SIMON DALE.

A NEW STORY BY ANTHONY HOPE.

CHAPTER I.—THE CHILD OF PROPHECY.

One that was in his day a person of great place and consideration, and has left a name which future generations shall surely repeat so long as the world may last, found no better rule for a man's life than that he should incline his mind to move in charity, rest in Providence, and turn upon the poles of truth. This condition, says he, is heaven upon earth, and although what touches truth may better befit the philosopher who uttered it than the vulgar and unlearned, for whom, perhaps, it is a counsel too high, and therefore dangerous, what comes before should surely be graven by each of us on the walls of our hearts. For any man who lived in the days that I have seen must have found much need of trust in Providence, and by no whit the less of charity for men. In such trust and charity I have striven to write; in the like I pray you to read.

I, Simon Dale, was born on the seventh day of the seventh month in the year of our Lord 1647. The date was good in that the divine number was thrice found in it, but evil in that it fell on a time of sore trouble both for the nation and for our own house; when men had begun to go about saying that if the king would not keep his promises, it was likely that he would keep his head as little, when they who had fought for freedom were suspecting that victory had brought new tyrants, when the vicar was put out of his cure, and my father, having trusted the king first, the Parliament afterward, and at last neither the one nor the other, had lost the greater part of his substance, and fallen from wealth to straitened means. Such is the common reward of an honest patriotism wedded to an open mind. However the date, good or bad, was none of my doing, nor, indeed, folks whispered, much of my parents, either, seeing that destiny overruled the affair, and Betty Nasroth, the wise woman, announced its imminence more than a year beforehand. For she predicted the birth on the very day whereon I came into the world within a mile of the parish church of a male child who—and the utterance had certainly a lofty sound about it—should love what the king loved, know what the king bid, and drink of the king's cup.

Now, inasmuch as none lived within the limits named by Betty Nasroth, save on the one side sundry humble laborers, whose progeny could expect no such fate, and on the other my Lord and Lady Quinton, who were wedded but a month before my birthday, the prophecy was fully as pointed as it had any need to be, and caused to my parents no small questionings. It was the third clause or term of the prediction that gave most concern alike to my mother and to my father; to my mother because, although of discreet mind and a sound church woman, she was from her earliest years a rechabite, and had never heard of a king that drank water; and to my father because of his decayed estate, which made it impossible for him to contrive how properly to fit me for my predestined company. "A man should not drink the king's wine without giving the king as good," my father reflected ruefully. Meanwhile, I, troubling not at all about the matter, was content to prove Betty right in point of the date, and leaving the rest to the future, achieved this triumph for her most punctually. Whatsoever may await a man on his way through the world, he can hardly begin life better than by keeping his faith with a lady.

She was a strange old woman, this Betty Nasroth, and would likely enough have fared badly in the time of the king's father. Now there was bigger game than witches afoot, and nothing worse befel her than the scowls of her neighbors and the frightened mockery of children. She made free reply with curses and dark mutterings, but me she loved as being the child of her vision, and all the more because, encountering her as I rode in my mother's arms, I did not cry but hold out my arms, crowing and struggling to get to her; whereon suddenly, and to my mother's great terror, she exclaimed, "Thou see'st Satan!" and fell to weeping, a thing which, as every woman in the parish knew, a person absolutely possessed by the evil one can by no means accomplish (unless, indeed, a bare three drops squeezed from the left eye may usurp the name of tears).

But my mother shrank from her and would not allow her to touch me; nor was it until I had grown older and ran about the village alone that the old woman, having tracked me to a lonely spot, took me in her arms, mumbled over my head some words I did not understand and kissed me. That a mole grows on the spot she kissed is but a fable—for how do the women know where her kiss

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fell save by where the mole grows? And that is to reason poorly—or at the most the purest chance. Nay, if it were more I am content, for the mole does me no harm, and the kiss, as I hope, did Betty some good; off she went straight to the vicar (who was living then in the cottage of my Lord Quinton's gardener and exercising his sacred functions in a secrecy to which the whole parish was privy) and prayed him to let her partake of the Lord's supper; a request that caused great scandal to the neighbors and sore embarrassment to the vicar himself, who, being a learned man and deeply read in demonology, grieved from his heart that the witch did not play her part better.

