

CHAPTER XXII

What happened to Julian in the person of a tailor.

“Fortune now stationed me in a character which the ingratitude of mankind hath put them on ridiculing, though they owe to it not only a relief from the inclemencies of cold, to which they would otherwise be exposed, but likewise a considerable satisfaction of their vanity. The character I mean was that of a tailor; which, if we consider it with due attention, must be confessed to have in it great dignity and importance. For, in reality, who constitutes the different degrees between men but the tailor? The prince indeed gives the title, but it is the tailor who makes the man. To his labours are owing the respect of crowds, and the awe which great men inspire into their beholders, though these are too often unjustly attributed to other motives. Lastly, the admiration of the fair is most commonly to be placed to his account.

“I was just set up in my trade when I made three suits of fine clothes for King Stephen’s coronation. I question whether the person who wears the rich coat hath so much pleasure and vanity in being admired in it, as we tailors have from that admiration; and perhaps a philosopher would say he is not so well entitled to it. I bustled on the day of the ceremony through the crowd, and it was with incredible delight I heard several say, as my clothes walked by, ‘Bless me, was ever anything so fine as the earl of Devonshire? Sure he and Sir Hugh Bigot are the two best dressed men I ever saw.’ Now both those suits were of my making.

“There would indeed be infinite pleasure in working for the courtiers, as they are generally genteel men, and show one’s clothes to the best advantage, was it not for one small discouragement; this is, that they never pay. I solemnly protest, though I lost almost as much by the court in my life as I got by the city, I never carried a suit into the latter with half the satisfaction which I have done to the former; though from that I was certain of ready money, and from this almost as certain of no money at all.

“Courtiers may, however, be divided into two sorts, very essentially different from each other; into those who never intend to pay for their clothes; and those who do intend to pay for them, but never happen to be able. Of the latter sort are many of those young gentlemen whom we equip out for the army, and who are, unhappily for us, cut off before they arrive at preferment. This is the reason that tailors, in time of war, are mistaken for politicians by their inquisitiveness into the event of battles, one campaign very often proving the ruin of half a dozen of us. I am sure I had frequent reason to curse that fatal battle of Cardigan, where the Welsh defeated some of king Stephen’s best troops, and where many a good suit of mine unpaid for, fell to the ground.

“The gentlemen of this honourable calling have fared much better in later ages than when I was of it; for now it seems the fashion is, when they apprehend their customer is not in the best circumstances, if they are not paid as soon as they carry home the suit, they charge him in their book as much again as it is

worth, and then send a gentleman with a small scrip of parchment to demand the money. If this be not immediately paid the gentleman takes the beau with him to his house, where he locks him up till the tailor is contented: but in my time these scrips of parchment were not in use; and if the beau disliked paying for his clothes, as very often happened, we had no method of compelling him.

“In several of the characters which I have related to you, I apprehend I have sometimes forgot myself, and considered myself as really interested as I was when I personated them on earth. I have just now caught myself in the fact; for I have complained to you as bitterly of my customers as I formerly used to do when I was the tailor: but in reality, though there were some few persons of very great quality, and some others, who never paid their debts, yet those were but a few, and I had a method of repairing this loss. My customers I divided under three heads: those who paid ready money, those who paid slow, and those who never paid at all. The first of these I considered apart by themselves, as persons by whom I got a certain but small profit. The two last I lumped together, making those who paid slow contribute to repair my losses by those who did not pay at all. Thus, upon the whole, I was a very inconsiderable loser, and might have left a fortune to my family, had I not launched forth into expenses which swallowed up all my gains. I had a wife and two children. These indeed I kept frugally enough, for I half-starved them; but I kept a mistress in a finer way, for whom I had a country-house, pleasantly situated on the Thames, elegantly fitted up and neatly furnished. This woman might very properly be called my mistress, for she was most absolutely so; and though her tenure was no higher than by my will, she domineered as tyrannically as if my chains had been riveted in the strongest manner. To all this I submitted, not through any adoration of her beauty, which was indeed but indifferent. Her charms consisted in little wantonnesses, which she knew admirably well to use in hours of dalliance, and which, I believe, are of all things the most delightful to a lover.

