Listowel Standard.

VOL. II.—NO. 36. LISTOWEL, CO. PERTH, OCT. 3, 1879. HAWKINS & KELLS, PUBLISHERS AND PROPRIETORS.

HOLMBY HOUSE.

The subject was sure to interest Carnarvon passionately attached to all field sports. "I have heard that gentle King Jamie loved a good horse well," he replied; "but I always believed he piqued himself most upon his skill in the chase, and his knowledge of all the secrets and science of the noble art of venery."

"If rse and hound, hawk and horn, nothing came amiss to King Jamie," was Sir Giles's answer. He could follow a buck and take a buck, and carve a buck, ay, and eat a fair portion of a buck, provided it were washed down with a huge allowance of canary or a tubful of claret. Oh! the times I have seen at Holmby, my lord, when the King came down to hunt the stag over the Haddon moorlands, and we rode all day, gingerly enough, for it was not to be thought of that we should outstrip his Majesty; and caution, between you and me, my lord, was a chief ingredient in his royal character. He had it for his whole family, I think; but then we made up for it by drinking like Dutchmen at night. None of your grand entertainments such as delighted his ancestors; none of your bears'-heads, and peacocks dressed in feathers, and such dishes of state; but a reeking haggis—by St. George, a villanous compound!—and a capon or so, with a few confections; but washed down, mark me! by wine such as you never drink now-a-days. I sometimes think the Parliament has spoiled the liquor, as they spoil everything else. And then for company, myself and poor Archie Armstrong, and two or three hard-headed Scots lords, to whom nothing came amiss. You have been in many countries, Carnarvon, and drunk with men of many nations; can you tell me why a Scotchman, who is a native of a cold climate, is always so confoundedly thirsty? But the King's delight was what he called a "cozy bit crack" with a few kindred spirits, unawed by his son, whom he respected, or the favorite, whom he feared; who could drink for that matter, like a fish, as all his family can, witness this boy here, who will have old Colepepper down under the table now before he has done with him! But to return to the nights at Holmby. I have seen Archie Armstrong so drunk that he could not sit upon his horse to go out hunting in the morning, and once he tumbled out of his saddle into the Nene, and when we set him up by the heels to dry, with the water running out of his boots into his neckerchief, and the King rode up laughing fit to split his sides, and asked him, 'How is it with thee, gossip? Methinks at last thou hast liquor more than enough!' he replied, sawing the air with his hand, as if deprecating all further hospitality, 'Enough, gossip! I thank thee. Enough. I'm for one manr this bout—neither het nor cauld!' The King laughed that you might have heard him at Northampton; and, faith, Archie was as ridiculous a figure as you could wish to see. But here comes the punch; so now for one rousing health, and 'Confusion to the Roundheads!' After that, we have no more to-night, gentlemen, hot or cold."

As Sir Giles spoke, neighbor Hodge entered the room, bearing aloft in person a huge bowl of the steaming compound, which was greeted with a shout of welcome by the Cavaliers, and soon went the way of its predecessors, amidst boisterous laughter, strange oaths, clapping of hands, stamping of feet, snatches of many a wild ranting chorus, and all the discordant jubilee of a debauch.

And yet many an anxious heart far away was aching for these revellers; many a little child had been taught to pray that very night for their welfare; many a fond lonely woman was weeping and watching even then, picturing to herself the beloved one, not flushed and swollen with wine, but calm and hushed in peaceful sleep; and many a one there present ere the same hour to-morrow would be down, stiff and stark, with a white rigid face turned upwards to the stars of Heaven.

Falkland, too, heard the dying shouts which concluded the nightly festivities of his comrades. He, too, had been awake and astir, but his vigils had been like those of some ancient knight who shrives himself and guards his armour ere the dawn of his great enterprise.

He had watched and prayed and pondered, long and earnestly, looking intently at one bright star shining conspicuously amidst the glittering diadem that crowned the sweet autumn night. He was purifying himself for the struggle, arming for the fight,—preparing his spirit unconsciously for the great unknown.

And one at Boughton was gazing fixedly at the same star, and praying her heart out, womanlike—not for herself, but for *him*.

CHAPTER VIII.

NEWBURY.

"How much longer are we to stand here idle, mowed down by round shot and exposed to the fire of those crop-eared citizens?" exclaimed Bosville, as the sorrel jerked impatiently and shook his bridle, whilst the men of his squadron murmured audibly behind him at an enforced inactivity, always so trying to the undisciplined troops of the Cavaliers.

"Steady, men!" was George Effingham's reply, as he confronted his little band, carelessly turning his back on the sharp fire poured in upon them by the Parliamentary artillery, admirably served, and in a commanding position, from which they had got the range of their enemy to a nicety. "Steady for a few minutes longer. Our time will come directly. I never knew Prince Rupert keep us so well in hand as he has done today. 'He laughs best who laughs last,' Humphrey; and the game is none the worse for being played according to rule. See the pikes are deploying into line even now, and here comes Sunderland at a gallop with orders." Effingham's eyes were beginning to glitter, and his dark face to pale a shade or two, as was customary with him when the moment of action had arrived.