"It is," said he to my father, "a monstrous lapse."

"Nay, it is a sign of grace," urged my mother.

"It is," said my father (and I do not know whether he spoke perversely or in earnest) "a matter of no moment."

Now, being steadfastly determined that my boyhood shall be less tedious in the telling than it was in the living—for I longed always to be a man and hated my green and petticoat-governed days—I will pass forthwith to the hour when I reached the age of 18 years. My dear father was then in heaven and old Betty had found, as was believed, another billet. But my mother lived, and the vicar, like the king, had come to his own again, and I was five feet eleven in my stockings, and there was urgent need that I should set about pushing my way and putting money in my purse; for our lands had not returned with the king and there was no more incoming than might serve to keep my mother and sisters in the estate of gentlewomen.

"And on that matter," observed the vicar, stroking his nose with his forefinger, as his habit was in moments of perplexity, "Betty Nasroth's prophecy is of small service. For the doings on which she touches are likely to be occasions of expense rather than sources of gain."

"They would be money wasted," said my mother, gently, "one and all of them."

The vicar looked a little doubtful.

"I will write a sermon on that theme," said he, for this was with him a favorite way out of an argument. In truth, the vicar loved the prophecy, as often a quiet student loves a thing that echoes of the world which he has shunned.

"You must write down for me what the king says to you, Simon," he told me once.

"Suppose, sir," I suggested, mischievously, "that it should not be fit for your eye?"

"Then write it, Simon," he answered, pinching my ear, "for my understanding."

It was well enough for the vicar's whimsical fancy to busy himself with Betty Nasroth's prophecy, half-believing, half-mocking, never forgetting, nor disregarding, but I, who am—after all—the most concerned, doubt whether such a dark utterance be a wholesome thing to have round a young man's neck. The dreams of youth grow rank enough without such watering. The prediction was always in my mind, alluring and tantalizing as a teasing girl who puts her pretty face near yours, safe that you dare not kiss it. What it said I mused on, what is said not I neglected. I dedicated my idle hours to it, and not appeased, it invaded my seasons of business. Rather than seek my own path, I left myself to its will and hearkened for its whispered orders.

"It was the same," observed my mother, sadly, "with a certain cook maid of my sister's. It was foretold that she should marry her master."

"And did she not?" cried the vicar, with ears all pricked up.

"She changed her service every year," said my mother, "seeking the likeliest man, until at last none would hire her."

"She should have stayed in her first service," said the vicar, shaking his head.

"But her first master had a wife," retorted my mother, triumphantly.

"I had one once myself," said the vicar.

The argument, with which his widowhood supplied the vicar, was sound and unanswerable, and it suited well with my humor to learn from my mother's cook maid and wait patiently on fate. But what avails an argument, be it ever so sound, against an empty purse? It was declared that I must seek my fortune, yet on the method of my search some difference arose.

"You must work, Simon," said my sister Lucy, who was betrothed to Justice Bayhard, a young squire of good family and high repute, but mighty hard on idle vagrants and free with the stocks for revellers.

"You must pray for guidance," said my sister Mary, who was wedded to a saintly clergyman, a prebend, too, of the cathedral.

"There is," said I, stoutly, "nothing of such matters in Betty Nasroth's prophecy."

"They are taken for granted, dear boy," said my mother, gently.

The vicar rubbed his nose.

Yet not these excellent and zealous counselors proved right, but the vicar and I. For had I gone to London as they urged instead of abiding where I was, agreeably to the vicar's argument and my own inclination, it is a great question whether the plague would not have proved too strong for Betty Nasroth, and her prediction gone to lie with me in a death pit.

