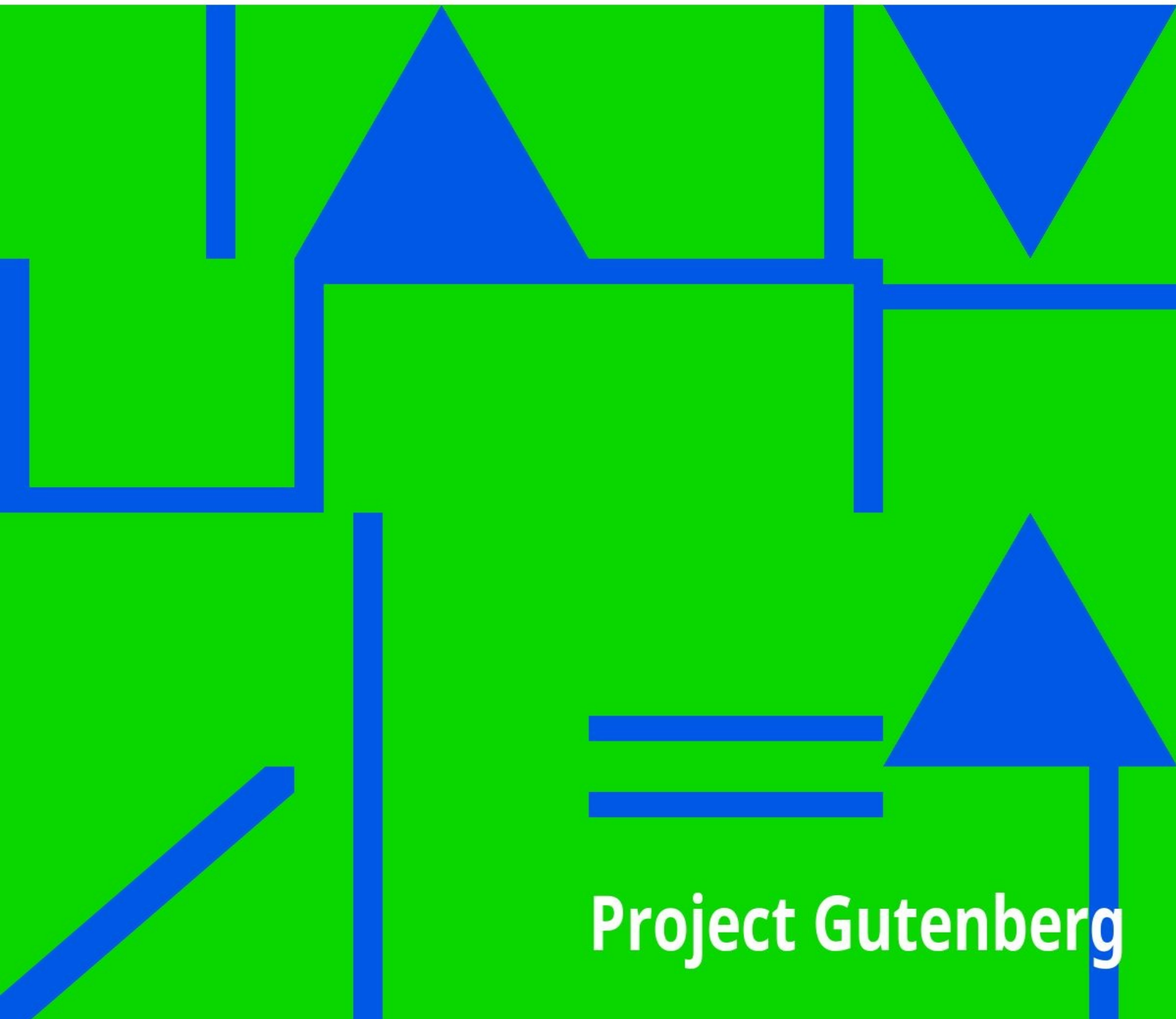


Hayslope Grange

A Tale of the Civil War

Emma Leslie



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HAYSLOPE GRANGE

A TALE OF THE CIVIL WAR

BY EMMA LESLIE

**AUTHOR OF "THE CAPTIVES," "CONSTANCIA'S HOUSEHOLD,"
"THE ORPHAN AND FOUNDLING."**

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CHAPTER I.

THE DRURY FAMILY.

It was a sweet spring day, soft and balmy as summer, and any one looking across the green meadows and smiling uplands of Hayslope, now so full of the promise of early fruitfulness, would have wondered what could make the farm-labourers appear so gloomy, and the women-folk sigh instead of singing at their work, if he knew nothing of what was going on a few miles away.

It was the year 1644, and for two long years civil war had been raging in England, and now two rival Parliaments were sitting, the one presided over by the King meeting at Oxford, while that in London was engaged upon the trial of Archbishop Laud, and levying war against the King, so that it was not to be wondered at that men looked gloomy and sorrowful, for they were dark, sad times for everybody.

Hayslope was a little village on the borders of Essex, but quite out of the high road usually taken by travellers going from London northward, so that when a young man came riding in towards the middle of the day, everybody turned from their work to look at him. They did not make a very close inspection before they raised their hats and cheered; but this greeting, pleasant as it was, scarcely brought a smile to his lips as he rode on up to the principal house in the place—Hayslope Grange. This was a large, rambling, roomy building, half farm-house, half mansion, standing in the midst of an old-fashioned garden, surrounded by fields, and enclosed with a moat. The moat was dry now, and had been for some years, and a permanent bridge of planks had been laid across, leading to the village; Master Drury would not have it filled up. "It might be useful yet," he would say, when his son Harry pressed him to make the alteration.

As the traveller reached the old moss-grown bridge he paused for a minute or two, and looked down at the broad deep trench. "God grant it never may be wanted," he murmured; and then he threw back his long brown curls that clustered round his head, and spurred his horse on at a quicker pace. He was a fine, tall, handsome young man, about twenty-two, with a thoughtful brow that would have made him look almost stern, but for the genial smile that played around his mouth, and the kindly eyes that looked as ready to cry as a girl's at a

tale of suffering. Before he was half-way across the fields he was met with the glad cry of, "Harry, Harry, I am so glad you have come home!"

That he was a general favourite at home was evident enough, for his younger sister and brother received him with screams of delight, and his elder sister, Mary, forgot all her stateliness in the warmth of her welcome. Only one of the group walking in the fields failed to run forward to meet him—a fact Harry was not slow to notice.

"So Maud would not come to greet me," he said, holding out his hand when he reached the spot where she was standing. He had sprung from his horse, and left the animal to find his own way to the stable.

The young lady coloured and looked down as Harry stopped before her. "I am very glad to see you," she said.

"But not quite so glad as my sisters here," said Harry.

"I am not your sister," said Maud, hardly knowing what to say.

"Oh, Maud," muttered little Bessie, "Harry is as much your brother as he is mine. Why, you have lived with us all your life, and if your name does happen to be Maud Harcourt instead of Maud Drury, it does not matter. I'm sure you can love Harry just the same."

"Yes, so I can," said Maud, smiling, and feeling greatly relieved by Bessie's little passionate outburst.

But Harry looked rather disappointed still.

"I am afraid my return is not very welcome to you, Maud," he said, as he placed himself at her side to walk towards the house.

"Why?" she said, quickly, in a tone of pain.

"I don't know, only you don't seem glad to see me this time. You did not come to meet me as the others did," replied Harry.

Maud looked down, but did not answer; and indeed there was no opportunity to do so, for Bertram, thinking he had been neglected long enough, pressed forward to his brother's side.

"Have you seen Prince Rupert, Harry?" he asked.

The young man's brow grew dark at the question. "Don't ask about Prince Rupert, Bertie," he said.

"Why not?" exclaimed the boy. "He's a great soldier, come to fight the King's battles against the wicked Parliament men. Do tell me about him?" he added, coaxingly.

"Harry will tell us all by-and-by," said Mary. "You must remember, he has not seen father yet. Let us make haste indoors," she added, turning to Harry, who still kept close to Maud.

But Bertram was determined not to miss hearing of Prince Rupert's valorous deeds, and fearing this account would be given to his father alone, he took his brother's hand, resolving to keep close to him. Prince Rupert's name, however, was not mentioned, and indeed Harry seemed strangely reserved in speaking of public affairs; and, as soon as he could get away, wandered off to a copse-like corner of the garden, where he stayed until he was summoned to prayers, late in the evening.

He looked pale and agitated as he came in. The family were all assembled—his father at the head of the table, with the Bible open before him, and the maid-servants and serving-men at the other end of the room; and Harry felt that every eye was upon him as he took his accustomed place.

After the chapter was read they all knelt down, and then any one might know how deeply and truly Master Drury loved his King, although he rarely spoke of it at any other time. Now, however, the man's whole soul was poured out before God in impassioned pleading for his royal master, while his hatred of the Parliament and those who were leading the rebellion could only find expression in the words of David against his enemies. A deep "Amen" followed, uttered by every one in the room except Harry,—an omission that was noticed by more than one present.

"Harry was asleep," whispered Bessie, who had had some difficulty in keeping her own eyes open.

Maud, to whom this was confided, did not contradict the little girl, but she knew it was not so, and she wondered why Harry had not responded to what everybody must wish for, she thought—at least every true Englishman. No one saw anything of Harry after he left the room that night, and Maud did not see him until the following afternoon. She thought he was offended with her, and

that this was the reason he kept away from everybody, and when she saw him leaning on the fence of the farm-yard, she determined to go and speak to him.

"I'm very sorry, Harry, if I have offended you," she said, as she drew near the spot.

Harry started. "Maud, Maud, what shall I do?" he said, impulsively, turning towards her and taking her hand.

Maud was only a year younger than himself, but she could not help feeling alarmed at his words.

"What is the matter?" she said. "Prithee, tell me all about what is troubling you."

But Harry shook his head, and tried to smile away her fears. "I have been wishing to be a chicken, and by my faith I do wish it too," he said.

"Marry, that is an old wish of mine," said Maud, trying to smile, but looking down as the colour stole into her cheeks.

"You wish to be a chicken!" uttered Harry in astonishment. "By my troth, I did not think you were so foolish, Maud."

"And wherefore not, wise sir? since you would nathless enter chickenhood."

But instead of replying in the same gay, bantering tone, Harry sighed deeply, and, still holding her hand, drew her into the field.

"It is quite true, Maud," he said. "I was actually wishing to be a chicken, or anything but what I am—Harry Drury, of Hayslope Grange."

"Prithee, now tell me wherefore you wished this," said Maud.

Harry had always told her his secrets since she first came, a little delicate girl, to live at the Grange.

"Now, marry, I can scarcely do that. But life is such a puzzle—such a tangle—men seem to be put in the wrong places."

"And you think you have one of the wrong places?" said Maud.

Harry nodded. "I am beginning to feel sure of it," he said, sadly.

"Then put yourself in the right place," said Maud, quickly, without in the least

knowing to what he referred.

"By my faith, I cannot," he said, huskily.

"Cannot?" she uttered. "Cannot do right? Be truthful and just—true to yourself. Harry, you cannot mean you are afraid to do this?"

She thought she knew what was passing in his mind. He had been away from home for several weeks, in London and in the North, and she thought he longed to serve his King by taking up arms and joining actively in the fray. Her spirit stirred and swelled within her, as she almost wished that she, too, was a man, that she might follow him to the field and fight by his side.

"Harry, you will do it," she said; "you will be brave and true, and tell your father all that is passing in your mind."

Harry looked at her astonished, almost bewildered. "By my troth, Maud, this is more wonderful than anything else," he said.

"Marry, that _I+ should tell you to be true to yourself and your own conscience," said Maud, in a deeply injured tone.

"Nay, but I did not mean to grieve you, dearest Maud," said Harry; "but I did not think—I dared not hope—you would see matters as I do."

"But I do see, that, whatever the cost may be——"

"Maud, the cost will not be half so great as I thought it half an hour since. I have your sympathy," interrupted Harry.

"But is your father _sure+ to oppose your wishes in this?" said Maud.

Harry looked at her in some perplexity. "Can you ask it?" he said, "when he _____"

"Yes, I know he refuses to take any public part in——" At this moment Maud was in her turn interrupted by Bessie rushing up to them with the announcement that a visitor had just arrived from London who desired to see Harry.

"It is a friend to whom I have spoken of the things we have been talking about," he said in a lower tone, to Maud; and finding Bessie was inclined to take his place by her side, he left them, and returned at once to the house.

"Has Harry been telling you about Prince Rupert?" asked Bessie, when they

were left alone.

"No, dear," answered Maud; and then she relapsed into silence, for her thoughts were busy about Harry, and she wondered why he could be so afraid of mentioning his wish to become a soldier to his father.

Bessie waited a few minutes, and then she said,— "Has Harry told you anything about Prince Rupert, to-day, Maud?"

Maud smiled. "We have so often talked about Prince Rupert, you know, Bessie, that I think we have heard all Harry can tell us about his winning the King's battles for him," she said.

"Marry, but we have not, though," said Bessie, earnestly. "Harry told Bertie this morning that he was a fierce, cruel man, one of the greatest robbers that ever lived; and that he justly deserved the title the King's enemies had given him, 'Prince of Plunderers.'"

Maud looked down at the eager upturned face, feeling somewhat puzzled, but she thought Harry might have heard something that seemed to him very cruel— something that the great Prince had been obliged to do to save the King, perhaps, which yet had roused Harry's anger, feeling so keenly as he did for everybody's distress. At all events, Harry was right, and Prince Rupert was right too, she had no doubt, if things could only be explained; and in this way she contrived to silence Bessie, if she did not convince her; and the little girl went to tell Bertie that Maud did not think his soldier-hero a bad man after all; while Maud pursued her walk through the fields, indulging in very happy thoughts, in spite of the danger she was anticipating for Harry when he should join the King's army.



CHAPTER II.

HARRY'S ANNOUNCEMENT.

Gilbert Clayton, Harry's friend, was a stranger to the rest of the family; but Master Drury no sooner heard of his arrival than he invited him to stay as long as he pleased, or as long as his business would permit; and this was so warmly seconded by Harry, that young Clayton could not but remain. He was the more willing to do this, as he had been ordered by the doctors to leave London and reside in the country before joining the army again, for he had received a dangerous wound the previous summer in the battle of Chalgrove, where his kinsman, the brave and pious John Hampden, was mortally wounded. It was by talking of John Hampden that Harry first became acquainted with Gilbert Clayton, and now he wanted to hear more of him and the gentle Sir Bevil Granville, who had so bravely led on his pikemen at the battle of Lansdowne.

The talks about these heroes generally took place in the most quiet part of the garden; for Gilbert Clayton, knowing his host's political opinions differed from his own, was too courteous to bring forward the subject before him and his family. Master Drury himself rarely talked of public matters with any one, and loved his books and the quiet of his study too well to take any active part in such affairs; and he said he could help the King's cause more by his prayers than anything else; so the two young men were left to amuse themselves as they pleased, and by a sort of tacit understanding, these conversations were never carried on in the presence of Mary or Maud.