They had waited for it long enough. The day was already beginning to wane, and Colepepper's Horse, with a strong support of "Byron's Blacks," had been held in reserve so carefully, that they almost feared they were destined to have no share in the stern conflict which they could themselves behold waged by their comrades with the Parliamentary army.

Essex had taken up a strong position on an eminence called Bigg's Hill, disposing his troops in stationary masses as though unwilling to assume the offensive, and trusting to the well known imprudence of the Cavaliers to attack him on ground most disadvantageous to their principal arm—a fiery and impetuous cavalry. The King's troops, on the contrary, had it at their own option to give or decline battle; and their obvious tactics would have been to draw the enemy, if possible, from his stronghold, and whilst manœuvering on the plain, to fall upon him with their cavalry. The older officers saw this at a glance, and Goring, smart and debonair as though turned out for a review, detached Sir Giles Allonby with a handful of veterans whom he could trust, to make a feint, followed by such a retreat as should tempt the Parliamentary leaders into a general advance of their whole line.

The old knight acquitted himself admirably of his duty. But, alas! the manœuvre succeeded only too well. The Roundheads detached a party of veteran horse to check him. A strong body of foot advanced to the assistance of their comrades. One or two headstrong young cavalier officers, without waiting for orders, engaged the cavalry regiments they commanded. Prince Rupert, never sufficiently Fabian in his tactics, was nothing loth to offer the main body of his horse, and was soon to be seen conspicuous in the van leading a succession of those brilliant headlong charges, which have made his name proverbial as the bravest of the brave, and the rashest of the rash—charges which must succeed triumphantly or fail irrevocably, and to which, in their undisciplined impetuosity, the slightest check is too apt to prove fatal. Notwithstanding their advantage of position, notwithstanding their superior discipline and numbers, the Roundhead horse gave way before the furious onslaught of the enemy; and the day must have ended in a triumph for the Royal cause had it not been for the unexpected steadiness and gallantry with which the pikemen stood their ground—a gallantry the more surprising both to friend and foe, inasmuch as it was displayed by the hitherto untried trained bands of London, whom the cavaliers, as was natural, held in unbounded derision and contempt, and in whom even the Parliamentary veterans had no great confidence as the champions of a doubtful day.

'The knaves stand fast with their yard-measures in their hands,' quoth Goring, wiping his bloody sword on his horse's mane as he re-formed his brigade, and brought them once more into position, after leading them through and through a column of the enemy's horse, striking fiercely to the right and left, like the veriest trooper, the grim smile deepening on his countenance at every blow.

Those pikes will turn the tide of the action yet, my lord,' was Sir Giles' reply, as the experienced eye of the veteran detected the diminished ardour and failing horses of his own cavalry. "Zounds,' added the old Cavalier, 'it shall never be said his Majesty's troops were turned by their own tradesmen. If they *would* but deploy into line! One more effort, and we might be amongst 'em.'

Goring laughed, 'Opportunity, you know Sir Giles, opportunity is everything, both in love and war. The happy moment has at length arrived; and here comes Sutherland with orders.'

In effect, even as he spoke, the young Lord Sutherland rode up at a gallop, glancing eagerly at Colepepper's reserve in which Effingham and Humphrey Bosville were deploring their inactivity. As he pulled up at Goring's side with a courteous bow, he delivered his message. "You will form the remains of your cavalry, my lord," he said, "upon Colepeppers reserve, and advance with the whole up the hill. The pikes are even now deploying into line, and the Prince bids you ——"

Goring was drawing his girths a hole tighter; his head was bent down to his pistol holsters, but he looked up quickly as the young Earl's voice ceased, and saw that a round shot had taken him of his horse, and that the intelligent, ardent messenger of an instant back, so full of life and spirits and gallantry, was now a ghastly, mutilated mass that would never speak again.

"I suppose he had nothing more to say," observed Goring, drawing on his glove, and patting his horse carelessly on the neck, as he turned to Allonby with a calm, unmoved countenance. "Sir Giles, form your regiment on my left. We will advance at a trot up to yonder brushwood, and there I will give the word to charge. I think we can pay the reckoning yet."

In the mean time the trained bands, who had already sustained the attacks of the Royalist cavalry with such determined obstinacy, and whose long pikes, held by strong English arms, and backed by stout English hearts, formed a bristling hedge of steel which not even the King's troopers could break through, were in the act of making a flank movement to acquire a position more favorable than that which they had already occupied. Prince Rupert's eagle eye, ever quick as lightning to detect an advantage, saw their wavering line, and seized the opportunity to order up his reserve for one last desperate effort. The rise of the hill was against the horses; a minute sooner they would have been in time, but ere the cavalry could reach their steady, resolute foes, they had again become a stationary mass of resistance, hedged with steel, and pouring forth a deadly, withering fire, that enforced the Royalists to return, emptying many a saddle, and bringing many a curled head to the dust. Old Colepepper stormed and swore in vain. The most he could accomplish was to make an orderly retreat; and as Humphrey Bosville, with tears of shame and indignation in his eyes, brought his troop back in good order to their appointed position, Effingham quietly observed, 'Another point in the game scored up against us, young one. Another opportunity lost! Laurels, indeed, Humphrey! better gather handsful of weeds, and lay your head down here on the turf and be at rest!'

