ANECDOTES
OF THE
UPPER TEN THOUSAND:

THEIR LEGENDS AND THEIR LIVES.

BY

THE HON. GRANTLEY F. BERKELEY

LONDON, 1867.

Edited by David Trutt

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THE LEGEND OF HADDON HALL

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David Trutt
Los Angeles, California
USA

email: davettt@verizon.net
Web Site: www.haddon-hall.com

One of the earliest full-length tales to include the Dorothy Vernon - John Manners romance is contained in the two volume *Anecdotes of the Upper Ten Thousand - Their Legends and Their Lives* by Grantley F. Berkeley, and was published in 1867. Berkeley brought together a number of oral legends of the Vernons and Haddon Hall, and wove them into a single tale culminating in the famous elopement. Berkeley recalls a visit to Haddon Hall four years earlier. “In an inn of the best sort [Peacock at Rowsley], I found myself in the bright month of July 1863.”—Mrs. Bath, who became caretaker after William Hage’s death in 1840, was still there.—“I entered the neatly-kept lodge of the housekeeper, Mrs. Bath, which domicile used to be the stable to the establishment ... There was not a room [in Haddon Hall] that was not as well aired as any in an inhabited mansion.”

Berkeley draws from well-known earlier accounts, embellishes them and includes them in a single story of George Vernon, Dorothy Vernon and John Manners. His fictionalized account includes the obviously incorrect “It was in the latter years of Queen Mary [prior to 1558] that the eldest daughter of Sir George Vernon died, and thus placed Dorothy, his surviving child, as sole apparent heiress of his wealth and wide domains, and mistress of his ancient Hall.” Missing from this tale are Margaret Vernon, Thomas Stanley, and George Vernon’s second wife. Berkeley appears to have used William Bennet’s seminal 1822 work, *The King of the Peak*, as the source of much of his story. Berkeley chooses a masked ball during the Christmas season as the vehicle to allow Manners to enter the Vernon grounds and spirit Dorothy away.

Berkeley has the distinction of being the first, if not only, author to make a manners / Manners pun, as George Vernon says to Dorothy “See, each carving of the boar’s head has the mistletoe attached. Well I know not who is to salute thee as my daughter and as thy suitor; it would *not be manners*–Heyday! what makes thee blush so, child? Hast thou a suitor, then? But, as I was saying, it would *not be manners* for any man, to touch thy cheek so familiarly.”

Of all the gifts which a liberal Providence has assigned to man, there is scarce one which makes him at times more "glorious, O'er all the ills of life victorious," than that of "building castles in the air."

Castle-building in the air has been a favourite pursuit of mine; and many an hour, when I have been compassed by danger and surrounded with enough to have made any man miserable, I have forgotten for the time each sorrow, each deed of ingratitude from those who ought to have had affectionate consideration for me, and risen on the full tide of joyous imagination to halls of bliss, to forests of deer, to stables and kennels of horses and hounds.

I never visit the ancient and romantic ruin of castle or hall without feeling inclined to seat myself on some time-worn stone or buttress, to commune with the spirits of other times. Spirits who had loved there, spirits who had fought there, and who, instead of knocking with impossible knuckles against tables, obedient to penny-seeking profligates in scenes termed séances, were really hovering round the living soul of one who would have loved and fought as they had done, had but the mysterious essence of being twined us all together.

Among the many graceful and venerable places that I had heard of, was the property of my kind friend the Duke of Rutland, called "Haddon Hall." Of this I had read much, and heard various accounts; not only of its picturesque beauty, but of the romantic love-affair in which Sir John Manners carried off the daughter and sole heiress of Sir George Vernon, in those days better known as "the King of the Peak" in Derbyshire, whose property and splendid residence Haddon Hall then was.

A mysterious longing having seized on me to see this place, and to gather anecdotes of the Upper Ten Thousand, however ancient their dates—having asked his Grace's permission to have the free run of the ruin, and, to while away the time if I wished it, leave to cast my fly in the preserved waters for trout, I set off from town, and shortly found myself in close approximation to the ruined mansion of Haddon Hall, there to learn, in the midst of time-dilapidated fanes [shrines], oriel windows, tapestried chambers, and kerb-stones still bearing the deep impress of the heel of heavily-armed and iron-clad men, how "Dorothy Vernon" was wooed, and how won; by which gateway she eloped with her lover, and on what occasion; and what were the domestic circumstances by which, at the time, they were surrounded. In short, "by what mighty magic" not a handsome knight had won a bride, who eventually transferred the splendid domains of her father to the already far-extending acres of the lords of Belvoir Castle.

What castles I built in the air, with what spirits I conferred, or seemed to confer, the reader will learn from the following pages. While imagining these things, either stretched on the velvet turf sloping from the Hall to the river at its foot, or sunning myself in that self-same ray of light that, at that same hour, once came through that same casement, as Dorothy sat in her drawing room and thought on her lover, illuminating her cheek as it did mine, no thought of the world's woes affected me; no shade of sorrow came across "the light of other days:" I was alone, the monarch of all I saw, or thought that I saw; and, in a beautiful dream assuredly, I "had—my hour."

Except at home, by your own fireside, there is no place where man can be more comfortable than at his inn; always supposing that that inn is a clean and well-provided one, with wealth of cold water and good wine. In an inn of the best sort, prettily built and beautifully situated, the clear waters of the deeply-bedded Derwent running at the foot of the flower-garden, I found myself in the bright month of July, 1863. Bright, indeed! too bright for me to make any use of the kind permission of the Duke of Rutland to fish in the preserved waters of the Wye or Derwent; for in the latter, where there are the most trout, there was scarce a foot of water, save in some shallow holes, and the trout were as well aware of the switch of a fly-rod as the columbine of a pantomime is of the wave of a fairy's wand. The chief object that I had in view, when thus finding myself comfortably domiciled in the Peacock at Rowsley, was to inspect, linger around, and admire, that perfect representation of the Hall of the olden time called "Haddon."

Having ordered a slice of salmon, a roast duck and green peas, and a far-famed Bakewell cake, with a pint of sherry and some pale ale for my dinner, a fly was announced, and I proceeded in the first instance to the Church at Bakewell, where I found the utmost kind civility from the Incumbent and his family, and all attention at the hands of the clerk. My object there was to see the tombs of the Vernons, and that of Sir John Manners, who married the last-surviving daughter and heiress of Sir George Vernon, through whom the splendid domain came into the possession first of the Earls and then of the Dukes of Rutland. A portion of the church has been enlarged and modernized: but there yet remain a considerable part of the ancient or primeval structure, and many a worn and indented stone that has felt the pressure of the barefooted friar, or rang beneath the sonorous chanting of the monks, in the early Norman days and in the reign of King John.

In the older part of the church may be seen the very rudest type of Norman Billetmould, with sundry traces in the walls of alteration and improvement of very ancient date—probably made to suit the increase of the congregation. Within the scope of some modern enlargements—I am loath to say improvements, for I do not like an interference with venerable structures—have come the elaborate tombs of Sir George Vernon, better known in his time by the appellation of "King of the Peak," and those of his son-in-law, Sir John Manners, who eloped with his sole remaining daughter [the older daughter having married Sir Thomas Stanley and having left Haddon], Dorothy, from her home at Haddon Hall, and thus brought to the ancestors of the present Duke of Rutland the Hall and its wide domains.

On gaining their tombs I observed that great care had been bestowed by the sculptor on the form of Sir George Vernon, represented as it is, recumbent between his two wives.

The figure and face are not represented as is usually seen—a grim-visaged, stalwart knight, with a beard, and no other expression; but infinite pains seem to have evidently been bestowed to give the lineaments of a handsome countenance and an aquiline nose, while the figure is remarkably neat, and if rather slight, still tall and well formed. On turning from the tomb of the King of the Peak to that of Sir John and Lady Manners, my eye was at once arrested by the shape of the Knight's head. The figure is kneeling on one side, and his lady at the other. Her features are remarkably small, as if they had been chiselled so for some reason; but the head of the Knight was so much out of all usual proportion that I was at a loss to account for it, and stood in mute contemplation. The forehead is utterly depressed; in fact, there can scarce be said to be any: while the entire skull recedes backward from the brow in the most extraordinary shape I ever saw. My attendant, it would seem, gathered at a glance what it was that riveted my attention, when he said, "No doubt, sir, you are struck with the formation of the head. Many visitors to the church have blamed the sculptor; but when the alterations caused these tombs to be interfered with, a skull was found beneath, bearing in its construction such a close resemblance to that you are looking at, that there is no doubt but that there was an intention in the artist of the time to illustrate the peculiarity. [This is a true historical fact.]" This tomb bears date in the 26th of the reign of Elizabeth, 1584.

Sir George Manners, the last of the Rutland family who resided at the Hall, the son of Sir John and Dorothy, who married the 2nd daughter of Sir H. Pierpoint, and died in 1623, has also a very elaborate tomb. There is a space on the tablet evidently left for the date of the death of his wife, but which has never been filled up. They had nine children, all of whom are represented on the tomb: the youngest died immediately after birth, and was buried in a species of swaddling cloth, as shown on the tomb; and when the tomb was interfered with, the remains of the child were found without a coffin.

The inspection of an old church, and the tombs of those who from the dark space of the silent vault might murmur up to my ear, "I, too, was a soldier, a knight, and huntsman, and once loved the living sun that now delighteth thee," ever inclines me to rather a saddening theme of thought; and I left the beautiful old church to proceed to mine inn at Rowsley, trying to hum a lively tune and to gladden my eyes with the bright and sunny prospect, in order to rouse myself out of more serious reflection. Succeeding in this, when I entered the comfortable Peacock Inn and asked for my dinner, all gloomy sensations had fled; so, like a good general, I very soon harassed their retreat by an appeal to some very good light sherry and sufficient bitter ale.

The next morning saw me in my fly again on my way to the Hall itself, and feeling sure that I should find enough there to make me tarry, mine hostess put me up some sandwiches and a flask of sherry; and so backed I very soon entered the park of Haddon Hall, crossed the pretty rippling river Wye, which murmurs at the foot of the terrace walls, and entered the neatly-kept lodge of the housekeeper, "Mrs. Bath," which domicile used to be the stables to the establishment. Having shown my credentials, from her I received every possible attention; and while making the tour of the building it gave me the greatest pleasure to be able, most justly, to compliment her on the attention she paid to all the interests under her care. There was not a room that was not as well aired and as cleanly swept as any in an inhabited mansion. Ascending the hill from Mrs. Bath's lodge to the low entrance-door to the building, the first thing that struck me over the stone entrance to the outer terrace was the quartering of my own shield with that of the Vernons, the "ten crosses" very visible; a fact of which 1 had not been till that moment aware.

Within the court of the Hall there was everything to admire; for before the eye of modern inspection stood, not in vain, but in massive maintenance of the strength bestowed by the hand of men in dangerous times, the walls, the pavements, the wainscots, the tapestries, and the floors, as they were when Dorothy, in her fantastic disguise at her father's masqued ball, fled to the bosom of a Manners. There was the Chaplain's room, near the gateway, so that he might be accessible to any of the flock that sought him. On the table of the Chaplain's room lay some of the boots of Cromwell's time and other old things, and two or three rude hunting-horns, such as you see round-cheeked visages blowing as they run after deer on tapestried sylvan revelations. One of these I put to my lips, and blew such a rough, discordant blast, as I have no doubt shook the forms of the old deer-keeper and the old huntsman, as they are represented in their portraits in the great hall. Leaning against the side of the entrance to the court was Sir George Vernon's old mash-tub for brewing; but neither the size of that, nor the size of the cellars and kitchen, came up to my idea of what it really required to furnish forth the feasts I heard of.

The cellar was eleven yards each way, and the kitchen ten. The dining-hall was ample and curious, and on its walls some of the finest antlers of red and fallow deer I ever saw: proving again, had proof been needed, of how the race of each have deteriorated in modern days—all, all for want of the infusion of fresh blood. On one side of this hall, and at a considerable distance from the dais, nailed to the wall, there was a single handcuff, which, supposing the wrist of a middle-sized man to have been put in it, would have held his arm stretched to the full; but it was not high enough to do so by mine. The history reported to me of this device was, that if any of the guests failed to drink enough, or, when having drunk too much, they did not carry their liquor discreetly, they were confined to the wall by this handcuff, and, their arm thus extended, cold water was poured down the limb, in trickling fashion, till they fainted away. This was told me by the housekeeper; but since she imparted the lore I have heard, or I have dreamed, another reason for the use of this instrument of torture, which I will faithfully render to my readers in another place. In the wainscot of the drawing-room, there also I found my shield in quarterings; while the ceiling, which once had been carefully ornamented, has been defaced with plaster and whitewash—no doubt in the days of the Reformation, though in what way the wise heads of the Reformists connected the devices on the ceiling with religious matters, for the life of me I could not divine.

It is needless for me now to give a description of all the rooms I saw; the tale of true love which I contemplate relating, and the deed of outfang-thief and infang-thief executed by the King of the Peak, will necessitate rather a minute recurrence to many of the rooms within the Hall, as well as to the terraces without. Therefore, in the hope that I have sufficiently interested the reader, male or female, to create a desire in them to follow me through a brief narration of some events about the end of Mary's reign, and the beginning of that of Elizabeth, I continue my story.

