

the wood pile, and having reached the farther end of the narrow passage, stopped and drew out with a little effort two or three of the large faggots which composed the stack. These being withdrawn disclosed the entrance of a low dark aperture about a yard in height, by half that in width, to which she pointed with her finger, saying hastily, "The stack is hollow with a large chamber in the middle, made for what ends you will see when you are within; creep boldly forward two or three yards space, and I will close it from without—you will be safer there from any peril of pursuers, than if you stood within the battlements of Belvoir Castle."

Of course he did not hesitate, and in less than two minutes from her leaving the children, she had bestowed him safely, built up the aperture, and was again upon the green beside them—"Philip," she whispered, "take up your bow and arrows and go on shooting just as you were before he came—every thing now depends upon the avoiding suspicion," and as the quick-witted boy resumed his occupation, she too returned to her basket and clothes line, and began carolling one of the sweet old melodies, which had been on her lips before the stranger interrupted the tenor of her tranquil meditations.

Twenty minutes, or perhaps half an hour now elapsed, without any further disturbance; and Constance was almost beginning to hope that the danger of interrogation and perhaps of discovery had already passed by, when the loud voices of several men, and the clank of their steel caparison showed that the enemy were near at hand, and rapidly approaching. "Ho, Win-the-fight," cried one, in harsh and dissonant tones—"here he hath passed but now—lo! here this foot print in the sand, with marks of the spur leather and the rowels; and here a blood gout on the green sward close beside it."

"Verily thou sayest true, Sin-despise," exclaimed another, "and here, among the trees, is a woodman's hut; past doubt, he hath fled thither for protection—I trow he hath but little spirit left to fight, or fly much farther, for I could see that my petronel planted its ball in his left shoulder, and Hezekiah Rumbold gave him a foul slash on the thigh in the first melody."

"Nay! be not thou too sure—they be a fighting race, these Desboroughs!—why thou didst see thyself how that old grayheaded malignant strove this morning, with all his viperous spawn about him. He was past eighty—of a verity I know it—yet he cut down three of our

stoutest fellows before he was himself hewn down; and when he fell at last, there was scarce blood enow in his cold veins to stain a rapier's blade. Past doubt, this young one will fight to the death, if we be in luck to tackle him; and if we fail, rest certain that the day will come when we'll be put in mind of this morning's work. But, come boys, on, and search the cottage!"

Within a moment, the party whose voices had announced their arrival, rushed violently through the little thicket, into the space before the door—they were seven privates of the Parliamentary horse, with a subaltern; stout, stern, morose, but soldierly men, well armed with head pieces, and corselets of bright steel, and huge jack-boots, reaching to the mid thigh—two or three of the number carried petronels, or musketoons, and all the others had their swords drawn, the blades of which were dimmed in several instances with recent gore. At the appearance of these strange intruders, the bloodhound, which had lain playing with the infant Mabel, during the whole time that the young cavalier was present, taking no farther notice of his person than to gaze at him steadfastly with its full liquid eye, and to snuff the air, roused himself, shook his sides, and uttering one deep querulous bay, stalked up toward the leader of the party, with the hair bristling like a mane along his neck and spine!

"Come in, sir—come in, Mortimer," cried Constance, fearful of offending her unwelcome visitors—"come in, sir, and lie down," but the sagacious animal, although he heard, and in so much obeyed the voice of his young mistress, that he came slowly and reluctantly back, seemed to be taught by his instinct that these men were enemies; for he continued to utter at intervals a deep and stifled growl, showing from time to time his long white tusches, and eyeing the soldiers with a keen and jealous glance. Meanwhile, the boy Philip, throwing down his bow and arrows, ran timidly across the green and grasped the gown of the young maiden with the tenacious hold of mortal terror, while the younger child burst into a fit of vociferous crying.

"Ho! girl!" exclaimed the officer, in a snuffing, sanctimonious tone, "see that thou answer unto that which we shall ask of thee, promptly, and in all truth—which way, and whither, went young Desborough—him who men call 'the Honourable Hugh,' applying to frail, erring mortals, the titles fitted only to the Most High!—whither went he, and how long since?—You cannot but have seen him, for we