In another instant he had darted like lightning from his men, and was engaged hand to hand with some half a dozen of the enemy's cavalry, who, like meaner birds about a hawk, were besetting the gallant Earl of Carnarvon, and hemming him in on all sides with their swords. That officer had got detached from his own men, and was now returning, alone on a tired horse through the scattered troopers of the enemy. Strong, athletic, and a practised swordsman, he had already emptied more than one of his opponents' saddles; but he was exhausted and outnumbered, and George Effingham's assistance came too late.

He had received a pistol shot, which had broken his bridle arm, and deprived him of all control over his failing steed. Still, his fine horsemanship and thorough use of his weapon enabled him to hold at bay the troopers in his front; but, alas! a swordthrust from the rear had run him through the body; and as George Effingham cut down the successful assailant, and took the Earl's horse by the bridle to turn him out of the press, the life-blood was welling up through the rivets of his breastplate, and saturating the stout buff-coat with its frothy crimson stains. Courteous and gentle to the last, he thanked Effingham for his service.

'I am bounded to you, comrade,' he said, sinking forward on his horse's neck; 'but it is too late. I am hurt to the death, for all cunning of fence. I pray you leave me, and save yourself.' Even as he spoke he fell heavily from his horse; and Effingham, with many a shrewd blow and many a hairbreadth 'scape, fought his way back to his own men.

Night was by this time drawing on, and as its dark mantle fell over the combatants, neither Cavaliers nor Roundheads could boast of a decided victory. The gallant trained bands bivouacked on the ground they had held with such stubborn valour; and although they had made an orderly retreat at daybreak, pursuing their line of march for the capital, and regardless of the harassing attacks made on their rear by the indefatigable Prince Rupert, with a thousand musketeers and such of his cavalry as were not incapacitated by the action of the previous day, they could scarce plume themselves on having gained any positive advantage over their opponents.

Humphrey Bosville and George Effingham slept under the same cloak, the sorrel and the black picketed close to their feet. Their squadron formed a strong outpost of Prince Rupert's advancing column, and they were to be ready for the pursuit with the first dawn of the morning light. Goring returned to his quarters at the farmhouse on the hill, doubtless to receive a hospitable welcome from neighbor Hodge and his pretty daughters. Old Colepepper and Sir Giles Allonby waited on the King with their respective reports of losses and success. A few hours reconcile the survivors after an action to anything and everything that has befallen. There are rations and forage to be issued, men and horses to be accounted for, reports to be drawn up, misadventure glossed over and successes made the most of; and then, when the fatigues of the day are past, the exigencies of the morrow provided for; 'tis but another day gone by, after all, and the conquerors and conquered lay them down

The weary to sleep and the wounded to die.

So the trumpets sounded the *reveille* blithely ere the first streaks of the morrow's dawn; and Effingham's squadron were up and mounted, and filing slowly over the ground of yesterday's hard-fought struggle in the early light of the soft autumn morning. Above their heads the heaven breathed of peace and beauty and holy calm; the birds were singing in the copse and hedges, the sheep bleating on the distant hill; but below their feet the very bosom of mother earth was torn and scarred by the fierce struggle of her wayward children. The ground occupied by the enemy was indeed vacant, for Essex was by this time in full and orderly retreat; but the traces of the conflict were but too apparent in broken wagons, dismounted guns, turf poached and trodden by dinted hoof-marks and scored with wheel-tracks; worst of all, in helpless bodies of men and horses, lying as they fell, the dying and the dead.

Bosville shuddered as he gazed; a man must indeed be inured to war who can look unmoved on such a scene. Effingham's eye dilated as he touched his comrade's arm, and pointed to a heap of dead who had evidently made a gallant attempt to storm an orchard surrounded by an old blackthorn hedge, and been shot down man and man as they came up.

'The apples in the orchard are hanging ripe from the bough, but the harvest of death is already gathered home,' said Effingham. 'Humphrey, we are like the Assyrians when they came up by thousands against the might of Judæa, and to! an unseen arm smote the horse and his rider. Have not these been kicking against the pricks? Verily the Lord is against us!'

'I saw them charge over this very ground yesterday,' was the young soldier's comment, 'and a nobler feat of arms I never witnessed, nor a finer fellow than the officer who led them! It was not Byron, for Byron was on the right with the rest of his Blacks, and would have turned their flank had the crafty Roundhead not placed a field-piece at the angle of the orchard. I could not recognize the officer at that distance, but I saw him put himself at the head of a handful of cavalry, and lead them twice up to this old straggling hedge, and twice they were repulsed by the deadly fire of the musketeers who lined it. The third time he leapt his horse into the orchard, and I am certain I saw him fall some twenty paces before any of his men. By St. George, there he lies!—man and horse under that large tree. Let us go in, Effingham, and see who he is!'