“She was so profusely extravagant, that it seemed as if she had an actual intent to ruin me. This I am sure of, if such had been her real intention, she could have taken no properer way to accomplish it; nay, I myself might appear to have had the same view: for, besides this extravagant mistress and my country-house, I kept likewise a brace of hunters, rather for that it was fashionable so to do than for any great delight I took in the sport, which I very little attended; not for want of leisure, for few noblemen had so much. All the work I ever did was taking measure, and that only of my greatest and best customers. I scarce ever cut a piece of cloth in my life, nor was indeed much more able to fashion a coat than any gentleman in the kingdom. This made a skilful servant too necessary to me. He knew I must submit to any terms with, or any treatment from, him.

“He knew it was easier for him to find another such a tailor as me than for me to procure such another workman as him: for this reason he exerted the most notorious and cruel tyranny, seldom giving me a civil word; nor could the utmost condescension on my side, though attended with continual presents and rewards, and raising his wages, content or please him. In a word, he was as absolutely my master as was ever an ambitious, industrious prime minister

over an indolent and voluptuous king. All my other journeymen paid more respect to him than to me; for they considered my favour as a necessary consequence of obtaining his.

“These were the most remarkable occurrences while I acted this part. Minos hesitated a few moments, and then bid me get back again, without assigning any reason.”

CHAPTER XXIII

The life of Alderman Julian.

“I now revisited England, and was born at London. My father was one of the magistrates of that city. He had eleven children, of whom I was the eldest. He had great success in trade, and grew extremely rich, but the largeness of his family rendered it impossible for him to leave me a fortune sufficient to live well on independent of business. I was accordingly brought up to be a fishmonger, in which capacity I myself afterwards acquired very considerable wealth.

“The same disposition of mind which in princes is called ambition is in subjects named faction. To this temper I was greatly addicted from my youth. I was, while a boy, a great partisan of prince John’s against his brother Richard, during the latter’s absence in the holy war and in his captivity. I was no more than one and twenty when I first began to make political speeches in public, and to endeavour to foment disquietude and discontent in the city. As I was pretty well qualified for this office, by a great fluency of words, a harmonious accent, a graceful delivery, and above all an invincible assurance, I had soon acquired some reputation among the younger citizens, and some of the weaker and more inconsiderate of a riper age. This, cooperating with my own natural vanity, made me extravagantly proud and supercilious. I soon began to esteem myself a man of some consequence, and to overlook persons every way my superiors.

“The famous Robin Hood, and his companion Little John, at this time made a considerable figure in Yorkshire. I took upon me to write a letter to the former, in the name of the city, inviting him to come to London, where I assured him of very good reception, signifying to him my own great weight and consequence, and how much I had disposed the citizens in his favour. Whether he received this letter or no I am not certain; but he never gave me any answer to it.

“A little afterwards one William FitzOsbern, or, as he was nicknamed, William Long Beard, began to make a figure in the city. He was a bold and an impudent fellow, and had raised himself to great popularity with the rabble, by pretending to espouse their cause against the rich. I took this man’s part, and made a public oration in his favour, setting him forth as a patriot, and one who had embarked in the cause of liberty: for which service he did not receive me with the acknowledgments I expected. However, as I thought I should easily gain the ascendant over this fellow, I continued still firm on his side, till the archbishop of Canterbury, with an armed force, put an end to his progress: for he was seized in Bowchurch, where he had taken refuge, and with nine of his accomplices hanged in chains.

“I escaped narrowly myself; for I was seized in the same church with the rest, and, as I had been very considerably engaged in the enterprise, the archbishop was inclined to make me an example; but my father’s merit, who had advanced a considerable sum to queen Eleanor towards the king’s ransom, preserved me.

“The consternation my danger had occasioned kept me some time quiet, and I applied myself very assiduously to my trade. I invented all manner of methods to enhance the price of fish, and made use of my utmost endeavours to engross as much of the business as possible in my own hands. By these means I acquired a substance which raised me to some little consequence in the city, but far from elevating me to that degree which I had formerly flattered myself with possessing at a time when I was totally insignificant; for, in a trading society, money must at least lay the foundation of all power and interest.

“But as it hath been remarked that the same ambition which sent Alexander into Asia brings the wrestler on the green; and as this same ambition is as incapable as quicksilver of lying still; so I, who was possessed perhaps of a share equal to what hath fired the blood of any of the heroes of antiquity, was no less restless and discontented with ease and quiet. My first endeavours were to make myself head of my company, which Richard I had just published, and soon afterwards I procured myself to be chosen alderman.