Master Drury's household was managed by his sister, an elderly lady, who looked after children and servants with the greatest watchfulness, lest a moment of their time should be wasted. It was the rule of the household that as soon as breakfast was over Mistress Mabel should take her place in the high-backed chair at the head of the table in the "keeping room," or general sitting-room, and with Bessie and Bertram on each side of her, at their lessons, a huge basket of work was brought to her side by one of the maids, and Mary and Maud were each set to work, making or mending garments for the family. Fancy-work was never heard of in those days, and Mistress Mabel would not have allowed any to be brought forward in her presence, if it had been. Sometimes, as a rare treat,

when the lessons were well learned, a book was fetched from the library, not a story-book—that would have been a waste of time, according to this lady's rule—but a learned treatise on some abstruse science, which generally set Bessie and Bertram yawning, so that the reading was not much of a treat to them. Talking was not allowed from any one until the children's lessons were learned, and not greatly indulged in then. Later in the day, after the dairy had been visited and the kitchen inspected, the spinning-wheels were brought out, and the maids, who had finished their household and dairy work, were set down to spin.

Harry had escaped from his aunt's dominion now, but his idle life was a great eyesore to her, so that she took care no one else should share it. Under these circumstances it is easy to understand that, without at all intending it, a sort of suppression of what was really going on between the two young men took place when they were with the rest of the family. That Gilbert Clayton was as staunch a Cavalier as themselves was taken for granted; while he thought they fully understood his principles and the cause he was engaged in, and believed it was from refinement of feeling that the matter was never referred to in his presence.

That he was helping his friend to see that the cause of the Parliament was a just, honest cause, and one that must be espoused if civil and religious liberty were ever to be secured for England, he knew full well; but in doing this he believed he was only doing his duty, since Harry had come to him first to talk about these matters.

So the days and weeks went quietly on at Hayslope Grange, and the pure country air had so invigorated Gilbert Clayton that he began to talk of returning to London, to make preparations for joining Lord Kimbolton's army. Maud had heard that he was a soldier, and fully expected Harry would speak to his father, and go to London with his friend.

She felt rather jealous of young Clayton, if the truth must be told, for he quite monopolised Harry's society, so there had been no opportunity of resuming the conversation that his arrival had interrupted, or she might have discovered the mistake she had made. Hearing nothing of this, and the day for Clayton's departure being fixed, she determined to seek some opportunity of speaking to

Harry. She was a noble, unselfish girl, and though she knew his going would cost her the bitterest pang she had ever felt, and be followed probably by weeks and months of anxious suspense and dread, she would not hold him back—nay, she would urge him to go at the call of duty, though all the sunshine of her life would depart when he went; for months might pass before she heard of him again, and he might be wounded, dying, or dead, and the tidings never reach Hayslope Grange.

News travelled slowly in those days, and in the unsettled state of affairs could not always be relied upon; but tidings reached Hayslope just now that the Parliament had seized the Archbishop of Canterbury, and his trial was now going on, the charges against him being that he had tried to subvert civil and religious liberty in England, had been the author of illegal and tyrannical proceedings in the court of Star Chamber, and had suppressed godly ministers and godly preaching.

But to the family at Hayslope Grange these charges were as nothing compared to the guilt the Parliament had incurred in seizing an anointed prelate.

Master Drury lifted up his hands in silent horror when he heard it, and Mistress Mabel burst into tears. The sight of their stern aunt crying seemed to make more impression upon Bessie and Bertram than the fate of the archbishop.

"Was he very wicked?" asked Bessie.

This was enough to drive back Mistress Mabel's tears. "Wicked!" she repeated, in anger. "Never let me hear you ask such a question about one of the Lord's anointed, Bessie, unless you would share in the sin of those who have laid violent hands upon him."

"It is sacrilege," uttered Master Drury, slowly and solemnly.

Mistress Mabel, who did not often talk, found her tongue now, and used it too, denouncing in the strongest terms the doings of the Parliament. "What is to be the end of this evil generation, that worketh such wickedness?" she said at last; and then, as if answering the query, went on, "The land shall be desolate, and all the people perish." Bessie and Bertram looked frightened. "What does that mean?" whispered the little girl; "won't the people in the village have anything to eat, because they are cruel to the archbishop?"

It was almost the first time any one at the Grange had thought of their poor

neighbours, and the burden they were silently bearing under these great changes. Taxes were high, food was scarce, and many of the men had joined the King's army; but none of the Drurys had thought of these things except Harry, and it was the little scraps of news he heard in the village that first led him to doubt whether the royal cause were the just one.

He and Gilbert Clayton were absent when the news concerning the archbishop first reached Hayslope; but when they returned in the evening Harry knew that something had happened, by the look of anxious trouble on his father's face, and the querulous restlessness of his aunt.

"What is the matter, Mary?" he asked, in an anxious whisper.

But Mary only held up her finger warningly. "The servants are coming in," she murmured; and at the same moment Mistress Mabel placed the Bible in front of the high-backed chair at the head of the table, and Master Drury slowly took his seat.

Prayers for the King, Gilbert and Harry could both join in; for they hoped God would change his heart, and teach him that it was most unkingly to break his promises again and again, as he had done. But to-night it seemed that Master Drury could think of nothing but of the evil-doing of the Parliament in bringing the archbishop to trial; and he prayed that all their plans might be frustrated, the King brought back to his throne, and the archbishop restored to his charge; while those who had troubled them might be visited with dire calamities and afflictions.

His prayer was not concluded when Harry started from his knees and said, in a hoarse voice, "Stop, my father, I pray you; you know not for what you are asking."

All turned to look at him in silent, speechless wonder—all but Gilbert Clayton, who rose from his knees and laid his hand upon Harry's shoulder. "Come away," he whispered.

But Harry would not stir. "My father must not pray thus," he said, loud enough for any one to hear.

Master Drury and the rest slowly rose from their knees.

"Harry, my boy, you are ill," said the gentleman, in a tone of compassion.

"Prithee, now tell me where you have been racing all the day, to get your head so disordered," said Mistress Mabel; and she despatched Mary to her store closet for some herb tea for Harry to take at once.

"I don't want the herb tea, aunt," said Harry, in a clear, calm voice. "I am quite well; the sun has not affected my head, and I know quite well what I am about."

Aunt Mabel looked incredulous; but his father, losing the fear of illness, sat down in his chair, a dim feeling of a sorer trouble than this coming over him as he looked at Harry. "Sit down," he said, in a tone of command to the rest, who stood just as they had risen from their knees—"sit down and listen to the reason my son has to give for interrupting our godly exercise this evening." And he looked towards Harry as if waiting for his answer.

The young man instinctively drew a step nearer to Maud, as if mutely asking her sympathy and support; but she was looking down upon the oaken floor, utterly unable to comprehend what Harry could mean by this strange proceeding.

Harry seemed to feel that he had acted unwisely in yielding to his impulse; and he said, slowly, "Prithee, father, let me tell it to yourself alone."

"By my faith, that cannot be now, Harry," said Master Drury, energetically. "We have all been hindered in our devotions by your froward speech, and each has an equal right to hear your reason for it."

The men and maid-servants gathered at the end of the room pitied poor Harry in his confusion, and would have retreated, trusting to have their curiosity gratified afterwards by the tell-tale tongue of Bessie or Bertram; but Mistress Mabel's eye was upon them, and they knew they dared not go away.

Harry's face changed from an ashy whiteness to crimson as his father spoke, and then he went pale again as he said, "My father, do not force me to speak out now; let me go to your study, and I will tell you all that has been passing in my mind of late."

But Master Drury was inexorable when once he had made up his mind. "My son, we are waiting," was all he said in reply to Harry's entreaty.

Harry drew himself up, and casting a hasty glance at Maud's bowed figure, he said, "Father, I have resolved to cast in my lot with the patriots who are striving to rescue this country from the grasp of tyrants; they are not the evil-doers you think them. It is the King and archbishop and their advisers who are traitors, not

the Parliament, or the brave, true men who are fighting for it."

He might have been hurried into saying much more, but at this moment Maud fell to the ground with a piercing shriek; and at the same instant Gilbert Clayton seized Harry's arm and dragged him from the room.

HARRY'S ANNOUNCEMENT.

CHAPTER III.

TRAITOR OR HERO?

The confusion and dismay into which the orderly household of Hayslope Grange was thrown by Harry's untimely and hasty confession baffles all description. Fainting among young ladies was not so common in those days, and the only orthodox remedy known to Mistress Mabel being burnt feathers, these had to be fetched from the poultry-yard, and singed at the kitchen fire, before anything else could be done for Maud, who still lay unconscious on the floor; while Bessie and Bertram, thinking of their aunt's words of the morning, cried and screamed, "Prithee, tell them to let the archbishop go; poor Maud will die if you don't!"

Clayton had some difficulty in keeping Harry outside the house, whither they had retreated when he heard that Maud was ill; but thinking that his presence would only add to the confusion in the keeping-room if he went in again, he prevailed upon him to remain where he was until Master Drury came out and fetched them both into the study.

His face was white and rigid, with such a look of helpless woe about the lines of his mouth that it touched Gilbert more deeply than the fiercest expression of anger could have done. Harry's misery seemed complete when he looked at his father's face in the dim light of the study lamp, and falling on his knees, he exclaimed—

"Oh, my father, forgive me!"

But his father drew back hastily from the outstretched hands.

"Rise from your knees, Harry Drury!" he said, sternly, "and tell me what you mean by the froward words you have this night spoken."

"My father, I spoke hastily and unadvisedly," said Harry, humbly. "I should have come to you alone, and confessed that my opinions of the King's doings had greatly changed of late, and begged your permission to join the army now fighting for the Parliament."

"And do you think I would have given it, traitor-caitiff?" said Master Drury, sternly.

"I have angered you," said Harry; "but, my father, you will suffer me to speak to you of this to-morrow, and hear me when I say that Gilbert Clayton here hath not sought to draw me to this way of thinking. I had some converse upon it with Mistress Maud before his arrival."

Master Drury glanced at Clayton suspiciously; he had not noticed his presence before.

"If you are clear of this thing, young man," he said, "you can abide here until the morning; but Harry Drury departs from Hayslope Grange this night."

HARRY DRIVEN FROM THE GRANGE.

Harry started in blank astonishment.

"Marry then, where am I to tarry?" he said.

"That I know not; but traitors cannot abide under this honest roof, that has never sheltered any but true and loyal men since it was raised by Roger Drury ninety years ago."

"But, my father——"

"Call me not by that name," interrupted the old man, "unless you are ready to return, and willing to do true and loyal service to your King and country."

"My country I am willing to serve; but, my father, this King is trying to enslave it," said Harry, earnestly.

"Prithee! what will you say next? But hold, I am not here to banter words with you. Will you enter the King's service, and fight his battles under Prince Rupert?" demanded Master Drury.

"Serve under that Prince of Plunderers?—never!" said Harry, in a determined

tone.

"It is enough," said his father. "I give you this purse, which contains enough to keep you from starving for a few days, and for the rest you must look to yourself. You have no further part or lot in Hayslope Grange. I cast you off for ever."

But Harry did not attempt to touch the purse, which his father had placed on the table beside him. Throwing himself again on his knees, he begged his father to revoke the dreadful words he had just uttered.

"I will remain at home, and never again seek to serve the Parliament, if you forbid it," he said.

Master Drury looked down at him, and his lips quivered with emotion.

"Say you will renounce these new opinions and serve the King, and you are my son still," he said.

But Harry started back.

"Give up my principles! all that I have learned to see is just and true and honest! My father, you cannot ask me to do this?" said Harry.

"I ask you to give up all traitorous friendships, and return to your allegiance and duty to your King," said his father.

"But I should be a traitor to my conscience. I should sell my convictions of right and duty for your favour. My father, you would not have your son a slave?"

"I would that I had no son at all!" groaned the old man, covering his eyes with his hands.

"Forgive me, oh, forgive me the pain I have caused you, my father; and let me remain at home with you still; only don't ask me to be a traitor to my conscience!" implored Harry.

"I _ask+ you nothing," said Master Drury. "I _command+ you to swear this moment that you will enter the King's service without delay; and if you do not obey me, you leave this house at once, and I have no son from this night."

Harry slowly rose from his knees with bowed head.

"I cannot swear," he said. "I will serve my country, not sell her into the power of

tyrants," and he turned to leave the room. But at the door he paused for a moment, and then turned back. "You will give me your blessing once more, my father, before I depart?" he said; and he would have knelt to receive it, but the old man waved him off.

"Leave me, leave me at once, lest I curse you!" he said, in a hoarse voice; and Harry, without glancing at the purse, which still lay on the table, retreated from that look of stern wrath which had settled on his face.

The two young men walked straight out into the fields, and for some time neither spoke; but at length Harry said,—

"What are we to do, Clayton?"

"We had better get round to the barn for to-night, and sleep there," replied Gilbert, "and then to-morrow you had better see your father again."

But Harry shook his head sadly.

"Marry, it will be of no use," he said.

"By my troth, I would try, though you cannot marvel that he is angry, speaking as you did," said Gilbert, warmly.

"Yes, I know I was wrong; but you do not know my father, Gilbert, or you would not advise me to thrust myself into his presence again for a while. No, no; I must go to London now, and seek my fortune there."

"But you will stay here to-night?" said his friend.

"Yes, to-night," sighed Harry; "for I must see Maud to-morrow."

Clayton hoped that Master Drury's anger might be somewhat appeased by the next day, and he resolved to see him, if possible, when he went to the house for his things, which in the hurry and confusion had been left behind.

Anxiety kept Harry awake as much as his strange quarters that night; but Clayton, who had many times slept out in the open field when upon the march, did not feel much inconvenience from sleeping on the barn floor. He awoke about the usual time, but would not stir, for fear of disturbing Harry. At length, however, one of the men pushed open the door, and not recognising the intruders, at once ordered them off in a loud, rough voice.

Harry started to his feet, crying, "Maud, Maud, I will save you!" and then rubbed his eyes to see if it was true that the man was staring and Gilbert laughing at him.

"Marry, but you have been dreaming," said Clayton, rising and stretching himself.

"Is it my young master?" uttered the man, slowly, as if scarcely able to believe the evidence of his eyes.

"Yes, it is me; Harry Drury," said Harry. "Have you heard how Mistress Maud is this morning?" he asked, anxiously.

"But sadly, I hear," said the man, shaking his head. "Marry, but 'tis a bad business, this, Master Harry," he added.

"Will you go and tell one of the maids to ask Mistress Maud to come to me?" said Harry, in a tone of impatience.

"Mistress Maud has not yet left her room," said the man. "I heard——"

"Then go and ask if I can see her in the painted gallery," interrupted Harry. "Stop!" he cried, as the man was moving off; "you are not to go to Mistress Mabel, but ask Jane, or one of the other maids."

The man gave a knowing nod, and departed on his errand, determined to accomplish it too, for he had no doubt but that the visit to Maud was to ask her to intercede with Master Drury; and Harry being a general favourite with the servants, they had all felt sorry for his dilemma, although they did not understand it.

He slowly followed the man round to a small entrance at the side of the house, and presently the door opened and Jane beckoned him to enter. A staircase close to the door led direct to one end of the painted gallery, which was close to Maud's room, and here Harry sat down in the broad window-seat to wait her coming. He did not have to wait long. In a minute or two her chamber-door opened, and the young lady stepped into the gallery, looking very pale and sad, but almost as stern as Master Drury himself.

"Oh, Maud, forgive me!" burst forth Harry, starting forward when he saw her.

But she coldly waved him off.