The two Cavaliers dismounted, and walked reverently and slowly up to the corpse. He was lying away from his dead horse, on his back. The charger had evidently fallen riddled with bullets at the same instant that his rider was struck. The corpse was stretched at length, its right hand still grasping its sword, and an ineffable expression of peace on its pale upturned face. Yes! in the midst of war he had found it at last. No more bitter misgivings now—no more weary longing and harassing anxiety—no more aching heart and sickening hopes and fears for Falkland. There he lay, the good, the generous, the gifted; born to be the ornament of a Court, the pillar of a state, the hope of a nation; and there he lay, shot below the girdle by some obscure musketeer, himself perhaps all unconscious of the deed. Many were the good and great men that joined the Royalist cause—many a noble heart shed its blood for King Charles; many a wise head plotted for the crown; many a stalwart arm struck its last to the war cry of "God and the King;" but there was but one Falkland, and the morning after Newbury he was found a corpse.

The tears started to Bosville's eyes.

"Let us send back a party to bury him," said he. "The Prince will willingly spare enough men for such a duty as this."

Effingham was not listening to him. "The King had better have lost his right arm," was his reply. "Verily, the Lord is against us!"

CHAPTER IX.

"ROSA QUO LOCORUM."

News travelled but slowly in the days of which we write. It was already a week after the battle of Newbury, and the quiet party at Boughton had as yet no particulars of the fight. Rumors had indeed arrived that a great action had taken place, but as each narrator colored his own account according to the political opinions he professed, both the details and the result remained wrapped in uncertainty. Some maintained that Essex had gained a complete victory, and was marching for London in the full tide of success, having dispersed and almost annihilated the royal army; that the King himself had fled, and that his best generals having been either killed or taken prisoners, nothing now remained but an unconditional submission to the terms of the Parliament. For this crowning mercy, it was argued by those who adopted so decided a view of the case, thanksgivings ought to be rendered, and the downfall of the man Charles celebrated by a solemn festival; others, again, and these garnished their version with many strange oaths, and showed a strong disinclination to discourse upon this, or any other topic, dry-lipped, avowed that the Parliamentary army had sustained a complete and unequivocal defeat, that the Royalist cavalry had, as usual, covered themselves with glory, and his blessed Majesty, whose health they were always prepared to drink on their knees, or indeed in any other position, having thrown a garrison into Donnington Castle, so as to command the western road to the capital, had retired in triumph, to Oxford, whence he would impose the most stringent and humiliating terms on his vanquished enemies.

Grace Allonby and Mary Cave listened alternately to these conflicting statements with anxious faces and beating hearts; the former daily expecting some assurance of her father's safety, the latter vibrating between a sensation of crushing shame, as she recalled her last interview with Falkland, and all the tender misgivings of a woman for the safety of the man she loves. And yet the days dragged slowly on, in their routine of quiet occupations and homely duties. The women worked at their embroidery, and tended their roses, and rustled softly about the house, as if all were peace both within and without, as if life had no interests, no anxieties, beyond the taking up of a dropped stitch, or the nipping of a faded rosebud.

They were, however, much together; kindred hopes seemed to draw closer day by day the links of friendship which had always bound these two dissimilar characters, and whilst Grace Allonby looked up to her more energetic friend for protection and consolation, the weary spirit of Mary Cave seemed to rest upon her gentle companion, and to derive a soothing, purifying influence from her sympathy and affection.

They were sitting together on a stone bench that terminated the terrace on which Mary's last interview with Falkland had taken place. A soft, cloudy atmosphere dimmed the rays of the sun, struggling at intervals in downward sheets of light; a gentle breeze moaned through the adjacent woods, claiming here and there its first autumnal tribute in a crisp yellow leaf that floated noiselessly down to the sward. The last roses, already overblown, drooped their heads over the two women, shedding their petals thick and fast, to the insidious woos that stole so softly across the distant meadow, and over the trim lawn, to win their perfume and waste their loveliness, and kiss them and pass on. There was music in the whispering breeze, and beauty in the dying roses, but it was a sad sweet music that seemed to mourn for the past, and a beauty that spoke of disappointment and decay. Each of them gathered one of the flowers, and placed it in her bosom; each seemed to have some association connected with these autumn roses, some strangely-mingled memory of pain and pleasure, of hope and longing, and shame and sorrow, for Grace blushed scarlet, and Mary's blue eyes were filled with tears.

She brushed them hastily away, and turned her head so as to hide her face from her companion; she was ever ashamed of such womanly weaknesses, and indeed seldom gave way to her emotions, whatever might be their nature.

"Another day, Grace," she said, "and no news yet from the army. Oh, it wears one's heart out to sit waiting here when men are in their buff-coats and breastplates, up and armed for the King. I would I were amongst them, Grace, to take my share of danger like the rest. *C'est l'homme qui se baste, et qui conseille;* but as for us poor women, what are we good for but to clog their energies, and distract their attention, and weep and watch, and eat our own hearts in solitude?"