“Opposition is the only state which can give a subject an opportunity of exerting the disposition I was possessed of. Accordingly, King John was no sooner seated on his throne than I began to oppose his measures, whether right or wrong. It is true that monarch had faults enough. He was so abandoned to lust and luxury, that he addicted himself to the most extravagant excesses in both, while he indolently suffered the king of France to rob him of almost all his foreign dominions: my opposition therefore was justifiable enough, and if my motive from within had been as good as the occasion from without I should have had little to excuse; but, in truth, I sought nothing but my own preferment, by making myself formidable to the king, and then selling to him the interest of that party by whose means I had become so. Indeed, had the public good been my care, however zealously I might have opposed the beginning of his reign, I should not have scrupled to lend him my utmost assistance in this struggle between him and pope Innocent the third, in which he was so manifestly in the right; nor have suffered the insolence of that pope, and the power of the king of France, to have compelled him in the issue, basely to resign his crown into the hands of the former, and receive it again as a vassal; by means of which acknowledgment the pope afterwards claimed this kingdom as a tributary fief to be held of the papal chair; a claim which occasioned great uneasiness to many subsequent princes, and brought numberless calamities on the nation.

“As the king had, among other concessions, stipulated to pay an immediate sum of money to Pandulf, which he had great difficulty to raise, it was absolutely necessary for him to apply to the city, where my interest and popularity were so high that he had no hopes without my assistance. As I knew this, I took care to sell myself and country as high as possible. The terms I demanded, therefore, were a place, a pension, and a knighthood. All those were immediately consented to. I was forthwith knighted, and promised the other two.

“I now mounted the hustings, and, without any regard to decency or modesty, made as emphatical a speech in favour of the king as before I had done against

him. In this speech I justified all those measures which I had before condemned, and pleaded as earnestly with my fellow citizens to open their purses, as I had formerly done to prevail with them to keep them shut. But, alas! My rhetoric had not the effect I proposed. The consequence of my arguments was only contempt to myself. The people at first stared on one another, and afterwards began unanimously to express their dislike. An impudent fellow among them, reflecting on my trade, cried out, 'Stinking fish;' which was immediately reiterated through the whole crowd. I was then forced to slink away home; but I was not able to accomplish my retreat without being attended by the mob, who huzza'd me along the street with the repeated cries of 'Stinking fish.'

"I now proceeded to court, to inform his majesty of my faithful service, and how much I had suffered in his cause. I found by my first reception he had already heard of my success. Instead of thanking me for my speech, he said the city should repent of their obstinacy, for that he would show them who he was: and so saying, he immediately turned that part to me to which the toe of man hath so wonderful an affection, that it is very difficult, whenever it presents itself conveniently, to keep our toes from the most violent and ardent salutation of it.

"I was a little nettled at this behaviour, and with some earnestness claimed the king's fulfilling his promise; but he retired without answering me. I then applied to some of the courtiers, who had lately professed great friendship to me, had ate at my house, and invited me to theirs: but not one would return me any answer, all running away from me as if I had been seized with some contagious distemper. I now found by experience, that as none can be so civil, so none can be ruder than a courtier.

"A few moments after the king's retiring I was left alone in the room to consider what I should do or whither I should turn myself. My reception in the city promised itself to be equal at least with what I found at court. However, there was my home, and thither it was necessary I should retreat for the present.

"But, indeed, bad as I apprehended my treatment in the city would be, it exceeded my expectation. I rode home on an ambling pad through crowds who expressed every kind of disregard and contempt; pelting me not only with the most abusive language, but with dirt. However, with much difficulty I arrived at last at my own house, with my bones whole, but covered over with filth.

"When I was got within my doors, and had shut them against the mob, who had pretty well vented their spleen, and seemed now contented to retire, my wife, whom I found crying over her children, and from whom I had hoped some comfort in my afflictions, fell upon me in the most outrageous manner. She asked me why I would venture on such a step, without consulting her; she said her advice might have been civilly asked, if I was resolved not to have been guided by it. That, whatever opinion I might have conceived of her understanding, the rest of the world thought better of it. That I had never failed when I had asked her counsel, nor ever succeeded without it;— with much more of the same kind, too tedious to mention; concluding that it was a monstrous behaviour to desert my party and come over to the court.

“An abuse which I took worse than all the rest, as she had been constantly for several years assiduous in railing at the opposition, in siding with the court-party, and begging me to come over to it; and especially after my mentioning the offer of knighthood to her, since which time she had continually interrupted my repose with dinning in my ears the folly of refusing honours and of adhering to a party and to principles by which I was certain of procuring no advantage to myself and my family.