As things befel, I lived, hearing only dimly, and, as it were, from afar off of that great calamity and of the horrors that best the city. For the disease did not come our way, and we moralized on the sins of the town folk with sound bodies and contented minds. We were happy in our health and in our virtue, and not disinclined to applaud God's judgment that smote our erring brethren, for too often the chastisement of one sinner feeds another's pride. Yet the plague bid a hand, and no small one, in that destiny of mine, although it came not near me, for it brought fresh tenants to those same rooms in the gardener's cottage where the vicar had dwelt till the loyal Parliament's act proved too hard for the conscience of our independent minister, and the vicar, nothing loth, moved back to his parsonage.

Now, I was walking one day, as I had full license and leave to walk, in the avenue of Quinton manor, when I saw, first, what I had (if I am to tell the truth) come to see, to wit, the figure of young Mistress Barbara, daintily arrayed in a white summer gown. Barbara was pleased to hold herself haughtily toward me, for she was an heiress and of a house that had not fallen in the world as bad as mine had. Yet we were friends, for we sparred and rallied, she giving offense, and I taking it, she pardoning my rudeness and I accepting forgiveness, while my lord and my lady, perhaps, thinking me too low for fear, and yet high enough for favor, showed me much kindness. My lord, indeed, would often jest with me on the great fate foretold me in Betty Nasroth's prophecy.

"Yet," he would say, with a twinkle in his eye, "the king has strange secrets, and there is some strange wine in his cup, and to love what he loves—" but at this point the vicar, who chanced to be by, twinkled also, but shifted the conversation to some theme which did not touch the king, his secrets, his wine, or what he loved.

Thus then I saw, as I say, the slim, tall figure, the dark hair and the proud eyes of Barbara Quinton; and the eyes were flashing in anger as their owner turned away from—what I had not looked to see in Barbara's company. This was another damsel, of lower stature and plumper figure, dressed full as prettily as Barbara herself, and laughing with most merry lips and under eyes that half hid themselves in an eclipse of mirth. When Barbara saw me she did not, as her custom was, feign not to see me till I thrust my presence on her, but ran to me at once, crying very indignantly, "Simon, who is this girl? She has dared to tell me that my gown is of country make, and hangs like an old smock on a beanpole."

"Mistress Barbara," I answered, "who heeds the make of the gown when the wearer is of divine make?" I was young then and did not know that to compliment herself at the expense of her apparel is not the best way to please a woman.

"You are silly," said Barbara. "Who is she?"

"The girl," I said, crestfallen, "is, they tell me, from London, and she lodges with her mother in your gardener's cottage. But I didn't look to find her here in the avenue."

"You shall not again, if I have my way," said Barbara. Then she added abruptly and sharply, "Why do you look at her?"

Now it was true that I was looking at the stranger, and on Barbara's question I looked the harder.

"She is mighty pretty," said I. "Does she not seem so to you, Mistress Barbara?" And, simple though I was, I spoke not altogether in simplicity.

"Pretty?" echoed Barbara. "And pray what do you know of prettiness, Master Simon?"

"What I have learned at Quinton manor," I answered with a bow.

"That doesn't prove her pretty," retorted the angry lady.

"There's more than one way of it," said I, discreetly, and I took a step toward the visitor, who stood some ten yards from us, laughing still and plucking a flower to pieces in her fingers.

"She is not known to you?" asked Barbara, perceiving my movement.

"I can remedy that," said I, smiling.

Never since the world began had youth been a more faithful servant to maid than I to Barbara Quinton. Yet, because, if a man lie down, the best of girls will set her pretty foot on his neck, and also from my love of a thing that is new, I was thoroughly resolved to accost the gardener's guest, and my purpose was not altered by Barbara's scornful toss of her little head as she turned away.

"It is no more than civility," I protested, "to ask after her health, for, coming from London, she can but just have escaped the plague."

Barbara tossed her head again, declaring plainly her opinion of my excuse.

"But if you desire me to walk with you—" I began.

"There is nothing I thought of less," she interrupted. "I came here to be alone."