It was, then, a sultry and an airless, though lovely evening, that on which I sat down to dinner in the comfortable little parlour on the ground-floor, looking out upon the garden of the Peacock at Rowsley, and towards the river Derwent. The river, deep and cool under the overhanging banks where trees grow, rippled up over the shallows at the bridge. There its waters made a soft and murmuring, and even a melancholy music to my ear; which, after my inspection of tombs, bones, a human skull, antique antlers, horns, fossils, and deserted halls, fell, if freshly still, as though its notes were laden with a tearful weight, and did by the spirit as thunder-drops do when over-weighing summer flowers—it bowed down the lighter aspirations of my heart. In a frame of mind not absolutely sad, yet still sedately reflective, I sat down to my lonely dinner, and feeling that there was a species of comfort in every glass of sherry, I applied rather frequently to my bottle, nor did I abstain from a second glass of pale ale.

Men, when they are alone, will fall asleep directly after dinner. I do not think that on this occasion I did go off to sleep; if I did, it was but to a wakeful sort of slumber, and I remember, that in a declension of the head made by me I was somewhat suddenly brought up to the perpendicular by becoming aware of a strange sort of soft oozing sound, as if some kind of heavy, but not hard substance, was pushed against, or butting at, the diamond panes of the little window looking into the garden. It was something like the sound which a damp cloth would make under the hand of a housemaid when cleaning a window; and yet it came too full and heavily for that: so much so, that on one of its pressures against the panes, the glass on the lefthand side the window as you look into the garden cracked, and I thought I heard a sort of phantom execration.

This of course aroused me to clearer perception, when, on looking to the place, I beheld in the light of the summer night a head; yes, decidedly the round, fat outline of a face and head beneath the shadow of what might once have been a hard, but now a very soft and crumpled hat, and I saw that the head was butting at the window. Mundane and dreamy imagination at once suggested a drunken man; but I apprehended no unpleasant intrusion to the room on this score, on account of the upright iron bars of the window. It seemed, however, that I must have mistaken their width, for what seemed a very sufficient jolly head when outside the window, at last bobbed against the open casement, and, striking the bars, intruded itself slap into the room! My first impulse was to rise and hit it, but, ere I could take a step to give effect to my purpose, a rather good humoured, but still strangely sepulchral tone of voice exclaimed, “Don’t hit me! No violence, my good master. I only came to do your honour service.”

As the lips uttered these words, the very thickset and lusty body, as it appeared outside, to my unspeakable astonishment squeezed itself after the head, through the very narrow bars, inside, and with a flourish of two very stout legs the figure came off the window-sill, and slipped down bodily on its feet upon the floor.

“How very tall you are, good master sir!” said the uninvited guest, eyeing me from head to foot from beneath the overhanging limp penthouse of his crumpled hat. “I heard you in the churchyard to-day, while your honour held some talk with our clerk as now is, about the good Knight, my master as was, and I made up my mind to have a look at you.”

“Well,” I replied, “look then your fill. I never saw so big a terrier as you are get to ground in so small an earth.”

“Ah, my good master,” rejoined my strange guest, with what seemed to me to be a thrill of delight; “how it does rejoice my bones—I had nearly said marrow-bones, but that’s not now to the purpose—to hear your honour speak in sporting fashion! But don’t talk about ‘an earth.’ I knew you loved the chase, for I have heard you spoken of; and so I thought that, once in a way, I’d look into a room again, instead of taking my midnight walks among the woods, and tell your honour what you’d like to know.”

“What have you to tell me, then?” I replied. “If your tale is long, be seated, and help yourself out of the bottle or the jug, which you like best.”

“The bottle, your honour! My eyes are dusty, perhaps, but I don’t see it.”

“Not see it?” I returned. “Why, there it is, the next thing to your hand!”

"What, this here?" cried my visitor, who had now assumed a seat, grasping my pint of wine. "Ha, ha! this here leetle thing a bottle! ha, ha! And I suppose," pointing to the ale-jug, "that there t'other spouted thing's a pitcher! ha, ha! I craves your honour's pardon, but if our old huntsman was here, how he would open out with me, and we'd have a jolly laugh together! Howsomever, he can't come, so there's no two ways about it."

My guest, or my supposed guest, having refreshed himself with wine, then seemed to await my further question; so I asked him who he was, and, to my utter astonishment, he replied as follows:—

"You went, sir, round our Hall to-day—I heard you say when you were in the churchyard that you would do so; and, no doubt, when in the dining-hall at the mansion you saw two pictures: one was of our old huntsman, with couples for hounds in his hand; and the other was your honour's servant, that's me. I was the deer-keeper, in charge of chase and manor, and it would have done your honour's heart good just to have seen the stags and bucks that fed in our glades. Not such stags and bucks as are at Chatsworth now, for sometimes of a moonlight night I goes to look at them, as, worse luck! there are none left here. Ours, and theirs too, then were twice as large as they be now.

I wish to be fair, your honour, in speaking of a neighbour; but if you goes to Chatsworth afore you leaves Derbyshire in this the summer of 1563—I would say, 1863—you will see the deer worse there than they really are; for it having been my Lord Devonshire's—Duke he is now—resolve (it couldn't be his pleasure) to reduce his stock of deer, his steward took it in hand—as if a steward could know anything outside the buttery—and he goes and says to one Herring, a Lunnoner [Londoner], 'You may take so many deer, all at so much a-head.' 'Yes, sir,' says the crafty Lunnoner; 'and I'll catch 'em just after the rut.' 'So be it,' says the steward, without so much as consulting the deer-keeper. So down comes Master Herring when he knows as all the best bucks is very weak, and much easier caught than the younger ones and does, and he takes up all the valuable deer, and leaves my lord little for the next year's breed, and nothing to speak of for his table. A pretty good bargain for Master Herring, and a deuced bad 'un for my lord!"

At the conclusion of this speech the old deerkeeper, as he announced himself, took another chuckling grasp of my little bottle, smacked his lips, and looked at me again. It now struck me, that some strange chance had put at my disposal the very man I wanted, my purpose being to write a true legend, or anecdote, of old Haddon Hall; so I at once led to the subject by remarking that "he must have seen many a jolly day in his time, and been conversant, too, with that eventful era in regard to the future destination of the family domains, when Sir John Manners first became enamoured of the only surviving [no: unmarried] daughter of Sir George Vernon, otherwise called 'the King of the Peak.'"

"Jolly days, sir!" remarked what must have been this very old man. "I *have* seen many of 'em, and to spare, or I should not have been at this here table now. If your honour would like to hear the story, I have yet time to tell it in; or if I haven't, I can call again to-morrow night."

"Go on then, my good friend," I rejoined; "take another pull at your glass, and I am all attention."

"'A lady looks down from Haddon height,
O'er all men's hearts she's lordin';
Who harms a hair of her true love's head,
Makes a foe of Geordie Gordon.'

[Allan Cunningham, 1822:]
[Seven Foresters of]
[Chatsworth.]

So sings, or leastways did sing, our 'Old Ballad,'" continued the deer-keeper:—

"It was during the latter years of the reign of Queen Mary that the eldest daughter of Sir George Vernon, whom men called 'King of the Peak' in Derbyshire, died [both daughters survived Sir George Vernon], and thus placed Dorothy, his surviving child, as sole apparent heiress of his wealth and wide domains, and mistress of his ancient Hall. Lord love you, sir! it would have done you good to have seen the feasting and drinking that there was in those days; it was, indeed, 'merry in hall when beards wagged all;' and when Sir George and our young lady, Dorothy, sat on the dais, there was such a kindliness in their glances down the tables, for the feasting-boards often stood as thick as they could be placed, that though good order was ever kept in their presence, every soul, from the guests to the steward and retainers, even to the lowest jack-scullion, felt as if they were at home in their own houses."

"From what I have heard people a-talking of in later days over my head, the feasting in Sir George's time was not like what it is now, any more than this here thimble (pointing to my pint bottle), and that there mug (pointing to the jug that held my pale ale), was like to our flagons, or black-jacks. Bless you, sir! the jacks that our two butlers used to carry—we had two: one for the strong-beer cellar and one for the small—to replenish the tables with, was, when full, as much as a man could lift; and even then right often were they fetched and carried to and fro!"

"Mind you, I speak of days when there were guests; at other times, when none but the household were at dinner, there then was plenty, but no waste; and our young lady, taking a leaf out of her poor mother's book, who had been dead some years, used to look us all up, and keep a good eye even to the kitchen. [Sir George Vernon had remarried and Dorothy's step-mother was Lady of Haddon Hall.] 'Tis like your honour may have heard that Sir Ralph de Vernon, one of the ancestors of this here family, lived to the age of 145 years; it's so set down upon the 'Book of Huvey,' folio 3, date 1306: but it's a fetch about that knight's age, and I know it, because in my time such things were nearer than they are now. True, he lived to a great age, and married a daughter of my Lord Dacres, and after that the widow of Master 'Jack Hatton,' but he didn't require all that time to do it in. [Ralph de Vernon was named *the old liver* and it was reported he lived to 150 years, which is either an exagerration or a confusion of identities.] Belike you know that 'Peyvere and Peverell, and Vere and Vernon,' came over when your honour's ancestor did, at the time of the Conquest, and that, like Harding did with the Saxon Berkeley, they married the native nobility, and got royal and territorial grants; and it was that that settled our family, the Vernons, in Derbyshire and Staffordshire. Your honour knows some of the Vernon lines of later date:—

'A grisly boar, as raven's feather black, [Alleyn Sutton, 1528:]
Bred in that land Rollo had by his wife, [From Stephen Glover's]
Past th' ocean, the Bastard's part to take, [Peak Guide, 1830.]
Who Harold reft of kingdom and of life.'

You sees the boar on our arms, no doubt, with the quarterings and the crosses of your honour's shield; but as I have told you things beside the mark of the tale you want, I'11 just wet my lips again, and then to love and murder, for there's both in what I have to tell."

By this time my anxiety for the power of speech in my guest was excessive, for not only had he made frequent applications to the wine, but of late he had gone deep into the bosom of the jug of sufficient ale, and the tones of his voice, which were always hollow, or like those of a man with his lips to the larger end of a hunting horn, and speaking through it, had become more indistinct, each word running into the next in a way that was doubly mysterious: so when in describing the fact that the hero and heroine of his discourse were, as he pronounced it, "sh-was-fond-of-seach-other," I suddenly resolved simply to listen to and catch any coherent sentence, but to write the continuous tale myself.

END OF PART I.

On a lovely October evening, when the woods of Haddon, and those of Chatsworth too, were in all the warmth and beauty of the October tint; when birds and beasts—though they neither sang nor leapt—seemed to bask in the long slanting rays of the western sun, and to give mute thanks to the great Creator for the blessings around them; when the Wye and the Derwent ran on in unruffled, mirror-like fashion, reflecting in their tranquil, but still current-moved bosoms, the red hawberry, that clustered richly among their wooded banks; when the meadows sighed in grassy sweetness to the sweet breath of grazing kine, and man felt that it was a luxury to breathe and live; Dorothy Vernon left the halls of her father, and with wary, and even timid glances, she proceeded from the Hall up the hill over the site where, in these days of moving, noisy appropriation, the railway thunders its subterraneous course.

She stole away from her parental mansion, as many more of us, then and thereafter, have stolen away; that is, she was bent on an errand which she knew to be directly adverse to her father's will, the knowledge of which conjured up imaginary vigilance, and put a spy in every bush she passed. She thought each labourer going from work looked more closely at her than usual, and invested the most innocent things with jealousy and care. The timid doe that bounded from the fern startled her more than was its wont to do; and yet all thought, all things combined, *would not* have kept her from her lover.

Dorothy Vernon was not the only person from Haddon Hall desirous of concealment, nor were her nervous suspicions of bush and brake without some foundation; for the deer-keeper, whose narration I detail, he, too, had left the Hall, not on any mission of love, but to watch his master's deer: for he had suspected that more than one buck in the preceding summer had gone from Haddon in the direction of Chatsworth; but whether by the hand of a neighbouring and jealous forester, or by the theft of outlaws, he had yet to determine. He had, therefore, ensconced himself in a thick patch of underwood mingled with fern, where he could gain a view of the lower and more open glades beyond him; and while in that position he beheld a figure, which afterwards proved to be Sir John Manners, come stealing through the shrubs, as if bent on some deed that was not altogether benefited by the light of day, but which was designed to escape observation.

It was not long before the keen eye of the deer-keeper recognised the belted Knight; but the latter was upon his concealment so quickly, that before he could make up his mind what to do, the lover, and, to his still greater consternation, the loved one, his young mistress, met on the lonely but more open turf close at the side of his ambush, and were clasped in each other's arms, absolutely close above his head; for he had crouched to the very roots of bramble and fern rather than have his presence known.

The appearance of Dorothy Vernon was that of a young lady below the middle height; but though her countenance might have been found fault with on account of the smallness of the features, still those features in themselves, in outline and formation, were not only indicative of gentle lineage, but immensely sweet and feminine in their changeful expression. When she smiled her little lips disclosed the pearly teeth, and her blue eyes a brightness that rivalled the flower, and seemed to say, "Forget me not are very useless words in the ears of those who look at me."