"You did not always say so, Mary," replied her companion. "I thought men were the puppets, and if we were to pull the strings. Have you changed your note so soon about our power and influence, and why?"

The proud look stole over Mary's face once more. "Yes, Grace," she answered, "ours is the dominion, if we only knew how to keep it. It is our own fault if we lose the upper hand. It does not answer to pull the rein too tightly, and so to break it once for all; nor is it judicious to let the so-called lords of the creation discover how necessary they really are to our happiness. To do them justice, they are wonderfully obtuse on this point, and, in this single instance, strangely prone to underrate their own value. And yet, dear, I sometimes think that ours is but a tinsel royalty, after all—a fairy splendor, that is visible to the dazzled eyes of those only over whom our glamor is cast; that the real power, and wisdom, and glory is not with us, and the time may arrive at any moment when our subjects wake to find out for themselves, and then all that was life to us is but a dream to them, a dream from which they do not even sorrow to be aroused; a dream at which they can smile when it is recalled to them, and yawn out some vague sentiment, half poetical, half philosophical, of indulgent pity on their own past folly, and self-congratulation that it is over at last for evermore. They are not quite ashamed of it, neither do they wish it had never existed, but they talk of it (as even the best of them will of their byhood's extravagances) with a sort of melancholy triumph, and comical self-pity and self-sympathy. 'I was very fond of that woman once,' they will say, without a particle of the feeling left. The woman does not speak so, but she carries her heartache about with her in silence, and every time his name is mentioned the old wound smarts and bleeds afresh."

"And do you believe there is no constancy?" answered Grace, in whose opinion her companion's thorough knowledge of such matters was deserving of the most implicit credence, and who felt much more alarmed than she would have been one short month ago at these discouraging views of the relations between the sexes. "Are men all alike, and all equally heartless and variable?"

"God forbid," was the reply; "and yet, Grace, in all I have seen of the world, and you know that my girlhood has been passed amongst the galeties and intrigues of a Court; well, in all I have seen, I can recall scarce one single instance of an attachment that has lasted more than two years. You look astonished, Grace, but it is so, nevertheless. They are nearly all alike, and differ only in degree from wild Lord Goring, who says that he requires a week to conquer, a week to triumph, and a week to weary, after which he allows himself a week's repose, meaning simply a rotation of hard drinking, and the beginning of the next month finds him prepared for fresh follies and fresh duplicity."

"What a monster!" remarked Grace, lending an ear, nevertheless, with unconscious interest, to the escapades of wild George Goring.

"And yet, Grace," proceeded Mary, looking back dreamily, as it were, into the past, "there was once a time that even Goring was ready to sacrifice his fortunes, his ambition, his life, and indeed his all, for a woman. She was my aunt, Grace, and once I think she loved him well. It was a foolish story. He hoped to win her against all obstacles, and with his energetic nature, his courage, and his recklessness, I cannot comprehend why he failed. But so it was. During His absence abroad, where he was serving to win distinction only for her sake, others came between them, and she was lost to him for ever. It was years ago, my dear, and she is a cold, proud, stern woman now, but I think she was not always so. They say she used to be a sweet-tempered, loveable and beautiful girl; they say she would have made Goring a good and happy wife. I have heard one person affirm that even he would have been a different man had she belonged to him; that it was not his nature always to be amongst the worst; that everything good and gentle in him changed in a day. But he who said so judged all men kindly, and saw everything through the clear atmosphere of his own pure, noble mind. There are few like him. But to return to Goring. I know that even after all hope was over, even at the foulest and blackest period of his career, when my aunt was thought to be dying, he threw up his command, he returned home with a stain upon his courage, he had lost his dearest chance of distinction, to be near her; and when she recovered he was heard of wilder and wickeder than ever. There was no doubt he loved her fondly, and like a fool; and yet listen, Grace, to what I heard with my own ears. After a long absence, Lady St. Aunyn returned to Court. They had not met for years, not since I was a child, and at the time I speak of I was a grown woman, in attendance on the Queen. I was standing close to Harry Jermyn and Goring when my aunt was announced. I knew the story, and I watched the latter's face. It never altered in a muscle. I could have forgiven him if he had turned red or pale, or had even lost for an instant that hateful smile which seems to jeer at everything good and bad. No, he passed his hand through his long curls, and touched Jermyn with his elbow—'Egad, Harry,' said he, 'who these red and white women are. Would you believe it, I once run my best friend through the body for a light jest about that one? And now look at her, my boy! She's an old woman, and a fat one. Faith, and almost an ugly one too. Well, its lucky there are plenty of young ones always coming on.' And this is the way men can talk of us, Grace; but not all—not all; there are a few, a very few noble hearts that a woman might be proud to win, or failing to win, might be proud to worship in silence and lifelong pain."

