thrust to take advantage of the comforting fire, and the blaze showed her cheek a ruddier hue than heretofore.

"Sir," she said, "I was brought up without a mother's care in the ancient hall of a sour old grandfather, my brother my only companion. I can sometimes outfence him and, failing that, I can always outrun him. Any horse he can ride I can ride, and we two have before now put to flight three times our number of the yokels of the neighborhood. As to education I have a smattering and can read and write. I have studied music to some advantage and foreign tongues with very little. I daresay there are many things known to your London ladies that I am ignorant of."

"We may thank God for that," muttered the earl.

The conversation was interrupted by a servant throwing open the door, crying:

"His majesty, the king!"

The girl sprang instantly to her feet, while her father rose more slowly, assisting himself with his hands on the arms of the chair.

CHAPTER III.
Majesty.

There was more of hurry than of kingly dignity in the entrance of Charles. The handsome face was marred by an imperious querulousness that, for the moment, detracted from its acknowledged nobility.

"Strafford," he cried, impatiently, "I have been kept waiting. Servants are at this moment searching palace and park for you. Where have you been?"

"I was in the forest, your majesty. I am deeply grieved to learn that you needed me."

"I never needed you more than now. Are you ready to travel?"

Strafford's gloomy face almost lighted up.

"On the instant, your majesty," he replied with a sigh of relief.

"That is well. I trust your malady is alleviated, in some measure at least, still I know that sickness has never been a bar to duty with you. Yet I ask no man to do what I am not willing to do myself for the good of the state, and I shall be shortly on the road at your heels."

"Whither, your majesty?" asked the earl with falling countenance, for it was to Ireland he desired to journey, and he knew the king had no intention of moving toward the west.

"To London, of course; a short stent over bad roads. But if you are ailing and fear the highway, a barge on the river is at your disposal."

"To London?" echoed the earl, something almost akin to dismay in his tone. "I had hoped your majesty would order me to Ireland, which I assure your majesty has been somewhat neglected of late."

"Yes, yes," exclaimed the king, brusquely, "I know your anxiety in that quarter. A man ever thinks that task the most important with which he intimately deals, but my position gives me a view over the whole realm, and the various matters of state assume their just proportions in my eyes, their due relations to each other. Ireland is well enough, but it is the heart and not the limbs of the empire that requires the physician's care. Parliament has opened badly, and is like to give trouble unless treated with a firm hand."

The hand of the earl appeared anything but firm. It wavered as it sought the support of the chair's arm.

"Have I your majesty's permission to be seated? I am not well," Strafford said faintly.

"Surely, surely," cried the king, himself taking a chair. "I am deeply grieved to see you so unwell, but a journey to London is a small matter compared with a march upon Dublin, which is like to have killed you in your present condition."

Indeed, your majesty, the smaller journey may well have the more fatal termination," murmured the earl, but the king paid no attention to the remark, for his wandering eye now caught sight of a third in the conference, which brought surprised displeasure to his brow. The girl was standing behind the high back of the chair in which she had been seated, in a gloomy angle where the firelight which played so plainly on the king and Strafford did not touch her.

"In God's name, whom have we here? How comes this girl in my palace, so intimate with my Lord Strafford?"

The slumbering suspicion of Charles was aroused.

"She brings me proof, which I cannot deny, that she is my eldest daughter."

"Your eldest daughter!" cried the king, amazed. "Is your family, then, so far unknown to you that such a claimant may spring up at any time?"

"I was married privately to the daughter of Sir John Warburton. Circumstances separated me from my wife, and although her father informed me curtly of her death, he said nothing of issue."

"Well," said Charles. "My Lord Strafford," he continued, reverting to his subject, "you will go to London, then?"

"Instantly, your majesty."

"I will consult with you there tomorrow. And have no fear, for on my oath as a man, on my honor as a king, I will protect you."

The king rose and left the room as abruptly as he had entered it.

Strafford ordered the coach, and fell into a reverie that lasted till the servant announced that it was ready. Then he ordered a woman's cloak brought for Frances, and himself fastened it at her throat.

