

everything that had been done, or left undone—the failures of the Allies—the fanaticism of the French—the hopes of popular liberty on one side, and the indignation of established power on the other—came rushing round me in a chaos of discordant conceptions, that for the time bewildered me. How simple was the gossip of the camp to this heterogeneous mass of struggling topics! How straightforward was even the wild harangue of the Palais Royal to the thousand reports and protests, remonstrances and replications, of the whole ringing and raging public mind of England! This was the age of pamphleteering. Every sage who could, or could not, write, flung his pamphlet in the teeth of the party whose existence he conceived to be ruinous to his country, or perhaps prejudicial to his own prospect of a sinecure. The journals printed their columns in gall; the satirists dipped their pens in concentrated acid; and the popular harangues dashed the oil of vitriol of contempt in each other's faces. The confusion, the collision, the uproar, was indescribable.

The public mind was fevered hour by hour; the news from the Continent was more and more startling; the successes of the Republican armies had assumed a shape which our depending politicians regarded as invincibility, and which our factious ones pronounced to be the ruin of Europe. The cabinet offered only the prospect of a melancholy struggle. But six months before it had stood, strong as a citadel erect by the national hands and garrisoned by the spirit of the empire. It still stood, but it stood dismantled; there were evident breaches in its walls, and the fugitives of Opposition, rallying with the hope of success, advanced again to the storm, headed by their great leader, and sustained by the capricious and fluctuating multitude. The premier was harassed by the incessant toil of defence—a toil in which he had scarcely a sharer, and which exposed him to the most remorseless hostility. Yet, if the historian were to choose the moment for his true fame, this was the moment which ought to be chosen. He rose with the severity of the struggle; assault seemed to give him new vigour; the attempt to tear the robe of office from his shoulders only gave the nobler display of his intellectual proportions. When I saw him, night after night, standing almost alone, with nothing but disaster in front and timidity in the rear, combating a force such as had never before been arrayed under the banners of Opposition; the whole scene of magnificent conflict and still grander fortune, reminded me of the Homeric war and its warriors—The champion of the kingdom, standing forth in despite of evil omens thickening round him, of the deepening cloud, and the sinister thunders.

I speak of those times, and of the great men of those times, in no invidious contrast with later days. I have so strong a faith in the infinite ability which freedom gives to a great empire, that I am convinced of our being able, in all its eras, to find the species of public talent essential to its services. I regard the national mind, as the philosopher does the natural soil, always capable of the essential produce, where we give it the due tillage. The great men of the past century have passed away along with it; they were summoned for a day of conflict, and were formed for the conflict; their muscular vigour, the power with which they wielded their weapons, the giant step and the giant hand, were all shaped and sustained by that necessity. But this day had its close; the leaders of man—like the "sightly hunters" of an Age, when the land was still overshadowed with the forest, and the harvest was overrun with the lion and the panther, would naturally give place to a less daring and lofty generation, when the forest had given way to the field, and the lair of the wild beast had become the highway and the bower. But if the evil day should again return, the guardian power of intellect and virtue will again come forth in the human shape, and vindicate the providence that watches over the progress of mankind. I utterly deny the exhaustion of national genius; I even deny its exhaustibility. If the moral vegetation languishes, and the land is parched for a while, the great source of refreshing and fertility still lies before us—the public mind, in its boundless expansion, and in its unfathomable depth; the intellectual ocean which no plummet has ever sounded, and which no shore has ever circumscribed, lies ready to restore the balance of nature.

But the sense of power itself in the national mind forbids the exhibition of its strength in tranquil times. It is lofty and fastidious; it will not stoop to a contest in which nothing is to be contended for. It is not an actor; and it cannot adopt the figured passion of the actor, read its rope, and flourish, and obtain heaven against the traitor and the oppressor, to the sound of an orchestra, or in the glitter of stage lamps. The true ability of the empire must scorn all mimic encounter; and what else can be the little struggles of party shut up in the legislature, whose sound scarcely transpires through the walls, whose triumphs are a tax, and whose oracles are an intrigue? But, when the true day of trial shall come—when an enemy shall be seen hovering on the coast of the constitution—when trumpet answers trumpet, and the "country is proclaimed in danger"—then, and not till then, shall we know the superb resources of our intellectual strength; whatever may have been the prowess of the past, we may see it not merely rivaled but thrown into eclipse by the future; the burnished armour and massive valry, superseded by more manageable and more destructive implements of success; and the stern conflict followed by the more consummate triumph. Yet when we undervalue

the living ability of a nation from its quietude at the moment, we but adopt the example of every past age in succession. The last ten years of the last century were preceded by a period of despair; Chatham's career was run, and the national regrets over his tomb were mingled with sorrows for the extinction of all parliamentary renown!—The day had gone down, and darkness was to cover the sky forever. But while the prediction was scarcely uttered, the horizon was in a blaze, mighty meteors rushed past in a thousand courses of eccentric speed and splendour; and a period of intellectual display began, which at once dazzled and delighted mankind. Anne's Augustan age of war, negotiation, and eloquence, was once pronounced to be, like the Augustan age of Rome, incapable of rivalry by posterity; by our own times have seen a bolder war, a broader peace, and a richer development of science, invention, and eloquence.