"My pleasure lies in obeying you," said I, and I stood bareheaded while Barbara, without another glance at me, walked off toward the house. Half penitent, yet wholly obstinate, I watched her go. She did not once look over her shoulder. Had she—but a truce to that. What passed is enough; with what might have my story would stretch to the world's end. I smothered my remorse and went up to the stranger, bidding her good-day in my most polite and courtly manner. She smiled, but at what I knew not. She seemed little more than a child, 16 years old or 17 at the most, yet there was no confusion in her greeting of me. Indeed, she was most marvelously at her ease, for on my salute she cried, lifting her hands in feigned amazement:

"A man, by my faith, a man in this place!"

Well pleased to be called a man, I bowed again.

"Or at least," she added, "what will be one if it please heaven."

"You may live to see it without growing wrinkled," said I, striving to conceal my annoyance.

"And one that has repartee in him! Oh marvelous!"

"We do not all lack wit in the country, madam," said I, simpering as I supposed the court gallants to simper, "nor since the plague came to London beauty."

"Indeed, it's wonderful," she cried in

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mock admiration. "Do they teach such sayings hereabouts, sir?"

"Even so, madam, and from such books as your eyes furnish." And for all her air of mockery I was, as I remember, much pleased with this speech. It had come from some well-thumbed romance, I doubt not. I was ever an eager reader of such silly things.

She courtesied low, laughing up at me with roguish eyes and mouth.

"Now, surely, sir," she said, "you must be Simon Dale, of whom my host, the gardener, speaks."

"It is my name, madam, at your service. But the gardener has played me a trick; for now I have nothing to give in exchange for your name."

"Nay, you have a very pretty nosegay in your hand," said she. "I might be persuaded to barter my name for it."

The nosegay that was in my hand I had gathered and brought for Barbara Quinton, and I still meant to use it as a peace offering. But Barbara had treated me harshly, and the stranger looked I ingingly at the nosegay.

"The gardener is a niggard with his flowers," she said with a coaxing smile.

"To confess the truth," said I, wavering in my purpose, "the nosegay was plucked for another."

"It will smell the sweeter," she cried with a laugh. "Nothing gives flowers such a perfume." And she held out a wonderfully small hand toward my nosegay.

"Is that a London less n?" I asked, holding the flowers away from her grasp.

"It holds good in the country, also, sir; wherever, indeed, there is a man to gather flowers and more than one lady who loves smelling them."

"Well," said I, "the nosegay is yours at the price," and I held it out to her.

"The price? What, do you desire to know my name?"

"Unless, indeed, I may call you one of my own choosing," said I with a glance that should have been irresistible.

"Would you use it in speaking of me to Mistress Barbara there? No. I'll give you a name to call me by. You may call me Cydaria."

"Cydaria! A fine name."

"It is," said she carelessly, "as good as any other."

"But is there no other to follow it?"

"When did a poet ask two names to head his sonnet? And surely you wanted mine for a sonnet?"

"So be it, Cydaria, said I.

"So be it, Simon. And is not Cydaria as pretty as Barbara?"

"It has a strange sound," said I, "but it is well enough."

"And now—the nosegay!"

"I must pay a reckoning for this," I sighed; but since a bargain is a bargain, I gave her the nosegay.

She took it, her face all alight with smiles, and buried her nose in it. I stood looking at her, caught by her pretty ways and graceful boldness. Boy though I was, I had been right in telling her that there are many ways of beauty; here were two to start with, hers and Barbara's. She looked up and, finding my gaze on her, made a little grimace as though it were only what she had expected, and gave her no more concern than pleasure.

Yet at such a look Barbara would have turned cold and distant for an hour or more. Cydaria, smiling in scornful indulgence, dropped me another mocking courtesy, and made as though she would go her way. Yet she did not go, but stood with her head half averted, a glance straying toward me from the corner of her eye, while with her tiny foot she dug the gravel of the avenue.

"It is a lovely place this park," said she. "But indeed it's often hard to find the way about it."

I was not backward to take her hint.

"If you had a guide, now—" I began.

"Why, yes, if I had a guide, Simon," she whispered, gleefully.

"You could find the way, Cydaria, and your guide would be most—"

"Most charitably engaged. But then—" she paused, drooping the corners of her mouth in sudden despondency.

"But what then?"

"Why, then, Mistress Barbara would be alone."