As to her lover—he, too, was scarce of the middle height, and though faultless in form, and with features of good expression, his head was of the most peculiar formation, and instead of the forehead rising from the brow, it immediately fell back and receded rearward to rather an unusual length. A "long-headed fellow," certainly has been from time out of mind a sentence intended to indicate wisdom; and who knows but that the head of the hero of this legend was the first to start that method of expression? Sir John Manners was dressed in a costume for the chase, and was, perhaps, the hero of the old ballad of "The Chatsworth Outlaw," from which I have already quoted [Seven Foresters of Chatsworth], staying, as he was at the time, at Chatsworth, with his friend, then Lord Devonshire. It is not unlikely that he even dressed like the foresters of that nobleman in order to disguise himself, and that—

"The Outlaw came—at his belt a blade,
  Broad, short, and sharp, was gleamin';
Free was his step, as one who had ruled
  Among knights and lovely women."

He might, in his vigil in the Chatsworth domain adjoining the woods of Haddon, have pretended to have been a trespasser, in expectation of seeing his love, and have simulated an outlaw; hence might have arisen the reluctance to either catch or kill him, as shown by the six foresters watching on the Chatsworth bank, at whose head seemed to be "Geordie Gordon."

"A thousand thanks, dearest Dorothy!" exclaimed Sir John Manners, when he clasped Dorothy to his breast, "for this kindly meeting. Alas, that your father should set his face so resolutely against my suit because I am a Protestant, while you continue in the Romish faith! Surely religion ought not to break the bonds of true affection! Nor am I, by kith and kin, or fame or fortune, unworthy of your hand. Tell me, Dorothy, do you not agree in this?" And as he asked for confirmation, his arm the more closely encircling her waist, again their lips met, and again my informant, the deer-keeper, went closer down among the roots of the lady-fern, as if intent to creep into the earth.

"Yes, John," replied Dorothy, "you know that I agree in all you say; but, alas! my father has the pride of the 'King of the Peak,' as they call him; and that he has even sworn not to let me wed away from the Church of Rome. What, then, can we do? You know my father's obstinacy, and that if there is one idea more hateful to him than another, it is that his daughter and his wealth and broad domains should pass into the hands of one of the Reformed religion."

"I know this,—I know it all, dearest Dorothy," replied the Knight. "And these harsh resolves of your father ought to free us from fetters that his severity renders unbearable. Let us watch an opportunity and escape this thraldom; let us fly and be united."

"That is all very easy to be thought of in your fiery imagination, dearest John; but how are we to accomplish it? Even now I know not but that one of my father's retainers may be watching me, and if 1 stay much longer away from the Hall there may be messengers sent in search. Horses are ever saddled for any emergency, and men ready to mount and enforce the bidding of the 'King of the Peak,' without much further warrant than his wish and their own right hand. Nothing can be done, John,—at least, at present; but I have had some thoughts of a possibility of success in this at other times!"

"Oh, Dorothy!" replied the Knight; "my own sweet lady-love! impart, then, those beautiful thoughts to me. You have only to assign the way, and then my heart and soul, my head and hand, shall proceed or carve the road to our success, and for life I'll be your slave!"

"Oh, yes," she said, wreathing her fingers in the Knight's dark hair,—"oh, yes, it is very well to say you'll be my slave; but I don't want you to be. I wish for a lover, always to love me; and for a knight whose mind and prowess I may admire. Now, listen, and don't be so very foolish. I won't be kissed any more!"

The old deer-keeper at least heaved a suppressed sigh of thankfulness for this assurance, and Dorothy continued,—

"If we are to run away, the only chance is when the-usual revels take place, just before and at Christmas. And listen, you naughty boy, if you can listen to anything save the hunting-horn and hound; my father, just before Christmas, intends to give a masked ball. Everything will be in confusion then: the old long gallery, or room for revelry and dancing, is to be full of quaint masks and mummeries; and as everybody's face and figure will be disguised, I might slip away, going off like a guest; and you, also in disguise, might come to the ball uninvited, and take me away."

"Oh, my darling lady!" cried Sir John, in raptures, breaking through the embargoes laid on his caresses, and by so doing almost driving the deer-keeper into the ground, "the thought is too charming! and it is one so sweetly promising success, that I am enraptured with your love and with your wisdom; and, Dorothy, I will and must be your slave."

"Well, then, be my slave until this masked ball. And now, John, I must go, or they will be asking where I am, and coming to look for me." So saying, Dorothy prepared herself for departure, when, clasping her once more to his bosom, the Knight, in raptures, asked, "When they should meet again?"

"Alas!" replied Dorothy, "it must not be too often. And yet, John, I would not doom you to entire banishment; and I promise you, that when the coast is clear, if you send some faithful messenger who may come amongst the many who do come every day to Haddon for dole and alms, let him look into the little hollow that is in the bole of an elm-tree close by the wall of the terrace, as you come to the entrance from the hill, on the same side with the window of my bedroom, and therein I will put a little billet for you, with your orders,—yes, with your orders, you naughty boy, if you will only be quiet now."

So saying, further speech seemed drowned in remarkably sweet sounds, which had the effect of flattening the deer-keeper almost into an expansive nothing, when Dorothy, breaking away from her lover, glided from the brake of lady-fern like one of her own does, and was soon lost to sight. Sir John Manners also turned to stride less glibly away, but in his fourth step kicked his foot against the prostrate side of the deer-keeper, and tumbled over him into some bushes. Up rose the Knight in fury, drawing his short, bright hunting-blade; and up knelt, but not higher, the keeper. In a moment the Manners' grasp was on the offender's throat, but on spying the cognizance of a Vernon retainer the grasp relaxed, though the blade remained drawn.

"What dost thou here, dog of a listener?" cried the infuriated Knight. "If thou hast heard the speech of thy young lady, or a word from me, if thou tellest it to soul alive I'll rip thy tale-bearing tongue out of thy mischief-making weasand [throat], and cast thee to feed the swine. Fellow! d'ye hear me? How came you here?"

"Oh, good sir," cried the deer-keeper, "I was not here for the purpose of spying upon you; I was here to watch my deer when you and my young lady came upon me like, and not wishing to distress her, nor anger you, I hid .myself till you had passed; but you stopped just over against me."

"Swear, then," cried Sir John Manners, "never to speak a word of the interview you have seen, nor of a syllable you may have heard, and serve your beautiful young lady faithfully and well."

"Oh, sir," cried the deer-keeper, "I will—I do swear anything: though I know it is as much as my life is worth to keep it from Sir George, I will never speak of this matter; if I do, I wish I may be frayed of my skin as antlers are of their velvet, and be belled at by all the bucks in Christendom."

"Good!" replied Sir John. "Here, then, take this gold, and every year that Christmas comes the same amount will I give to thee if thou keepest the secret: but if the secret gets divulged, knowing the traitor, I'll 'grullock' thee clean as any stag."

With this Sir John, having given the keeper the money, pressed through the fern, and sped on his way down the Chatsworth side of the Haddon bank, to gain the Devonshire domain.

We must then follow Dorothy Vernon along the brow of the hill, beneath which the railway now runs, as she retired from this stolen interview with her lover. She came through the glades of the chase, not in a direct line for the Hall, but down the grassy slopes, which at length led her to the river Wye, betwixt Haddon and Rowsley, by the banks of which she paused to rest herself after her rather hurried descent from the woods above. She then indeed did look so pretty with her heaving breast, delicately flushed cheek, and beaming blue eyes, that had Sir John Manners been there, with the forester in the old ballad he might have sung,—

> "Say not thy maid's the fair one;
> On the banks of Wye my lady spy,
> A beauteous and a rare one." [Seven Foresters of Chatsworth]

Having paused by the cool stream, and composed her dress as well as the expression of her face, she proceeded, as if carelessly on her way from a long walk, to the Hall, and again rising the hill, she passed by the terrace still known as "Dorothy's Terrace," rounded its corner, and met her father at the entrance gateway beneath the "Watch Tower."

Sir George Vernon, though twice a widower [once a widower: his second wife was alive at this time], was not an old man, but hale and hearty, full of vigour, and very handsome. His features were regular, with an aquiline nose, and a figure tall and graceful, and if rather slight, still firmly knit in the manliness of strength and activity. In his dress he was gorgeously neat, and his gold-hilted sword and jewelled emblazonry of attire became him well, and fairly bespoke for him the name of "the King of the Peak." To the "thirty manors" of which he was possessed he added a vast amount of wealth from other sources, when, as his means as well as his mind alike tended to induce him to the most profuse hospitality, no wonder that in the latter years of the reign of Mary, and the earlier ones of Elizabeth, he was locally styled the king of his vicinity, and was well looked up to by rich and poor. As might have been expected, his power as well as his temper was, to some extent, overbearing. He was prompt to the sword, and as liberal of blows as of charitable gifts; yet with it all there was a stern justice in his local rule which satisfied his dependants, and left his equals not much to complain of.

Thus stood, and thus was seen, the proud Sir George Vernon, when he met Dorothy coming from her clandestine interview with Sir John Manners, the second son of the Earl of Rutland. "How now," he said, "Dame Dorothy! I have been looking for you. We shall need an addition to our catering, for I expect some visitors: and you, the Mistress of my Hall, go roaming in the woods, good sooth, as if there was not plenty to attend to here!"

"Dearest papa," replied Dorothy, half inclined to shrink from the searching and eagle eye of the King of the Peak, "I am here to do your bidding,"—so saying, she kissed him—"and I will at once attend to anything you like."

"Go, then, and inspect the 'washing tally'" (it has been described in *The Reliquary* [Vol. III, 1862-3.], and was found in a remote corner of the chaplain's room at Haddon), "and then look to the buttery: the varlets and the scullions want looking after, as your poor mother used to say; and who so fit, aye, and who so capable of doing so, as her own daughter! Then get thee in, my sweet wench; I go to inspect my hounds and horses, and will see thee again at our dinner."

"Will," the deer-keeper, for we must now return to him, remained seated on the root of a tree, after Sir John Manners had left him, in deep cogitation with himself. In one hand he held some broad pieces, while in the other he supported his forehead, the elbow of that arm resting on his knee. His hand after a time slipped from his forehead, and resting on his mouth seemed to restrain some words that came reluctantly at intervals through his compressed lips.

"It's a nice fix you are in, Will," said the deer-keeper to himself; "but it's a fix you did not get into yourself, nor could you help it were you the innocentest fawn that ever was dropped. A fawn of one of my favourite does might have done just the same thing, and knowed no better. It's a secret that seems too big for me! it is! A mouthful of hay like, as won't go down. If I tells it, the lover will 'grullock' me—the Lord save me from the infliction! and if I don't blab, and the King of the Peak finds it out, why the highest limb of the biggest elm at Haddon will be scarce tall enough for me to dance upon nothing on. Oh, Will! Will! you had better not have gone looking after your deer, and then you would not have got 'toiled' with the dear of another. Woe's me! and what sort of a buck is it that's a belling after our young lady? that's what I want to know. But I'll go home and consult my old woman." So saying, the keeper found his legs, and proceeded to the cottage which served him for a place of rest, such as it was, when not immediately required at the Hall.

On entering his cottage, the deer-keeper found his better half busied with her domestic concerns, and imparted to her what had happened. His dame, true to the interests of her sex, at once advised him to hold his peace, concluding with the assurance, that "she dared say the Knight was a mate befitting her rank, or she'd never have let him kiss her, and that it was time now for her young lady to choose from the best in the land."

"Aye, but dame," remarked the deer-keeper, "it's all very well your saying she would not kiss this, nor she would not kiss t'other, but I have known one of my best young does go a-capering around to anything but the buck I intended for her; and just you look what a crying sin it would be if our young lady broke park with some swashbuckler as run'd her for her money, and I to blame for not making in with the hobbles."

"You to blame! What could you do? How all our serving-men, and women too, belike, would just about jeer you if you were to go blabbing to Sir George as you see'd the Lord knows who a-kissing of my lady! Let her kiss, and be quiet, do! I warrant Sir John has riches, else he wouldn't have the face to come after her!"

"Well, dame, he's an open-handed youth, certain sure; for, see here, he just slipped these gold pieces into my hand as if he had gathered 'em off a nutbush. I like the gold very well; but, somehow, it sticks in my gullet as if it were a bribe to keep things from the Knight's ears, and I don't like that."

"A bribe!" replied the dame; "and so it is a bribe to keep you from being a fool. Let money make you a wise man; hold your peace; see and say nothing; and let our young lady pipe like a bullfinch in the bush for a true lover, as none is let come to the Hall. I warrant me she won't go wrong."

"Well, dame," replied Will, "let it be as you say; but if ever I hide in the fern again without coughing to let lovers know there's somebody there, may I be blessed!"

"Cough! you should always cough, or stamp, when you go where a lady and a gentleman are together."

"Alack! alack! I tell you, mother, when a man's out of sight he don't know but he may be smothered with secrets all at unawares, and none of his seeking, big enough to be the death of him. A pull at the can, mother. But there's the horn for dinner," he exclaimed, smacking his lips, "and so no more." Thus saying, the deer-keeper hurried off to take his place in the dining-hall, but not before he had tossed off all his can contained.