Together they want down the dimly lighted steps. A cavalier stepped from the shadow of the arches and Frances recognized him as the French spark whom she had so frankly characterized earlier in the day.

"My lord," protested De Courcy, jauntily, "you have your comrades at a disadvantage. "You have captured the woodland nymph. I do protest 'tis most unfair to us."

"Sir," said Strafford, with severity. "I would have you know that the lady to whom you refer is the Honorable Frances Wentworth, my eldest daughter."

The Frenchman brought off his bonnet with an impressive sweep that brushed its ample feather lightly on the stones.

"My lady, may I have the honor of escorting you to the carriage?

The girl shrank closer to her father, and made no reply. The earl bowed stiffly, but offered no objection, and the foreigner tripped daintily by her side, chattering most amiably of the queen and her proposed visit to London on the morrow.

On their arrival at the carriage, the earl seated himself in the closed vehicle, and his daughter sprang nimbly in beside him, ignoring the proffered aid of De Courcy. Nothing was said until the jingling procession of carriage and mounted guards was well clear of the park, when the girl exclaimed with a shudder:

"I loathe that scented fop." Then, seeming to fear a reproof, added. "I know I should not say that, but I cannot see what you have in common with such a creature that you are civil to him."

"The earl laughed lightly—the first time she had heard him do so.

"When we travel, Frances, safe out of earshot, you may loathe whom you please, but 'tis sometimes unsafe to give expression to your feelings within four walls. I may find little in common with a man, least of all, with such as De Courcy, but the time to crush him is not yet. He has the ear of my enemy, the queen, and she has the ear of her husband.

"Sir, what reason have you to suspect that the queen moves against you?"

"One reason is that I am at this moment journeying east when I would be traveling west. In truth, my girl, you seem resolved unconsciously to show that you are your father's daughter with that uncurbed tongue of yours, for a lack of lying is like to be my undoing. If I had told the king I must to London 'tis most like we were now on our way to Dublin."

"But why does the king order you thus contrary wise?"

"I know the king. He is not, as many think, selfish, but he is weak and thinks himself strong—a most dangerous combination. Now, a weak monarch or a strong monarch matters little, England has been blessed with both, and has survived the blessing; but a monarch who is weak and strong by turns courts disaster. 'War with the Scots,' says the king. He will smite them with a firm hand. Very good; a most desirable outcome. But our captains are promoted by a woman's whisper and not by their own merit. Our army is shattered. I am called for God's sake from Ireland and I come, scarcely able, through illness, to sit my horse.

"Very good. I cut up a portion of our Scotch friends, and the rest are on the run. What happens? An added title for me, you might suppose. Not so. A censure comes posthaste from London, 'Leave the Scots alone. The king is treating with them.' In the face of victory he embraces defeat. I am left like a fool with a newly inspired army and no enemy. They term it negotiating in London, but I call it defeat.

"Very well. I accept the censure in humbleness and implore the king to call no Parliament till we have time to set our house in order and face lords and commons with good grace. Then I set forth for London.

"Pushing on through darkness in the second night of my journey, a man thundered by me. 'Good friend,' cried I, 'what news that you ride so fast?'

" 'Great news,' he answered, breathlessly. 'A Parliament is summoned, and, as I am elected a member, I ride in haste. Please God, before the month is done we have Strafford's head in our hands and off his treacherous shoulders.' "

The girl gave a cry of terror.

"Oh, 'twas but a braggart countryman, knowing not to whom he spoke so freely. When I met the king he was all panic and regret. He had conjured up the Devil easily enough, but knew not how to allay him. ' 'Tis my head they want,' I said. 'Do with it as you please. If it is useless to you, toss it to them; if useful, then send me to Ireland, where I shall be out of the way, yet ready to afford you what service lies in my power.

"He swore he would concede them nothing. He gave me permission to return to my post. That was yesterday. You heard him speak today. It is still the firm hand, but I must to London. There, indeed, exists a firm hand, but it is concealed, and so directed by hatred of me that it may project the avalanche that will overwhelm us all."