I hesitated. I glanced toward the house. I looked at Cydaria.

"She told me that she wished to be alone," said I.

"No. How did she say it?"

"I will tell you all about that as we go along," said I, and Cydaria laughed again.

CHAPTER II.—THE WAY OF YOUTH.

The debate is years old; not, indeed, quite so old as the world since Adam and Eve cannot, for want of opportunity, have fallen out over it, yet descending to us from unknown antiquity. But it has never yet been set at rest by general consent. The quarrel over passive obedience is nothing to it. It seems such a small matter, though, for the debate I mean turns on no greater question than this: May a man who owes allegiance to one lady justify by any train of reasoning his conduct in snatching a kiss from another, this other being (for it is important to have the terms right) not (so far as can be judged) unwilling? I maintained that he might. To be sure, my position admitted of no other argument, and, for the most part, it is a man's state which determines his arguments and not his reasons that induce his state.

Barbara declared that he could not, though, to be sure, it was, as she added most promptly, no concern of hers, for she cared not whether I were in love or not, nor how deeply, nor with whom, nor, in a word, anything at all about the matter.

It was an abstract opinion she gave, so far as love or what men choose to call such, might be involved; as to seemliness she must confess that she had her view with which, maybe, Mr. Dale was not in agreement. The girl at the gardener's cottage must, she did not doubt, agree wholly with Mr. Dale; how otherwise would she have suffered the kiss in an open space in the park, where anybody might pass—and where in fact (by the most perverse chance in the world) pretty Miss Barbara herself passed at the moment when the thing occurred? However, if the matter could ever have had the smallest interest for her—save in so far as it touched the reputation of the village and might afford an evil example to the village maidens—it could have none at all now, seeing that she set out the next day to London, to take her place as maid of honor to her royal highness, the duchess, and would have as little leisure as inclination to think of Mr. Simon Dale or of how he chose to amuse himself when he believed that none was watching. Not that she had watched; her presence was of the purest and most unwelcome chance. Yet she could not but be glad to hear that the girl was soon to go back whence she came, to the great relief (she was sure) of Madam Dale and of her dear friends, Lucy and Mary; to her love for whom nothing—no, nothing—should make any difference. For the girl herself she wished no harm, but she conceived that her mother must be ill at ease concerning her.

It will be allowed that Mistress Barbara had the most of the argument, if not the best. Indeed, I found little to say, except that the village would be the worse by so much as the Duchess of York was the better for Mistress Barbara's departure. The civility won me nothing but the haughtiest courtesy and a taunt.

"Must you rehearse your pretty speeches on me before you venture them on your friends, sir?" she asked.

"I am at your mercy, Mistress Barbara," I pleaded. "Are we to part enemies?"

She made me no answer, but I seemed to see a softening in her face as she turned away toward the window, whence were to be seen the stretch of the lawn and the park meadows beyond. I believe that with a little more coaxing she would have pardoned me, but at that instant, by another stroke of perversity, a small figure sauntered across the sunny fields. The fairest sights may sometimes come amiss.

"Cydaria! A fine name," said Barbara, with curling lip. "I'll wager she has reasons for giving no other."

"Her mother gives another to the gardener," I reminded her meekly.

"Names are as easy given as—as kisses," she retorted. "As for Cydaria, my lord says it is a name out of a play."

All this while we had stood at the window, watching Cydaria's light feet trip across the meadow, and her bonnet swing wantonly in her hand. But now Cydaria disappeared among the trunks of the beech trees.

"See, she is gone," said I in a whisper. "She is gone, Mistress Barbara."

Barbara understood what I would say, but she was resolved to show me no gentleness. The soft tones of my voice had been for her, but she would not accept their homage.

"You need not sigh for that before my face," said she. "And yet sigh if you will. What is it to me? But she is not gone far, and, doubtless, will not run too fast when you pursue."

"When you are in London," said I, "you will think with remorse how ill you used me."

"I shall never think of you at all. Do you forget that there are gentlemen of wit and breeding at the court?"

"The devil fly away with every one of them!" cried I, suddenly, not knowing then how well the better part of them would match their escort.

