ЭДВАРД БУЛЬВЕР-ЛИТТОН

DEVEREUX — COMPLETE

Эдвард Бульвер-Литтон

Devereux — Complete

Бульвер-Литтон Э. Д.

Devereux — Complete / Э. Д. Бульвер-Литтон — «Public Domain»,

Содержание

Edward Bulwer-Lytton
Devereux — Complete

ADVERTISEMENT TO THE PRESENT EDITION

IN this edition of a work composed in early youth, I have not attempted to remove those faults of construction which may be sufficiently apparent in the plot, but which could not indeed be thoroughly rectified without re-writing the whole work. I can only hope that with the defects of inexperience may be found some of the merits of frank and artless enthusiasm. I have, however, lightened the narrative of certain episodical and irrelevant passages, and relieved the general style of some boyish extravagances of diction. At the time this work was written I was deeply engaged in the study of metaphysics and ethics, and out of that study grew the character of Algernon Mordaunt. He is represented as a type of the Heroism of Christian Philosophy,—a union of love and knowledge placed in the midst of sorrow, and labouring on through the pilgrimage of life, strong in the fortitude that comes from belief in Heaven.

KNEBWORTH, May 3, 1852.

E. B. L.

DEDICATORY EPISTLE TO JOHN AULDJO, ESQ., ETC., AT NAPLES LONDON.

MY DEAR AULDJO,—Permit me, as a memento of the pleasant hours we passed together, and the intimacy we formed by the winding shores and the rosy seas of the old Parthenope, to dedicate to you this romance. It was written in perhaps the happiest period of my literary life,—when success began to brighten upon my labours, and it seemed to me a fine thing to make a name. Reputation, like all possessions, fairer in the hope than the reality, shone before me in the gloss of novelty; and I had neither felt the envy it excites, the weariness it occasions, nor (worse than all) that coarse and painful notoriety, that, something between the gossip and the slander, which attends every man whose writings become known,—surrendering the grateful privacies of life to

"The gaudy, babbling, and remorseless day."

In short, yet almost a boy (for, in years at least, I was little more, when "Pelham" and "The Disowned" were conceived and composed), and full of the sanguine arrogance of hope, I pictured to myself far greater triumphs than it will ever be mine to achieve: and never did architect of dreams build his pyramid upon (alas!) a narrower base, or a more crumbling soil!... Time cures us effectually of these self-conceits, and brings us, somewhat harshly, from the gay extravagance of confounding the much that we design with the little that we can accomplish.

"The Disowned" and "Devereux" were both completed in retirement, and in the midst of metaphysical studies and investigations, varied and miscellaneous enough, if not very deeply conned. At that time I was indeed engaged in preparing for the press a Philosophical Work which I had afterwards the good sense to postpone to a riper age and a more sobered mind. But the effect of these studies is somewhat prejudicially visible in both the romances I have referred to; and the external and dramatic colourings which belong to fiction are too often forsaken for the inward and subtile analysis of motives, characters, and actions. The workman was not sufficiently master of his art to forbear the vanity of parading the wheels of the mechanism, and was too fond of calling attention to the minute and tedious operations by which the movements were to be performed and the result obtained. I believe that an author is generally pleased with his work less in proportion as it is good, than in proportion as it fulfils the idea with which he commenced it. He is rarely perhaps an accurate

judge how far the execution is in itself faulty or meritorious; but he judges with tolerable success how far it accomplishes the end and objects of the conception. He is pleased with his work, in short, according as he can say, “This has expressed what I meant it to convey.” But the reader, who is not in the secret of the author’s original design, usually views the work through a different medium; and is perhaps in this the wiser critic of the two: for the book that wanders the most from the idea which originated it may often be better than that which is rigidly limited to the unfolding and *denouement* of a single conception. If we accept this solution, we may be enabled to understand why an author not unfrequently makes favourites of some of his productions most condemned by the public. For my own part, I remember that “Devereux” pleased me better than “Pelham” or “The Disowned,” because the execution more exactly corresponded with the design. It expressed with tolerable fidelity what I meant it to express. That was a happy age, my dear Auldjo, when, on finishing a work, we could feel contented with our labour, and fancy we had done our best! Now, alas I I have learned enough of the wonders of the Art to recognize all the deficiencies of the Disciple; and to know that no author worth the reading can ever in one single work do half of which he is capable.