Tired with long converse, Stratford sank into a troubled sleep, from which he was awakened at last by the stopping of the carriage in front of his town house.

CHAPTER IV.
Proposal.

The house was prepared for his reception, fires blazing and a table spread in the room to which he conducted his daughter.

"Mrs. Jarrett," said the earl to his housekeeper, who looked with wonder at the girl, "this is my daughter, newly found, having lived till now with her grandfather in the north. She is the child of my second wife, Frances Warburton."

After supper, when she arose to retire, he kissed her on the lips, ruffling her wayward, curling black hair—so much like his own—and patting her affectionately on the shoulder.

"You will not be afraid of me from this time forward, child?" he asked. "Indeed, Frances, I grow superstitious as I become older, and I look on your strange arrival as in some measure providential. There is none of my own kind to whom I can speak freely as I did to you in the carriage; my other daughters are too young. My Lady Strafford dislikes this London house and this London town, for which small blame is to be imputed to her. In you, a man's courage is added to a woman's wit. Who knows? You may be the rapier by my side."

Long time Frances Wentworth lay awake after she had retired. Was it possible that she was to be thus transplanted, to stand by the side of the greatest man in England? She planned the days to come. She would be as subtle as the craftiest. Her tongue must measure what is said and all rural bluntness should disappear.

It was two hours after midday the next day when Strafford sent for his daughter. De Courcy was with him and rose as she entered, to present her with one of his down-reaching bows.

"My child," said the earl, "I am about to set out for Parliament and it may be late before I return. Yet I think you shall sup with me at 7 if all goes well and debate becomes not too strenuous, but do not wait in case I should be detained. I counsel you not to leave the house today, for there seem many brawlers upon the streets. My friend, De Courcy here, begs the favor of some converse with you and speaks with my approval."

Strafford looked keenly at the girl, and her heart thrilled as she read the unspoken message with quick intuition. He had some use for De Courcy and she must be sauve and diplomatic. Thus already she was her father's ally.

"Sir, I shall obey you in all things, and hope to win your commendation," said Frances with an inclination of the head.

No sooner was the earl quit of the room than De Courcy flung himself at her feet. Her first impulse was to step quickly back, but she checked it and stood her ground.

"O, divine Frances," he cried, "how impatiently I have waited for this rapt moment, when I might declare to you—"

"Sir, I beg of you to arise. 'Tis not seemly you should demean yourself thus."

" 'Tis seemly that the whole world should grovel at your feet, my lady of the free forest, for all who look upon you must love you, and I adore you and do here avow it."

"I implore you to arise."

The gallant seized her hand instead and pressed his lips on it. The tremor which passed over her at this action was misinterpreted by his unquenchable vanity.

The tension was relieved by a low roar from the street, a sound that had in it the menace of a wild beast angered.

"Good heaven! What is that?" she exclaimed, snatching away her hand and running to the window. Her suitor rose to his feet, daintily dusted the knees of his silken wear with a film of lace that did duty for a handkerchief and followed her.

The street below was packed with people, howling round a carriage that seemed blocked by the press. The stout coachman, georgous in splendid livery, had some ado to restrain the spirited horses, maddened and prancing with the interference and the outcry. Cudgels were shaken aloft in the air, and there were shouts of "traitor! Tyrant!" and other epithets so degrading that Frances put her hands to her ears in horrified dismay.

"Whom are they threatening so fiendishly? she whispered.

"That is your father's carriage," answered De Courcy.

Before she could make further inquiry, there came up to them the cold dominating tones of her father's voice, clear even above that tumult.

"Strike through!"

The stout coachman laid about him with his whip and the curses for the moment abandoned the head of Strafford to alight on the head of the driver. The horses plunged fiercely into the crowd. The cruel progress changed the tenor of the cries, as if a wailing stop of a great organ had suddenly taken the place of the open diapason. The press was so great that those in front could not make for safety and the disappearing coach was greeted with screams of terror and was followed by groans of agony. Men went down before it like ripe grain before a sickle.

"Oh! oh! oh!" moaned the girl, all color leaving her face.