It was a jolly sight to see the dinner! There, on the dais, sat Sir George and his daughter, and such guests as might have come of rank enough to take their places by their side. Well-worn and deeply indented that old table on the dais is, as seen at the present day: its entire surface has been slit with knives, as if used in slicing the bread by the side of the trenchers; while here and there notches have been driven into it, as if with the butts of knives enjoining silence or calling for attention. Oh, that jolly old board! what visions of beakers and hosts of ribs, rounds, and cruppers of beef, its well-dinted brown old face reminds one of! There were no made dishes then; Sir George Vernon's hospitality was of the substantial sort: nor must my readers think that the joints were nicely proportioned, as we proportion them now—they were not: they came up, indeed, in plenty; but as to appearance, they were severed to suit the size of the dishes, more than for the fashion of a name: and but for the weight of viands, there was little symmetry on the dining-table. Beef, sheep, and goat-flesh, or, as they at that time called the latter, the "smaller meats," were there, with venison, peacock, heron, and bittern, and broaches of the smaller wild fowl served upon spits, whence the guests on the dais cut what they pleased: but other than plenty there was nothing else to praise.

"I see the huntsman and the deer-keeper," exclaimed Sir Geoffery Peverell, who was one of the guests. "Sir George, may I call them up for merry woodland's sake, and the sport they have at seasons shown me, and give them a stoup of canary?"

"As you please, Sir Geoffery," returned the King of the Peak: "they are both thirsty souls and seasoned vessels, and no fear of their not carrying their liquor discreetly. What, ho, there! Will of the Deer and John of the Leash, approach the dais for a stoup of wine by favour of Sir Geoffery Peverell."

Up rose the two retainers at their master's bidding, and came along the side of the wall up to the corner of the dais, near which their pictures hang now. On their arrival, one of the butlers filled them each a cup from a flagon, and they made a humble bow to all the gentry.

"How are the hounds?" asked Sir Geoffery of the huntsman—"a good entry, hey? and nicely coming on?"

"Yes, sir," said John of the Leash; "a handsomer lot were never seen, as I hope soon to show your honour."

"And how are the deer, my good friend Will; and the wild cattle, and the antelopes? D'ye think the latter will show us any sport?"

"I shink sho," replied the deer-keeper, in something the fashion, but very slight, of a pendulum, his body swaying to and fro.

"You shink so!" echoed the King of the Peak, in a voice of indignation. "Here, Bibber," addressing the butler, "let these varlets finish that flagon. I see how it is. And if you can't walk straight from the dais to the lower end of the hall, good Will the deer-keeper, thou shalt have a taste of the couples."

The men took the cans of wine; the huntsman, with a cool and marked satisfaction: but Will the deer-keeper certainly, for once in his life, looked as if he had rather that it had been water. He made an effort to be excused, by saying, "Good Sh—George, I'sh unwell."

"Drink! drink it, thou varlet! or I'll drench thee," wrathfully exclaimed his master: so each man drank off every drop in the cans, and then were bidden back to the lower end of the hall.

With the huntsman it fared well enough; but poor Will, in the most ludicrous way, tried to fix his rolling eyes on an antler in the wall directly in front of him, much resembling in his gait a rope dancer balancing himself in our day. In a deathlike silence, and through a line of faces all of them inclined to laugh, had they dared to have done so, Will went, lurching along, till his deviating toe catching the leg of a bench, down he went head foremost, pulling a man-at-arms to the floor along with him, and up that instant at the dais rose Sir George. "Dick of the Tower, and three others," the King of the Peak right angrily exclaimed, "away with that pig to the handcuff, and water his wine for him. At him there, and let it speedily be done."

No sooner was this mandate issued than it was obeyed. Poor Will, fully alive, but a good deal more drunk than sober, was carried to the handcuff to be seen in the wall to this day, and his outstretched arm, fully extended upwards, fastened by the wrist to it, while a guard from the tower, provided with a huge earthen pitcher, trickled cold water down the extended limb, and then on every portion of his figure. This punishment, which is thus handed down in legendary tradition, while the single handcuff still hangs upon the wall, a rusty witness of the truth, must have been, to say the least of it, odd in its consequent sensation; but I cannot believe that there was that severity in it which is locally affirmed.

I see no reason why a man should "faint away" under such an infliction, as, from the height at which the shackle is driven into the wall, even a small man would not be put in a painfully extended position, and a tall man's arm would not be near at its full stretch, for I inserted my wrist into the handcuff to illustrate this narration. However, in this case Will was not long subjected thus to be a mockery to his fellows. Dorothy Vernon whispered in her father's ear, and he at once bade the prisoner to be released; and then rising from the dais, he, his daughter, and his guests, passed from the hall to the drawing-room upstairs, and in a few minutes the dining-room was cleared of all.

"Ole fren," said the deer-keeper to his ally the huntsman, who was conducting him to his cottage, "I shay, what'll my ole doman shay to shish? It's fourth time I've had shee-shackle. Never mind," he continued, coming to a dead halt, and staring stupidly in the huntsman's face, "I'll never blab about what I'sh seen. Now, my young lady—but 'sh no use telling you—you're too drunk to understand! I'll punish Shir George for thish, I will—so, come on, or you'll tumble down. I'll not blab, now; no, not I!"

As Will said this, the huntsman, who was perfectly sober, sat him down on a stool in his cottage and retired, as the deer-keeper's wife commenced a furious lecture on her boozing better half.

END OF PART II.

"The sun had risen above the mist,
The boughs in dew were dreeping,
Seven foresters sat on Chatsworth Bank,
And sung while roes were leaping."
Old Ballad. [Seven Foresters of Chatsworth]

Seven of the Chatsworth retainers in charge of Lord Devonshire's forest were returning from a nightly vigil among the deer, when they were met by a man, booted and spurred, and otherwise if plainly, still handsomely dressed—sufficiently so to cause the foresters to acknowledge his rank by pulling off their hats. The stranger, or gentlemanly esquire, whichever he was, acknowledged their courtesy, and singling out a forester whose name was "Geordie Gordon," he beckoned him aside from his fellows, and thus addressed him,—

"What, good fellow! up late and early, too! I warrant me, thy vigil in my lord's chases puts thee up to a thing or two more than is done by deer?"

"Why, ay, sir; we do sometimes see things we are not meant to see," replied Geordie;—"wood-stealers, lovers, robbers, and such-like."

"Ay," said his questioner, somewhat sharply, "and lovers, too, as you say. Come, my good fellow, hast never seen a knight in these parts wooing a Haddon dear? Come, you see I know something; so tell me, and I will make it worth thy while. Hast thou not seen a gallant in company with the Lady Dorothy Vernon?"

"Well, sir," replied Geordie Gordon, "I nae say I've not; but as it's nane o' my business, I ken nae more than just seeing the twa thegither."

" Do they often meet?" continued his interrogator. "Come, hast thou seen them more than once, and dost thou know where the gallant comes from?"

As the stranger said this, he held out his hand to the forester with money in it; but the stalwart north-countryman drew back.

"Nae, sir, I canna tak' your gowd. I've answered ye as much as I ken; and for the wherabout of the gallant, I guess you maun seek him there awa," pointing towards Chatsworth; "or, it may be, up at my lord's." Thus saying, the forester dashed away amidst the high bracken after his fellows, and was lost to the stranger's sight. Left to himself, the stranger then cast himself at the foot of an oak tree, and seemed grievously afflicted.

[Grantley Berkeley brings to life the Seven Foresters of Chatsworth, the 1822 ballad, and gives them a new adventure in this episode of John Manners hiding in the woods. See *Poems of Haddon Hall* on this Web Site for the complete ballad.]

"It is, then, as I thought!" he murmured to himself. "Her coldness, her silence is accounted for. She has left me for a more favoured lover, and every hope I had is fled. S'death! but I will not—cannot bear it!" As he said this, his hand grasped a poniard at his side, and never did the deep-lined, frowning forehead of man o'ershadow a more violent passion than his eyes expressed as he looked on the glittering blade now drawn naked from its sheath. While thus occupied, the sound of a step close beside him made him turn, and his rival, the very man he spoke of, stood before him. Each fixed their eyes on the other, the Knight [John Manners] simply in surprise at finding a well-appointed stranger there; but in the look the stranger gave to the new-comer there was, indeed, a concentration of every violent emotion that could rack the human mind: and yet he stirred not from his seat. It was as if his limbs, even his own life, were for the time forgotten in his contemplation of him whom he deemed to be his successful rival.

"You'll not forget me, at all events, sir," exclaimed the Knight, proudly drawing himself up. "May I ask who it is that favours the woods of my Lord of Devonshire with his uninvited presence?"

Upon this question, the stranger, without speaking, arose, and, looking to the right and left down the glades of the chase, to see that no foresters were near, he advanced a step towards the Knight, and thus addressed him,—

"I see, Sir Knight, the man before me who has robbed me of my love; who has swept past me like the angel of death, and destroyed my world and the things by which I hoped to live. I need no tongue to tell me who you are, though I have never seen you before; fate points you out as my destroyer. Draw, then, and defend your life!"

As he said this, the poniard glittered in the air, and the Knight was but just in time to draw his short hunting-sword, and with its point to hold his assailant at bay.

"Hold! madman!" cried the Knight; "and in this wild frenzy force not blood on either of our hands. How have I passed, like the shadow of death, before you?—or how have I wronged, or even crossed your path?"

"Oh, villain!" said the stranger, "think not thus to delude and elude me. *Why* are you in this wild wood *now*? Is it not *to meet Dorothy Vernon*?"

"And what is that to thee?" replied the Knight, reddening with anger in his turn.

The answer to this was a stroke from the poniard, parried by the sword; and for a moment they stood foot to foot in strife. Short as the hunting-sword was, it had the advantage over the poniard; which was, in fact, little more than a dagger; and the "rally" of lightning-like passes and quick parries caused a want of breath in each assailant; and a momentary pause ensued. Short as that breathing-time was, the loud twang of a bow sent an arrow into the sword-arm of the stranger. Then his weapon fell to the ground; and Geordie Gordon, from whose bow the shaft had sped, followed by the other foresters, rushed upon the scene. Rough hands and rude words were about to be laid on the wounded man; but the Knight stepped before him, and picking up the poniard, presented it to his antagonist, saying,—"Here, sir, take your weapon; and though you have assailed my life, I will pass my word for your safe passage through the Chatsworth domain; but take my advice, find some other country, and remain not here."

No thanks, but a scowl at the arrow still sticking in his arm, was the only reply to this courteous speech; when the Knight, stepping close to the stranger's side, continued,—

"Nay, sir, you shall not go thus; I will be your Leech. Here," he said to the foresters, "which of you has the sharpest knife? Though the point of the arrow is through, a little force will free the barb."

A knife having been found, the Knight, assisted by the men, accomplished the task with much difficulty. Not a word, not a symptom of pain, escaped the stranger's lips; nor even a thankful word when the operation was concluded. In silence, and with a frown of the most diabolical hatred, he prepared to follow the two foresters pointed out as his guides from off the Devonshire territory; and even as the intervening boughs of a forest vista shut him out of view, the Knight thought that he saw an arm raised towards him in an attitude of savage defiance.

Time wore on; the Knight and his loved one continued to meet in the Haddon Woods, while Will the deer-keeper held his peace, as he called it; greatly tormented by a secret, or mute as to knowledge as a silent hound. The cold water, of which he had a religious horror, whether within his lips or applied in punishment to his arm, as before narrated, still cooled his attachment to his master, and for once in the history of the world there was no tell-tale to interrupt the course of love.

The woods had at last been reft of their leaves; high winds had kissed the Peak, and hurried down to divest the valleys of their autumn verdure. Boughs, which had rustled quietly over softly-whispered words, no longer screened from observation; sullen stags, with swollen necks, lay listlessly in retired places by themselves; the small wild cattle kept for the chase were herded together on the sheltered sides of rising grounds; autumn was gone, and winter reigned triumphant.

One day beneath some clustered hawthorns, which, with an underwood of elder and hazel, still afforded some cover under the Haddon elms, on the Chatsworth side of the bank, stood Dorothy Vernon; and her lover was very soon by her side.

"Dorothy!" he exclaimed, as he passed his arm around her waist; "dearest love, I hope I have not kept you waiting! But the woods are not so friendly to us now as they were; and in my way hither I thought that I caught the glimpse of a human figure—perhaps one of your father's foresters. I have arranged all my plans, my own sweet love; and at the masked ball your father gives, then, then we will fly together. It is, this whim of his to receive his guests in costume, a smile from Fate which portends the most assured result to all our dearest hopes. In disguise I can attend the ball, and disguised we can leave it together. My men, my horses, all shall be hard by, and all unnoticed through the attending crowds."

"Oh, yes, dear John," replied Dorothy, "as you say, all seems to promise well: but, I know not why, there is a secret dread upon me that nothing can shake off. All that my old nurse used to tell me she had known to presage death, has forced itself upon my ears and eyes: there have been corpse-lights in the candles, and the ticking of a death-watch in the wall; an owl has beaten its wings against my casement—ay, against that very window whence I used to speak to you and to let fall my letters. I mean, the casement of the little closet adjoining my bedroom; in which closet there is another with a window overlooking mine, whence I have always suspected some hidden eavesdropper first learned the secret of our attachment: for it is known now. It could have got to my father's ears in no other way. Oh, John, do not laugh at me; but I do not like the mysterious signs: and I dread the vengeance of Master Gruson [The fictitious Master Gruson appears nowhere else in the stories of Haddon Hall.], who tried to gain my affections. May not the signs of some approaching death be thine at his murderous hand?"