“I had now entirely lost my trade, so that I had not the least temptation to stay longer in a city where I was certain of receiving daily affronts and rebukes. I therefore made up my affairs with the utmost expedition, and, scraping together all I could, retired into the country, where I spent the remainder of my days in universal contempt, being shunned by everybody, perpetually abused by my wife, and not much respected by my children.

“Minos told me, though I had been a very vile fellow, he thought my sufferings made some atonement, and so bid me take the other trial.”

CHAPTER XXIV

Julian recounts what happened to him while he was a poet.

“Rome was now the seat of my nativity, where I was born of a family more remarkable for honour than riches. I was intended for the church, and had a pretty good education; but my father dying while I was young, and leaving me nothing, for he had wasted his whole patrimony, I was forced to enter myself in the order of mendicants.

“When I was at school I had a knack of rhyming, which I unhappily mistook for genius, and indulged to my cost; for my verses drew on me only ridicule, and I was in contempt called the poet.

“This humour pursued me through my life. My first composition after I left school was a panegyric on pope Alexander IV, who then pretended a project of dethroning the king of Sicily. On this subject I composed a poem of about fifteen thousand lines, which with much difficulty I got to be presented to his holiness, of whom I expected great preferment as my reward; but I was cruelly disappointed: for when I had waited a year, without hearing any of the commendations I had flattered myself with receiving, and being now able to contain no longer, I applied to a Jesuit who was my relation, and had the pope’s ear, to know what his holiness’s opinion was of my work: he coldly answered me that he was at that time busied in concerns of too much importance to attend the reading of poems.

“However dissatisfied I might be, and really was, with this reception, and however angry I was with the pope? for whose understanding I entertained an immoderate contempt, I was not yet discouraged from a second attempt. Accordingly, I soon after produced another work, entitled, *The Trojan Horse*. This was an allegorical work, in which the church was introduced into the world in the same manner as that machine had been into Troy. The priests were the soldiers in its belly, and the heathen superstition the city to be destroyed by them. This poem was written in Latin. I remember some of the lines:—

*Mundanos scandit fatalis machina muros,
Farta sacerdotum turmis: exinde per alvum
Visi exire omnes, maguo cum murmure olentes.
Non aliter quam cum llumanis furibundus ab antris
It sonus et nares simul aura invadit hiantes.
Mille scatent et mille alii; trepidare timore
Ethnica gens coepit: falsi per inane volantes
Effugere Dei — Desertaque templa relinquunt.
Jam magnum crepitavit equus, mox orbis et alti
Ingemuere poli: tunc tu pater, ultimus omnium
Maxime Alexander, ventrem maturus equinum
Deseris, heu proles meliori digne parente.”*

I believe Julian, had I not stopped him, would have gone through the whole poem (for, as I observed in most of the characters he related, the affections he had enjoyed while he personated them on earth still made some impression on him); but I begged him to omit the sequel of the poem, and proceed with his history. He then recollected himself, and, smiling at the observation which by intuition he perceived I had made, continued his narration as follows:—

“I confess to you,” says he, “that the delight in repeating our own works is so predominant in a poet, that I find nothing can totally root it out of the soul. Happy would it be for those persons if their hearers could be delighted in the same manner: but alas! Hence that *ingens solitudo* complained of by Horace: for the vanity of mankind is so much greedier and more general than their avarice, that no beggar is so ill received by them as he who solicits their praise.

“This I sufficiently experienced in the character of a poet; for my company was shunned (I believe on this account chiefly) by my whole house: nay, there were few who would submit to hearing me read my poetry, even at the price of sharing in my provisions. The only person who gave me audience was a brother poet; he indeed fed me with commendation very liberally: but, as I was forced to hear and commend in my turn, I perhaps bought his attention dear enough.

“Well, sir, if my expectations of the reward I hoped from my first poem had balked me, I had now still greater reason to complain; for, instead of being preferred or commended for the second, I was enjoined a very severe penance by my superior, for ludicrously comparing the pope to a f—t. My poetry was now the jest of every company, except some few who spoke of it with detestation; and I found that, instead of recommending me to preferment, it had effectually barred me from all probability of attaining it.