Barbara turned to me; there was a gleam of triumph in the depths of her dark eyes.

"Perhaps when you hear of me at court," she cried, "you'll be sorry to think how—"

But she broke off suddenly and looked out of the window.

"You'll find a husband there," I suggested bitterly.

"Like enough," she said carelessly.

To be plain, I was in no happy mood. Her going grieved me to the heart, and that she should go thus incensed stung me more yet. I was jealous of every man in London town; had not my argument, then, some reason in it, after all?

"Fare you well, madame," said I with a heavy frown and a sweeping bow. No player from the Lane could have been more tragic.

"Fare you well, sir. I will not detain you, for you have, I know, other farewells to make."

"Not for a week yet!" I cried, goaded to a show of exultation that Cydaria stayed so long.

"I don't doubt that you will make good use of the time," she said, as with a fine dignity she waved me to the door. Girl as she was, she had caught or inherited the grand air that great ladies use.

Gloomily I passed out, to fall into the hands of my lord, who was walking on the terrace. He caught me by the arm, laughing in good-humored mockery.

"You've had a touch of sentiment, eh, you rogue?" said he. "Well, there's little harm in that, since the girl leaves us tomorrow."

"Indeed, my lord, there was little harm," said I, long faced and ruefull. "As little as my lady herself could wish." (At this he smiled and nodded.) "Mistress Barbara will hardly so much as look at me."

He grew graver, though the smile still hung about his lips.

"They gossip about you in the village, Simon," said he. "Take a friend's counsel and don't be so much with the lady at the cottage. Come, I don't speak without reason." He nodded at me as a man nods who means more than he will say. Indeed, not a word more would he say, so that when I left him I was even more angry than when I parted from his daughter. And the nature of man being such as heaven has made it, what need to say that I bent my steps to the cottage with all convenient speed? The only weapon of an ill-used lover (nay, I will not argue the merits of the case again) was ready to my hand.

Yet my impatience availed little, for there, on the seat that stood by the door, sat my good friend the vicar, discoursing in pleasant leisure with the lady who named herself Cydaria.

"It is true, he was saying. "I fear it is true, though you're ever young to have learned it."

"There are schools, sir," she returned with a smile that had (or so it seemed to me) a touch—no more—of bitterness it it, "where such lessons are early learned."

"They are best let alone, those schools," said he.

"And what's the lesson?" I asked, drawing nearer.

Neither answered. The vicar rested his hands on the ball of his cane and suddenly began to relate old Betty Nasroth's prophecy to his companion. I cannot tell what led his thoughts to it, but it was never far from his mind when I was by. She listened with attention, smiling brightly in whimsical amusement when the fateful words, pronounced with due solemnity, left the vicar's lips.

"It is a strange saying," he ended, "of which time alone can show the truth."

She glanced at me with merry eyes, yet with a new sort of interest. It is strange the hold these superstitions have on all of us; though surely the future ages will outgrow such childishness."

"I don't know what the prophecy means," said she, "yet one thing at least would seem needful for its fulfilment—that Mr. Dale should become acquainted with the king."

"True," cried the vicar eagerly. "Everything stands on that, and on that we stick. For Simon cannot love where the king loves, nor know what the king hides, nor drink of the king's cup, if he abide all his days here in Hatchstead. Come, Simon, the plague is gone!"

"Should I, then, be gone, too?" I asked. "Yet to what end? I have no friends in London who would bring me to the notice of the king."

The vicar shook his head sadly. I had no such friends, and the king had proved before now that he could forget many a better friend to the throne than my dear father's open mind had made of him.

"We must wait, we must wait still," said the vicar. "Time will find a friend."

Cydaria had become pensive for a moment, but she looked up now, smiling again, and said to me:

"You'll soon have a friend in London."

Thinking of Barbara, I answered gloomily, "She's no friend of mine."

"I did not mean whom you mean," said Cydaria with twinkling eyes and not a whit put out. "But I also am going to London."