"I have nothing to forgive," she said.

Harry paused in amazement.

"Prithee, tell me what is the matter," he said; "are you ill, Maud?"

"Prithee, no," said Maud, lightly (which was not quite the truth).

Harry advanced a step nearer, and Maud drew further back.

"Do not seek to touch me," she said, proudly. "I give not my hand to traitors."

"But I am not a traitor," said Harry. "I have followed your advice, and told my father I must go on in——"

"Followed my advice!" repeated Maud. "By my faith, I never advised you!"

"Nay, nay, did you not understand me when I conversed with you?"

"I understand you now, Master Drury," interrupted Maud, "but I choose not to hold converse with a traitor;" and with a haughty gesture she turned and went into her own room, leaving Harry overwhelmed with surprise and distress.

He went down-stairs, and out of the little unused door into the sunny fields, without knowing where he was, and he wandered up and down, trying to collect his bewildered thoughts, and think over what had happened, until Gilbert Clayton overtook him.

He had collected the few belongings he brought with him to Hayslope Grange, and now carried them in his hand, but he had utterly failed in his mission to Master Drury. The old man was more bitter this morning than he had been the previous evening, and vowed he would never own his son again, unless he took service under King Charles.

"Let us get away from here as fast as we can," said Harry, as his friend joined him.

"Have you seen Mistress Maud?" asked Gilbert, hoping that she at least had spoken a word of comfort to him.

"Prithee, do not ask me," said Harry, in a hoarse voice. "I am an outcast from my father's house; every one spurns me."

"Say not so, Harry," said Gilbert, in a gentle tone. "Remember the word of the

Lord, 'When my father and mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up.'"

"But I know not that I have the right to that promise," said Harry, moodily.

"But you confess that you need it," said Gilbert.

"Yes, I need it," said Harry.

"Then Christ came to satisfy the needy, whatever their wants might be. He came to show us the love of the Father that it was inexhaustible, not like the love of earthly friends, which is often cold and changeful, but ever full, free, and unchangeable."

Harry sighed.

"I feel utterly desolate and deserted," he said.

"Then will you not go to Him who is waiting to take you up and adopt you into His family, and make you His son in Christ Jesus? He wishes to do so. He is waiting to be gracious."

"Go on," said Harry, when Gilbert paused. "I am listening; your words are like water to a thirsty soul;" and Gilbert went on until they reached the village, where Gilbert bought a loaf of rye bread, and after eating this, and drinking some water from the spring, they started on their journey to London; for although Gilbert was not a poor man, they had not much money with them, not enough to buy a horse, and stage-coaches were unheard of in those days.

CHAPTER IV.

CROMWELL'S IRONSIDES.

Gilbert Clayton and Harry Drury kept on their weary tramp to London, and at length reached the little village of Whitechapel, which was outside the city walls. They had run some risks from highwaymen and footpads; but now they thought all danger was over, for they had almost reached their destination. But just as they were about to leave the village, a party of the King's pikemen rode in, and at once seized upon the travellers, to compel them to enter the King's service.

This was a dilemma neither of them had foreseen. To declare they were in favour of the Parliament would be the signal for their arrest as traitors to his Majesty; and to escape on any other pretext, without telling an actual lie, seemed equally impossible. Gilbert was seized first, and asked his name and condition. The latter was not easy to comply with, as he had left the army on account of his wounds, and was not at all sure that he should be received back again. He therefore gave his former occupation—a mercer of the city of London. Harry gave his as a farmer, for although he did not look much like one, he spoke of that being his occupation. After a few more questions had been asked and answered, they were marched off to the captain of the band, who began his examination by asking Harry his name.

"Drury!" he repeated. "Are you one of the Hayslope Drurys?"

"My father lives at Hayslope Grange," said Harry.

"Ay, a right true and trusty servant of the King's is Master Drury. I marvel that he has not sent you to do service for the King ere this," said the officer.

"My father meddleth not with public matters," said Harry, pondering what would come next.

"I trow not, I trow not," said the soldier, shaking his head; "but I must have a word with Master Drury on this same matter as I pass through the village, and I doubt not he will bid you wield your arms for King Charles after your visit to London. You may pursue your journey now, young man; but nathless you will speed your return, for the King needs trusty men to do him service in these

troublous times. But we wish not to force our friends too much in this matter, therefore will I suffer you both to depart."

All the time he was speaking he eyed Gilbert most narrowly, as if trying to recall where he had seen that face before, as in truth he had, for they had met in the first battle fought between Charles and his Parliament, at Edgehill, on the borders of Warwickshire.

Gilbert remembered Captain Stanhope quite well, for he had been his prisoner for a little while, until an exchange of prisoners took place. Long illness had, however, altered Gilbert far more than the two years' campaign had altered the captain; and he rode away, thinking his eyes had played him false for once. Perhaps his being in the company of one whose family was known to be so strongly attached to the royal cause helped his escape; for he could not think it possible that a Drury would hold any intimacy with the Claytons.

"We have had a narrow escape, Harry, and we must not stay long in London," said Gilbert, as they left the village, and saw the soldiers ride out towards Essex; and then he told his companion of his former acquaintance with Captain Stanhope.

Harry could not help laughing, in spite of his sorrow, and quite agreed that their stay in London should be as short as possible. They would only stay a few hours to rest, to replenish their purses, and ascertain where Lieutenant Cromwell was now with his army, and then hasten to join him. The long tramp from Essex to London in the heat and dust had somewhat wearied Harry, unused to such exertion; but no sooner did he hear that horses had been provided, than he was anxious to start again, and they were soon on the great road leading to Yorkshire, where Lord Kimbolton and his lieutenant, Cromwell, were mustering their forces.

It was sad to pass along the edge of uncultivated fields in this bright summer weather; and yet, what encouragement was there for the farmer to plant or sow, when crops might be trodden down by the feet of horses and soldiers, or, if allowed to ripen, to see the grain cut down by that lawless Prince Rupert and his band of soldier-robbers. Truly the land might be said to mourn as well as the inhabitants, although as yet they had not reached the scene of actual strife.

Gilbert was anxious to reach his kinsman Cromwell as soon as possible, and so pressed on with all speed, making inquiries now and then at the villages where they slept, or of people they met on the road, as to the whereabouts of the two

armies. It seems almost incredible in these days of rapid communication that this necessary intelligence could not be furnished in London, but that both forces lay somewhere in or near Yorkshire was the utmost Gilbert could learn about them.



A RIDE TO THE NORTH.

The farther they travelled northwards the more people did they meet, and it soon became plain that these were many of them fugitives flying from impending ruin. The tales they told were of course conflicting, and in their fright and anxiety to escape and save their families, often confused. But Gilbert was able to make out that the Scots army, which had marched over the Border to the help of the Parliament, had been shut up in Sunderland by the Royalists under the Earl of Newcastle; but the Parliamentary forces under Fairfax coming to their relief, the Earl had retired to York, and the English and Scotch together had now laid siege to that city.

As they drew near to Yorkshire, evidence of the commotion became still more apparent. The roads were strewed with beds and bedding, and various articles of household furniture, which the fugitives had attempted to take with them, but afterwards had thrown away; for the rumour had gone abroad that Prince Rupert was coming, and enough had been heard of his atrocities in Cheshire and Lancashire to make the people dread his approach as they would the plague. At length, as they neared the besieged city, they heard that Lord Kimbolton's army was in the neighbourhood, and Gilbert was not long in discovering the encampment and seeking out Lieutenant Cromwell.

He warmly welcomed his young kinsman, and at once accepted his services and that of his companion. Harry Drury was not unused to arms. He had been taught fencing as a part of his education, and would use the singlestick, arquebus, and crossbow, while the fashion of every gentleman wearing a sword had rendered it necessary that this weapon should be handled skilfully. The necessary drill was therefore soon learned by Harry, and he was admitted to serve in the same corps as his friend.

Every addition to the army was welcome now, and the work of drilling the recruits went on all day, and often far into the night too. The life of a soldier here in Cromwell's camp was very different from the gay scene of revel he had sometimes heard the Royalist troopers describe. There was no rioting or drunkenness, no shouting or brawling, for these were sober-minded earnest men, who felt they had a real work to do, and sacrificed much in the doing of it. None

had been forced to come here; but they had left home, and wife, and little ones, of their own accord, to fight their country's battles and set all England free. No wonder that they were earnest when they thought of the dear ones far away. They were not like the paid soldiers of the regular army; they could not afford to trifle and lose their time in play when they might be at work preparing for the battle; and so when not at drill, the cleaning of armour and furbishing of arms went on ceaselessly, and the clatter of this and the ring of the blacksmith's tools were broken only by the singing of some pious hymn or the voice of one reading to his comrade from the Word of Life. The day was begun and closed with prayer, and but for the tramp of the sentry, when once the word of command had been given that all work should cease, all the camp was as quiet and still, as a sleeping village.

Harry joyfully took his share of the labour going forward; he was willing to do anything, or bear any fatigue, to prepare himself to take part in the expected action when Prince Rupert should show himself. July was drawing near now, and they had almost reached the united armies besieging York, and it was expected that when Prince Rupert came into the field a battle would be fought. Scouts were sent out in all directions to give timely notice of his approach, but they were able to reach the forces of Fairfax before he came. But, however, only just in time. On the second of July, Prince Rupert came upon them by way of Marston Moor, but Kimbolton and his lieutenants were prepared for his coming.

A desperate battle was fought, and for some time it seemed that the Royalists must be victorious, for Prince Rupert fought with the most desperate bravery, driving several generals from the field, and thus disconcerting all their plans. He tried to do the same with Cromwell's cavalry, but they kept together like an iron phalanx, and all Rupert's dashing charges and feigned retreats failed to throw them into disorder. They were rightly named the Ironsides, for they kept the field and turned the tide of battle in favour of the Parliamentarians, and when once the Royalists saw that the day was lost their rout was complete. They retired from the field, leaving all their artillery, military stores, and baggage to the enemy.

The battle of Marston Moor decided the Royalist cause in the north. That was lost to Charles for ever, and there might well be hymns of rejoicing and solemn thanksgiving for the victory, for the cause of the Parliament had looked desperate enough only a short time before.

But in these rejoicings neither Gilbert nor Harry could take part. Gilbert had again been seriously wounded, and Harry, fighting by his side, had shared the

same fate. The news was carried to Cromwell just as he was giving the last instructions to the messenger who was to bear the despatches to London giving information of the victory. "Clayton and young Drury of Hayslope wounded!" he repeated. "I will come and see them soon;" and then he went on giving instructions how Prince Rupert's retreating troops should be avoided, by the messenger taking an easterly course through Essex, instead of following the more direct road to London at the risk of being robbed. Cromwell was as clever a man of business as he was a soldier, and although the nominal head of the army was Lord Kimbolton, it was well known that the actual direction of affairs rested with his lieutenant, and all the men looked up to him as their leader. Cromwell's Ironsides, as his troops were now called, were everywhere spoken of as having gained the battle of Marston Moor, and he was daily rising into greater prominence, and was more frequently consulted as to the general direction of affairs.

But he did not forget his young kinsman lying sick and wounded. Provision had been made for this beforehand. Medicaments—hospital stores we should call them—had been secured, and now Cromwell went round to see those who had been carried from that awful battle-field where four thousand lay dead. Many an arm was raised when he was seen approaching, and many a feeble voice attempted to cheer; but Gilbert lay quiet and unconscious, while Harry was talking in the delirium of fever, moaning out the one name, "Maud, Maud!" or imploring his father's forgiveness.

Cromwell made particular inquiries into the case of each, and directed the doctors to let the two friends be as near to each other as possible when they were sensible, and this was the most he could do for them at present. The doctors could give no opinion as to their recovery yet, for they were both severely wounded; but Harry's case seemed the most dangerous, from the fever running so high.

CHAPTER V.

MAUD HARCOURT.

Mistress Mabel, with all her sternness, had some difficulty in parrying the children's questions about Harry, when they assembled in the keeping room the morning of his departure. Mary, too, felt anxious about her brother; but she dared not question her aunt as the children did; and from her answers to them little could be gathered beyond this, that Harry had disgraced himself through making unworthy friendships, and the children at once jumped to the conclusion that it was Gilbert Clayton to whom their aunt referred. Mary, however, indignantly repelled this insinuation. She had had several conversations with Clayton, and had learned to esteem him very highly, so that how Harry could have disgraced himself while with him, or what the wild words he had uttered the previous evening fully meant, she could not tell.

At dinner time Maud came down looking very pale but quite calm, until Master Drury, noticing that Harry's chair had been placed at the table as usual, ordered it to be carried away without mentioning his name, and said, "That seat will not be wanted again." Then Maud trembled with agitation, and Bertram asked quickly, "Where has brother Harry gone?"

"My boy, you have no brother," said Master Drury, coldly.

"Oh, Harry's dead!" screamed Bessie, pushing aside her pewter plate, and laying her head on the table in a burst of uncontrollable anguish.

Maud, however, knew that he was not dead, but without noticing Bessie's distress or Mary's look of mute agony, she rose from her seat, and walking round to the side of Master Drury, she said, "You will tell me where Harry has gone."

It was a demand rather than a question, and Mistress Mabel, as well as her brother, opened her eyes wide with astonishment on hearing it. "He has disgraced himself and all who bear his name," said the lady, quickly.

"Prithee, Maud, go and sit down," said Master Drury, tenderly.

But Maud shook her head. "You will tell me where Harry is, first," she said, still

in the same quiet tone of command.

"I know not, unless he be travelling towards London with his false friend, who has turned his head with his stories of the traitor Parliament. He hath done this much; he confessed it to me this morning ere they departed," added Master Drury.

He thought this would satisfy Maud, and all questioning would be at an end now, but the young lady asked, "What did you mean, Master Drury, by saying Bertram had no brother now?"

Mistress Mabel looked horrified at the impertinence of the question, but Maud stood still and waited for an answer.

Calming his emotion with a violent effort, he turned to Maud and said, "By my faith, you should be thankful this day that you are not a Drury, to be disgraced by this traitor caitiff, who was my son. This must be the last time he is ever spoken of in this house, for I have renounced him—cast him off for ever; and you children must do the same," he said, turning towards Bertram and Bessie.

The little girl had dried her tears, and both sat with white frightened faces gazing at Maud and their father.

Maud staggered back to her seat and bowed her face in her hands, and the dinner went on in silence among those who cared to eat. Maud and Mary sat with their plates before them, but left the table without tasting anything, and as soon as they could escape went up to their own room.

Here Maud's firmness quite forsook her, and laying her head on Mary's shoulder, she burst into tears, moaning, "Oh, Mary, what shall I do? I cast him off as well."

Mary could not understand her. "I think you ought to be very glad you are not a Drury, to share in his disgrace," she said, with a sigh.

Maud lifted her face, her eyes flashing with indignation. "Glad!" she said; "nay, nay, I wish I were a Drury, that I might go and seek him now. Think of it, Mary; all have cast him off."

"He has disgraced us all," said Mary. "I have heard my father say it was his proudest boast that the Drurys had ever been true to the king and state, and never taken part with any riotous mob, and now Harry has dragged our family honour to the very dust. Everybody will know it soon, and every village wench will pity

me because I am the sister of a traitor. I shall never hold up my head again," and Mary burst into tears at the picture of humiliation she had drawn.