For fifty years, England was pronounced to have worn herself out by the prolific brilliancy of the half century before; like a precocious infant, to have anticipated her powers, and ensured their premature decay; like the Bœotians, to have had her Pindaric period, and thenceforward to have paid for its raptures and renown by perpetual darkness; or like the Israelites in Egypt, to be condemned to drudgery for life, sunk into an intellectual slave caste;—when in the midst of the scoffing, or the sorrow, suddenly arrived a new epoch, a new summons to the national genius, a time of lofty interpositions, "thunderings in the ear, and lightning running along the ground," an era of the marvellous things of mind; the chains fell off the hands, and the generation went forth, with a new sense of superiority, into new scenes of knowledge, discovery, and empire.

The following scene is laid in Ireland. Marston having been appointed Secretary for that country, a short time previous to the rebellion, a plot was laid to assassinate him. How this was frustrated, we shall let the author relate himself, as well as some stirring and melancholy incidents which subsequently occurred.

Our mornings were chiefly spent in hunting over the fine landscape which spread, in all the various beauty of vegetation, within view of the mansion. On one of those days the attention of the field was caught by the fierce riding of a singular looking man, scarcely above the peasant in his general appearance, and yet mounted on one of the finest English horses that I had ever seen. He rode at every thing, managed his horse with practised skill, and soon became an object of general emulation. To "ride up" to the "wild horseman," was found to be a task not easily accomplished, and at length all was a trial of speed with this dashing exhibitor. A glance which, when on the point of one of his most desperate leaps, he threw back at me, seemed to be a kind of challenge, and I rushed on at speed. The Irish hunter is matchless at "topping" stone walls, but his practice has not lain much among rivers; and the English horse is sometimes his master at the deep and rapid streams which running between crumbling banks, are perhaps the severest trials to both horse and rider. The majority of the hunt pulled up at the edge of one of those formidable chasms, and I was by no means unwilling to follow their example; but the look of the strange rider had a sneer along with it, which put me on my mettle, and I dashed after him. The hounds had scrambled through, and we rode nearly abreast through a broken country, that mixture of bog and firm ground which occurs frequently in newly cleared land, and over which nothing but the most powerful sinews can make way. We had now left every one behind us, were struggling on through the dimness of the hazy day, sinking into twilight. Suddenly my mysterious rival turned his horse upon me, and to my utter astonishment discharged a pistol at my head. The discharge was so close that I escaped only by the swerving of my horse at the flash. I felt my face burn, and in the impulse of the pain made a blind blow at him with my whip. He had drawn out another pistol in an instant, which the blow luckily dashed out of his hand. No words passed between us, but I bounded on him to seize him. He slipped away from my grasp, and, striking in the spur, galloped madly forward, I in pursuit. The twilight had now deepened, and he plunged into a lane bounded on both sides by steep hedges, and which, from some former hunting in this quarter, I knew to be a *cul-de-sac*. This doubled by the determination to make myself master of the assassin; and even in the hurry of the moment I formed some conception of my having seen his face before, and that the attempt to put me out of the way was connected, in some way or other, with public affairs. This question was soon decided. He reached the end of the lane, which was shut in with a wall of about the height of a man. His horse shied at the obstacle. The rider, with an oath and a desperate exertion, pushed him to it again. I was now within a few yards of him and arrived just in time to see the animal make a convulsive spring, touch with his hind feet on the top of the wall, and roll over. My Irish horse cleared it in the native style, and I found my enemy crushed under his hooves, and evidently in the pangs of death. He had been flung on a heap of stones, and the weight of the falling horse had broken his spine. I poured some brandy down his throat, relieved him from the incumbrance of the hunter—attempted to give him hope—but he told me that it was useless; that he felt death coming on, and that I was the last man who should wish him to live, "as he had pledged himself to