I smiled, for it did not seem as though she would be a powerful friend, or able to open any way for me. But she met my smile with another so full of confidence and challenge that my attention was wholly caught, and I did not heed the vicar's farewell as he rose and left us.

"And would you serve me," I asked, "if you had the power?"

"Nay, put the question as you think it," said she. "Would you have the power to serve me if you had the will? Is not that the doubt in your mind?"

"And if it were?"

"Then, indeed, I do not know how to answer, but strange things happen there in London, and it may be that some day even I should have some power."

"And would you use it for me?"

"Could I do less on behalf of a gentleman who has risked his mistress's favor for my poor cheek's sake?" And she fell to laughing again, her mirth growing greater as I went red in the face. "You mustn't blush when you come to town," she cried, "or they'll make a ballad on you and cry you in the streets for a monster."

"The offence comes the cause the rarer shall the effect be," said I.

"The excuse is well put," she conceded. "We should make a wit of you in town."

"What do you do in town?" I asked squarely, looking her full in the eyes.

"Perhaps sometimes," she laughed, "what I have done once—and to your good knowledge—since I came to the country."

Thus she would baffle me with jesting answers as often as I sought to find out who and what she was. Nor had I better fortune with her mother, for whom I had small liking, and who had, as it seemed, no more for me. For she was short in her talk, and frowned to see me with her daughter. Yet she saw me, I must confess, often with Cydaria in the next few days, and I was often with Cydaria when she did not see me. For Barbara was gone, leaving me both sore and lonely, all in the mood to find comfort where I could, and to see manliness in desertion; and there was a charm about the girl that grew on me insensibly and without my will, until I came to love, not her (as I believed) forgetting that love loves not to mark his boundaries too strictly), but her merry temper, her wit and cheerfulness. However, these things were mingled and spiced with others, more attractive than all to unfledged youth, an air of the world and a knowledge of life which piqued my curiosity, and sat (it seems so even to my late mind as I look back) with bewitching incongruity on the laughing child's face and the nurse grace of girlhood. Her moods were endless, vying with one another in an ever undetermined struggle for the prize of greatest mirth passing into sly raillery. Now and then she would turn sad, sighing, "Heigho, that I could stay in the sweet, innocent country." Or again she would show or ape an uneasy conscience, whispering, "Ah, that I were like your Mistress Barbara." The next moment she would be laughing and jesting and mocking, as though life were naught but a great many-colored bubble, and she the brightest tinted gleam on it.

Are women so constant and men so forgetful that all sympathy must go from me, and all esteem be forfeited because, being of the age of 18 years, I vexed to live for one lady only on a Monday, and was ready to die for another on the Saturday? Look back, how your heads and give me your hands, to kiss or clasp.

Let not you and I inquire
What has been our past desire,
On what shepherds you have smiled,
Or what nymphs have I beguiled,
Leave it to the planets, too,
What we shall hereafter do;
For the joys we may now prove,
Take advice of present love.

Nay, I will not set my name to that in its fulness; Mr. Waller is a little too free for one who has been nicknamed a Puritan to follow him to the end. Yet there is no truth in it. Deny it, if you will. You are smiling, madame, while you deny.

It was a golden summer's evening when I, to whom the golden world was all a hell, came by tryst to the park of Quinton manor, there to bid Cydaria farewell. Mother and sisters had looked askance at me, the village gossiped, even the vicar shook a kindly head. What cared I? By heaven, why was one man a nobleman and rich, while another had no money in his purse and but one change to his back? Was not love all in all, and why did Cydaria laugh at a truth so manifest? There she was under the beech tree, with her sweet face screwed up to a burlesque of grief, her little hand lying on her hard heart as though it beat for me, and her eyes the playground of a thousand quick expressions. I strode up to her and caught her by the hand, saying no more than just her name, "Cydaria." It seemed that there was no more to say; yet she cried, laughing and reproachful: "Have you no vows for me? Must I go without my tribute?"

I loosed her hand and stood away from her. On my soul, I could not speak. I was tongue-tied, dumb as a dog.

"When you come courting in London," she said, "I am glad to be going where lovers are less woebegone."