“These discouragements had now induced me to lay down my pen and write no more. But, as Juvenal says,

— *Si discedas, Laqueo tenet ambitiosi
Consuetudo mali.*

“I was an example of the truth of this assertion, for I soon betook myself again to my muse. Indeed, a poet hath the same happiness with a man who is dotingly fond of an ugly woman. The one enjoys his muse, and the other his mistress, with a pleasure very little abated by the esteem of the world, and only undervalues their taste for not corresponding with his own.

“It is unnecessary to mention any more of my poems; they had all the same fate; and though in reality some of my latter pieces deserved (I may now speak it without the imputation of vanity) a better success, as I had the character of a bad writer, I found it impossible ever to obtain the reputation of a good one. Had I possessed the merit of Homer I could have hoped for no applause; since it must have been a profound secret; for no one would now read a syllable of my writings.

“The poets of my age were, as I believe you know, not very famous. However, there was one of some credit at that time, though I have the consolation to know his works are all perished long ago. The malice, envy, and hatred I bore this man are inconceivable to any but an author, and an unsuccessful one; I never could bear to hear him well spoken of, and writ anonymous satires against him, though I had received obligations from him; indeed I believe it would have been an absolute impossibility for him at any rate to have made me sincerely his friend.

“I have heard an observation which was made by some one of later days, that there are no worse men than bad authors. A remark of the same kind hath been made on ugly women, and the truth of both stands on one and the same reason, viz., that they are both tainted with that cursed and detestable vice of envy; which, as it is the greatest torment to the mind it inhabits, so is it capable of introducing into it a total corruption, and of inspiring it to the commission of the most horrid crimes imaginable.

“My life was but short; for I soon pined myself to death with the vice I just now mentioned. Minos told me I was infinitely too bad for Elysium; and as for the other place, the devil had sworn he would never entertain a poet for Orpheus’s sake: so I was forced to return again to the place from whence I came.”

CHAPTER XXV

Julian performs the parts of a knight and a dancing master.

“I now mounted the stage in Sicily, and became a knight Templar; but, as my adventures differ so little from those I have recounted you in the character of a common soldier, I shall not tire you with repetition. The soldier and the captain differ in reality so little from one another, that it requires an accurate judgment to distinguish them; the latter wears finer clothes, and in times of success lives somewhat more delicately; but as to everything else, they very nearly resemble one another.

“My next step was into France, where fortune assigned me the part of a dancing master. I was so expert in my profession that I was brought to court in my youth, and had the heels of Philip de Valois, who afterwards succeeded Charles the Fair, committed to my direction.

“I do not remember that in any of the characters in which I appeared on earth I ever assumed to myself a greater dignity, or thought myself of more real importance, than now. I looked on dancing as the greatest excellence of human nature, and on myself as the greatest proficient in it. And, indeed, this seemed to be the general opinion of the whole court; for I was the chief instructor of the youth of both sexes, whose merit was almost entirely defined by the advances they made in that science which I had the honour to profess. As to myself, I was so fully persuaded of this truth, that I not only slighted and despised those who were ignorant of dancing, but I thought the highest character I could give any man was that he made a graceful bow: for want of which accomplishment I had a sovereign contempt for most persons of learning; nay, for some officers in the army, and a few even of the courtiers themselves.

“Though so little of my youth had been thrown away in what they call literature that I could hardly write and read, yet I composed a treatise on education; the first rudiments of which, as I taught, were to instruct a child in the science of coming handsomely into a room. In this I corrected many faults of my predecessors, particularly that of being too much in a hurry, and instituting a child in the sublimer parts of dancing before they are capable of making their honours.

“But as I have not now the same high opinion of my profession which I had then, I shall not entertain you with a long history of a life which consisted of bourées and coupées. Let it suffice that I lived to a very old age and followed my business as long as I could crawl. At length I revisited my old friend Minos, who treated me with very little respect and bade me dance back again to earth.

“I did so, and was now once more born an Englishman, bred up to the church, and at length arrived to the station of a bishop.

“Nothing was so remarkable in this character as my always voting—.”¹⁰

¹⁰ Here part of the manuscript is lost, and that a very considerable one, as appears by the number of the next book and chapter, which contains, I find, the history of Anne Boleyn; but as to the manner in which it was introduced, or to whom the narrative is told, we are totally left in the dark. I have only to remark, that this chapter is, in the original, writ in a woman’s hand: and, though the observations in it are, I think, as excellent as any in the whole volume, there seems to be a difference in style between this and the preceding chapters; and, as it is the character of a woman which is related, I am inclined to fancy it was really written by one of that sex.