"Are there?" observed Grace, absently, for her attention was occupied by an advancing horseman, mounted on a sorrel that even at a distance she seemed to recognize. Perhaps she was thinking, "is this one of them?" perhaps she was speculating, with prospective power of imagination, "will this one ever care for *me?* and having cared, will he overlaugh, like Goring, and say, 'how these women alter,' and 'how fat I am grown?'" The horseman was accompanied by one servant, a tall spare figure, mounted on a stout useful palfrey, the spoil of some Parliamentarian whom Dymocke had deprived of his charger by the usage of war. It was indeed Bosville who was rapidly approaching the park, and the hearts of both women beat fast, and their cheeks turned pale, for he would have news of the great battle, and the Cause, and the King, and Sir Giles Allonby, and Lord Fawkland.

The young man reined up his horse at the door and dismounted, the reeking sides of the sorrel and the marks of disapprobation visible upon Dymocke's lean visage sufficiently denoting the speed at which he had been travelling. He gave the rein to his servant, and advanced to greet the ladies, with doffed beaver and slow dejected step. His dress was disordered and travel-stained, his face bronzed by exposure, and now suffused with a deep blush, and his countenance bore a saddened expression that was ominous of bad news.

Grace jumped from her seat. "My father!" she exclaimed, with clasped hands and eager face.

"Sir Giles is safe, Mistress Grace," was the reply; "he bids me commend him to you, and hopes soon to see his daughter once more."

Grace burst into tears, and covered her face with her hands, Mary Cave meanwhile remaining pale and cold as the stone balustrade against which she leaned. And yet she dared not ask the question that was nearest to her heart.

"And you have obtained a victory, a great victory?" she said, with lips that blanched and grew rigid while she spoke.

"A victory, indeed," was the Cornet's reply, "and a triumph for the Royal Cause. I have dispatches here from the King himself to my Lord Vaux. I pray you give me leave, ladies; I must hasten to deliver them."

"And they are safe!" exclaimed Grace, with her eyes full of tears; "all safe! those that rode away so full of life and vigor such a short time ago, and whom we thought we might never see again?"

The Cornet's face was very grave. He needed not to speak. Ere a word had crossed his lips Mary Cave knew the worst. Is it not so with all great griefs? with all those important moments upon which turn the destinies of a life—nay, it may be of an eternity? What is it that tells the sufferer there is no hope, whole seconds if you count by the clock, whole ages if you count by the racked and tortured heart, before the decree has gone forth? Do you think the prisoner at the bar does not know the verdict before the foreman of the jury has delivered the thrilling word "Guilty?" Do you think we are so constituted that by our physical organs alone we can become conscious of outward facts? Is there not in acute mental anxiety, another and independent sense of prophetic nature? Who has not suffered has not lived. Is it better to vegetate in contented ignorance, or to pluck, Eve-like, at the tree of knowledge, and taste the wild, bitter flavor of the fruit? Alas! the lesson of life must be learnt by one and all. Happy those who profit by it. Give them place; let them take their proper station at the head of the class; but pity the poor dunce who is smarting in his ignorance, whose hot tears are falling thick and fast upon the page.

"We have bought our victory at too high a price," said Humphrey; "some of the noblest heads in England lie low at Newbury, Carnavon, Sunderland, Falkland, have met a soldier's death and found a soldier's grave."

Mary spoke not a word. Her beautiful features took a set meaningless expression, like a mask, or like the face of a corpse. There was a dull stony look in her eye, like that of some dumb animal.

Suffering pain and nerved to endure, her head was thrown proudly back till the muscles of the neck started out in painful tension. It seemed strange to see one of her cast of beauty so metamorphosed. Unbending physical resistance and acute stupifying suffering combined, seemed so out of character with her ripe womanly loveliness, her soft undulating form, her rich brown hair. She who was formed to love, and laugh, and command with the imperious wilfulness of a spoiled child—it was sad to see her there, with a hard defiance, even of her own breaking heart, stamped upon her brow.

She questioned Bosville again and again, unwavering and pitiless towards herself, she learned every particular he had to tell, she shrank from no incident of the action, no harrowing detail of Falkland's last charge, or the state in which he was found; and then with quiet grave courtesy she thanked Humphrey for his narrative, and walked once more up the well-remembered stairs with she stately step and queen-like gestures that became her so well.

She had been a changed woman one short week ago, when her chamber door had closed upon her after that interview which she could never forget. She was changed again now; but it was a change that would influence her till she was at rest in her grave.

Bosville followed her with his eyes as she stepped gracefully away, but with his body he accompanied Grace Allonby into the house, that he might deliver his despatches, as in duty bound, to that young lady's kinsman. Now that the first anxious inquiries were over, that Sir Giles' safety was ascertained, and the victory of Newburg—for as a victory it was claimed by the Royalists—placed beyond a doubt, they talked, as young people will, of lighter and more mirthful matters—of the Court of Oxford, of the last jest made by Wilmot, and the last new fashion introduced by Harry Jermyn, of the Queen's caprices, and Prince Rupert's retorts uncourteous, the thousand topics which come so readily to the lips where the deeper chords of character have not yet been sounded, and which make a dialogue between a gentleman and lady, both of them were well born and well bred, so sparkling and agreeable, that we despair of conveying its purport to the reader through the medium of our staid and sober pen.