"HE HAS DISGRACED US ALL!"

Maud was quite incapable of understanding this self-pity, and seating herself at the little table by the window, she indulged her own self-reproachful thoughts on her conduct of the morning. She had no idea then that his father had treated him so harshly, or she would have been more tender, and her heart was sad as she thought of his words, that he must be true to his conscience.

But her musing was broken in upon by Mary saying, "It is so wicked, so wilful, to rebel against the King."

"But suppose he had to do this, or rebel against his conscience," said Maud, giving some expression to her own thoughts.

Mary started. "What can you mean? prithee, it cannot be right for us to rebel against the King?"

"Certainly not for us," said Maud. "But we are not to make ourselves a conscience to other people; and if Harry sees that serving the King would be wrong——"

"But it cannot be wrong," interrupted Mary. "God's Word says, 'Fear God, honour the king.'"

"Yes, fearing God comes first," said Maud, but speaking more to herself than to Mary; "and it seems to me that it is out of this fear Harry has been led to adopt these new views. I can't see how they are right; but then I suppose living here in this quiet village, and having everything we want, we do not understand things as men do who go out into the world and learn what Acts of Parliament mean."

"Maud, you are half a traitor yourself," interrupted Mary, indignantly.

"Nay, nay, Mary! I am not that," said Maud. "I love the King, from what I have

heard of his gentle courteous bearing and his loving care of his children; but even Master Drury denies not that he has oft-times broken his solemn promise, and 'tis said that his subsidies and exactions have well nigh ruined the nation."

"Maud, Maud! said I not that you were a traitor; and by my troth you must be, to speak thus of the King."

"Nay, I am no traitor. I would that I could speak to King Charles myself, and tell him how sorely grieved many of his subjects are at his want of truth and honest dealing," replied Maud, warmly.

"But the King cannot do evil," said Mary, in a tone of expostulation.

Maud put her hand to her forehead in some perplexity. "I know not what to think, sometimes," she said. "I like not to think it possible that the King can do wrong; but what am I to think when he breaks the Divine laws of truth and uprightness. He is not above these, if he is above those of the land, that he can make and unmake at his will."

"We have no business to think about such things at all," said Mary, impatiently.

"Marry, you may be right," answered Maud; "for women-folk have but little wit to the understanding of such weighty matters; but for men it is different, and that is why so many are carried away to the defending this rebellious Parliament, I trow."

"But they should not be carried away, now that they know how evil are its doings, and how it has laid violent hands on the Archbishop; and herein is Harry's sin the greater."

"Oh, say not so, Mary. Harry is right, I trow, although you and I see not how that may be," said Maud.

At this moment there was a knock at the door, and Bessie's tearful face appeared. Mistress Mabel had found it impossible to settle down to her usual spinning to-day, and telling the children she must look after the maids, to see they did not get gossiping about the family affairs, she had dismissed them.

"Oh, Maud, I have no brother Harry now," sobbed the little girl, throwing herself into her arms.

"But Harry is not dead," said Maud, smoothing back the tumbled hair from her

hot forehead. "He has only gone away from home, and you can love him still."

"That's what Bertram says," sobbed the child; "but it isn't just the same; he was my brother before—my very own, and now"—and she burst into another passionate flood of tears.

"Prithee, now hush," said Maud. "Harry loves you all the same, I am sure, and you can love him; so that it need make no difference to you, Bessie."

"But it does make a difference," passionately exclaimed Bessie. "You said it did a little while ago."

Maud had forgotten the circumstance to which the girl referred, until she went on—"You said Harry was not your real brother, and now I am not his real sister. Has Harry got another name?" she suddenly asked.

Maud smiled, but Mary shook her head sorrowfully. "No, his name is Drury still," she said, "and he has disgraced it, Bessie—disgraced the good old name that you and I bear."

Bessie looked at Maud. "Are you glad your name is not Drury?" she said.

Maud shook her head. "I wish it was," she said, "and then I could make you understand better that I do not think Harry has disgraced it."

"Then it can be, can't it?" said Bessie, drying her tears.

"What, dear?"

"Drury. You can change your name, can't you?"

A momentary blush overspread Maud's pale face, but it quickly faded, and a sadder look than ever came into her eyes as she shook her head and said, "No, dear, I shall never change my name now." Then, seeing that her sadness had brought back the tears to Bessie's eyes, she asked where Bertram had gone.

"To look after Harry's horse," answered Bessie. "Aunt Mabel says it is to be his, now; but Bertram says he will never ride it, for it will be like robbing Harry."

"Suppose we go and look at Cavalier, too," said Maud. "He will miss his master almost as much as you do, Bessie," she added, trying to speak cheerfully.

They went through the painted gallery and out of the side door, as Harry went in the morning, the little girl wondering why they went that way. Bertram had

sobbed out the first portion of his grief to his brother's dumb favourite, and now stood stroking its silky chestnut coat; but as Maud entered the paddock the noble creature pricked up its ears and gave a pleased whining of recognition.

"It is not Harry, Cavalier," said Bertram, sadly.

"Prithee, Cavalier is almost as fond of Maud as he is of Harry," said Bessie.

"Oh, Maud, then you have him," said Bertram, with a fresh burst of tears. "He is mine now, Aunt Mabel says; but I shall never be able to ride him, for thinking of Harry; but he'll like to have you on his back, and Harry will like it too, I know."

That Harry would like it Maud knew full well, but the appropriation of his things in this way she did not approve of at all; but Bertram's next words settled the matter.

"Aunt Mabel says Cavalier shall be sold, and a pony bought for me, if I don't like it; and I can't bear to part with Cavalier," sobbed the little boy.

"We won't part with it, Bertie," said Maud. "I will have Cavalier, and ride him every day, and I will buy you a pony instead, and you can ride with me."

Mistress Maud Harcourt possessed the sole right to a large fortune, and so she could do as she pleased in such a small matter as keeping a horse for her individual use. Mistress Mabel grumbled a little when she heard of this arrangement, but it did not alter matters, and in a few days Bertram's pony arrived.



CHAPTER VI.

THE HAYSLOPE WITCH.

There had never been much communication between the villagers of Hayslope and the family living at the Grange. Mistress Mabel believed that the villagers existed solely for the convenience of the family, but never troubled herself to consider their wants or necessities, and brought up her niece Mary upon the same principle. Maud appeared to be of a similar opinion; but sharing Harry's confidence in everything, she knew he went about among his poorer neighbours, and began to take an interest in them herself, although not very actively.

Now, however, she determined to follow Harry's example, and take up his work; and, mounted on Cavalier, she went out the very next day to make inquiries after an old woman whom she knew Harry had often befriended. She inquired at the blacksmith's shed for Dame Coppins, but was surprised by the man coming to the door, and instead of pointing out the way to the cottage, saying, "We'll do it, Mistress Harcourt! We'll have justice on the old witch that's done the mischief!"

"What mischief?" asked Maud, in some surprise, patting Cavalier to make him stand still.

"What mischief should it be but sending away Master Harry Drury to the Parliament wars, as though the king hadn't had enough of the lads from Hayslope?"

"But this poor old woman did not send Harry away," said Maud, quickly.

"Marry, but she bewitched him. I see it with my own eyes," said the man. "If I had but known it then I'd have ducked her in the horse-pond, and broken the spell."

Maud shivered. The belief in witchcraft was universal then, and she began to fear whether Harry had been under Satanic influence. At length she said, "I should like to see this old woman, if she be a witch, and ask her where Master Harry has gone."

"Prithee, be not so venturesome, lest she send thee after him," said the

blacksmith, in some consternation.

Maud thought this would not be so much of a calamity, perhaps, until the man added, "Nobody will ever hear aught of Master Harry again, and if thou dost go to the witch, thou wilt disappear too."

The young lady looked undecided when she heard this, but she could hardly restrain Cavalier from turning down a narrow lane close by, which the blacksmith observing, said, "Now, you may be sure mistress, that the old witch has worked her spells; for Cavalier there is under them, and is bidden by her to take thee to be bewitched too."

It seemed that the horse was determined to take her somewhere, whether she would or no, and the next minute was trotting down the lane, Maud scarcely knowing what to make of the proceeding. After trotting about half a mile he paused, and then turned in at a broken-down gateway, and walked up to the window of a cottage, where he stopped and looked round, as if telling Maud to dismount.

"The horse certainly is bewitched," said Maud, half aloud, determined not to move from her seat, and trying to turn Cavalier's head in the opposite direction.

But Cavalier seemed obstinately bent on looking in at the window, and would not move; and Maud's consternation was complete when the door slowly opened, and an old woman, leaning on a crutched stick, came hobbling out. She was in the presence of the witch herself, and, with a cry of horror, Maud dropped the reins and covered her face with her hands. Finding the witch did not attempt to drag her into the house, now that she had her in her power, Maud ventured to look up in a minute or two, and saw a venerable-looking old woman standing on the threshold, looking very pale and ill, and quite as frightened as she herself did.

DAME COPPINS.

But the old woman was the first to recover herself, and she said, "You have come

to tell me about Master Harry Drury? The Lord reward you for your kindness to a poor old woman."

Maud hardly knew what to say. She felt ashamed of her fright now, and yet an idea had entered her head that Cavalier could see Harry in the cottage, and she said, "Nay, but I have come to ask _you+ about Harry."

The poor old woman trembled visibly when she heard this. "Prithee, but I cannot tell you that," she said, speaking as calmly as she could. "I have not seen him these three days," she went on, "and sorely have I missed him, for not a word of the Book can I read now. He's been eyes to me ever since my own boy went away to fight for the King."

"What book did he read to you?" asked Maud.

"Marry, and what should it be but God's word?" said Dame Coppins. "It's been open at the place where he left off these three days, for it is sore hard to believe I sha'n't hear his voice again." Tears choked the old woman here, and Maud, quite forgetting her reputation as a witch, jumped off her horse, saying, "Shall I read a chapter for you, as Harry used?"

"Then it is true he's gone away?" said the old woman.

Maud nodded. The tears were in her eyes now. "We don't know where he has gone," she said.

"Poor lamb, it is a sore trial for you; but it will be worse for me, I trow," and the old woman sighed heavily.

"Why?" asked Maud, entering the cottage, where, on a little table lay a Bible open at the Gospel of St. John. There was nothing remarkable in this book, she knew, for she recognised it as an old one of Harry's, which they had read from together many times, until she gave him a new one on his birthday once, when the old one disappeared.

After she had read part of the sixth chapter, the old woman begged for a few verses more about the "mansions," and Maud read part of the fourteenth.

"I'll keep that in mind when the time comes," murmured the old woman; "and if I never see you again, Mistress Harcourt——"

"But I will come and see you again," interrupted Maud.

The old woman shook her head. "It'll be all over soon; I couldn't bear it again," she said.

"What will be all over?" asked Maud. "You are not ill, are—at least, not very ill—not likely to die yet," she added, hastily.

"If I waited till the Lord called me by disease I'd may be wait a good while yet, for I'm strong when I'm well; but the people hereabout say I am a witch, and but for Master Harry I should have been tried before last night."

"Last night!" uttered Maud. "What did they do to you?" for she had lost all fear of her as a witch now.

The poor old creature looked round fearfully. "They did it," she said, "tried me for a witch. They took me to the horse-pond and ducked me, but there was not enough water to drown me. They'd have done it before if Master Harry had not been my protector, but now he is gone nothing will save me, for they say I've sent him away; as if I should want to lose my best friend," and the old woman burst into tears again.

Maud was indignant. "Prithee, do not be afraid," she said. "I will protect you, they shall not hurt you!"

For a minute the old woman looked up glad and grateful, but then she shook her head sadly. "You can't do it, they are coming again to-night," she said, "and the ill-usage will kill me;" and she pushed up the sleeve of her gown and showed how her arms were cut and bruised.

"You must be protected," said Maud, "it will be murder. I will go to Master Drury at once and tell him about it," and without waiting another minute, Maud mounted Cavalier and cantered up the lane.

At the top, clustered round the blacksmith's shed, were a group of soldiers, who made way for her to pass, but the blacksmith sprang forward and stopped her horse.

"These soldiers have seen Master Harry Drury Mistress Harcourt," he said.

"Then you will not repeat the cowardly attack on Dame Coppins, I trow!" said the young lady, burning with anger still.

The blacksmith drew back somewhat ashamed, and Maud, forgetting all else,

turned to the soldiers and said, "Tell me where you met Master Harry Drury."

The man doffed his cap respectfully, for he could see Maud was a lady. "It was near by the gate of London," he said. "Our leader, Captain Stanhope, has now gone to the Grange, bearing tidings of it."

Maud urged Cavalier into a sharp canter when she left the soldiers, for she wished to be in time to hear the Captain's account of his meeting with Harry, which she was likely to lose for ever if not in time to hear it given to Master Drury. Captain Stanhope and his troopers had been to Hayslope before, and the Captain knowing the importance of his meeting with Harry, would be most likely to speak of it at supper time, when they were all assembled in the dining-hall.

Before supper, however, she wanted to consult Master Drury about protecting Dame Coppins from the village mob, and as soon as Cavalier had been left to Roger she went in search of that gentleman. But he was not in the study or the keeping-room, and thinking he must have gone out with Captain Stanhope, she went into the garden to watch for his return.

Walking noiselessly over the velvet turf, she was close to the quaintly-cut leafy screen that sheltered the arbour from the garden, when she heard voices close by, and some one say, "Then we are to arrest him as a traitor, wherever he may be found?"

"Yes," faintly answered Master Drury's voice.

Maud felt as though she were rooted to the spot. Could it be Harry they were talking of? All uncertainty about this was set aside by Master Drury's next words. "He has disgraced the family name by this, and I would you had taken him prisoner ere he entered London to finish his rebellion."

"That might not be, Master Drury, seeing I knew not wherefore he was journeying there," said Captain Stanhope.

Maud disdained to listen to what was not intended for her ears, and rapidly walked away in a tumult of passion against her guardian for his cruelty to his son.

When she entered the keeping-room Mistress Mabel and Mary looked up from their work of spinning, but she did not heed the command to come and sit down at her wheel with them. Passing up to her own room, she took out some warm wraps, and then went round to the stable in search of Roger, to whom she gave

some directions about coming to the village with a basket of provisions a little later in the evening.

She then set out on her walk back to Dame Coppins' cottage, determined to stay there all night, and protect the old woman by her presence. She was likewise anxious to tell her of this fresh danger threatening Harry, for she was the only one to whom she could speak about it, and she knew the old woman would sympathise with her in her sorrow.

The poor old woman could give more than sympathy, she found she could give strength and comfort by her apt quotations from God's Word, for she herself had tasted sorrow and learned their power. Then they fell into a conversation about Harry, which lasted until Roger arrived with the basket, and a message from Master Drury that he and Captain Stanhope were coming to the cottage shortly.

Maud was not in a humour to thank either her guardian or the soldier for anything they might do now, but when they arrived she told them what had taken place the night before; and on the gentlemen promising to ride back to the village and make inquiries into the matter, to prevent its recurrence, she was obliged to promise to return to the Grange, upon Roger being sent down as a guard for Dame Coppins for this night. But she was very ungracious in her bearing towards the young soldier, although it was evident that he greatly wished to please her.