"You look for lovers in London?" I cried, that had cried to Barbara—well, I have said my say on that.

"If heaven sent them," answered Cydaria.

"And you will forget me?"

"In truth, yes, unless you come yourself to remind me. I have no head for absent lovers."

"But if I come—" I began, in a sudden flush of hope.

She did not, though it was her custom, answer in raillery. She plucked a leaf from the tree and tore it with her fingers as she answered with a curious glance.

"Why, if you come, I think you'll wish that you had not come, unless, indeed, you've forgotten me before you come."

"Forget you! Never while I live! May I come, Cydaria?"

"Most certainly, sir, so soon as your wardrobe and your purse allow. Nay, don't be huffed. Come, Simon, sweet Simon, are we not friends, and may not friends rally one another? No, and if I choose, I will put my hand through your arm. Indeed, sir, you're the first gentleman that ever thrust it that way. See, it is there now. Doesn't it look well there, Simon—and feel well there, Simon?" She looked up into my face in coaxing apology for the hurt she had given me, and yet still with mockery of my tragic airs. "Yes, you must by all means come to London," she went on, patting my arm. "Is not Mistress Barbara in London? And I think—am I wrong, Simon?—that there is something for which you will want to ask her pardon."

"If I come to London, it is for you, and you only that I shall come," I cried.

"No, no. You will come to love what the king loves, to know what he hides, and to drink of his cup. I, sir, cannot interfere with your destiny," she drew away from me, courtesied low, and stood opposite to me, smiling.

"For you and for you only," I repeated.

"Then will the king love me?" she asked.

"Gor forbid," said I fervently.

"O, and why pray, your 'God forbid?' You're very ready with your 'God forbids.' Am I, then, to take your love sooner than the king's, Master Simon?"

"Mine is an honest love," said I, soberly.

"O, I should dote on the country, did not everybody talk of his honesty there. I have seen the king in London, and he is a fine gentleman."

"And you have seen the queen also, maybe?"

"In truth, yes. Ah, I have shocked you, Simon? Well, I was wrong. Come, we're in the country, we'll be good. But when we've made a townsman of you, we'll—we will be what they are in town. Moreover, in ten minutes I am going home, and it would be hard if I left you in anger. You shall have a pleasanter memory of my going than Mistress Barbara left you."

"How shall I find you when I come to town?"

"Why, if you ask any gentleman you meet whether he chance to remember Cydaria, you will find me as soon as it is well you should."

I prayed her to tell me more, but she was resolved to tell no more.

"See, it is late. I go," said she. Then suddenly she came near to me. "Poor Simon," she said softly. "Yet it is good for you, Simon. Some day you will be amused at this, Simon." She spoke as though she were fifty years older than I. My answer lay not in words or arguments. I caught her in my arms and kissed her. She struggled, yet she laughed. It shot through my mind then that Barbara would never have struggled nor laughed. But Cydaria laughed.

Presently I let her go, and kneeling on my knee kissed her hand very humbly as though she had been what Barbara was. If she were not—and I knew not what she was—yet should my love exalt her and make a throne whereon she might sit a queen. My new posture brought a sudden gravity to her face, and she bent over me with a smile that seemed now tender and almost sorrowful.

"Poor Simon, poor Simon," she whispered. "Kiss my hand now, kiss it as though I were fit for worship. It will do you no harm and—and, perhaps—perhaps I shall like to remember it." She leaned down and kissed my forehead as I knelt before her. "Poor Simon," she whispered, as her hair brushed mine. Then her hand was gradually and gently withdrawn. I looked up to see her face; her lips were smiling, but there seemed a dew on her lashes. She laughed, and the laugh ended in a little gasp, as though a sob had fought with it. And she cried out loud, her voice ringing clear among the trees in the still evening air.

"That ever I should be so sore a fool!"

Then she turned and left me, running swiftly over the grass with never a look behind her. I watched till she was out of sight and then sat down on the ground with twitching lips and wide-open dreary eyes.

Ah, for youth's happiness! Alas for its dismal woe! Thus came she into my life.

(To Be Continued.)

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