Arrived at the threshold of Lord Vaux's own chamber, Grace bid her companion "Good-bye," with a half laughing, half formal courtesy. He turned as he closed the door for another glance at his guide. Oddly enough, at that very moment Grace turned too—it always does happen so—and as she tripped away to decorate her person in her own chamber, she felt happy and light-hearted as a bird. Of course it was the news of the great victory at Newbury and the safety of good Sir Giles that created this wondrous change in his daughter's spirits.

Mary Cave was on her knees in the adjoining apartment. The struggle was over, the wild sickening feeling of despair alone remained, but the great agony had passed away, and a flood of tears had brought that relief to the overcharged heart and the overstring brain which alone saves the sufferer from madness. There are some natures that are at once utterly prostrated by sorrow; that make no effort to resist it, and yield at the first attack; such know nothing of real misery. It is the proud unbending spirit that has defied a thousand storms, which falls with a crash at last.

Mary had been accustomed to conquer, had marched in triumph over the necks of a host of captives; here was no meek yielding disposition, that clings where it attaches itself, and finds a pleasure in self abasement and self-sacrifice. No; she was one of those wild birds that must be tamed, and subjected, and constrained to stoop to the lure by a stronger will than their own; and she had found her master long ago. Hopeless though it was, she had fixed her love upon Falkland; though he could never be hers, there had yet been a vague unacknowledged link that bound them together; and now even this was broken, and he was dead. Dead! the irrevocable, the fatal word, before which all other griefs seem so trifling, all other breaches so easily repaired, all other sorrows so open to consolation. Never, never to see him more! It was a dull, stony, stupifying sensation. She was so glad, so thankful she had told him all before he went away. There was no shame now, no self-abasement, no womanly pride to come between her and the loved one in his cold grave; and Mary's tears welled up afresh, thick and hot, and the band that seemed to have compressed her heart to suffocation grew looser, and she rose from her knees with a firm resolve in her brain, and a giant's strength growing up in her steadfast will to struggle and endure.

CHAPTER X.

"ANCILLÆ PUDORIS."

Grace Allonby inhabited a pretty little room, overlooking the terrace we have so often mentioned, stored with the many knick-knacks that, even in the days of which we write, were affected by young ladies to keep them beautiful, and leave them neat. Albeit the act of prying into such a boudoir may be deemed an impertinence, yet must we claim the historian's privilege to be at all times in all places, and take a peep at Grace undergoing the various tortures of the toilet at the hands of her handmaid Faith, a pretty Puritan, whose duties as the *soubrette* of a Cavalier's daughter are continually at variance with her conscientious opinions—a mental conflict which imparts to that damsel's conversation and general character a degree of acidity foreign to her real nature. She is combing and brushing her lady's hair with merciless energy, and those long dark masses fall over the white neck and bosom with a luxuriance of which the maid is prouder than her mistress. Yet is she reflecting even now, while with a turn of her skilful hand she adjusts a jetty ringlet, holding the comb meanwhile between her teeth, how the crowning beauty of Absalom was a delusion and a snare; and how, though a woman may be permitted to retain her abundant tresses, the long love-locks of the Cavaliers *must* be wicked, they are so very becoming.

"Is the young officer from Newbury going away to-day, Mistress Grace, or doth he remain all night?" asks Faith, with an air and accent of the utmost simplicity.

It is a strange coincidence, but Grace is thinking exactly the same thing. A shower of ringlets falls between her face and the mirror, so she blushes under them unseen; nevertheless her neck and shoulders crimson visibly, and Faith, although a Puritan, deduces her own conclusions. Like a thorough waiting-maid, however, she proceeds, without pausing for an answer—

"He is a likely young gentleman enough; of a fair countenance, and a gallant bearing too, as becomes a soldier. He cannot be as bad as the rest of them, Mistress Grace, or he would hardly have left them by his own desire to come here to our quiet place, where he knows nobody and can care for nobody."

"He goes where he is ordered, Faith," replies Grace, very quietly, and with a certain air of enforced dignity; "he is a brave and good officer," she adds, her voice trembling a little, "and has been sent here with despatches by the King himself."

"I know what I know," resumes Faith, with some asperity. "When it came to a question of who was to leave the army, and ride alone—leastways, him and his servant—through the ranks of the rebels, that's to say the Parliamentarians" (Faith catches herself up rapidly as she recollects her political and religious principles), "facing dangers and what not, to come here to Boughton;—nothing would serve Captain Bosville—for a captain he is and will be when he gets his due, as them that knows and told me is not misinformed—nothing would serve him but down he goes on his knees before the King—I wonder he wasn't ashamed to do it; and says he, "Your Majesty," says he, "where the treasure is there will the heart be also; and my sorrel," says he—that's the one he rode here that's got two fore-shoes off now in the great stable—"my sorrel can do the distance in half the time of e'er another in your Majesty's army; and my servant," says he—that's good Master Dymocke, a worthy man and a right thinker, though backsliding for the time—"my servant knows the ways by track and ford, and none other; and we crave leave to enter upon the duty, and so to kiss your Majesty's hand, and God be with you all." And with that," continued Faith, now almost breathless, "they up and saddled, and never drew rein till they rode in at our great gates, and as Master Dymocke says, 'faint heart never won fair lady,' and the laborer is worthy of his hire.'"