"No, Dorothy! to prove to you how wrong such suspicions are, I must tell you now that Gruson has attempted my life. It is over. We met in the Chatsworth Woods. I knew him not then; he assaulted me, and in the fight he was stricken in the arm from one of Devonshire's men. I requited him with kindness to his wound, and had him escorted off the lands. Fear not, then, on his account, for he is far away."

"Are you sure of that, dear John?" Dorothy replied. "Are you *sure* the form you mentioned as having seen in your way to me was not his? I implore you, be on your guard. His violence and diabolical inclination to revenge I know. It was an insight into his ungovernable passions that first led me to discard him; and when I gave him to learn that he was not agreeable to me, never shall I forget his threats of vengeance on any future lover. Oh, John! dearest John! how *could* I have been so vain, so idle, so foolish as to have given him *any* encouragement? I little thought to make an enemy for life."

"Dorothy," replied Sir John, kissing a tear away, which, clear and as bright and sweet as dewdrop on a rose, trickled from her eyelash and soft blue eye to her cheek; "it is too late, now, to review the danger in a girl's playing with the feelings of a violent man: it is our task to guard against it now: and while I have hand and belted sword to guard thee, Dorothy, fear not any danger. I will protect thy life as the chief boon of my existence; and my own, that I may live to watch over thee." Dorothy leant her head on his shoulder as he said these words; and the long eyelash, yet glittering even as the "maiden's hair" leaf, after rain, lifted itself blandly up to let a sunny beam of playful light break through, to smile assurance on her lover.

"John," she said, "I will have faith in your protection; you shall protect us both, for your own sake: so I will try to drive these melancholy bodings off. Alas! we must part now until the eventful evening, for the woods are bare, and 'twould be folly to provoke suspicion. Adieu, then, John: to receive my father's guests I shall be in my usual ball attire; after their advent I shall adopt various masks, and in one of which you meet me on the terrace. Adieu." And thus the lovers kissed and parted, and Sir John, lifting his hand to his cap, muttered their heraldic motto,—"God save the Vernon!"

Dorothy was proceeding leisurely along, on her way to the Hall, thinking of the past interview, when, on nearing some high withered fern, upheld by some furze bushes, she paused a moment in deep thought; at that instant such an explosive and loud cough reached her ears, that she was at once aroused from her reverie. She listened, and it came again, hoarse, chest-racking, and loud, with such a curious echo, that it seemed now in the air, now in the trees, then in the fern, and at last at her feet. She stepped into the fern and beheld Will the deer-keeper black in the face with his exertions, and lying upon the ground.

"Oh, gracious!" she exclaimed; "Will, are you dying? what has happened?"

"Oh, dying, my young lady!—no, not dying," replied Will, rising from his recumbent posture: "I only wished to let you know I was here."

"To let me know you were there! Why, what did you think I wanted you for? And how came you here? have you been following me from the Hall?" Dorothy asked, with a nervous blush upon her cheek.

"Oh, no, my young lady—no!" replied Will. "I but just sat down like to watch the lairs of the stags, when, seeing you coming, I thought it my duty to warn you of my presence, that was all—that was all."

"Very considerate of you indeed, Will!" she rejoined.

"Yes, my young lady, yes; you might have got a-talking to yourself, you know, and told me unawares more than was my business; so I thought I'd cough to warn you."

"Much obliged, good Will," said Dorothy, laughing: "but don't distress yourself too much on my account, for I am not likely to reveal secrets to the air;" and, waving her hand to him, she passed on.

"To the air!" said Will to himself, looking after her; "not likely to tell the air! but if I don't cough you or somebody else may tell it to the fern, and it's there where the hoof pinches."

It was now that merry season of the year when, in the olden time, the coming of Christmas was heralded by the most profuse hospitality. The discomfort of the houses in the reign of Mary, and even in the beginning of that of Elizabeth, seemed to be amply atoned for by the good cheer that mantled on the board. What mattered it if, even in the houses in considerable towns, “the fire was kindled by the wall,” there being no chimney-place, and the ascending smoke escaped by door, roof, or window, or even through chinks of the clay-plastered wall! The rooms were warm, and the stomach comforted. According to the old song,—“Back and sides go bare, go bare,

> And foot and hand grow cold;
> But, belly, God send thee ale enough,
> Whether it be new or old.”

Men of all ranks seemed to think that the comfort of a roof was in its cheer, and they were not far wrong. Even in our own time we have known a palace but a cheerless and gilded prison, and seen large tables with very little on them to eat or drink. In the days of this true history, what if people slept on “straw pallets, with a log of wood for a pillow,” they cared not how hard their couch was if they put on a warm nightcap of nappy ale. The comptroller of Edward the IVth’s household paid only thirty shillings a-year of our present money for his house, and by that fact the reader will judge what was the probable state of domiciles, or of that fabulous edifice since called the “Englishman’s castle,” in the reigns of Mary and Elizabeth. Haddon Hall, under the reformatory rule of Sir George Vernon, was the first mansion to raise itself from the rude customs of the earlier ages. The owner of it needed not a law like “the 4th and 5th of William and Mary, cap. ii.,” which enforced “the number of horses, arms, and furniture,” to be kept by a man of the Vernon rank, “for the defence of the kingdom.”

In his palmy day his income was more in money than a thousand pounds a-year, to which was added his vast resources in cattle and beasts of chase, fish, and fowl, all of which contributed to feed the many mouths of his retainers, or to contribute to his available funds by their sale. His “demi-lances” and “light horsemen,” whom it was his pleasure to maintain and keep effective, were a regiment in themselves; while his ample stables of goodly steeds for the chase, for draught or pleasure, amounted to forty well-selected animals, bred by himself or purchased in adjacent counties.

George Vernon's high tone, lofty bearing, and profuse hospitality, were proverbial; no wonder, therefore, that, as his manors and his lands surrounded it, men called him "King" of the adjoining Peak. He was a Roman Catholic; and though neither an ascetic nor a blind bigot to an infallible priesthood and the imbecile doctrines of the Church of Rome, nevertheless he had the greatest repugnance to his daughter marrying one of the Reformed religion, and hence his objection to Sir John Manners.

On the day preceding Christmas-eve, and early in the morning, two butlers sat down on a bench in the hall, in solemn conclave, in regard to some orders given them by their young lady, Dorothy Vernon. Both were portly men, but one of a higher grade in the household than the other, inasmuch as one kept the key of the ale, or strong beer, and the other the key of the small. The one was the butler, the other the under-butler, and hence the names have been handed down to the present day. The butler, Master Frothemwell, was a grave, tall man, with a somewhat large and grizzled beard; the other, a quicker and smaller, and a fairer-haired man, whose name was Swiper.

"Swiper," said the butler, "this is a bad business that my young lady has spoken to me upon, and it shakes to its centre the hospitality of our household."

"Indeed!" said Swiper: "has the king's chest been robbed?"

"His chest! no!" replied Frothemwell: "not quite that, or we should have heard it from Sir George—aye, lip and hand, hip and thigh—and not from our young lady. It is the butter, sir! the butter has been taken, and our young lady will know how!"

"And what," replied Swiper, "has that got to do with you and me?"

"It has to do with us," rejoined the butler; "and this is why:—Jane Jollybun, the head kitchen-wench, has told our young lady that whenever John Taylor, our big butcher, or, as we call him, 'old twenty-stun [stone],' comes to take orders for serving the Hall with 'small meats,' she misses two pounds of butter; and my young lady, knowing our importance in the household, has looked to us to catch the offender: but may I never draw bung or cork again if I see how it's to be done!"

"Done!" cried Swiper; "I'll tell'y how. D'ye see our cellar-doors have both got a grating at top, too high for even you to look through; but if we put an empty cask on end to stand on, we can see all that goes on, and 'old twenty-stun' none the wiser."

"An excellent thought that, my worthy aid!" replied Frothemwell. "Come, Master Taylor of Darby Dale will soon be here: let us betake ourselves to our respective cellars and watch him."

No sooner said than done: having cast an eye to see that the fresh butter had been put in its usual place for Dorothy Vernon's inspection, and where it was used to meet the hand of the reputed thief, each butler retired to his cellar, and after much rumbling of empty casks, and perhaps a smack at a full one, all was quiet, and a heavy and approaching step was heard in the entrance court. In came Master Taylor the big butcher, and going to a hole, or window, in the wall that opened from the site of the housekeeper's occupations, he read the liberal orders for the "small meats" of the season of the year; but what those "small meats" were I am at some loss to define: I suppose they were mutton, veal, and pork, and that the King of the Peak killed his own beef. Drawing back from the aperture, Mr. Taylor then found himself in the outer kitchen alone, where there was a large screen warming pewter dishes, and an immense fire waiting for sundry joints it would have to cook. The morn was cold and chilly, and the butcher for a moment put the broad disk, or rear of his person, to the fire; then, seeing the tempting rolls of fresh butter, he stepped up to where they lay, and deposited a pound of the savoury article in each of his breeches pockets, and turned to depart. Ere he had cleared the building he was overtaken by both butlers, Master Frothemwell bearing in his hand a black jack of the best strong beer.

"Lord bless'y, Master Taylor! don't let it ever be said you came to our Hall at this season of the year without a pull at the Christmas flagon!" exclaimed both the butlers together; when, as the big butcher made a show of faint resistance, they each took him by an arm and lovingly conducted him back into the kitchen; then, on the plea of its being a cold day, they sat him down on a stool within the high screen, and close to the fire, and while they plied him horn on horn with strong beer, to which, under any other circumstances, Master Taylor was very well inclined, they kept him, under one excuse or another, so long, that by the heat the butter melted in his pockets and ran down over his shoes. Heat adding to his thirst, when the butter melted the man was drunk, and in that phase the young lady's attention was solicited to the butcher of "twenty stone."

When Dorothy Vernon entered the kitchen she found the stout delinquent held and supported by the two butlers, one on either side of him, who seemed to think the whole affair was an amazingly good joke; while with the greatest glee they pointed to the butter, which was absolutely running over his shoes, and cried upon their young mistress to regard her stolen effects.

Though in those times society in some things was of a much ruder cast than it is now, and broad jokes were tolerated then which would shock the more refined of the present day, still the sight of a great burly ruffian swaying to and fro from excess of liquor, and well greased by a quantity of melted butter, as well as from the perspiration extracted from the fire, was not a pleasing sight to the young lady, and as she was about to retire she commanded the butlers to acquaint her father.

"Oh, the Lord love'y, my dear, good young lady!" exclaimed the butcher. "No! Do what'y will with me yourself, but keep me from the King! There, if he sees me suffering like from too much heat, and the effects of the cold air just acoming from the fire and a-making of me giddy, he's sure to say I'm drunk! But no," he continued, raising one of his arms to his head and crushing on his hat, "I'm not drunk; am I, good gentlemen?"

At this appeal the butlers nearly died of laughing; and at that moment the voice of Sir George Vernon was heard in the entrance court.

"Oh, then, my dear young lady, I am done for! Sir George comes in; says he, 'So, sir,' says he, 'you can't carry your liquor discreetly! off with him to the handcuff and cold water!' But no," continued the butcher, with a more ridiculous approach to enacted grief, "you won't see the parent of many blessed little lambs dragged to the shambles, will'y?"

"Put him out of my father's sight," exclaimed Dorothy Vernon, "and let him go away; we know who is the thief now, and at some sober time my father shall hear the fact."

So saying she left the kitchen, and the butlers hurried their victim into one of the out-houses, where he remained till he was sufficiently sober to carry his well-basted and nearly roasted legs away.

[This tale, about the butcher John Taylor first appeared in the 1836 *History and Antiquities of Haddon Hall* by S. Rayner. The tale is supposed to be true; however it occurred under Sir John Manners, the grandson of John Manners and Dorothy Vernon.]

Winter had now arrived, as winter ever does; according to the old saying "Winter never dies within its dam." The leaves on the larger trees around the Hall were all gone; the hawthorns, shorn of their verdure, gave to the eye of the hungry "redwing" and "fieldfare" the ruddy berries on its boughs; and wherever thorn or holly-tree disclosed their fruit, there might be heard the flapping wing of "felt" and "throstle," and the harsher "screech" of the "missel-thrush," as some keen-set sparrow-hawk passed by, and scared the now songless birds from their occupation. Snow, too, had fallen; rough-coated and exhausted old male deer, both stag and buck, sought out the oak in Haddon chase to pick up acorns; and Will the deer-keeper had enough to do to pull down ivy and lop the pollard ash to brouse his herds, without having one glance to spare for trysting lovers.

Oh, it was a jolly time among the poor and the dependants of Haddon, for in the Hall there lived a knight—a king, indeed—who held it to be his splendid duty to see that the indigent were comforted, and to care for the wants of all. What if his word was a local law—what if men drew the brand and rode armed to do his bidding—what if with stern but open justice he punished offenders, and was sharp on crime and protected his game and deer; he, on other hand, was equally solicitous to find out suffering and to cherish the oppressed, and to the fatherless, the orphan, and the widow, he endeavoured at least to supply the place of those who had been gathered to the world to come.