It was Captain Stanhope's business just now to get fresh men to recruit his Majesty's army, and he readily consented to Master Drury's proposition that he should make Hayslope Grange his head-quarters for the present. His men could be lodged in the village, and they could make short expeditions into the surrounding country in search of recruits, and thus business could be combined with pleasure on the part of the Captain, while it would afford the Royalist leaders a proof that Master Drury of the Grange was still a staunch Cavalier, should they hear of the defection of his son; and thus the matter was settled to the satisfaction of all parties—at least, all but Maud, and the arrangement vexed her exceedingly.

CHAPTER VII.

THE REVEL.

May-day had not been kept with its usual festivity at Hayslope this year, and so in this month of June it was proposed to have a junketing on the village green in honour of Captain Stanhope and his soldiers. Maud, and many another as sad-hearted as she, were in no humour for revelry when their dear ones were away at the war, and Bertram was quite indignant that Mary should wish it if Captain Stanhope did, and loudly declared he would not join in the fun. The horns of ale passed freely from hand to hand that day, and the soldiers kept up the excitement among the villagers by occasionally giving them a fanfare from their trumpets, drinking with them, and telling them stories of "glorious war." It had the desired effect. Before the night closed in half-a-dozen lads had enlisted, and among them Master Drury's trusty groom, Roger.

This was rather more than the gentleman had bargained for, and he was very angry when he heard it, but he could not say much to Captain Stanhope, lest the sincerity of his principles should be doubted. But it seemed that Roger was not the only prize the young soldier coveted, for the day following the revel he asked the hand of Mary Drury in marriage. Master Drury knew not what to say to this, for all the household had seen the marked attentions he paid to Maud—attentions which she repelled with cold disdain.

It had been remarked by many in the village that Mistress Harcourt had kept aloof as much as possible from the revelry. She had been obliged to come down with the family, but instead of joining in the sport, she went about among those who were on the outskirts of the crowd—the mothers with babies in their arms, widows, whose lives this civil war had made desolate, and sad-eyed maidens widowed already in heart and affection through the intolerance of King Charles. Among these, Maud had already made herself known, and now her rich robes of cherry-colour flowered satin might be seen in close neighbourhood with the blue serge and linsey-woolsey petticoats and linen jackets of her poorer neighbours. The children liked to look at her pretty dress—that of itself was a show to them—but the sad and sorrowful had begun to love her for the kindly words and sympathy she gave them.

From these she heard that it was whispered she was likely to become Mistress Stanhope shortly—a rumour that annoyed her exceedingly. Captain Stanhope, it seems, had heard the same. Some one had ventured to remark that the bride-elect did not join the dancers, and he resolved to speak to Maud that very night, and ask her to become his wife, although he had received so little encouragement to hope for a favourable answer.

On his way back to the Grange, therefore, he contrived to join her, and in a few words begged her to favour his suit. Maud hardly knew whether to be angry or sorry, but she contrived to make him understand most clearly that it was useless to press her on that subject, and begged him not to allow any one else to know that he had asked her hand.

She need not have feared this. Captain Stanhope was too proud to let any one know of his rejection, and his chief annoyance arose from the fact that many had already seen and remarked his preference. Musing on this, he saw Mary and Bertram at a little distance, and the idea at once entered his head that this annoyance could be got over by at once proposing to Mary, when it would be thought he was only playing with Maud, while in reality he was attached to Mary. So he contrived to dismiss Bertram from his sister's side, and in a gentle tone begged her to walk in the garden with him; and then when they reached the arbour he made the same proposal as he had made to Maud but a few minutes before.

Mary was surprised, but pleased; not that she loved the young soldier, she had not thought of such a thing. But he was handsome, and could be a pleasant companion; and then she had felt herself so disgraced since Harry had gone away, that she would gladly exchange the name of Drury for Stanhope. She did not tell her lover this, she only said something about thinking he liked Maud best, on which he muttered that Maud was too proud and cold for him, when she shyly said he must speak to her father, when, if he gave his consent, she was willing to ratify it.

Master Drury hardly knew what to say when asked for his permission. In reality he felt the loss of his son more than he chose to own even to himself, and did not care to part with his eldest daughter just now, but he resolved to let Mary decide the matter; and so, telling Captain Stanhope that he should receive his answer in the evening, he sent for Mary.

The young lady blushed as she entered her father's presence, for she guessed

what he wished to speak to her about.

"Prithee now, tell me truly Mary of this business with Captain Stanhope. Dost thou wish to leave the old Grange, my child?" he asked.

"I wish to change my name, father," said Mary, with a deep blush.

"And wherefore art thou so anxious about this?"

"Canst thou ask, when it has been so deeply disgraced?" said Mary.

The old man bowed his head. Truly his family pride was bearing bitter fruit, if he were to lose his children through it in this way. He saw that his daughter did not love the man that had sought her hand in marriage, and he did not believe that he loved her; but he was powerless to withhold his consent if Mary wished it, which she evidently did. "It will be better so, my father," she said. "The Stanhopes have ever been true and loyal, I have heard you say, and this marriage may help to wipe the traitor stain from our escutcheon."

"True, my daughter," said the old man, but it was said very sadly, for he knew it was not thus he had chosen her mother, or been accepted by her. But the matter seemed to have been settled by Mary without his interference, and he yielded rather than gave his consent when Captain Stanhope came again in the evening.

After leaving her father Mary went to inform Maud of what had taken place. She had expected some surprise, but not the look of blank astonishment with which her news was received.

"Mary, you cannot mean to do it," she uttered, as soon as she was able to speak.

"By my troth, I know not what you mean, Maud," said Mary, indignantly.

"Prithee, tell me it is not true, dear; that it is all a fable about your marrying Captain Stanhope," said Maud, soothingly.

"Marry, but it is true—true as that your name is Maud Harcourt," replied Mary.

Maud rose from her seat and paced up and down the room, and Mary, looking at her, could only think that she was disappointed. "Tell me, when did this take place?" said Maud, pausing in her walk and looking earnestly in Mary's face.

"Marry, but I know not why you should ask this question," said Mary, indignantly. "Did he propose to you?" she asked, in a tone of bitter sarcasm.

Maud blushed crimson and turned away, but only for a minute. "Tell me when he asked you this?" she cried. "Prithee, tell me, Mary. I wish not to vex you, but this I would know."

"Marry, you may know, it was last night," said Mary, speaking calmly.

"As he walked from the village?" asked Maud.

"Nay, in the garden, after Bertram had left me," said Mary. "I saw him walking with you from the village," she added.

"Then it must have been after I came indoors," said Maud.

Mary bowed her head. "Even so," she replied. Maud resumed her walk up and down the room, and Mary sat gazing at her until Maud came and threw herself on a cushion at her feet, and, forgetting the bitter words that had been spoken only a minute or two before, she stooped and kissed Mary's hands. This touched the proud girl's heart, and she said, "I hope I have not offended you, Maud."

"Prithee, no," said Maud. "But I want you to tell me, Mary, do you love this Captain Stanhope?" Mary drew back.

"Why do you ask this question?" she said.

"Marry, because I greatly fear he loves not you," said Maud, slowly.

"But tell me does he love you?" said Mary, in a tone of sarcasm.

Maud did not reply to this. She expected the young lady would be angry, but she was determined to do what she believed to be her duty. "Mary, sweetheart, we have been as sisters," she said, "and I would you knew how much I loved you; and by my faith, it is because of this I would bid you be not too hasty in binding yourself to this Captain Stanhope! It is pride, not love, that has made him seek you."

"Marry, then we are even," said Mary, with a bitter laugh. "I thank you, Mistress Maud, for telling me of this," she said, with a mock reverence, "for you have removed the last scruple I had in accepting him." Whether this was true, or whether the gay manner was only put on, Maud could not tell, but it made her very unhappy, and instead of going down to the keeping-room, to be watched by Mistress Mabel, she went to pay her usual visit to Dame Coppins at once, instead of later on in the day.

As she reached the blacksmith's corner she saw a little crowd gathered round, and heard the sound of women crying; and when she drew near she found it was the soldiers leaving with the spoil of the previous day's revel—the six men who had taken service for the King.

She had heard of it before she left home; but the thought that Roger might meet and fight against the young master whom he loved almost overcame her now, and she could hardly restrain her tears when the downcast-looking man ventured to say farewell as she was passing.

"Farewell Roger, and Godspeed to you, and quickly bring this war to a close, and you back to us. You will not forget to be kind to Master Harry if ever he should need it," added Maud; for it might be that as a royalist soldier Roger would have that power some day, she thought; and then she rode on down the lane, while the poor fellows who were going away bade wives and sisters cheer up and take example by Mistress Maud, whose lover would soon have to go to the wars too, for the villagers had quite settled the affair for Captain Stanhope to their own satisfaction.

As Maud went on to the cottage she wondered when the marriage was to take place between Mary and Captain Stanhope. It could not be for some time, she thought—not until this dreadful war was over, and then she sighed as she thought of the misery this was causing.

When she reached the cottage she found the old woman looking very weak and ill, and so feeble she could hardly speak. Maud was alarmed. "What is the matter," she said; "are you ill?"

The poor old creature shook her head—"Not ill," she gasped, "but, oh, so hungry." Maud ran to the cupboard; there was not a bit of anything in the shape of food, but a little pile of halfpence in one corner.

Maud took these into her hand. "Why did you not buy yourself a rye loaf?" she said. Dame Coppins shook her head. "They will not sell anything to me," she said.

It was true enough; the villagers had determined to starve out the witch if they could not drown her, and so every one had refused to supply her with food, until the poor creature was brought to the verge of starvation.

To remedy this, Maud now had either to bring the old woman's food from the

Grange, or make her purchases herself in the village, so that a day seldom passed without her being seen near the blacksmith's shed.

One day when she was passing, a stranger rode up whose horse had lost a shoe, and he was obliged to stop to get the damage repaired. The man looked travel-stained and tired, and the blacksmith, with his usual love of gossip, wanted him to drink a horn of ale before he shod the horse.

"Nay, that may not be, friend blacksmith, for I bear tidings of weighty import. There has been a great battle in Yorkshire." Maud, pausing to speak to a child close by, heard these words.

"A battle, sir traveller: can you tell me aught about it?" she asked.

"Marry, and I should be able, seeing I was in it, and fought with Lieutenant Cromwell's Ironsides," said the man. "Is not this Hayslope?" he asked.



THE STRANGER AT THE SMITHY.

The blacksmith nodded. "But we be all King Charles's men here," he said.

"Marry, that may be, so all who are here," said the traveller. "But one Harry Drury cometh from Hayslope, and he fought right bravely with the Parliament men at Marston Moor, and now lieth sorely wounded and grievously sick."

CHAPTER VIII.

BESSIE'S DISTRESS.

Maud did not wait to hear anything more that the messenger had to tell; whether the Royalists had gained the victory or had to mourn defeat she did not know, and hardly cared. This one fact was enough for her; Harry was wounded—wounded and ill—perhaps dying among strangers. It might be he was prisoner even, and then an ignominious traitor's death awaited him. All the darkest possibilities of his fate rushed to her mind as she walked down the lane to the cottage.

Here her grief was shared by Dame Coppins, who hardly knew what to say to comfort her under such a trial, and could only point her to Him who, having "borne our griefs and carried our sorrows," can sympathise and comfort under the sorest trials.

On reaching the Grange, Maud found that the news had travelled thither before her—news of humiliation, that had put Captain Stanhope quite out of temper.

"By my faith, I cannot believe it!" he was saying, as Maud entered the keeping-room. "Prince Rupert defeated by that son of a brewer and his handful of sorry prentice lads? Master Drury, what think you is likely to happen, forsooth?"

"This varlet messenger, may be, is mistelling the news," said Master Drury, hoping it might be so, for he had thought the rebel troops well nigh crushed out.

Maud wondered whether he had heard the news concerning Harry, and looked across at Mistress Mabel, but that stern, impassive face told nothing, and Mary's, in its proud resolve, no more; and she dared not utter the forbidden name before so many, and so went in search of the children, to ascertain from them what news had come.

She saw in a moment that they had heard both items, for Bessie was sitting in a corner of the garden crying bitterly, while Bertram was marching up and down, telling her what he would do to rescue Harry when he was a man.



BESSIE'S GRIEF FOR HARRY.

She sat down beside the little girl and tried to comfort her, but Bessie would not be comforted. "It's very kind of you, Maud," she sobbed, "but you are not Harry's sister—not a Drury, like Mary and I. If Mary would only be a little sorry for him, I shouldn't cry so much, but now he's only got me and Bertram to be sorry."

"Oh, Bessie, think you not that I am sorry, too?" said Maud.

"Yes, you are sorry, Maud, I know," said the little girl, hardly knowing how to express herself; "but you know you are not his sister, and so he won't expect you to cry for him."

"Marry, will he not," said Maud, scarce able to keep from laughing. "And will he expect you to cry for him a great deal?" asked Maud, as the tears broke out afresh.

"Mary won't," sobbed Bessie; and she seemed bent upon doing her sister's share for her.

Maud could not help shedding a few tears in company, and Bessie threw her arms round her neck and kissed her for them. At length Maud said, "If Harry does not expect me to cry for him, there is something else he will expect me to do, and that is to comfort his little sister;" and she took the little girl in her arms, and laid the hot tear-stained cheek against hers, and whispered gentle loving words, that soothed the troubled heart. It was just what Harry would have done—just what he would have her do, she knew, and she did it as though he were near and watching her.

For the next few days Captain Stanhope was in a restless state of impatience to ascertain whether the news brought to the village was correct, but they were not the days of newspapers, and an army might be within a few miles of Hayslope itself, and the inhabitants none the wiser; so it was not strange that he could hear nothing of the movements of an army away in Yorkshire.

But all suspense was at an end in a day or two. A messenger arrived bearing despatches for Captain Stanhope, and in them mention was made of the

disastrous battle of Marston Moor. These despatches were commands for the Captain to collect all the men he had been able to get in his recruiting tour, and join the main body of the army in the west of England.

So Mary's marriage, which was to have taken place in a few weeks, had to be postponed until the autumn, or rather winter, for there could be no certainty of his returning to Hayslope until then. There was always a truce of a few months during winter. Wars could not be carried on regardless of weather, as they are now, and thus it was that they often lasted years.

After the departure of the Captain, life seemed to pass more slowly and monotonously than ever at Hayslope Grange. Out of the direct main road, strangers rarely came that way, and so little was known of how events were tending in the mortal strife going on so near them.

The trial of Archbishop Laud was still being carried on by the London Parliament; Oxford was supporting the King in the combat with his subjects, the north having yielded to Fairfax, the Parliamentary general. This was all the news that came to Hayslope through all the remaining days of July and the sultry weeks of August. No word came from Harry Drury, not a syllable that Maud was hungering to hear with a hunger that paled her cheek and was wasting her strength.

The harvest—what there was—had to be gathered in by women for the most part; and when Maud looked at these going out to their unwonted toil, a baby in one hand and a reaping-hook in the other, and thought of the burden of sorrow they had to carry as well, she reproached herself for weakly yielding to her grief; and yet it was hard to combat sometimes.

She had been compelled to rebel against Mistress Mabel's command to sit more closely to her spinning and sewing. Not that she disliked preparing Mary's house linen, but because she could not endure the scrutiny of those hard cold eyes, and to get away from them she did as Harry had done many a time before—mounted Cavalier, and cantered away miles over the fields, and then back to the village, to visit her friends there.