my extinction." For a while, his recollections were wild, and he talked of events in France and Spain, where he seemed to have done some deeds which affected him with peculiar horror in the prospect of dissolution. But after a brief period of those terrible disclosures, his pains totally ceased, his mind grew clear; and he acknowledged that he was one of the leading agents of a National Conspiracy to repudiate Ireland. "You are too kind," said he to me, "to one who now sees the madness of the design, and is sensible of the guilt of taking away the lives of honourable men." A lapse of weakness here tied his tongue; and I brought him a draught of water from the spring which gurgled beside the wall. He thanked me, and proceeded to say, that my "character for vigilance and activity had alarmed the principal conspirators, and that he, thinking all crimes meritorious in a popular cause, had resolved to signalize the commencement of his services, by putting the English secretary to death on the first occasion." For this purpose, he had followed my steps for some time in the metropolis, but without finding a fit opportunity. The intelligence of my hunting days in the north gave him renewed expectations, and he had followed me in various disguises; had been present at dinners and balls, where I was the principal guest; had even frequently conversed with me on public and foreign politics; in fact, had haunted me constantly with a case of pistols constantly in his bosom; yet had never been able to find the true opportunity of despatching me without *celat*. He had, at last, determined to give up the object as altogether hopeless; and had prepared to set on a bolder scale by heading open rebellion, when he heard of my intending to hunt on this day. It was to be his last experiment; "and how rejoiced I am," said he, "that it has failed!" He now appeared for a while in apparent meditation, and then suddenly raising himself on his hand, said in a full and manly tone—"One thing I still can do in this world, if it may not be too late. Leave me here; I must die; go back in all haste to your friends, and tell them to prepare either to fly or defend their lives. This is the night appointed for the breaking out of the insurrection. Fifty thousand men are already armed in the mountains, and ready for the signal to march on the principal towns. The few troops in the country are to be made prisoners in their barracks. The government stores are to be divided among the people. Before twelve hours are over we shall have a force of a hundred thousand men on foot; and a republic will be proclaimed."

The intelligence was startling, but not wholly unexpected. I demanded the names of the leaders; but on this head he refused to make any answer. I next enquired, whether the rebel directory had any hope of assistance from the Continent. "That I can fully answer," said he, now almost at his last gasp. "I myself was the negotiator. It is but a month since I was in Paris. The Government agreed to send seven sail of the line, with ten thousand troops, and Hoche, the favourite general of the republic, to the north; or, in case of unexpected obstacles, to the south of Ireland. I have been looking out for their flag from hour to hour." The man sank back on the ground. I prepared to run for help, if there were any to be found in that desolate place. He grasped to my hand; his was icy. "No," said he, "I must now be left alone; I am dying, and I am not sorry to die. I am free from your blood, and I shall not share in the horrors which I see at hand. Men in health, and men dying think differently of those things, farewell." He gave my hand a convulsive clasp, and expired.

My situation was an anxious one. Night had fallen, and the hour was full of peril to those whom I had left behind; it was even possible that the insurrection might have already broken out. Sounds, which seemed to me, in the stillness of the hour, to be the signals of the peasantry—The echoes of horns, and trampling of bodies of horse—began to rise upon the ground. At length a loud shout, and firing of musketry on the skirts of the wood, awoke me to a sense of the danger of my situation. I forced my way through the thickets, and saw a skirmish between a large mass of armed men, and a picket of troops in a village on the borders of the wood. There was now no time to be lost. I returned to the spot where the body lay, placed my hand on its forehead, to ascertain whether any remnant of life lingered there; found all cold; and, remounting my horse, wound my dreary and difficult way back to the mansion.

To my surprise, I found the windows blazing with lights, carriages arriving, and all the signs of a night of gala. I had forgotten that this was my noble entertainer's birthday, and that the whole circle of the neighbouring nobles and gentlemen had been for the last month invited. There were to be private theatricals followed by a ball and supper. The whole country continued to pour in. Full of my disastrous intelligence, my first inquiry was for the noble host; he was not to be seen. I was at length informed under the seal of secrecy from his secretary, that some information of popular movements within a few miles, had been conveyed to him late in the day, he had put himself at the head of the squadron of his yeomanry to ascertain the nature of the disturbance, and as it was too late to countermand the invitations to the ball, had given strict orders that the cause of his absence should be concealed, and that the entertainments should go on as if he were present.