It was a glorious day in Christmas week, on which, and by every path, the people of the hundred flocked to reach the Hall. Gathered on the slope that ascended to the entrance-gate from the stables, one site of which is now occupied by the Lodge, wherein resides the housekeeper, and where each curious visitor in the present day meets with all attention and a draught of soda-water to quench the summer thirst, were hundreds of the labouring classes, mingled in their plain attire with the gay coats and badges of Sir George Vernon's servants and retainers. Alms were doled at the gate, and the Romish priest stood there to laud his flock and leer with sidelong hatred on those comers who had adopted the Protestant religion, and left a creed whose impious teaching taught infallibility in man. Though stanch, and to some extent bigoted to the tenets of Rome, Sir George would not let that interfere with his open-handed hospitality, and the Christmas cheer and the ready coin were as free to all as if a difference in sect had not existed.

He and his daughter, Dorothy Vernon, came forth and passed among the crowd, with a kind look and word to all their poorer guests; and, as an old peasant expressed himself, "the bread and the beer at the Hall was always better than anywhere else, for, while the lady sweetened and blessed the bread with her smile, the hearty bidding of the King of the Peak put strength into the strong beer and set the heart rejoicing." The programme of the hospitality embraced a day of feasting and recreation to the poor, and on the following night a masked ball to all the nobles, knights, and gentry, for miles around. The day I am endeavouring to describe was the one before the ball.

Not to dwell too long on any portion of this true legend, the feasting and the alms were all over, and the company assembled at the Hall were out on the slopes to witness the games of the people. There were divers games and pastimes, many of which are in existence now; and according to the inclinations of the various groups, the people, male and female, ranged themselves in different parts of the open park or chase, in the vicinity of the Hall, to while away the glorious winter's day. Sword-play or single-stick, quarterstaff (which I think to this hour a most effective weapon), running, jumping, and "toddling in sacks," dipping in tubs for apples, and climbing greased poles; and though last, not least, kissing in the ring, were all "i' the humour and spirit of the time;" and, true chronicler as I am, Will the deer-keeper was heard to say, that that kissing in the ring reminded him of his master deer when lording it over a very limited circle, to which he jealously kept his hinds or does. It somehow or other also increased the parson's holy labours, and eventually added to his flock: but this was an old-world assertion of Will's, and my readers have it for what they think it is worth.

The games were beginning to flag—even "kissing in the ring" can't last for ever—when, along the road leading from where the highway to Bakewell runs now, and across the river Wye, came a single pedestrian. The moment he was seen a joyous cry arose, particularly among the prettiest rustic girls, of "Oh, the pedler! the pedler!" and a rush was at once made to meet the individual. Before this individual became the focus of an anxious, and admiring, and surrounding crowd, we must describe him, as he was doomed to play a conspicuous part in what was to come. He was a stout, square man, of the middle age and height, and bore a box on his shoulders, guarded against all weathers, of considerable dimensions.

Fluttering from his hat and streaming from his shoulders, in tempting and gaudy display, were ribbons and laces, garters and gauds of every conceivable fashion, with which no doubt he had decorated himself in some retired corner of the woods, to tempt the assembled people gathered on the slopes of Haddon.

"How now, Master Jabesh Tiddler! Welcome, Master Tiddler!" was the general cry, as the girls gathered round him.

"Up to our young lady first—she's the one for your gems and trinkets; and then us, for your ribbons and laces."

"Aye, and your garters," exclaimed a jolly lad, who had thrust his red cheeks in between the shoulders of the girls.

"Hold your imprance, do, you good-for-nothing!" cried two of his female playmates, knocking his hat over his eyes, and making way for Master William, the head deer-keeper, who came to take the pedler to the King. "Hip, hip, hoora for the King of the Peak!" Thus shouting and laughing, tussling and romping, the merry throng opened out left and right, and the pedler ascended to the Hall to display his wares to the entertainers and the higher guests, before he submitted them to vulgar hands.

While this was going on, there stood the rather tall figure of a man [Gruson], wrapped in a plain cloak, beneath a group of hawthorns, whose stems partly served to conceal him, while at the same time the position he kept was far enough brought out in view to dispel any idea that he was purposely concealed. He had taken no part in the games, and if he mingled among the crowd it was as a passing stranger or looker-on; of too high a grade to accept out-door refreshment, and yet in appearance not exalted enough in position to walk in at the entrance-gate and seek to share the higher honours. As he looked on the scene around him, it was from beneath eyebrows dark in themselves, but knit firmly into a frown; and, in expression, black as Egyptian night.

Had the reader watched him narrowly, it would have been seen that when Dorothy Vernon came forth, "the observed of all observers," the action of his chest increased, and his keen and flashing, yet slightly blood-shot eye, seemed to search among her male companions for a victim on whom to concentrate the furious jealousy of a baffled fiend. Apparently this object for concentration was not at hand, or if he was, he was so disguised among the crowds of people as not to strike his searching glance, and the stranger continued to lean against a tree as if a mere inspector of passing events.

The pedler was not long detained at the Hall, but shortly came forth, well satisfied with the generosity of Dorothy Vernon, the ladies around her, and her female attendants; and the heart of the pedler was light in proportion as his pocket was heavy, and he was soon surrounded by a joyous and vociferous crowd. “Here, my charmers! here, my beauties! come and see my wares! Here,” he cried, holding up ribbons and laces, “here are things to make the skin the like of snow; and laces, too, to keep the waist as slim as the middle of a wasp. Oh, but look! here’s the dye of all the flowers! here’s a dress to kill a dozen sweethearts! and all to go for nothing; for I’m poor, and I want to sell my wares, as I am an honest man.”

“I say, Master Tiddler, I’ll have this to put in my cap,” cried one dark-eyed girl; “And I’ll have this ’un to put in mine,” said a blue-eyed one; and so the demands continued till the pedler had sold all his lighter gauds, and then had to bargain away to the men his knives and male habiliments. So charmed was Master Tiddler with the custom he had met with, and so charmed in heart and mind by the draughts of strong beer, that at the conclusion of the sale he set down his almost empty chest, and danced upon it with such emphasis that the lid gave way, and let him in with a crash on all that remained, and that was but his every-day or working apparel. The bran new suit of clothes he had only that morning put on was assumed for the passing festival.

Loud laughed the crowd, and louder laughed the pedler, as picking up from his broken box the clothes, he offered them for sale; and many a joke was cast among the married women as to who was best entitled to the breeches. No one bid for the garments, so the pedler picked up his damaged box and adjusted his shoulder-straps, and commencing the most wild, dancing sort of gambols, to make his friends laugh (for his periodical visits had made him friends with all), he shouted, “May the King of the Peak live for ever!” and amidst the plaudits and adieux of all he took his leave, and went off by an unfrequented path that led by a shorter cut to the little town of Bakewell, continuing his grotesque sort of dancing gait as long as he was in sight of the crowd. He had scarce resumed a more natural progression, and entered a sequestered dell, when he was suddenly met, face to face, in the narrow path by a man, whose features were partly hidden by a slouched hat and the high fold of a cloak [John Manners].

“Stay,” he said, “Master Pedler; thou mayest perhaps be of service to me in this masquerading. But whose clothes hast thou got in that trunk of thine?”

At first the hand of the pedler, when thus he was suddenly stopped, had sought the hilt of a dagger which he had concealed in a sheath within his vest, for robbers were rife at that period, and the pedler had money; but in a moment his well-practised eye saw the mistake in the first idea, and he doffed his hat with considerable civility to his questioner. "No, good Sir Knight, I have no wares left; they have cleaned me out up there" (casting his thumb over his shoulder in the direction of Haddon Hall); "and I have nothing for sale but the new suit I stand up in, which I only put on but just now for the occasion. I will sell that suit, and gladly, for it ill becomes me. It is as good material—may Heaven bless your honour!—as anything you can wear; and yet it's the dress of a pedler."

"I'll have the suit," replied the Knight, or whatever he was; "it will do for the masked ball: so hie thee under the bushes and doff it as quickly as thou canst. Rig thyself out in thine every-day things, and say the price between us."

Master Tiddler very soon complied, muttering to himself as he dressed, "I've tumbled on my legs to-day, and out of all my breeches. I never did so well afore, naked as my trade has left me. Wish I had brought a dozen suits!" When, emerging from the brambles and thorns with the new suit on his arm, he named an exorbitant price, and got it. His customer then rolled the things up, put them under his cloak, and bade the pedler come at nine of the morrow to him at Chatsworth: he then disappeared.

Somehow or other, but Master Tiddler could not tell why, no sooner had he crowned his day's work with this, his unexpected and most prosperous deal, than the joy over his riches deserted him, and he felt as if in parting with those clothes he had sold the very sun out of the evening sky. "That blessed strong beer has got out of me!" exclaimed Tiddler to himself: "I've got a stoup too low uncommon soon. I must on to the hostelrie at Bakewell, and refresh my inward man."

"Hold!" cried a deep, sonorous voice [Gruson], close to his ear, as a strong hand was struck upon his shoulder. "Hold, Master Pedler! my excellent friend! What hast thou left in thy box that I may buy?"

On thus being again and so suddenly accosted, the pedler's nerves unaccountably left him; his hand failed in any effort to seek his dagger, and he stood before the knit brows and dark eyes of his questioner with knees knocking together, his mouth open, a picture of an embodied panic.

"Answer me, man! dost thou not hear? What hast thou got that I may buy? I want a suit of clothes."

"Holy M—m—m—mother!" cried Tiddler, "here's as many customers as carvers about the Hall to-day. Clo—clo—clothes, did you say, sir? The Lord help me! I've none but what I stand in, as I'm a honest pedler, though you may say there is no such thing. I sold the only new suit I had to a Knight in this very wood."

"To a Knight!" cried the dark, tall man, with flashing eyes; "how didst thou know it was a Knight? No lies, Sir Pedler! or I'll slit thy weasand. To whom didst thou sell that suit?"

The pedler, who at all other times was an able man of his hands, and of approved courage, still felt so utterly prostrated before the eyes that seemed to look through him, that he hesitated; but at last replied,—"Oh, the suit, good gentleman! the suit was bought for the masquerade."

"Was it!" cried the stranger; "and by whom?" The pedler was dumb.

"Who by, villain? hast thou lied so much that for once thou canst not tell a simple truth? I ask thee who bought it?"

"Oh, but if I tell," rejoined the bewildered pedler, "the gist of the thing will be lost; for the suit, doubtless, is for disguise at the masque, and you will know who comes as the pedler."

"Out upon thy folly, fool! I'm not going among the dancers; but I'm curious only to know who bought a suit of clothes in a wood like this?"

"Well, then," returned Tiddler, "if you must know, I sold the clothes, I think, to Sir John Manners. I don't think that he knew me, but I think I knew him by the shape of his head, for I had seen him at my Lord Devonshire's at Chatsworth. But, sir, you won't show me up? he must want them for disguise."

"I show thee up! no, no, Master Pedler, I'm not going to show thee up," and the stranger's breast heaved as if with tumultuous feeling. "Thou art a good man, the best man I have seen to-day, and here's a piece of money: now away." Having said this, the dark stranger struck off among the trees, to the great comfort of the poor pedler, who, staring vacantly at the piece of money in his hand, exclaimed, "Deary me! odds, scraps, and cuttings! first I sell my suits because I've got 'em, and then I sell them alike whether I have them or no! Deary me! well, well, Scraps, but this is a day such as I have never seen afore; may Heaven grant that nothing comes of it, though the strong beer's all out, and I feel as if terribly cast down: my stomach's shreds all over!"

Timidly on his lonely path, and stopping to listen every moment, and to peer into the dark behind him, as if in dread of some arm about to administer a fearful blow, Master Tiddler sped on his way, till, on emerging from the wood, the distant glimmer of the few lights then shown in the hamlet of Bakewell cheered his heart, and seemed to bring back some of the strength of the King of the Peak's strong beer. "Woe is me!" murmured the pedler to himself, "but dark places conjure up gloomy thoughts! I hope nothing may come of it. I could have sworn that there was an arm behind me going to dash out my brains. Shreds and patches, bless the heart that's mine! Sir Tiddler, as I often calls myself, don't thee be cast down; man often thinks there's summat going to happen, as never does come nigh. So now for the Pig and Whistle, a drop more beer, and my biggest box; for there I've duds the Lord Devonshire himself might wear, and some on 'em shall go to Chatsworth to-morrow's blessed morn."

END OF PART III.

The morn of the eve on which the masqued ball at Haddon Hall was to take place broke on the world through a net-work of frosted silver; the little snow on the ground that there was, was frozen into crystallized atoms, that rose but in brilliant particles on the foot of passing man, and failed to melt upon his instep. Before the oaks of Chatsworth had shaken the hoary frost from their pendent boughs Jabesh Tiddler [the pedler] presented himself at the ponderous gate of the place, and announced himself, freshly-laden pack and all, as a suitor to see Sir John Manners by appointment.

"Well, but come into the porter's hall, while I bid thy message to the butler," exclaimed the burly retainer of the Earl of Devonshire; "he, Master Guiditil, will give thee summat to knock that icicle from off thy red nose this cold morning. In there, and sit thee by the fire."