The months of September and October passed slowly enough, but about the middle of November Roger and a few of the other men came back to the village for the winter. It could not be said that they were not welcome, and yet provisions were now so dear, owing to the scanty harvest and heavy taxes, that every extra mouth to fill was felt as a heavy burden by their distressed families;

and then, being winter time, there was scarcely any work they could do in the fields and gardens.

Maud had hoped that she should hear something of Harry when the men came back, and how much her returning health and strength had depended upon this she did not know until the hope was taken away and the faint sickening languor again stole over her frame. It might have grown upon her more than it did, but the wants of the poor people in the village, and the demands of Mistress Mabel, that she should assist in the preparations for Mary's wedding, left her very little time to spend in sitting alone and thinking of Harry.

Mary was to be married at Christmas, and go with Captain Stanhope to Oxford. The two seemed mutually pleased with each other, and quite satisfied with their bargain, but Maud could not tell whether they loved each other. She hoped they did, but Mary never gave her an opportunity of speaking upon this subject, and indeed the preparations for the coming event seemed to occupy her mind so fully that she had no thought for anything else.

This wedding afforded the villagers the most satisfaction, perhaps, for Master Drury was to give them an ox to be roasted on the green, and the prospect of a good dinner was very pleasant to them under the present circumstances. Captain Stanhope gave them a barrel of ale in which to drink his bride's health, but Mary seemed to think no one wanted anything but herself.

She packed up all the books and little trifles lying about that had belonged to Harry, and when Maud ventured to remonstrate with her about this, saying that Bertram would want them by-and-by if Harry did not return, she retorted, "Harry Drury never will return to this house, Maud, and Bertram will be expelled too if you continue to encourage him in thinking Harry right in what he has done."

Maud looked surprised. "What can you mean?" she exclaimed.

"Marry, nothing but what is true. You are teaching Bertram to think Harry right in rebelling against the King, and his father, too," retorted Mary.

"I do not think Harry is wrong in following the guidance of his conscience," said Maud, slowly; "but I have not sought to teach Bertram that Harry's way is right for him. I have only told him to keep the fear of God before his eyes, and follow the teaching of His Holy Spirit, as I believe Harry has done."

"And so you think it is this that has made Harry a traitor," said Mary, with rising

anger.

"I don't think Harry is a traitor," said Maud, calmly. "It is the King who has——"

"By my troth I will not listen to such dreadful words," interrupted Mary, and she went out of the room; but she evidently did not alter her opinion, for she confiscated to her own use every article that had formerly belonged to her brother.

After the wedding festivities were over, and Mistress Mary Stanhope had departed with her husband to Oxford, the house seemed more dull than ever, and Mistress Mabel more severe and exacting.

About the middle of January came news that thrilled every one with horror, and put Master Drury into a fever of mingled anger and sorrow. A man had stopped at the blacksmith's shed on his way from London, and brought the news that Archbishop Laud had been beheaded on Tower Hill the day before he left.

Mistress Mabel was speechless with indignation for a few minutes, and her first act was to take the bright cherry-coloured bow off Bessie's hair.

The little girl looked up in surprise, and saw her aunt taking the ruffles from her own neck and wrists. "This is not the time for such bravery as this," said the lady, looking angrily at the ribbons and ruffles. Bessie wondered what they had to do with it, while Mistress Mabel stood upright, watching her brother as he walked up and down the room, murmuring, "They have slain the Archbishop—murdered the Lord's anointed."

"For which all good Christians ought to fast and mourn," put in Mistress Mabel; "and I hope, brother, that you will see to it that your household is not lacking in this matter," she added.

"Nay, nay, I leave all such to you," said Master Drury; "order whatever is seemly at this time. I know not what has come to this evil-minded generation," he added.

"An evil generation they are, as you say," quoth Mistress Mabel. "Where will their iniquity end? They will put forth their hand against the King next, I trow."

Bertram and Bessie shivered at the bare idea of such a thing, and Maud, who felt she must say something in defence of the Parliament, said, "Nay, nay, Mistress Mabel, they will not put forth their hand against the King's majesty."

"But they will, I trow, if they have the power," said the lady. "And that God may rescue this nation from their hands, it behoves us to appear before Him in decent raiment of mourning at this time."

"Are we all to go into mourning?" asked Bessie, in some surprise.

"Would you be wearing ribbons and ruffles, and such light vanities at this time?" angrily demanded the lady.

Bessie looked down, feeling very much ashamed of herself, but hardly knowing how she had offended, until Bertram asked, "Will everybody wear mourning for the Archbishop, aunt?"

"Every honest Christian soul will nathless wish to do so," replied Mistress Mabel, with a severe look at Bessie.

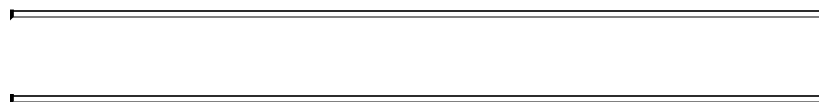
The little girl felt the reproof, and when she went upstairs she put away all her bright ribbons and the gay dresses that had been worn at her sister's wedding. "I don't mind wearing the black hood and wimple, Maud," she said; "but then I thought people wore mourning because they felt sorry, and I can't feel so sorry about the Archbishop as I did about Harry going away."

"Of course not, dear, because——"

"But aunt seems to think we ought," interrupted the little girl; "and father never looked so sorry about Harry as he did to-day about the Archbishop."

"Your father may not let us see how sorry he is about Harry," said Maud, "but I am sure he is often thinking of him."

Maud spoke of this as though she were sure it was so, as in truth she was. She had noticed a great alteration in her guardian lately. His hair was rapidly changing from brown to silver white, his tall erect form was bowed as with the weight of an added twenty years; and she thought with a keen pang that if Harry did not soon come he would never see his father again. And then arose the question, where was Harry?—for no news had come but that one voice from the battle-field, telling them he was sick and wounded.



CHAPTER IX.

THE WOUNDED MESSENGER.

There was little fear that no fasts would be kept the month that the Archbishop was executed. So many were compelled to fast for want of food throughout England, that all the land might be said to mourn, although they did not put on the outward semblance of it, as Mistress Mabel did.

Just as the men were thinking of leaving their homes again in the early spring, came a faint rumour that peace might be established, and many a heart beat high with hope that the commissioners who were to meet at Uxbridge, and negotiate a reconciliation between the King and his people, might be able to conclude terms of adjustment satisfactory to both parties. Maud felt sure that peace would be established at last when she heard the news, and Bertram asked her in a whisper if Harry would come home then; but to this question she could only shake her head and look up at the clouds racing across the stormy February sky, and think that Harry had probably gone to the Father's home where ambition and injustice could never mar the peace of the one great family.

She had come to this conclusion, because she thought if he were living he would surely have tried to see or communicate with his father before this, in spite of what had happened.

The meeting at Uxbridge took place just as the first spring blossoms began to whisper that the earth was not the cold, lifeless thing it looked; that God had not forgotten the seeds in the time of their darkness, but that out of this He had made them spring forth, and through this He had made them strong. Thus thinking as she walked through the fields, Maud sometimes wondered whether these dark times was England's winter, out of which righteousness and truth would spring, and be more strong for the struggle they had endured. Of course to her this meant that the people would return to the King, and be more firm in their allegiance than ever, and she hoped that the first promise of such a result had already taken place.

But alas, for her, and the hopes of thousands like her, who had to endure silently, and witness misery they could not alleviate! the commission broke up without

anything being done, and men were hurried from their homes to take up the sword, leaving the plough to be guided by women's hands. Roger and the rest of his companions again left Hayslope, and Maud went in and out and tried to comfort the women for their loss.

Master Drury seemed to feel the failure of the Uxbridge commission most keenly, although he did not say much about it; yet even Mistress Mabel could not fail to notice the whitening hair and the failing strength of her brother, and spoke to Maud about it too. She had noted the change long since, and now she felt sure that secret grief for Harry was preying upon her guardian's heart, and bowing him down with premature old age, and yet she dare not mention the name it would have been a relief for both to utter and to hear spoken.

So the spring passed into summer without any outward change at Hayslope Grange, except a short visit from Mistress Mary Stanhope. At the end of June came tidings of a battle that had been fought a fortnight before at Naseby, in Northamptonshire, where the King's army had been completely defeated, leaving on the field five thousand prisoners, an immense quantity of war material; and what was worse than all for the Royalists, the King's private cabinet of papers and letters was captured. This news came from Captain Stanhope, who had himself barely escaped being taken prisoner by Cromwell's Ironsides, and had got back to Oxford without even his sword.

This news seemed to affect Master Drury most deeply, and one day he suddenly announced to Mistress Mabel that he should join the royal troops and fight for King Charles. The lady looked as if she had not heard aright, and said something about herb tea and going to bed; but Master Drury silenced her by taking down his sword from where it hung against the wall, and ordering one of the servants to fetch his jack-boots.

MASTER DRURY TAKES DOWN HIS SWORD.

"Marry, but you are not going to the King now," said Mistress Mabel, in affright.

"I am going to Oxford," calmly spoke Master Drury; and during the remainder of

the day he was occupied in making preparations for his departure.

When Mistress Mabel found her brother was bent upon leaving them, and fully determined to join the army, she suddenly professed to be in great fear of the Parliament gaining all England, and begged her brother to remain and protect them—have the moat filled at once, and barricades placed round the house, for fear of an attack from Cromwell's army; for Cromwell's name began to be the more prominent now, although Fairfax was the commander-in-chief.

But Master Drury shook his head. "Cromwell will never come into Essex," he said. "You forget King Charles has the Divine right to this land and its people. He will be the more firmly seated on his throne by-and-by for these troubles," he added.

Before his departure he spoke to Maud, bidding her come to him at Oxford if anything happened needing his presence at home. She could ride well now, he said, and Cavalier could bring her the whole journey.

Maud looked almost as surprised to hear this as Mistress Mabel had done when her brother first announced his intention of joining the army, for she had never been to Oxford in her life, and travelling was not very safe even for a man now Prince Rupert's wild troopers were about. But she felt thankful for the permission to do this, though at the same time she hoped that she should not need it.

Harvest-time was drawing near again now, and Mistress Mabel was more busy than ever among the maids, and Maud spent all her time between the two children and the village. Sometimes Bessie and Bertram went with her on her visits of charity, and one or other occasionally read to Dame Coppins from Harry's old Bible, or listened while the old woman told them some story of his kindness to her. One day as they were returning from a visit to the cottage, they were startled to see a crowd of women gathered round the blacksmith's shed, and Bertram, in his usual impetuous fashion, ran forward to see what was the matter. Maud was mounted on Cavalier, and Bessie on her brother's pony, while Bertram, being on foot, managed to edge himself to the front of the little crowd, and presently came running back, crying, "Maud, Maud, the man is dying! somebody has been beating him." Several of the women were coming towards her by this time, and she sprang from her horse and stepped forward to meet them.

"Prithee, what is the matter?" she asked, seeing their anxious faces. "Is the poor

man much hurt?"

"By my faith, I think he's dying; but he says he _must+ get to Oxford first, to deliver up some papers he is bearing to the King," said one of the women.

"And what saith the blacksmith to his going on his journey?" asked Maud.

"That he will not live an hour with the wound he has received in his side. Nought but keeping him quite still, as well as careful dressing, will stanch the bleeding, Martin says, and he knows of such matters."

"Then he must not suffer the poor man to depart," said Maud, in the tone of one accustomed to be obeyed, as she stepped up to the blacksmith. She spoke loud enough for the stranger to hear, as she had intended; but he feebly shook his head, while Martin completed the temporary bandaging of his wound.

"Marry, stranger, you had better tarry here awhile, for your life will pay for this journey if you do not," said the blacksmith.

"Nay, nay, I must away to Oxford. I have been sore hindered already, and lives more valuable than mine depend upon the speedy delivery of these papers;" and as he spoke he attempted to rise, but fell back into the blacksmith's arms with a faint groan.

"He must not undertake this journey," said Maud; and she ordered him to be carried into a cottage near, saying she would come and speak to him about the papers as soon as he had somewhat revived. Meanwhile she ordered Martin to look to Cavalier, while the women attended to the stranger; and then she sent Bertram home with Bessie, and a message to Mistress Mabel not to be alarmed if she did not come back to the Grange that night.

By that time the traveller had recovered from the fainting fit, and Maud went into the cottage. "I am Mistress Maud Harcourt, and Master Drury of the Grange is my guardian," she said. "He is at Oxford just now, but if you will entrust your despatches to me, I will take them to him there, and he will place them in the hands of those to whom they are directed."

The stranger looked at the young lady's glowing resolute face, and laid his hands upon the papers "I could trust you," he said, "but will you swear that these shall not pass out of your hands, save to those directed to receive them?"

"I swear," said Maud, solemnly.

"It seemeth I must perforce stay here," sighed the man. "Prince Rupert's troops have chased me miles out of my way, or I should have reached Oxford ere this; and if it were not for the faintness that comes over me when I move, I would even now continue my journey."

"I will explain all that," said Maud, "but time presses. Now give me the papers, for my horse is in readiness, and I would fain depart ere messengers come from Mistress Mabel to hinder me."

It was a large packet, sealed with the seal of the Parliament, that the stranger delivered into her hands, and which she contrived to conceal within her dress. Then the stranger gave her directions for her journey, for he it seemed was well acquainted with the road; and carefully noting these in her mind, and looking at her purse to see she had money with her, she took her departure, the villagers scarcely comprehending that she was going to Oxford until she was out of sight.

Then it was suggested that one of the lads could have gone instead, and a message came from Mistress Mabel, ordering Maud to return to the Grange at once; but she was some miles on her way by this time, for Cavalier was fresh, and inclined for a sharp canter, and Maud kept him at full speed, for the pressure of those papers was a constant reminder that life or death hung upon their speedy delivery.

Whether it was the life of friend or foe she did not think. Whoever it was, he was dear to some heart doubtless—dear as Harry was to her, and that thought was enough to keep down all fatigue, and make her urge Cavalier forward whenever he seemed inclined to lag. It never occurred to her that if Prince Rupert's troops had driven the messenger so far out of the usual route, it would be impossible for her to escape them, neither did she think, even if she knew, the distance she had to travel. Hour after hour she urged her good horse forward, and as it was fine dry weather, the usual muddy, unkept roads were comparatively easy to travel, and she had accomplished a good portion of the journey before the evening closed in.

She halted at a little village where the people were in a terribly frightened condition on account of the doings of Prince Rupert in the neighbourhood. Some of his followers had fired a farm-house the night before, after carrying off all that they wanted; and the numbers of people—quiet dwellers in lonely houses—or travellers, whom his troopers had wantonly killed, were very numerous, it seemed, and there was great surprise that Maud should have undertaken such a

journey.

Maud felt surprised herself, now that something of the excitement was over; she felt stiff and tired, too, with her long ride; and now these tales about Prince Rupert made her shudder with fear as she knelt down in the little strange bedroom to thank God for His mercy, and ask it too for Harry if he was still in this world. She prayed too that she might be kept through the remainder of her journey—that Prince Rupert might be kept from her road, and nothing be allowed to hinder her from reaching Oxford in time to save the lives of these unknown prisoners.