Agreeing that this was the wisest thing which could be done, to avoid unnecessary alarm, which paralyzes action beforehand, and renders all ridiculous after, I seldom felt it more difficult to play my part than on this occasion. As a minister, any thing in the shape of solicitude on my part, was sure to be magnified into

actual disaster, as I was forced to keep an embarrassed countenance. I immediately sent out servants in every direction to bring intelligence of the actual state of affairs, and above all, to ascertain what had detained their master. Though all this was done with the utmost secrecy, it was impossible to suppress the growing impression that something extraordinary must have occurred to withdraw from his own hospitable roof, and so long detain, the lord of the mansion, distinguished as he was for the most polished courtesy. As the hour waned, the enquiries became more urgent, the dance languished, and the showy crowd forming into groups, and wandering through the saloons, or gathered to the windows, had evidently lost all the spirit of festivity. To my astonishment, strong opinions began to find utterance, and I discovered that his lordship, in his general and lofty disregard of the shades of popular sentiment, had among his guests some individuals whose rank and wealth had not preserved them from the taint of republicanism. As it was not my purpose to make a ball room the scene of a political squabble, and as I felt it due to my official position to avoid any unnecessary entanglement in the obscure follies of provincial partizanship, I first tried to laugh down the topic. But a young orator, a handsome and fluent enthusiast, recently returned from a continental excursion, gave so stirring a picture of the glories of French independence, and the glittering advantages which must accrue to all countries following the example, that I was forced to stand on my defence. The gallant republican was not to be repelled; he poured out upon me, as he warmed with the theme, so vast a catalogue of public injuries, in language so menacing, yet so eloquent, that I was forced to ask whether I was standing in the midst of a Jacobin club—whether his object was actually to establish a democracy, to govern by the guillotine, to close up the churches, and inscribe the tombs with—death is an eternal sleep; to swear to the extinction of monarchy and proclaim universal war. Our dispute had now attracted general notice. He answered with still more vehement and elaborate details. I had evidently the majority on my side, but some few adhered to him, and those two men of consequence, and obvious determination.

The ladies shrank affrighted, as the contest grew more angry; and the usual and unhappy result of political discussion in Ireland, an exchange of cards, was about to take place, when one of the servants brought me a small packet of papers which has been found on the body of the assassin. Glancing over them I saw a list of the leaders of the insurrection, and the first name in the paper that of my antagonist. I crushed the document in my hand, and beckoned him to a window. There, alone, and out of hearing of the guests, who however, followed us anxiously with their eyes, I charged him with his guilt. He denied it fiercely. I gave him five minutes to consider whether he would confess or abide the consequences. His countenance visibly exhibited the perturbations of his mind; he turned red and pale alternately, shuddered, then braced himself up with desperate resolution, and finally ended by denying and delaying every thing. It was not in my nature to press upon this moment of agony; but telling him, that nothing but compulsion prevented my ordering his arrest on the spot, I again warned him to make his peace with government, by a solemn abjuration of his design.

I have the whole scene before me still. This man was destined to a memorable melancholy fate. I never remember a countenance more expressive of intellectual refinement; but there was a strange and feverish restlessness in his large grey eye, almost ominous of his future career. He was still young, though he had gone through vicissitudes enough to darken the longest life. He had been a few years before called to the bar, the favourite profession of the Irish gentry, where he had exhibited talents of a remarkable order; but an impatience of the slow success of this profession drove him to the hazards of political change. He had married, and this increased his difficulties, until party came athwart him with its promises of boundless honour and rapid fortune. His sanguine nature embraced the temptation at once; but the parliamentary opposition was too deliberate and frigid for the boiling blood; he plunged into the deeper and wilder region of conspiracy, took the lead, which is so soon assigned to the brilliant and the bold, and became the soul of the tremendous faction which was ready to proclaim the separation of the empire.

He had now returned from France, with a commission in the army of the Republic, and a plan agreed on with the Directory for the invasion of Ireland; but these were discoveries to be made hereafter. On this night I saw nothing but a gallant enthusiast, filled with classic recollections, inflamed with the ardour of early life, and deluded by the dreams of political perfection. My sense of the utter ruin which he was preparing for himself was so strong, that I pressed him from point to point, until he was forced to take refuge in flight, and, rushing from me, burst open a door which led to the demesne. While I paused not unwilling to give him the opportunity to escape, I heard a wild burst of wailing, and a confusion of voices outside. In the next moment, I saw the fugitive return, with a tottering step, a bloodless countenance, and a look of horror. Without a word, he pointed to the door; I followed the direction, and saw what well might justify his feelings. The troop of yeomanry had been attacked on their return from patrolling the country; an ambuscade had been laid for them by a large force of insurgents, in one of the narrow roads which bordered the demesne, and where, from its vicinity they had imagined themselves secure. As they moved down this defile with