I will not detain my readers with the conversation that passed, nor the orders that were given by Sir John Manners, when the pedler was admitted to his presence. Suffice it to say, that Jabesh Tiddler received some further commands as well as refreshment, which sent him rejoicing on his way back to Bakewell, and induced him to laugh within at his own causeless terrors of the preceding night. "So ho!" he muttered to himself; "gild and tinsel, what is this? Jabesh Tiddler, thou'rt a man—a man of mist and mummery, for thou art to make at the King of the Peak's one among the noble masks!"

1 must now carry the reader's attention to the inside of Haddon Hall, where all was bustle and preparation for the mummery and masks, of the approaching night. For the last month Dorothy Vernon had been in consultation with her "tire-women," but, strange to say, she paid more attention to the becoming fit of a new riding-dress than she did to a quaint device prepared for her, in which she was supposed to represent Diana: with more apparel on, of course, than that thorn-proof—we must suppose—nakedness in which that pictorial goddess is represented as threading the tangled woods.

Dorothy Vernon, however, with the usual inclination to caprice, perhaps, of her sex, had more than one habit prepared; so that, if it suited her fancy, she could appear in half-a-dozen others. Many of my readers no doubt have seen Haddon Hall; but to give those a better idea of it who have not done so, let them imagine that they hear a loud whistle from Sir George Vernon's bed-room for his page, who was loitering at the bottom of the stone stairs opening into the court. The page hastened upstairs into his own room, which adjoined Sir George Vernon's, and presented himself for orders.

"Here!" exclaimed the King of the Peak, "take these antlers, swords, and daggers, and follow me." So saying, he led the way through a second chamber, called the dressing-room, and entered the withdrawing-room; where, in one of the bay-windows of it, commanding a cheerful view of the Wye rushing beneath the trees at the foot of the terrace, he found his daughter, pensively watching the waters. She started as he came in, but at once advanced to meet him.

"What!" exclaimed the King of the Peak, "idle at such a moment as this! Why, Dorothy, I had wagered my best gazehound that thou hadst been with thy wenches, in the midst of trying on bodices of the strangest pattern! Come with me?"

They then proceeded from the old drawing-room, so cheerfully lighted as it is now by day, with its ample bay-windows, and going through a passage, at the end of which there were some remarkably large, solid, oaken steps, said to be cut from the root of a single tree, whose timber sufficed for the floor of the ball-room, and admitted by the door at the top of these steps, father and daughter stood in the long chamber, in which was to be the dance and mummery of the masked ball. The spacious room gave the length of 109 feet by 18, and 15 feet high. The ball-room was also well lighted—indeed, both this and the drawing-room are wonderfully lighted by day, considering the date of the edifice; and on this occasion, when Sir George Vernon and his heiress stood there, the sun had not yet passed sufficiently in his western career to refuse to light with his beams of gold some of the ornaments put upon the walls for the occasion. These consisted of antlers, bows and swords, dirks, daggers, and battle-axes, tastefully arranged with banners, intermixed with evergreens and boughs from the mistletoe, holly, and the hawthorn, the mingling of whose bright leaves and ruddy berries among the glittering blades of the weapons threw over the room a very brilliant effect.

"So!" cried the King of the Peak, as he surveyed the preparations with satisfaction; "this is all as it should be. Ha, my girl! is that thy fancy? See, each carving of the boar's head has the mistletoe attached. Well, I know not who is to salute thee as my daughter and as thy suitor; it would not be manners—Heyday! what makes thee blush so, child? Why, thou art ready to swoon in thy confusion! Hast thou a suitor, then? But, as I was saying, it would not be manners for any man, be he noble knight or gentleman, to touch thy cheek so familiarly, be the old custom what it may. Gad!" he continued, regarding his daughter's newly assumed activity about the decorations of the room with no little amusement. "'Gad! the very name of mistletoe and the bare mention of a kiss set her all on fire!"

From the ball-room they then proceeded to the ante room, and thence to the state bed-room, which on this occasion was dedicated to the use of the coming guests, either to arrange their attire on their arrival, or to change one mask for the other, as their fancy might prompt them to do. Beyond this, again, the most ancient part of the building, there were what is now called the old state-room, and divers passages and smaller apartments, leading by the stairs to "Peverill's Tower," on to the bed-room known as "Dorothy's Chamber," the window of which held very easy verbal or missive communication with the greensward of the park below. I stood at one of these windows gazing into the park, while I was imagining the look on the face and the size of the hand that had looked through and pressed the bars as my hand pressed them then. There hung the tapestry, and there was the little closet within; from which concealment, it is averred, Sir George Vernon first found out the attachment to the Manners of his daughter. But with these legendary suppositions I will have naught to do; my tale deals with more certain facts.

The ball-room opens out on a terrace, to this day called "the Terrace of Dorothy Vernon," and as the Hall and the terraces stand on the side of the hill, the ingress and egress to the ball-room from this terrace is still on the *ground floor*, though much higher than the great entrance-door that admits into the court-yard below. Dorothy Vernon's Terrace, even up to the entrance to the ball-room, is now sombred and hued by ancient yews; and at the further end of the terrace in one corner may be still seen the remains of a bower, added to from time to time by boughs of trees, to mark the site of where a bower once was, rather than for any other purpose.

In the days of which I am speaking the bower was kept and clipped, and formed a part of the gardener's care; and in it, ay, on that very spot where I stood to think of the olden time, Sir John Manners first spoke of that love which was eventually to bring the wide domain of her father to the house of Rutland—and there may it long continue.

Early, then, and before the daylight closed, and while the red glare of a cloudless sun was still sinking beneath the purple-tinted hills and giving promise of a nightly frost, the guests for the masked ball began to arrive; some at the main entrance into the court below, and others from the hills by the gateway beneath Peverill's Tower, to which a road led from the direction of the Chatsworth Chase and Hall.

Seated on a curious old root from a very old tree, which even at this time protrudes itself from the park through the wall to Dorothy's Terrace, I traced that once well-beaten carriage-track from the gateway to the hill, and thence towards Chatsworth, and thought of the jolly wood-carts bearing in the log and cord-wood for the fires, and the pony that had brought on its back the goodly stag and buck, and the steeds and retainers that had followed the ladies of the Vernon family, who, perhaps, carried a falcon on their hands for sport on the Longshaw Moors. This road, thwarted and almost trackless now, on this eventful night was bare and hard, and almost plain as a modern highway; and on the night of the fête numbers of peasants were collected round the Peverill Gate, as well as around the main gate below, to watch and make remarks on the quaint attire of their betters.

Sir George Vernon and his daughter had stationed themselves in front of those guests who were specially invited to stay at the Hall, about midway of the ball-room, so as to be within similar reach of those—who were by far the greater number—who entered from the court below, and those who came across the hills from Chatsworth, and the vicinity around it. By this arrangement they had a full view of all the grotesque masks, as they promenaded in their approach the one half of the apartment. To receive their guests, Sir George and his daughter were unmasked, and not in any disguise. Nobles and knights, in peasants' dresses or in fashions taken from foreign countries, soon thronged the room, among gods and goddesses, nymphs and clowns, and queer imitators of monkeys and wild beasts. As they approached the King of the Peak to make their bow, "Ha!" exclaimed the knight, "by my faith, a goodly bear! Welcome, Sir Bruin, to my roof! And see, a stately Knight of the Red Cross! And there's a Juno, her peacock's eyes not half so bright as her own!"

"Your most obedient, Death! Sir Knight of the Woeful Countenance, you might have gladdened us with a more pleasing face!" He said this to a tall man [Gruson] in half armour, enveloped, too, in a red cloak, from beneath whose steel skullcap appeared a mask resembling a death's face. It fitted very close to his cheeks, and from his steel head-piece escaped not a semblance of hair, while the cloak fell from his shoulders to his feet, and entirely covered his figure.

"Ho, ho, my jolly friend! but for the fact that I had not sent him an invitation, Godsooth! I should have thought that honest Tiddler the pedler who passed before me. I'11 be sworn I saw him in that dress yesterday. Hast any wares to sell?" The figure [John Manners] had a box with him, with a few articles of lace and embroidery exposed, but seemed not to hear the question, and passed on; while Dorothy, in great haste, entreated her father's attention to other guests, and very shortly afterwards withdrew from his side to put on the disguises she intended to wear during the evening. The music then struck up; the old-fashioned English dances commenced, varied here and there by the minuet; while clowns and boars made noises and exhausted their witticisms in not the most modest phraseology that could be imagined. The license of the period was great, and greatly did some of the guests avail themselves of it, their witticisms not more refined by partaking of the ample and unrestricted cheer for ever ready in the dining-hall. That ample old Hall, with its little retired rooms and ill-lit darkling passages, formed a labyrinth in which those who wished it could for a time be lost. Diana and the pedler, though they never dined together, once or twice were seen to speak and linger near each other; and on one of these occasions, as a faithful historian, I must repeat their words.

"John," said a voice, very like Dorothy's, "for the love of heaven, tell me if you know who that horrible figure is with the death's head?"

"I know not, dearest love," replied the presumed pedler. "But why have you taken such a dislike to him?"

"I cannot tell," replied Dorothy; "but more than once this evening I have turned round and caught the dreadful sightless orbits fixed upon me, while the feet beneath were stock-still as those of a statue. I have watched him also, and seen him as steadfastly regarding thee. 1 cannot tell why, but his presence fills me with an unaccountable dread."

"That assurance would be enough, my dearest, to make me request the removal of the mask, as obnoxious to the Lady of the house: but if I did so I should have to disclose myself; and that, you know, is out of the question. Think not of him, dearest girl: thy fear is consequent on those nervous feelings, the cause of which we know." His lips approached still closer to her ear. "Be ready, darling; the time is nigh; my men and horses must be close at hand: I go to change my dress to one more fitted to thy companion and thy lover."

"Put on another disguise—two, if you think necessary—so as completely to make thy father lose sight of thee: but in the last be dressed for flight; the cloak to conceal thy figure, the hue and embroidery on which I so well know; and come to the entrance on the terrace. Once in the open air, leave all the rest to me."

A step approached, and they were surprised in those last few words again by the mask of Death. It passed on, however, and the cold, meaningless, noseless profile and vacant orbits, seemed directed straight away. The figure of the pedler then also disappeared among the throng, and Dorothy went to her room to adopt for a brief space other disguises, and then the riding-dress and cloak alluded to.

The wine and wassail, the joke and dance, seemed to have kept all the guests still in great enjoyment of the night, though many of them had gone, when the seeming pedler issued from the door on to the terrace, and seeing that all was clear gave a low whistle.

"Here, sir," was the reply of a voice in the pitchy shade close at his elbow.

"Right, good Allan! Is all well, and is the pedler here?"

"In the bower, sir."

"Good: then hie thee back to the men, and be ready when I come."

The Knight walked to the bower, the way to which he knew too well, and there he found Jabesh Tiddler, what with the cold and fright half dead, in spite of the tankard of strong beer bestowed on him by a Haddon retainer, while watching the arrival of the guests.

"Haste, thee, Jabesh, and give me my riding-suit and arms; and then—mark me well—strip off thy duds, leave them here, and put on this suit I bought of thee, of which I make thee a present, and the mask. That done—do you mind me, for I cannot see thy face—go boldly into the ball-room: no one will gainsay thee, for thou wilt be known only by the dress that has been there all night, and saunter ostentatiously about among the best of them, but speak to none. This done, and well done, for a short time, then leave the room and hie thee back to Chatsworth the shortest way, where Lord Devonshire will see thee taken care of, and protected if necessary. Do this well, and I'll make thy fortune."

These arrangements were made with all the speed as well as decency permitted by the darkness, and as the Knight, equipped and armed for riding, stood by the door, his heart throbbed with anxiety, such as a gallant lover only feels when he has to guide and to protect the loved one through a scene of danger. Several guests came to the door, and stood and looked out upon the night. Some went away, and others returned to the room again; when among those going and returning, and lit up by the blaze of light within, the expected cloak was seen.

Sir John laid his hand upon Dorothy's, and drew her to the right of the doorway, as she came out beneath a dark yew, and with his arm round her waist conducted her noiselessly down the terrace to the wall, leaving the bower to the right; and as he approached it, the snort of more than one horse was heard close by in the park below. Here he paused, and bidding Dorothy stand by the wall, he slid down into the park; and when there, asked her to be seated on the wall, her feet to the park, and then to let herself down into his arms, and those assisting him. She did so: a few minutes more, and she was lifted to her saddle, and they proceeded with caution to the road over the hill, and mingled with the rear of other parties going away.

We must now return to the pedler. True to his orders, and to the hope of liberal reward if he enacted his part well, he contrived to press himself into the ball-room among some knights and others that had been bidding their friends and partners in the dance good-bye, and were returning to see the end of the affair, as the night was wearing late, and the room much cleared of its guests. In one of the turns which Jabesh took, on stopping short and turning round he was terrified at seeing the empty orbits of a death's head intently regarding him. The gaze, however, broke when the owner of the mask saw that he was observed, and Jabesh thought no more of it, though more than once he deemed that, by some unaccountable accident, the death's head was constantly at his heels.

