

bin. His doublet was fine, though sadly torn, but a tatter of throat gear remained to him, and his neck was scratched as if with brambles. His left arm he used with evident difficulty, and she saw the doublet cut away at the shoulder, and stained red as if from a wound but recently received. Her eyes moistened at this knowledge of his pitiable condition, so jauntily carried off, as if it were, upon the whole, a huge joke.

"How do you know my name is Dorothy?" she asked with less of accusation in her voice than had hitherto been the case.

"I heard your father call you so. 'Tis a lovely name, and lovingly I dwell on it," then seeing in her eyes a return of that disapproval which he had formerly noted. "I have a sister Dorothy, and an anxious girl she is this day, I warrant you, though her brother may have a jest on his parched lips, while mouth and throat are like the great desert with chaff and dust of the corn. Thus I venture to call you the Lady Dorothy, and again implore you to close that gaping door."

"No one passes this way," she said. "Your pardon, Lady Dorothy, but those who have just gone may return. Surely you are not afraid of a wounded man?"

"We Puritans," she said proudly, "have no reason to fear; we can defend ourselves."

"Egad, Madam, and you speak truth," cried his lordship, laughing, "I can testify to that. I wish I had your courage. I fear the door opening upon the highway."

Without another word she went to the door and closed it. He made an attempt to throw a leg over the rim of his prison, but the exertion was too much for him, and he fell back grinning, his face going white like the flour that powdered the walls.

"Be not in such haste," she said, and taking a small step-ladder she set it up against the bin, mounted lightly, and held out her hand to him. He smiled wanly up at her, and with her help was seen down upon the floor of the mill.

"Would you care for a mug of ale?" she asked him.

"Ale? Is there such a blessing in this ill-fated land? Has not that damned brewer—I humbly beg your pardon, Madam, I'm a wicked man and forgot myself—but that brewer Crownwell has driven ale and every other good thing out of the country he encumbers, thus ruining his own trade, curse him. Ale, did you say? It seems incredible. But angels may work miracles, therefore I shall believe that ale exists. And, Dorothy, a crust of bread for a starving dog!"

The girl, her compassion touched, fled to the house. The coast was clear, for her mother had walked down the valley with her father. When she returned he seized the tankard with an almost wolfish glitter in his eyes, and brought it near to his cracked lips. Then he thrust it from him and held it aloft, while his left hand removed the tattered hat, his wounded arm with difficulty obeying his will.

"The King! God bless him!" he cried. "My lord, you dishonour hospitality," said Dorothy sternly. "I brought you the drink for no such toast."

He consumed half of what was in the tankard, before he set it down and replied, this time with more soberness than he had hitherto evinced—

"The texts are not all on your side, my Lady Dorothy. 'Fear God and honour the King,' says the good Book. The hospitality of no household in England is dishonoured when I obey the Bible, and pray God to bless the English King. Unfortunate men! Would that my prayer were as potent for him as this good ale is for me."

The young man was seated on the lowest step of the ladder which still leaned against the bin of the hopper. His first thought had been to his thirst, and so he had taken a long drink from the generous flagon. Now, as he set it down on the stone floor, he remembered his supplication for a crust of bread when he saw on the broad trencher a heaping-up of meat paste. He reached the trencher to his knees, and placed it there, then looked up at Dorothy with a smile, half whimsical, and wholly winning. She stood between him and the closed door, the light from the southern window enveloping her in luminous relief against the dark background of the wall. Her fair face was shadowed with perplexity, as she looked down on the young man smiling up at her, who, starving as he was, left for the moment his appealing dish untouched. He guessed her thoughts, and read his fate in those glorious, sombre eyes. She was a true daughter of that vigorous race which had

crumpled up the aristocracy of England as if it had been flimsy tinsel, which the young man began to suspect it really was. He saw that the girl pitied him as a hunted wanderer, but would nevertheless deliver him to his enemies as a traitor to his country. He knew that threats or persuasion would alike be useless, while wounded and exhausted he could not overcome her by physical force and thus accomplish his escape. Not even quiescence on her part would ensure his safety. He must cross the marshy moor above the mill from which this stream took its source, and that journey were impossible unless he had a guide who knew the way. On the other side of the desolate moor, he was a free man once more. So he looked up at her smiling, and she looked down on him with deep melancholy. There was something in his glance and smile that filled her with vague uneasiness; she, the country maiden, he, the man of the world. Her eyes, clear and unpolished as the crystal stream that turned the wheel; his, shadowed by the reflection of the city in fouler waters far below. She shivered a little, not relishing his scrutiny, and said, with impatience—

"Sir, why do you not eat?"

"Dorothy, I dare not, until the problem in your mind is solved."

"There is no problem," she said shortly.

"Ah, yes, my lady, there is. Duty says harshly, 'Give him up to his foes;' humanity whispers, 'Mercy blesses her that gives and him that takes.'"

"I shall do my duty," she said, drawing a long, quivering breath.

"Then, congratulations, Madam. The conflict is ended, and I shall not so wrong your gentle soul as to pretend that the victory has been welcome to you. Take away the trencher."

The young man leaned back wearily against the rounds of the ladder. His eyes closed, and his face went to a chalky whiteness. The girl with a gasp of sympathy took a step nearer to him.

"Surely you will eat?"

"Take it away; its very aroma is maddening to me. I have had nothing to eat for three days, a mouthful of throat-parching corn white buried in this bin."

"Then why do you refuse now when plenty is offered you? We do not starve our prisoners."

The young man sat up again, and was so inconsistent as to offer himself momentary refreshment from the lips of the flagon. The brief draught seemed to revive him.

"My Lady Dorothy, I am no prisoner of yours, nor are you authorised to hold me. I surrendered to your compassion, not to your vengeance. It is because of you I dare not eat. Were I in the tent of the most barbarous Arab that rides the desert, and did I break but a crust of bread with him, my life were sacred in his hands; yes, to be defended from peril even at risk of his own. Shall a Christian maiden in a civilised land be lower in the human scale than a heathen savage? Christ forbid! whose words, 'Neither do I condemn thee,' should ring in every woman's ears."

"Eat, I beg of you," said Dorothy, with a sob.

"As a prisoner?" he asked, looking searchingly at her.

"No, no, as a hungry man. Finish your flagon, and I will refill it."

By the time she had returned with the brimming flagon, the pasty had well-nigh disappeared. All his old jauntiness had returned to the tattered noble.

"I swear to you, Dorothy, war is a stern schoolmaster. I understand now what I never could fathom before, why Esau sold his birthright for a mess of pottage. Yesterday I lay prone in a thicket of my own plantation. It was a foolish place to hide, for they said, 'He will make up the valley to his own estate,' and as I lay there with the Roundheads beating the bushes within twenty paces of me, the thought came to me, 'This land in which my face is buried is my birthright, and gladly would I sell it for a mess of pottage.'"


When the repast was finished Dorothy took trencher and tankard to the house, and on her return the young man bolted the upper half of the mill door, which at the same time automatically sealed the lower half.

"I distrust this door," he said, seeing the girl seemed slightly alarmed at his action. "When it is open any chance passer-by may enter, and then it is too late to hide. Now he must knock."

"There are no chance passers-by in this lonely district," said the girl.

"Then there are those who come by design, and they are still more dangerous."

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