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'That were ruin,' said Foster, his brow darken-  
ing with apprehensions; 'and all this for a  
woman! Had it been for his soul's sake, it  
were something; and I sometimes wish I  
myself could fling away the world that cleaves  
to me, and be as one of the poorest of our  
church.'

'Thou art like enough to be so, Tony,' an-  
swered Varney; 'but I think the devil will give  
thee little credit for thy compelled poverty, and  
so thou lovest on all hands. But follow my  
counsel, and Cumnor Place shall be thy copy-  
hold yet. Say nothing of this Tressilian's visit  
—not a word until I give thee notice.'

'And wherefore, I pray you?' asked Foster  
suspiciously.

'Dull beast!' replied Varney; 'in my lord's  
present humour it were the ready way to confirm  
him in his resolution of retirement, should he  
know that his lady was haunted with such a  
spectre in his absence. He would be for playing  
the dragon himself over his golden fruit, and  
then, Tony, thy occupation is ended. A word  
to the wise—Farewell—I must follow him.'

He turned his horse, struck him with the  
spurs, and rode off under the archway in pursuit  
of his lord.

'Would thy occupation were ended, or thy  
neck broken, damned pander!' said Anthony  
Foster. 'But I must follow his beck, for his  
interest and mine are the same, and he can wind  
the proud earl to his will. Janet shall give me  
these pieces, though—they shall be laid out in  
some way for God's service, and I will keep them  
separate in my strong chest till I can fall upon  
a fitting employment for them. No contagious  
vapour shall breathe on Janet—she shall remain  
pure as a blessed spirit, were it but to pray God  
for her father. I need her prayers, for I am  
at a hard pass—Strange reports are abroad  
concerning my way of life. The congregation look  
cold on me; and when Master Holdforth spoke of  
hypocrites being like a whited sepulchre, which  
within was full of dead men's bones, methought  
he looked full at me. The Romish was a com-  
fortable faith; Lambourne spoke true in that. A  
man had but to follow his thrift by such ways  
as offered—tell his beads—hear a mass—confess,  
and be absolved. These puritans tread a harder  
and a rougher path; but I will try—I will read  
my Bible for an hour ere I again open mine iron  
chest.'

Varney, meantime, spurred after his lord,  
whom he found waiting for him at the postern-  
gate of the park.

'You waste time, Varney,' said the earl; 'and  
it presses. I must be at Woodstock before I can  
safely lay aside my disguise; and till then, I  
journey in some peril.'

'It is but two hours' brisk riding, my lord,'  
said Varney; 'for me, I only stopped to enforce  
your commands of care and secrecy on yonder  
Foster, and to inquire about the abode of the  
gentleman whom I would promote to your lord-  
ship's train, in the room of Trevors.'

'Is he fit for the meridian of the antechamber,  
think'st thou?' said the earl.

'He promises well, my lord,' replied Varney;  
'but if your lordship were pleased to ride on, I  
could go back to Cumnor, and bring him to your

lordship at Woodstock before you are out of  
bed.'

'Why, I am asleep there, thou knowest, at  
this moment,' said the earl; 'and I pray you  
not to spare horse-flesh, that you may be with  
me at my levee.'

So saying, he gave his horse the spur, and  
proceeded on his journey, while Varney rode  
back to Cumnor by the public road, avoiding  
the park. The latter alighted at the door of the  
bonnie Black Bear, and desired to speak with  
Master Michael Lambourne. That respectable  
character was not long of appearing before  
his new patron, but it was with downcast  
looks.

'Thou hast lost the scent,' said Varney, 'of  
thy comrade Tressilian—I know it by thy hang-  
dog visage. Is this thy alacrity, thou impudent  
knave?'

'Cogswounds!' said Lambourne, 'there was  
never a trail so finely hunted. I saw him to  
earth at mine uncle's here—stuck to him like  
bees'-wax—saw him at supper—watched him to  
his chamber, and presto—he is gone next morn-  
ing, the very hostler knows not where!'

'This sounds like practice upon me, sir,'  
replied Varney; 'and if it proves so, by my soul  
you shall repent it!'

'Sir, the best hound will be sometimes at  
fault,' answered Lambourne; 'how should it  
serve me that this fellow should have thus  
evanished? You may ask mine host, Giles Gos-  
ling—ask the tapster and hostler—ask Cicely,  
and the whole household, how I kept eyes on  
Tressilian while he was on foot.—On my soul, I  
could not be expected to watch him like a sick-  
nurse, when I had seen him fairly a-bed in his  
chamber. That will be allowed me, surely?'

Varney did, in fact, make some inquiry among  
the household, which confirmed the truth of  
Lambourne's statement. Tressilian, it was unani-  
mously agreed, had departed suddenly and unex-  
pectedly, betwixt night and morning.

'But I will wrong no one,' said mine host;  
'he left on the table in his lodging the full  
value of his reckoning, with some allowance to  
the servants of the house, which was the less  
necessary, that he saddled his own gelding, as it  
seems, without the hostler's assistance.'

Thus satisfied of the rectitude of Lambourne's  
conduct, Varney began to talk to him upon his  
future prospects, and the mode in which he  
meant to bestow himself, intimating that he  
understood from Foster he was not disinclined  
to enter into the household of a nobleman.

'Have you,' said he, 'ever been at court?'

'No,' replied Lambourne; 'but ever since I  
was ten years old, I have dreamt once a-week  
that I was there, and made my fortune.'

'It may be your own fault if your dream  
comes not true,' said Varney. 'Are you needy?'

'Um!' replied Lambourne; 'I love pleasure.'

'That is a sufficient answer, and an honest  
one,' said Varney. 'Know you ought of the  
requisites expected from the retainer of a rising  
courtier?'

'I have imagined them to myself, sir,' an-  
swered Lambourne; 'as, for example, a quick  
eye—a close mouth—a ready and bold hand—a  
sharp wit, and a blunt conscience.'