherever himself led, it remained only to measure their strength against each other, and the younger warrior, with new tales of whose mighty deeds, the public ear was daily filled, yearned for a field to tell which should wear the victor palm.

To follow his star was now my destiny, and I exulted in his fame, idiot-like, hoping that in it I might one day share. Let none sneer at my folly—I was young, ardent, and proud, though inexperienced and without knowledge, and I was cheered by the smile of a beautiful and high-born maiden, who, although to be seen no more by me, was one whose praise I would most willingly have given life to win.

My troop joined his standard, and we were not long inactive. In a brief space we became familiar with war! Today, we met the foe, and conquered—and tomorrow, we feasted on the spoil; and the battle and the banquet were alike welcome—nay, the former was often coveted with an avidity surpassing that with which we hailed the approach of the latter.

Panting only for a fame that would absorb the infancy of my birth no danger could check my ever onward career. Wherever the foeman showed the boldest front, there was my sword seen flashing? Yet I escaped unhurt from a hundred battles—unsathed amid butchered thousands. It seemed as if the battle-axe and the bullet turned aside from one who “wore a charmed life.” I boast not that I was brave—I was reckless—careless of a life without joy, save that I felt in the whirlwind of human passion, or amid the turmoil of battling armies; unless that may be called joy—a vague and undefined idea, that in a warrior’s name, the proudest of England’s nobles might forget the bar-sinister that disgraced my shield. If it were so, it only proved that even I—vain and miserable fool—sometimes thought too highly of my abject and degraded race.

It was the eve of battle, and warrior thousands were gay in the anticipation of the glory a day would win. The enemy lay within an hour’s march of our encampment, but the battle had been deferred, for the enemy were worn out with forced marches, and we were hourly in expectation of reinforcements of straggling parties who had been despatched on foraging or reconnoitering expeditions. Amongst the rest we were joined by a division, newly arrived from England, to which the young Lord of Lorida, who had recently joined the army as a subaltern, was attached. The officers were introduced at our mess, and each rose to exchange greetings with some remembered friend. I, too, rose to my feet, and extended my hand to the young lord, but he turned aside from my proffered palm. Gods! how my veins tingled at the cold-blooded and ungrateful insult. But I spoke not. He sat beside me at the board, and in the interval of mirth, I heard him discourse with a brother officer of the home he had left—and speak of his sister as on the point of union with a nobleman far her superior in rank and wealth.

I became mad, and the hot breath scorched my lips, as the words, in a stern whisper, passed them, and I said,

“Tell me, my lord, who that noble is?”

“Tell thee,” he answered, while his face became livid with passion, at the unlooked for interruption; “What doth it concern thee who is the wooer of an honoured maiden?”

“Much,” I answered, “it concerneth me, who is the lover of Clara—”

“Name her not!” he cried, “thinkest thou thy daring insolence is unknown, or that because my