Then she laid down, and in total forgetfulness of Prince Rupert and his brutal troopers went to sleep, not waking until the morning, when she recommenced her journey in renewed hope, and with a calm trust in God's protecting care.



CHAPTER X.

"ON, CAVALIER, ON!"

To Maud's great joy, the stately towers and ancient buildings of Oxford at length rose before her. As she rode into the principal street of the city she was met by a crowd of people who were talking loudly and eagerly, so that Maud had but little difficulty in making out the words. "Down with all parliament men! Shoot the traitors, and all the rebel army!" and many other speeches, convinced Maud something unusual had taken place, or was about to take place.

Her cheeks grew pale with anxious fear as the bridle of her horse was at length seized, and she was forced back against a wall; and then for the first time she noticed that a body of soldiers were drawing near, and beyond them marched a number of downcast-looking men, evidently prisoners. Could it be that they were already on their way to execution?—that the delivery of her papers would be too late to save them? This thought almost maddened her, and turning her horse's head, she said, "On, Cavalier, on!" and at the same moment drew out her packet, and held it high above her head.

"ON CAVALIER, ON!"

The effect of her words seemed magical—not upon her horse, but upon the soldiers by whom she was now surrounded. The officer in command bowed as she uttered the ringing words, "On, Cavalier, on!" and instead of turning her back to the wall, called upon his men to halt, while Maud passed through their midst, holding high the official-looking document which she thought had gained her this privilege, but which in reality the officer had hardly noticed.

Quite unconsciously, Maud had used their password in addressing her horse, and to this she owed it that she was allowed to pass through the ranks, the officer

believing she came with orders from the King to those in charge of the prisoners. She heeded not the looks of the soldiers; indeed, she scarcely saw them, but rode straight on to where an officer stood waiting to demand her business, and why the cavalcade had been stopped.

Maud handed him her packet. "It concerneth the prisoners," she said, panting with excitement.

The officer took it from her hand, and rode back to another officer after glancing at the address, and Maud, then face to face with the pale, weary-looking prisoners, glanced at them for the first time. One was looking at her and her horse most earnestly, but she did not recognise him; and when the officer came back she rode on, wondering whether she had been in time to save them after all. The papers had been sent to the residence of the general in command, and they were still halting, to know the result of his reading them; and Maud was detained, lest she should be wanted too. They had not to wait long. In a few minutes a soldier rode up with a note from the general. The prisoners were to be taken back to their prison and the messenger released; and Maud was allowed to go on her way, while the whole cavalcade turned back, to the great disappointment of the Oxford crowd, who would fain have testified their loyalty to the King by making a holiday over the execution of these rebels.

Maud had no other care than to get out of the way of the crowd and the detachments of soldiers; but as soon as a by-street was gained, and she was left in comparative quiet, weariness and exhaustion almost overcame her, and for the first time she noticed that Cavalier had fallen lame with his exertions. To get back to Hayslope Grange, as she had at first intended, was therefore impossible, and she resolved to ask the hospitality of Mistress Stanhope for a few days. She hoped Master Drury was there, but of this she could not feel sure; but whether or no he was there, she must go, and she made instant inquiry of a bystander for Captain Stanhope's house. After some little difficulty she found it, and to her joy heard that Master Drury was there. He seemed much astonished to see Maud, and Mistress Stanhope was in no little alarm at her travel-stained appearance.

"Has the rebel army appeared before Hayslope?" he asked, anxiously.

"No," answered Maud, faintly smiling. "Nothing had happened to Hayslope when I left."

"Then wherefore hast thou come here?" asked Master Drury. "Has anything happened to Mistress Mabel or the children?"

"Nay, they are all well," said Maud. "I came as a messenger, to bring certain letters from London to the King."

"Marry, now be truthful, Mistress Maud," said Mary, "and tell us thou art come to see the gay city of Oxford."

"Nay, nay; I came not for that," said Maud. "I have ridden hard to reach here in time, so hard that Cavalier hath fallen lame with his journey, and needs rest more than I do."

"Then I will order Cavalier's rest and refreshment while Mary looketh to your wants," said Master Drury; and he went out at once, leaving the two ladies alone. Mistress Stanhope was proud to play the hostess to her old companion, and as soon as she had changed her dress, and had some refreshment, she insisted upon showing her new and fashionable house, in spite of Maud's evident weariness. At length she was allowed to take up a book and sit down in peace, for some other visitors had called, and Mary was obliged to go to them.

The book Maud had taken up was quite a new one, just published, and written by Master John Milton, a schoolmaster of London. It was a volume of poems, and Maud was soon absorbed in reading "Penseroso." Mary suddenly entering the room some time afterwards quite startled her, and the book slipped from her hand on to the floor. But Mary did not stay, she had only come for something to show her visitor; and as Maud picked up the book, she went out again, and did not see how pale Maud had suddenly grown, as she sat and stared at the inner cover of the book.

There was nothing very remarkable there,—only, "Mistress Stanhope, from an old friend. Oxford, 1645." But Maud knew that Harry's hand had traced those letters, and she wondered how it was he was at Oxford, and whether he was there now. When Mary came back Maud was still staring at her name in the book.

"Marry, what are you looking at?" asked the young matron, glancing over her shoulder.

"Harry wrote this?" gasped Maud.

"I suppose he did," coolly spoke Mary; "but he had the grace to conceal the fact that I was his sister."

Maud had noticed that he wrote "friend" instead of "brother."

"Why should he do this?" she said.

"Prithee, Maud, will you never see how he has disgraced our name?" said Mary, impatiently. "Nay, nay, you have not seen my father's misery since he hath been here, and how closely he hath kept himself shut up, lest any should hear his name."

"But why should he do this?" asked Maud.

"Why?" uttered Mary, "when all men are talking of the traitor rebel, Harry Drury, who was this day to be executed."

Her voice faltered as she said the last words, although she tried to appear unmoved as she added, "But the execution is postponed, I hear."

"Only postponed!" gasped Maud, who sat with widely staring eyes.

"The letters were to save their lives, I heard."

"What letters?" asked Mary.

"Those I brought from Hayslope, where the parliament messenger lies sorely wounded," said Maud.

Mary did not wait to hear more, but went to meet her husband, who was coming up the stairs. The gaily dressed officer bowed to Maud as he entered a few minutes afterwards, but she could see he looked annoyed.

"Good-morrow, lady messenger," he said. "You did but reach Oxford in time, and if you had been an hour later 'twere better for his Majesty, I trow."

"Prithee, tell me why?" said Maud.

"There would have been six stout-hearted rebels the less to fight against King Charles," said Captain Stanhope.

"Are the prisoners released?" asked Maud, with an exclamation of joy.

"Nay, nay, not yet; but we cannot afford to execute them, for the rebel army hath five thousand of our loyal troopers, and they propose to exchange some of these for the handful we have here in our prison, and Harry Drury is specially named as one of them—Harry Drury and Gilbert Clayton, whom Prince Rupert's men captured some time since."

To describe Maud's feelings when she heard how near Harry had been to an ignominious death would be impossible. For a time she could only bow her head in her hands, and weep out her thanksgiving to God for His great mercy; but by degrees the hope that she should soon see him gradually stole over her, until she recollected that Harry would scarcely venture to call upon them, even though he had seen her in the town; for she doubted not but that the prisoner who had looked at her so closely was Harry, although she had failed to recognise him.

When Master Drury came in soon afterwards, it was evident he had heard the news, although Harry's name was not mentioned.

"Maud," he said, drawing his chair close to hers as soon as they were left alone, "you heard that the King's cabinet had been captured at the battle of Naseby?"

Maud bowed. "Hath it been retaken?" she asked.

Master Drury shook his head. "Prithee, I would it had never existed," he said, "or that I knew not aught of it."

"Have you seen the King's letters?" asked Maud.

"All the world will see them shortly," sighed the gentleman. "The rebels have published some of his papers, calling it 'The King's Cabinet Opened.'"

"Then all the world will know what a just and gentle monarch he is," said Maud.

"Alas! they will see that what these rebels say of him is true; that he hath tried to sell his people to a foreign foe," groaned Master Drury. "All his doings with the Irish rebels, and his negotiations with foreign princes to bring troops over here, are given in these papers."

Maud started to her feet, flushed with indignation. "It is not true," she said. "It would be unkingly—beneath the majesty of our royal Charles. It is a fabrication of the Parliament rebels."

"I would fain think so if I could," sighed Master Drury; "but, Maud, I have heard from those who knew all the King's matters that these letters are true copies of what were in the cabinet."

Maud dropped into her seat as though she had been shot. "The King is false and untrue, then," she gasped, "and Harry is right after all."

"Hush, prithee, hush!" said Master Drury. "You know not what you say, Maud;"

but he did not speak as though he were angry that Harry's name had been uttered.

"Marry, but I cannot hold my peace when true and noble men are risking their lives to fight for this false king," said Maud.

"I will not fight," quietly spoke Master Drury. "I will go back with you to Hayslope."

"Prithee, but you will see Harry before you leave Oxford?" said Maud, a faint colour stealing into her cheek as she spoke.

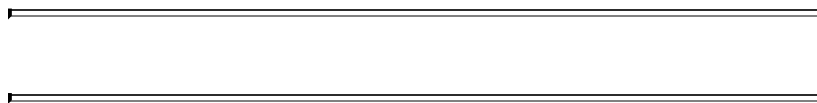
Master Drury was deeply moved. It was evident he was longing to see his son, but he said in a faint voice, "Nay, nay, I dare not see him. Mary Stanhope has spread the report that I have cast him off as a traitor rebel, and my loyalty to the King would be suspected if I were to see him now;" and he heaved a deep sigh as he spoke.

"But it is true that you think the King false?" said Maud. "Harry did the same, and avowed it."

Master Drury winced at the implied reproach. "Nay, nay, I cannot go so far as that," he said; "if I were I should be a rebel."

"Then you must be false to yourself to _seem+ true to the King," said Maud, boldly; "and that is why there are so many true and honest men among the rebels, and why they are so strong. It is not their hatred of oppression only, nor their wish to save England's liberties, as they say; but they cannot do otherwise if they would be true to themselves—true to God, who has said, 'Fear God,' first, and then 'Honour the king.'"

Maud was speaking for Harry, and that gave her courage, or she would never dared to have said so much to her guardian. But it was all in vain. Family honour demanded the sacrifice of principle—at least, so thought Master Drury—and he would not allow Maud to seek an interview with Harry, or claim acquaintance with the all but executed traitor.



CHAPTER XI.

MYSTERIES.

As soon as Maud had sufficiently rested she returned to Hayslope with Master Drury, who, now that he had made up his mind to do so, was all impatient to return home. His visit to Oxford had been a very painful one, for his faith in the King had been completely broken, and yet he had been forced to hear of his son's condemnation to an ignominious death, for principles he began dimly to see were right.

The last lingering remnants of loyalty forbade his seeking to see that son, as much as the fear of offending his son-in-law, and yet he longed to fold Harry in his arms and look in his face once more.

When the travellers reached Hayslope they found the villagers in a wildly excited state. Many of their relatives who had been fighting at Naseby were held prisoners by the Parliament, and of course could not return home this winter; and lads too young to serve as soldiers, and the women, with Martin the blacksmith at their head, were wildly clamouring for the destruction of the Parliament and all the rebels. The poor wounded messenger had most mysteriously disappeared, Maud heard, but on questioning some of them more closely, it seemed that he had more than once been threatened by Martin, if he would not swear to serve the King, while he stoutly refused, and at last he left the village with his wound only half healed.

Poor old Dame Coppins was of course accused of having some hand in this business. Without the help of witchcraft the man could not have escaped, the women said, and for once Maud felt thankful to the unknown witch, whoever she might be, who had done this service. She believed in witchcraft almost as fully as the ignorant villagers, but she did not believe Dame Coppins was a witch simply because she did not choose to tell all the village her business—where she had come from, and what had induced her to take the lonely cottage outside Hayslope,—and this was the only reason they had for supposing her a witch.

Maud had tried to reason them out of this, had told them she was a poor widow who had seen a great deal of trouble, and preferred a solitary life; that she loved

the Bible and feared God as much as any of them; but it was all of no avail. That any one could exist without gossip was to them impossible to understand, and they shook their heads sadly, and thought Maud bewitched herself when she talked about Dame Coppins.

So the cottage in the lane was as lonely as ever, in spite of the patronage extended to the widow by Maud and the two children at the Grange.

For a day or two after her return Maud was not able to go to the cottage, for Master Drury had scarcely reached home when he was taken seriously ill, and Mistress Mabel's herbs and decoctions failed to relieve his sickness for some time. Bertram and Bessie, however, went each day, and brought back the report that the widow had seemed very joyful when she heard that Maud had returned, and that her errand had been so successful as to gain the prisoners their freedom.

Maud smiled when she heard this. "Marry, but their freedom is not gained yet," she said, with something of a sigh.

"Dame Coppins says they are free, and on their way to London," said Bessie.

Maud opened her eyes. Was the old woman a witch after all? Bertram's next words quite confirmed her in this wild notion. "Maud," he said in a whisper, "do you know that Harry was one of the prisoners."

"Who told you so?" asked Maud, quickly, for it had been agreed that this intelligence should not reach the children, or even Mistress Mabel.

"Dame Coppins told me," replied Bertram; "she said he would have been shot if you had not gone to Oxford with those papers," he added.

Maud actually shuddered with horror as the boy said this. "Bertram, you must not go to Dame Coppins again," she said, quickly.

"Why not?" asked Bertram, in surprise.

"Prithee, I scarce can tell you, but—but you will keep it quite a secret, Bertram, even from Bessie," said Maud—"this dreadful thing I am going to tell you."

Bertram nodded. "Isn't she a good old woman?" he asked.

"Bertie, she's a witch," whispered Maud, in a tone of horror.

Bertram started back pale with fright. "I don't believe it, Maud," he said: "she

couldn't talk about God taking care of Harry, and pray for Him to do it, if she was a wicked old witch. I do believe God took you safe to Oxford in time because she prayed so much about it, and that He's kept Harry safe in all the battles, that he might come home to us again in answer to Dame Coppins's prayers."

Bertram spoke quickly, almost passionately, but Maud only shook her head sadly. "I thought she was a good woman," she said, "but how could she know what happened at Oxford if she was not a witch? Nobody here knows that Harry was in prison—not even Mistress Mabel or the servants, so that no one could tell her about it."

But Bertram was still unwilling to believe in Dame Coppins's wickedness, until Maud said pettishly, "I do believe she has bewitched you, Bertie, and you must not go to see her again."

"But I will go," said Bertram, beginning to lose his temper.

"Then I shall ask Mistress Mabel to forbid you going beyond the moat," said Maud.

This threat, which Bertram knew she would put into execution, made him give the required promise not to go and see Dame Coppins until Maud had discovered who had told her about Harry; which Maud feeling sure was a dark mystery, that no one would ever be able to penetrate, made up her mind not to try, now that she had extorted this promise from Bertram.

Some thoughts of the poor old woman's anxiety troubled her after she left Bertram, and she wondered what effect their neglect might have upon the mind of the villagers; but on this she resolved to keep eyes and ears alike open whenever she went amongst them, so that she might protect her from violence should any be attempted or contemplated.