Grace listens well pleased to this somewhat improbable story; drop by drop the poison is stealing gently into her veins. It is sweet to talk of him even to uninterested listeners; then will come blushes and confusion, and a strange wild thrill of pleasure; and then the reckoning must be paid for happiness thus taken up at interest. The lonely hours, the weary days, the sore heart, and the wan face, that never blushes now, but only contracts with a sickly smile and turns whiter than before. Is not this the course of ninety-nine love tales out of a hundred? Poor fools! wasting your treasure for that which is not bread.

But Grace is busy fastening a rose into her bodice, and Faith is still training the long tresses into two bewitching curls.

"They can't go to-night, Mistress Grace," says the latter, answering her previous question for herself. 'After such a ride as that, both man and beast are entitled to rest and refreshment,' as Master Dymocke says; and moreover, there's one of them as wouldn't be dragged from here by wild horses except duty for the King required. Poor blinded creature! I know what I know."

"And is it the master or the man that is wedded to a place he has only seen twice in his life?" asks Grace, half amused in spite of herself, although her heart is beating somewhat faster than usual. Faith is at once overcome by an access of propriety.

"Oh, madam," she replies, "it is not for me to make free with the young gentleman's thoughts; and as for Master Dymocke, though a worthy man and a personable his gravity and his experience put him beyond all such vanities. Only there's some talk of their staying here for a convoy and a guard to take us all on to Oxford, where may we be preserved from the temptations of a Court!" adds Faith, piously. "And now, madam," she concludes, with a finishing twist to the curls and a toss of her own head, "I have made a clean breast of it; I have told you all I know, and of what may come of it, whether for good or evil, I wash my hands."

With which solemn admonition Faith folds up her lady's things, smoothing them into squares with unusual accuracy and precision. She is evidently waiting to be further questioned, but in this she is disappointed, for Grace Allonby is in more hurry than common to attend upon her kinsman downstairs; and it is with trembling steps, and breath coming quick and short that she proceeds to the great hall, where she already hears the voices of Lord Vaux and his lately arrived guest.

Captain Bosville, as we must call him now—for Faith's information, however obtained, is perfectly correct, and his captain's commission is already made out and signed by the Sovereign—has performed an elaborate toilet, and one that even less prejudiced eyes than those of Grace Allonby would pronounce to be most becoming. His long love-locks, curled and perfumed with the greatest care, droop over a point lace collar, fitting high and close around the throat, but falling back in dazzling width over his broad shoulders. His velvet doublet, richly embroidered, and fastened down the front with tags and loops of gold, is slashed at the sleeves, so as to display the fine texture of his cambric garment underneath, and fitting tightly over the hands, admits of the broad wristbands being turned back so as to exhibit the whiteness and symmetry of those members to the greatest advantage. A ruby clasp fastens his doublet at the throat, a fellow stone, of equal size and radiance, is set in the pommel of his sword. These, too, will ere long be converted into men and horses for King Charles; meantime they are very dazzling, very beautiful, and very useless. A wide rustling scarf, stiff with embroidery, crosses his breast, and is gathered into a huge knot over his left hip, where it meets the broad baldric that sustains his long straight sword. His lower man is clothed in loose velvet pantaloons, reaching somewhat below the knee, to meet the wide wrinkled riding boots, pushed half-way down the leg, and forming with their high heels and heavy massive spurs a somewhat warlike termination to the festive air betrayed in the rest of his costume. Add to all this a handsome face, improved by exercise, and wearing the keen forcible expression which all men of action insensibly acquire, and we arrive at a general effect, which might indeed make sad havoc in a heart already predisposed to look upon it with favor and affection.

Nor was Grace Allonby thrust upon an unequal war unfurnished with those weapons, both offensive and defensive, which women know how to use so skilfully. In the days of the first Charles a lady's dress much resembled that of the present era. There was the same display of confident beauty above, the same voluminous series of defences below, as though the attack must be provoked only to be repelled. There was the same costly taste for jewelry, the same magnificence of texture and georgeousness of hue in silks and satins—nay, the very arms, bared nearly to the elbow, were overlaung by a cloudy, graceful fabric of muslin or lace, or whatever which is to-day so much affected by those who are possessed of any or all of these advantages. Grace Allonby's light girlish figure borrowed a graceful dignity from the ample folds of the heavy brocade she wore—low at the bosom, and descending to a peak or stomacher, the upper part of the body was distinctly and beautifully defined; whilst the spreading skirt, falling in massive plats from her slender waist, added that majestic sweep and volume which ladies consider so necessary to complete the finish of their costume. Her hair, undisfig