"It serves the dogs right," said De Courcy. "How dare they block the way of a noble and the chief minister of state?"

"I—I cannot look on this," lamented Frances, shrinking back to the table and leaning against it as one about to faint, forgetting her desire to avoid further demonstration from her companion in the trepidation which followed the scene she had witnessed.

"Indeed they were most mercifully dealt with, those scullions. The king of France would have sent a troop of horse to saber them back into their kennels. 'Strike through!' cried his lordship, and, — —, 'tis a good phrase, most suitable motto for a coat-of-arms, a hand grasping a dagger above it. 'Strike through!' I shall not forget it. But 'twas a softer and more endearing theme I wished to—"

"Sir, I beseech your polite consideration. I am nigh distraught with what I have seen and am filled with a fear of London. 'Tis not the courtly city I expected to behold. I am not myself."

"But you will at least bid me hope?"

"Surely, surely, all of us may hope."

"Why, 'twas the last and only gift left in Pandora's casket, and London were grim indeed to be more bereft than the receptacle of that deceitful woman. May I make my first draught on Mme. Pandora's box by hoping that I am to see you at this hour tomorrow?"

"Yes—tomorrow—tomorrow," gasped the girl faintly.

But that tomorrow was not to come. Before night the great house was barricaded and the lights were put out to show no beam through the heavy shutters. Like a phantom army, the servants of the household stood in the gloom of the wide hall, with bared swords ready for the worst should the mob beat in the doors. For hours they had been waiting for news of Strafford, and none had come. Only his treasurer had won to the house, after much mishandling by the mob, with the news that all London was crying that Strafford had been arrested in Parliament and taken to the Tower.

At last there was a timid knock at the door during a lull in the street. It was an envoy from the earl himself, and he brought a letter addressed to Mistress Frances Wentworth. It read:

Sweetheart: You have heard before this what hath befallen me, yet trust thou in the goodness of God that my enemies shall do me no hurt. I am troubled that you should be in London at this time where I can be of no help to you. It would please me to know that you were safe in the home where you have lived until this present time. Think not that you can assist me other than by obeying, for I trust in God and the king, and in the assurance that I am innocent of the charges malice hath brought against me. Therefore, be in no way alarmed, but betake yourself straightway to the north, there to wait with thy brother as heretofore, until I send a message for you which I hope to do right speedily. Travel in comfort and security, and take with you such of my household as will secure both.

My treasurer, John Vollins, will give you all moneys you require, and this letter is his assurance to fulfill your wishes in this and every respect. Trust in God; give way to no fear, but bear yourself as my daughter. Your loving father,

STRAFFORDE.

The young woman folded the letter without a word except to the secretary, to whom she said:

"My father writes in good confidence, seeing no cause for alarm, having assurance of his innocence and faith in God and the king."

(To be continued.)

The Retort Classical

The two rival candidates for office were holding a joint discussion.

The one they called the judge had a smattering of learning.

The one they called the colonel had no learning, but he could talk the bark off a tree.

"My opponent," says the colonel, "says I'm against the Chinese exclusion law. Now, for my own part, I don't care the snap of my finger whether the Chinese are allowed to come to this country or not. They've never done me any harm, and I'd just as lief they'd come here as the Turks, or the Japanese or the Persians or any of them Asiatics."

"De gustibus non disputandum," interrupted the other candidate.

"You're another!" roared the colonel.

He got the applause.—Chicago Tribune.

Storks as Messengers

A German nobleman of experimental turn of mind, curious as to the migratory habits of the storks which return each spring to his park, caught one last autumn and affixed to its neck a silver plate on which were engraved the words, "This stork comes from Germany." The bird has just returned to his summer haunts, still wearing the silver neckpiece, on which had been engraved beneath the original inscription the words, "India returns him with a gift to his German owner." Attached to the collar was a small parcel wrapped in waterproof containing a ring of unmistakable Indian workmanship. When the bird flies south this autumn he will be the bearer of a message of inquiry as to the identity of the donor of the ring.—Minneapolis Tribune.