But it seemed that the people had forgotten the witch in their rage against the "Parliament rebels," and Maud could not discover whether the old woman was being supplied with food or not; and very soon the fear that she would be starved to death began to take possession of her mind. To satisfy herself upon this point she resolved to walk down the lane late one afternoon, when she would not be expected. Before she had reached the cottage, however, she saw a litter borne between two men carried into the garden, and then from this was lifted what looked like a huge roll of cloth, and taken into the house, while Dame Coppins

came and looked all round to make sure no one was in the lane. She did not see Maud, for she had concealed herself behind a tree, but the young lady had a good view of the old woman's face, and saw that there was little fear of her dying of starvation yet. As soon as she could she slipped out of her hiding-place and walked quickly up the lane. She was afraid of going near the cottage now, and she wondered what fresh wickedness Dame Coppins had been at. No wonder the people were afraid of her when such mysterious doings as that were going on.

Maud thought she had more than sufficient evidence to prove that Dame Coppins was a witch now, and began seriously to consider whether she ought not to inform against her; and she might have done this, only Master Drury was taken ill again. Maud began to think this must be the witch's work, when all Mistress Mabel's remedies failed, but she dared not say so, for fear the servants should tell the villagers, and they should attempt to drown her again; and so she suggested that a physician should be sent for to see her guardian. Mistress Mabel looked scornful at first, but finally relented, and a boy was despatched to the town, and returned with the grave-looking doctor, in plumed hat, scarlet cloak, and immense ruffles at his wrists. He looked grand enough to do anything if grandeur would do it, but he shook his head when he heard all Master Drury's ailments. Beyond this he would not commit himself, and so very little information was gained from his visit, and they could only wait in hope that his medicine would soon effect some improvement on the patient.

Meanwhile news had arrived that Prince Rupert had been compelled to surrender Bristol and several other places in the west, and that another battle disastrous to Charles had been fought at Rowton Moor. The King had been completely defeated, and compelled to retire to Oxford for the winter, and Captain Stanhope and his wife were coming to Hayslope. This was the news brought by one or two of the men who came back to the village to tell of the death or imprisonment of others who had gone forth with them that sweet spring day a few months before. So the winter came in gloomy enough, and men grew fiercer each day about the strife that was raging in the land. In Hayslope all the rage was against the London Parliament, and many vowed that if one of Cromwell's troopers showed himself there he should be killed, whoever he might be. This threat did not disturb Maud much, even if she heard it, for she did not think it was likely any of the Parliament men would come there, and she could only feel glad that the messenger had gone away before the arrival of these half-frenzied men. She still visited occasionally among the villagers, and contributed to their wants as far as

she could; but a good deal of her time was occupied with Master Drury now, and Dame Coppins was almost forgotten, apparently.

She was therefore greatly surprised one day to receive a message from a village lad, saying she was wanted down the lane. She had no doubt who wanted her, but she did not intend going; she would not give Dame Coppins the opportunity of bewitching her any more; and so merely saying, "Prithee, I will think about it," she walked home as fast as she could.

That evening, about six o'clock, just as they were about to assemble for supper, one of the maids came to her and whispered that she was wanted; a man, who refused to say who he was or where he came from, demanded to see her.

Maud shivered: such mysterious messages were disagreeable, and she was just about to say she would not go, when Mistress Mabel appearing in the passage settled the matter; for had she heard her refuse, there would have been an instant inquiry, and the lady would not have rested until she found out all about the supposed witch and Maud's charities in the village.

So to prevent this she threw a cloak over her head, and followed the maid, without speaking, to where a muffled figure stood outside the door. She had only stepped off the threshold, when a gust of wind blew the door close, and at the same moment her wrist was seized, and she was dragged away from the house; and before she could even scream, or give any alarm, she was lifted on to a horse, and the man sprang up before her, and galloped away into the village.



ABDUCTION OF MAUD.

All the horrible tales Maud had ever heard of people being carried off by witches rushed to her mind when she saw that they were turning round by the blacksmith's shed. All was dark and still, but she tried to scream, in hopes of raising some alarm; but fear had paralyzed her tongue, and she could not utter a sound. She was like one in all the horrors of a nightmare, and believed she was on a phantom horse, although she could hear it splashing through the wet mud, precisely as Cavalier did the day before, when she was out riding with Mistress Stanhope.

At length they stopped just opposite the widow's cottage, as Maud expected, for she had no doubt that this ride was of the witch's planning; and feeling powerless to resist, she suffered herself to be lifted down, and expected to be carried into the house. But instead of this, a familiar, though scarcely remembered, but very human voice, said, "Go in, Mistress Maud, I will look after Cavalier." But Maud did not move, although the man stepped to the horse's head. Before she could make up her mind, however, to run away, the cottage door opened, and a weak, quivering voice, said, "Roger, Roger, is that you?"

Without answering, the man left the horse and came to Maud. "Prithee, be not so sorrowful," he said; "there's hope for him yet, if we can only get a physician to him soon, and Dame Coppins says——"

But Maud staggered back as he would have led her into the house. "Tell me what it is, and who you are," she gasped.

The man was perplexed. "Marry, but you know me, Mistress Maud. I'm Roger, Master Drury's servant, and the letter told all about the rest, I trow."

What the "rest" was Maud had not time to ask, for at that moment the cottage door opened again, and Dame Coppins drew her inside.

CHAPTER XII.

HARRY'S RETURN.

Suddenly stepping out of the darkness into the lighted room, Maud could not distinguish any object at first, and only heard as in a dream Dame Coppins's words, "Be calm, Mistress Maud, for he is very weak, I trow." Then, looking across the room, she saw some one lying on a bed with hands eagerly outstretched towards her, and a faint voice uttered, "Maud, Maud, come to me; let me hold your hand once more." The sound of that feeble pleading voice brought back Maud's bewildered senses. "Harry," she gasped, "Oh, my Harry!" and she was kneeling by the low bed, kissing the thin white hands.

MEETING OF MAUD AND HARRY.

For a few minutes no one came near them, and Maud knelt there sobbing, for her overstrained feelings would have vent, in spite of her effort to control them.

Harry was the first to regain composure, and smoothing the soft braids of her hair, he said, "I began to fear you would never forgive me, Maud; and I could not die without your forgiveness."

"Forgive you!" repeated Maud. "I have wanted to ask you to forgive me for speaking as I did the morning you went away."

"I have nothing to forgive," said Harry. "You could not but believe I was a traitor, as you said, in refusing to serve the King."

"Nay, nay, but I ought to have believed you were acting conscientiously, although I could not see things as you saw them. I was hard, uncharitable, cruel, Harry."

"Nay, nay, Maud; cruel, when at Oxford you saved my life?"

"I did not know it was to save you," murmured Maud.

Harry looked disappointed, and dropped the hand he was holding. "Maud, when I saw you there, riding through the soldiers, I thought it was for me you came, although you had given your heart and hand to another."

Maud stared. "Given heart and hand to another!" she repeated.

"Hush! hush!" said Harry, "my secret shall die with me. I would not even ask about you when I came here, but suffer me to call you Maud the little while I stay."

"What other name should I be called?" asked Maud, in surprise.

"Nay, nay, I cannot play now, Maud," said Harry, "I would not even suffer a word to be spoken about you until I heard Captain Stanhope and his wife were coming from Oxford, and then I roused myself to write that letter, for I longed to see you once again, as the companion of my childhood and the friend——"

"Prithee, I have received no letter," said Maud.

"Marry, but I sent one, and the messenger said he had delivered it into the hand of Mistress Stanhope herself," said Harry.

"But I am not Mistress Stanhope," said Maud, smiling.

Harry raised himself in bed, and looked earnestly into her face. "You are not the wife of Captain Stanhope?" he repeated.

"No, it is Mary who is married," said Maud.

Harry fell back on his pillow, and Roger and Dame Coppins were obliged to administer some restoratives; but the moment he had revived he looked round for Maud, and feebly murmured her name.

"I am with you, Harry dear," she whispered, and took his hand, while Dame Coppins told the story of how he had been brought there in a litter some weeks before by Roger and the messenger, who had fled to her cottage from the violence of the villagers. The man had remained with her until he recovered from his wound, and had told her who were the prisoners at Oxford, and the certainty of their release if the letters were only delivered in time; and the old

woman's joy on hearing from Bertram that Maud had reached Oxford as she did, unloosed her tongue and thus brought upon herself the charge of witchcraft. Maud felt heartily ashamed of her hasty judgment now, and when she heard how greatly Harry had longed to see her, she felt more grieved than ever that she had stayed away from the cottage. Dame Coppins had felt anxious, when day after day passed and no one came from the Grange, for she began to fear some of them had heard she had strange visitors, for it was the messenger who had been with her that informed Harry it was dangerous for him to go to the village even to see his father, and persuaded him to come to Dame Coppins's cottage, and wait for some chance to send to his father secretly. Roger came with him, for Harry was too ill when he left London to travel alone, and all Dame Coppins's herb tea had failed to do him any good; and so at last, feeling sure he had not long to live, he wrote a letter to Maud, enclosing one to be given to his father, asking his forgiveness, and begging he would come and see him. This was addressed to Mistress Stanhope, and delivered to her, but which she took care no one else should hear of, destroying her father's letter as well as her own.

Maud did not hear this all at once. Harry could say but little more that night beyond how he had longed for her after the letter was sent, and how disappointed he was that she did not come.

"But what made you think I was Mistress Stanhope?" asked Maud.

"Roger told me you were about to be married when he left the village last summer. We met in a slight skirmish soon after I recovered from my wounds, and enemies though we ought to have been, we could not help exchanging a few friendly words; and it was because I knew he loved me truly, despite of the King's quarrel, that I asked his release, to attend me when I came home."

"Yes, Harry, you must come home," said Maud, in a determined tone.

"Yes, I am almost there," murmured Harry; "but it is harder to leave now, Maud, than before I saw you, and heard about this mistake."

"Nay, nay, but it is to the Grange you must come, Harry," said Maud, with a faint blush. "Your father is ill, but the sight of you will do him more good than all the physician can do; and if you are there the doctor can attend to your wants as well."

But Harry shook his head. "I have longed to see my father and the old Grange, Maud; but you must ask his forgiveness and blessing now. I cannot move from

here."

"Nay, nay, but you must try, Harry," said Maud, almost wildly; "for my sake," she added, in a whisper.

Harry looked at the pleading face. "You forget," he said, "I have vowed never to set foot inside the Grange again. I came to Hayslope to ask my father's forgiveness, but not to go to the Grange."

"It was a proud, rash vow," said Maud. "Your father has much to give up in receiving you, and it is but right you should first seek him."

Harry did not know how much he had indulged this proud, bitter spirit, until now, and it was only after much pleading from Maud that he consented to give it up. She obtained a promise from him, however, that he would come to the Grange before she left, and then she went home again, under Roger's guidance, to perform the more difficult task of winning a welcome for him there. As Cavalier trotted along her brain was busy upon the question how she should do this, and at length she resolved to mention what had happened to no one but Master Drury. To Mistress Mabel's questioning she would answer she had been to see some one who was ill in the village, for if she and Mary heard Harry was likely to return to his home, they would oppose it, she knew. The household had become somewhat accustomed to Maud's erratic doings by this time, and so little wonder was expressed that she did not come into the keeping-room to supper. Every one supposed she was in her own room, and so at the usual hour the watch dogs were set upon their guard and the house locked up, and by the time Maud got there every light was extinguished but the little lamp burning in Master Drury's room. The approach of Cavalier, therefore, at that unseasonable hour, was the signal for all the dogs to set up a furious barking, and all the household was aroused. Captain Stanhope was the first to make his appearance at an open window, and demand the reason of the disturbance, warning the intruders that if they came a step nearer the house he would discharge his musket at them.

Maud hardly knew what to do, but begged Roger to let her reply, hoping the gentleman would recognise her voice; but he failed to do this for some time, until, assured it was a woman who was speaking, he consented to come down and open the door, as soon as all the servants were armed to resist any attack that might be made.

Maud could not help laughing, and yet the dilemma was a serious one just now, as she knew she should have to give an account of herself to everybody. At

length the door was opened, and Maud walked in past the row of servants, and upstairs to where Mistress Mabel, with Bertram and Bessie, were shivering in the gallery with fright and cold.

Mistress Mabel was speechless with anger, and seizing Maud's wrist, marched her into Master Drury's room at once. "Now, Master Drury, you will nathless make this wilful girl give an account of herself," said the lady, and she sat down; while Captain Stanhope and the rest came into the room, and the servants crowded round the door to hear what had happened.

"Marry, I would speak to Master Drury alone," said Maud.

"Nay, nay, you must speak out before us all, unless it is some shameful deed you would tell of," said Mistress Mabel and Mary both in a breath.

Maud turned and looked at Mary. "You know what I have to tell," she said, angrily, "for you had a letter from Harry, telling his father he was dying, and craved his forgiveness."

Master Drury raised himself in bed. "You have seen my son—my Harry!" he exclaimed, eagerly, looking at Maud.

But Captain Stanhope stepped forward. "You forget," he whispered, "you have no children but Mary and Bessie. Even the boy Bertram has turned to follow his brother's way of thinking."

"Nay, nay," said the old man, pleadingly. "I must see my son, my Harry, before I die. Where is he? Where is he?" he asked of Maud.

"He will come to-morrow," replied Maud; "he is ill—very ill, but may get better if he has a physician."

"Tell me all about him, Maud; you saved his life, I know."

Bertram and Bessie were almost as eager as their father to hear all about their brother, and so in the hearing of them all, Maud told how she had been fetched to the cottage that evening to see Harry.

Master Drury would have had him brought to the Grange that night, had it been possible, but was at length persuaded to wait until the morning, on Maud promising to go down and prepare him for the removal as soon as it was light.

Captain Stanhope and his wife were the only ones who did not rejoice at the

thought of Harry's return, and it was easy to see why they were so disappointed. The Captain, having an eye to Mary's wealth when he married her, had done all he could to increase Master Drury's anger against his son, and even persuaded him to disinherit Bertram in favour of Mary. Now the hopes this had raised were all crushed, and the next day, before the litter arrived with Harry, the disappointed pair had left for Oxford. Mistress Mabel, finding her nephew's return was inevitable, wisely made the best of it, and accorded a grim welcome, hoping they would not all be beheaded by-and-by for sheltering a traitor.

The meeting between the long-estranged father and son we will pass over in silence. Harry had not been at the Grange long before he began to improve, and soon hinted that, instead of a funeral, there would have to be a wedding for him. Master Drury too began to grow stronger, but the overthrow of his faith in King Charles was a blow he could not recover entirely; and although he confessed to his son that he believed he was right in espousing the cause of the Parliament, yet he begged him not to leave the Grange again while he lived, a promise Harry was the more willing to give since his health would not allow him to join the army again, and Maud had consented to be his wife early in the spring.

Mistress Mabel's fear of being beheaded for receiving her nephew was quite groundless, and even Captain Stanhope was glad to ask the interest and protection of the man he had sought to injure when the Royalists were ultimately defeated and the Commonwealth established. Before this, however, Harry succeeded his father as Master Drury of Hayslope Grange, for the old man never held up his head after the death of King Charles, and died a few months after the King was beheaded. His last days were calm and tranquil. "By the grace of Christ," he was wont to say—"he had conquered his pride and prejudice, which had brought such misery to Hayslope Grange."

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