"I don't like that ugly customer," murmured the pedler to himself; "and, somehows or other, hooks and tinsel! I'm troubled to my soul when I looks at him. Howsever, time's up, and I'll cut; so, good-bye, old death's head. And now for snug quarters and warm lining in Chatsworth's noble hall." As he said this he hastened to the door; but as some of the latest loiterers were there before him, he was delayed in getting through: at last, however, he found himself, by the light of a very small and waning moon, out in the park, and proceeding through the woods in the direction of Chatsworth.

The King of the Peak had been much amused and much taken up with his retiring guests as they unmasked before him and bade him adieu, and had constantly been looking for some surprise, intended, as he supposed, for him, by his daughter, when from behind some mask or from beneath some cloak her loved face and figure should appear. The guests, both male and female, grew much fewer, and still she came not; and at last he found himself alone, attended only by those that were staying with him.

"Who has seen Dorothy of late?" he asked among his friends; but nobody remembered to have seen her within the last hour or more.

"Hie thee," he said to one of his pages; "go to thy young lady's tire-woman and say, if her young mistress has not retired to rest, that I would speak to her."

The page returned, followed by the head waiting-woman evidently considerably alarmed, and Sir George Vernon was informed that the woman knew nothing of his daughter since in her last masquerading dress, and that was nearly two hours ago. The high-toned, proud soul of the King of the Peak, was up in arms; but, furious as the feeling was which beset him, he felt the presence of guests; and flinging from him with an immense effort any suspicions of an elopement, he bade the waiting-woman go seek her young mistress anywhere till she found her; and then, turning to his guests, with a wave of his hand he bade them a courtly good night, but marked enough to show he desired to be left alone.

Alone, in concentration of doubt at first, and then of rage, when servant after servant came to assure him his daughter was not in the house, the King of the Peak for a few moments remained inactive, as if stunned by the now too-well-authenticated news. At last, however, he came to himself, and ordering his own horse, and every man he had to mount and scour the country for the fugitives, and to cut down all opposition to her return if they overtook her, he went to change his attire, and to arm himself for vengeance.

In this phase of that strange night we must for the present leave him.

When Master Jabesh Tiddler sped from the door of the ball-room at Haddon Hall he looked up at the horns of the declining moon, and wished that planet had been at the full. However, not all the wishes of the world could alter the waning light in the skies; faint as it was, the pedler had to make the best of it. “Strange!” he said to himself; “though when I went into the ballroom I took no end of pulls at the best bellylining I ever come across, latches and laces! if my heart an’t got down again, as ’twas t’other night when them customers came to me in the wood. ’Fore heaven, I hopes as nothing will come of it!”

Was there no good witch or fairy believed in, in those old times, no benignant sign in the skies, to tell that poor unoffending man to turn back and rather lie at the door of the stables of the Hall till daylight, than go down into the dark dell before him? But no, there were none: he did as many a man has done since—he combated the melancholy but certain forebodings of his soul; he shut his ears to what, perhaps, were the benignant whisperings of Heaven, and down into the dark dell beneath the overhanging woods he descended; and as he turned in startled horror to look round at the sound of some hasty footfall close behind him, a terrible ring passed through his ears; the fire flew from his eyes, and in the momentary crash of his skull, in one throb of the brain, he knew, as he fell upon his face, that death was upon him, and that all suffering terminated.

The murderer [Gruson] knelt by the side of his victim, and groping for the body, placed that heavy hand on the now pulseless heart that he had only scared the day before, when stopping the pedler to question him as to who it was that bought the clothes in which the pedler had appeared at the Hall in the morning, and the murderer appeared to be satisfied. With this investigation as to death, the same hand then passed over the distorted face, and seemed to dwell upon the features; but the blow had done its office so well, that thence he could gain no information. The noise of horses and the jingle of arms coming down into the dell then came close upon him; he arose and ran to the right; but not knowing which way the thickest trees lay, he had taken to the more open vista, and the shoulder of a horse and the knee of the rider striking him on the side, he was dashed forcibly to the earth, and the rider crying a halt, dismounted and stood over him.

“Who art thou,” cried the voice of Will the deer-keeper, setting his foot upon the body of the fallen man to steady himself, as he had not yet got rid of the strong beer, “thus taken in the woods, in a ride that leads to nowhere? Get up, and I'll send thee back to Haddon.”

And "Halloo! who's here ?" cried the voice of another retainer. "God's my life!—here's a dead man, for he neither speaks nor moves, and smells of blood! Keep that other villain safe, for there's mischief a-foot, or my name's not Martin." These remarks were then very briefly brought to a close; for the prisoner, starting suddenly to his feet, aimed a blow at Will the deer-keeper with an old-fashioned battle-axe, brought from the decorations of the ball-room, which, striking Will's horse on the nose, sent him reeling among the other horses, and for a moment all was in the direst confusion. It was too dark for blows, so horses became entangled with each other, and hearing Will's cry to seize the villain, his comrades became locked in each other's arms, unable to distinguish friend from foe: but in the end, the silent, desperate attempts of one figure to be free, brought a concentration of force on what at first was an individual and indiscriminate struggle, and the stranger was secured.

By this time the crescent moon had waned before the first faint grey streaks of the winter's morn, and the brightening sky without a cloud gave light enough to make things visible in the soft, fresh, purified atmosphere of the young day, so that by drawing out the prisoner and the body from beneath the trees which marked the boundaries of the chases of Chatsworth and Haddon, the retainers were just enabled to note their ghastly capture, and to see that the attire of the slain was the same as that they had seen at the ball; and that their prisoner was a tall, dark-browed man, in a steel skullcap and half-armour, though he had not then a cloak attached to him nor any death's-head mark.

Leaving some of the men to cut down and arrange a litter for the body, Will then, having seen his prisoner disarmed and tightly secured with a cord, proceeded back with him to Haddon Hall, where he locked him up in the guard-room in the tower, sufficiently guarded by the retainers left on watch. The different parties sent to scour the country for the lost young lady one by one returned; and late that night, and last of all, the haughty Sir George Vernon. Crest-fallen, wearied in mind and body, with the sleepless exertion of the night before and his ride or raid of the day, Sir George retired to his room to hear the reports that were brought to him, glad to find that his guests had taken their departure and left him alone in his otherwise deserted Hall.

[Grantley Berkeley now tells the familiar tale of the King of the Peak administering justice upon the murderer of a pedler on or near the Vernon estates, though the actual circumstances were not related to John Manners or Dorothy Vernon.]

Having received the report of the capture of the stranger, found, under very suspicious circumstances, near a murdered man, Sir George ordered the supposed culprit to be brought before him on the following morning, while the body had been laid out in one of the rooms on the ground-floor,—the exact use of which rooms, or for what purposes they were used, unless for stables in times of danger, is to this day a mystery. There is a surface-drain running around them, which is scarcely to be otherwise accounted for. Dreadfully disfigured as the features were, no one recognised the poor pedler; all attention was riveted to the dress, which had constantly been seen the entire evening of the ball.

Sir George, still smarting under what he termed his family affliction, and in no mood to lean to the side of much investigation or mercy, sat on the dais of the great hall, and ordered the prisoner to be brought before him. Heavily handcuffed and firmly bound, a tall, dark man was ushered in, on either side of whom stood a retainer, with the short sword of the bowman drawn, and ready for use, to quell resistance. The statements having been made as to how, when, and where the capture was effected, the prisoner was put on his defence, and Sir George Vernon called upon him to account for his presence near the murdered man. In a dogged and deeply sullen, but collected tone, the prisoner replied,—"I was passing through the wood; I know of nothing that you call a murder, and I challenge the proof of my complicity in it by the production of any witness to the deed."

"Witness!" replied Sir George; "we have none: but circumstantial evidence is almost conclusive against you. Here!" he exclaimed to the guard, "conduct the prisoner thus in my presence to the body: we will see what testimony Heaven accords, though the tongue of man be mute."

Thus saying, Sir George rose and followed the guards with their prisoner whither he had desired. The door of the room was thrown open, and the light fell full on the sheet, stained here and there with blood, that screened the corpse from the air; the tramp of the many retainers who followed their "king" had ceased in its measured tread, and all was wrapped in profound silence; the guards advanced their prisoner to the foot of the bier, and Sir George, from the head of it, confronted the accused.

"Ere I withdraw the covering of the murdered dead," said Sir George Vernon, in a solemn, concentrated tone, "prisoner before me, what dost thou say,—art thou guilty or not guilty in taking the life of this fellow-creature, against the laws of our Queen and country? Say, ay or no?"

The prisoner had drawn himself up to his full height while his inquisitor thus addressed him, and with his keen, dark, flashing eyes fixed eagerly on the sheet, which he knew was about to be removed, rather as if in expectation of a sight he longed to see than one that should shock him, in a firm, unshaken, deep voice, replied,—"He who defends himself against the man who assails his more than life is no murderer. Murderer I am none;—raise up the sheet and test my truth, as God shall be my witness."

At a sign from Sir George Vernon a retainer drew away the cloth; the eyes of the prisoner flashed fire as he beheld the dress; the cloth had stuck to the features by the drying blood, and hung a moment to the head: then, with a sudden jerk, the face was exposed; some drops of blood followed, and, with a start, the prisoner fell on the stone floor as if he had had a crossbow bolt driven through the brain. He lay insensible till raised by the retainers and some water dashed in his face, when, utterly changed in look and manner, and even apparently shrunk in figure, in the weakest accents of tremulous despair he said,—

"I am, in truth, the murderer!"

"Away with him!" exclaimed the stern and quick administrator of justice; "away with him to some field near a public highway, where there is a befitting tree; or if no tree is there fit to bear such fruit, erect a gibbet, and hang the murderer, thus red-handed, on the spot! Away, I say, and see the execution done!"

The sentence was immediately carried into execution.

No sooner had the sentence been passed upon the murderer than the old crones of the village came, charmed with the order to wash and lay out the dead—a duty so much in accordance with their desires as to be a source of pleasurable satisfaction to them. While this undressing and "streeking" out the limbs was going on, the old woman engaged in washing the face let fall the basin in her hand, and shrieked—

"May Heaven be gracious, if it an't poor Master Tiddler the pedler! Well! well! who'd have thought of this being his end?"

The poor pedler, thus recognised by them, as he had been before by his murderer, who expected to have seen, when the sheet was removed, a far different face, was shortly after buried in the churchyard at Bakewell; while the field in which his murderer was hung, near the turnpike that now stands on the road to Bakewell, to this hour, and for that reason, bears the name of "Gallows Acre."

There is a slight obscurity whether this deed of summary justice was enacted in the close of Mary's reign or in the beginning of that of Elizabeth; but in either of these reigns it could scarcely be expected that a man should be hanged without a legal and sufficient trial, and hence, to answer for the deed, the King of the Peak was cited to appear in the Court at Westminster. On the day on which he received that summons, scouts brought him word that they had discovered the whereabout of the fugitives; and that they were resident with a female relation of Sir John Manners, not very far distant; to whose house the King of the Peak instantly repaired, with an armed party, to assist him in the recovery of his child.

What passed indoors—for Sir George Vernon was at once admitted—no one knows; but it ended by Sir George Vernon riding back to Haddon at the head of his followers, with two happy companions on either side his bridle-rein—his daughter and her betrothed husband; and intelligence having fled before, they were welcomed at the bridge across the Wye by the cheers of his assembled friends and retainers.

[Grantley Berkeley continues with the famous tale (maybe true, maybe not true) of Sir George at the Court in London.]

As to the summons to the Court of Westminster, Sir George, of course, attended; and the "crier of the Court" called thrice upon the "King of the Peak" "to appear," but without any response. He then called upon "Sir George Vernon, Knight," to "answer to his name;" when the clear, manly voice of the respondent exclaimed, "I am here." It would seem, then, that Sir George was much too good and powerful a man to be punished or even blamed too much. So the lawyers and the judges laid their heads together, and an error in the pleadings was set up and admitted: by which informality it was supposed that the summons and the charge alike, for the time being, fell to the ground. They were never amended or renewed. And so ended the last execution by the old Saxon law of Infang-thief and Outfang-thief; and as a Lord Berkeley was the last custodier of the public peace who hung a man at Bristol for "shooting a hare with a crossbow," so Sir George Vernon, at a more recent date, was the last justice who, on his own responsibility, hung a man for murder.

The King of the Peak lived many years after the transactions herein related; and at his death Sir John Manners, through his marriage with Dorothy Vernon, brought to the house of Rutland an immense accession of domain.

My strange guest had barely done imparting to me the groundwork of this tale when he suddenly started from his chair, and, looking to the window, crushed on his hat; and butting at the bars, proceeded to compress himself most wondrously through their narrow space. On alighting in the garden he waved with one hand respectfully to me, and pointed to the east with the other. At that moment the door of my apartment opened, and the rather drowsy voice of the excellent waiting-maid of the Peacock at Rowsley said, “Perhaps, sir, as it’s very late, you’ll be good enough to extinguish the light when you retire, and I need not sit up any longer.”

She retired: bottle and jug were alike empty; the candles were in their sockets. I must have been very dry; I must have drunk and dreamed: still, how came a vacant chair, and the table with a wine-glass near it, opposite to me? and what made the crack in the diamond window-pane, to the left of the window as you look into the pretty garden? It was unlikely that I should have placed a chair and glass, and broken a window in my sleep. It must have been a ghost!

END OF PART IV.
END OF STORY.