

pea-cod; and I will visit his Lindabrides,* by Saint George, be he willing or no!

'I would gladly pay your halves of the risk, sir,' said Tressilian, 'to be permitted to accompany you on the adventure.'

'In what would that advantage you, sir?' answered Lambourne.

'In nothing, sir,' said Tressilian, 'unless to mark the skill and valour with which you conduct yourself. I am a traveller, who seeks for strange rencounters and uncommon passages, as the knights of yore did after adventures and feats of arms.'

'Nay, if it pleasures you to see a tront tickled,' answered Lambourne, 'I care not how many witness my skill. And so here I drink success to my enterprise; and he that will not pledge me on his knees is a rascal, and I will cut his legs off by the garters!'

The draught which Michael Lambourne took upon this occasion had been preceded by so many others, that reason tottered on her throne. He swore one or two incoherent oaths at the mercer, who refused, reasonably enough, to pledge him to a sentiment which inferred the loss of his own wager.

'Wilt thou chop logic with me,' said Lambourne, 'thou knave, with no more brains than a skein of ravelled silk? By Heaven, I will cut thee into fifty yards of gallion lace!'

But, as he attempted to draw his sword for this doughty purpose, Michael Lambourne was seized upon by the tapster and the chamberlain, and conveyed to his own apartment, there to sleep himself sober at his leisure.

The party then broke up, and the guests took their leave; much more to the contentment of mine host than of some of the company, who were unwilling to quit good liquor, when it was to be had for free cost, so long as they were able to sit by it. They were, however, compelled to remove; and go at length they did, leaving Gosling and Tressilian in the empty apartment.

'By my faith,' said the former, 'I wonder where our great folks find pleasure, when they spend their means in entertainments, and in playing mine host without sending in a reckoning. It is what I but rarely practise; and whenever I do, by Saint Julian, it grieves me beyond measure. Each of these empty stoups, now, which my nephew and his drunken comrades have swilled off, should have been a matter of profit to one in my line, and I must set them down a dead loss. I cannot, for my heart, conceive the pleasure of noise, and nonsense, and drunken freaks, and drunken quarrels, and smut, and blasphemy, and so forth, when a man loses money instead of gaining by it. And yet many a fair estate is lost in upholding such a useless course, and that greatly contributes to the decay of publicans; for who the devil do you think would pay for drink at the Black Bear, when he can have it for nothing at my lord's or the squire's?'

Tressilian perceived that the wine had made some impression even on the seasoned brain of mine host, which was chiefly to be inferred from his declaiming against drunkenness. As he him-

self had carefully avoided the bowl, he would have availed himself of the frankness of the moment, to extract from Gosling some further information upon the subject of Anthony Foster, and the lady whom the mercer had seen in the mansion-house; but his inquiries only set the host upon a new theme of declamation against the wiles of the fair sex, in which he brought at full length the whole wisdom of Solomon to reinforce his own. Finally, he turned his admonitions, mixed with much obijuration, upon his tapsters and drawers, who were employed in removing the relics of the entertainment, and restoring order to the apartment; and at length, joining example to precept, though with no good success, he demolished a salver with half a score of glasses, in attempting to show how such service was done at the Three Cranes in Vintry, then the most topping tavern in London. This last accident so far recalled him to his better self, that he retired to his bed, slept sound, and awoke a new man in the morning.

CHAPTER III.

Nay, I'll hold touch—the game shall be play'd out, It ne'er shall stop for me, this merry wager;
That which I say when gamesome, I'll avouch
In my most sober mood, ne'er trust me else.

THE HAZARD-TABLE.

'AND how doth your kinsman, good mine host?' said Tressilian, when Giles Gosling first appeared in the public room on the morning following the revel which we described in the last chapter. 'Is he well, and will he abide by his wager?'

'For well, sir, he started two hours since, and has visited I know not what purlieus of his old companions; hath but now returned, and is at this instant breakfasting on new-laid eggs and muscadine; and for his wager, I caution you as a friend to have little to do with that, or indeed aught that Mike proposes. Wherefore, I counsel you to a warm breakfast upon a culish, which shall restore the tone of the stomach; and let my nephew and Master Goldthred swagger about their wager as they list.'

'It seems to me, mine host,' said Tressilian, 'that you know not well what to say about this kinsman of yours; and that you can neither blane nor commend him without some twinge of conscience.'

'You have spoken truly, Master Tressilian,' replied Giles Gosling. 'There is natural affection whimpering into one ear, "Giles, Giles, why wilt thou take away the good name of thy own nephew? Wilt thou defame thy sister's son, Giles Gosling? wilt thou defoul thine own nest, dishonour thine own blood?" And then, again, comes Justice, and says, "Here is a worthy guest as ever came to the bonnie Black Bear; one who never challenged a reckoning" (as I say to your face you never did, Master Tressilian—not that you have had cause), "one who knows not why he came, so far as I can see, or when he is going away; and wilt thou, being a publican, having paid cut and lot these thirty years in the town of Cumnor, and being at this instant head-

* [Lindabrides, a female of doubtful reputation.]