What man ever wrote anything really good who did not feel that he had the ability to write something better? Writing, after all, is a cold and a coarse interpreter of thought. How much of the imagination, how much of the intellect, evaporates and is lost while we seek to embody it in words! Man made language and God the genius. Nothing short of an eternity could enable men who imagine, think, and feel, to express all they have imagined, thought, and felt. Immortality, the spiritual desire, is the intellectual *necessity*.

In “Devereux” I wished to portray a man flourishing in the last century with the train of mind and sentiment peculiar to the present; describing a life, and not its dramatic epitome, the historical characters introduced are not closely woven with the main plot, like those in the fictions of Sir Walter Scott, but are rather, like the narrative romances of an earlier school, designed to relieve the predominant interest, and give a greater air of truth and actuality to the supposed memoir. It is a fiction which deals less with the Picturesque than the Real. Of the principal character thus introduced (the celebrated and graceful, but charlatanic, Bolingbroke) I still think that my sketch, upon the whole, is substantially just. We must not judge of the politicians of one age by the lights of another. Happily we now demand in a statesman a desire for other aims than his own advancement; but at that period ambition was almost universally selfish—the Statesman was yet a Courtier—a man whose very destiny it was to intrigue, to plot, to glitter, to deceive. It is in proportion as politics have ceased to be a secret science, in proportion as courts are less to be flattered and tools to be managed, that politicians have become useful and honest men; and the statesman now directs a people, where once he outwitted an ante-chamber. Compare Bolingbroke—not with the men and by the rules of this day, but with the men and by the rules of the last. He will lose nothing in comparison with a Walpole, with a Marlborough on the one side,—with an Oxford or a Swift upon the other.

And now, my dear Auldjo, you have had enough of my egotisms. As our works grow up,—like old parents, we grow garrulous, and love to recur to the happier days of their childhood; we talk over the pleasant pain they cost us in their rearing, and memory renews the season of dreams and hopes; we speak of their faults as of things past, of their merits as of things enduring: we are proud to see them still living, and, after many a harsh ordeal and rude assault, keeping a certain station in the world; we hoped perhaps something better for them in their cradle, but as it is we have good cause to be contented. You, a fellow-author, and one whose spirited and charming sketches embody so much of personal adventure, and therefore so much connect themselves with associations of real life as well as of the studious closet; *you* know, and must feel with me, that these our books are a part of us, bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh! They treasure up the thoughts which stirred us, the affections which warmed us, years ago; they are the mirrors of how much of what we were! To the world they are but as a certain number of pages,—good or bad,—tedious or diverting; but to ourselves, the authors, they are as marks in the wild maze of life by which we can retrace our steps, and be with our youth again.

What would I not give to feel as I felt, to hope as I hoped, to believe as I believed, when this work was first launched upon the world! But time gives while it takes away; and amongst its recompenses for many losses are the memories I referred to in commencing this letter, and gratefully revert to at its close. From the land of cloud and the life of toil, I turn to that golden clime and the happy indolence that so well accords with it; and hope once more, ere I die, with a companion whose knowledge can recall the past and whose gayety can enliven the present, to visit the Disburied City of Pompeii, and see the moonlight sparkle over the waves of Naples. Adieu, my dear Auldjo,

And believe me,

Your obliged and attached friend,
E. B. LYTTON.

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHER'S INTRODUCTION

MY life has been one of frequent adventure and constant excitement. It has been passed, to this present day, in a stirring age, and not without acquaintance of the most eminent and active spirits of the time. Men of all grades and of every character have been familiar to me. War, love, ambition, the scroll of sages, the festivals of wit, the intrigues of states,—all that agitate mankind, the hope and the fear, the labour and the pleasure, the great drama of vanities, with the little interludes of wisdom; these have been the occupations of my manhood; these will furnish forth the materials of that history which is now open to your survey. Whatever be the faults of the historian, he has no motive to palliate what he has committed nor to conceal what he has felt.

Children of an after century, the very time in which these pages will greet you destroys enough of the connection between you and myself to render me indifferent alike to your censure and your applause. Exactly one hundred years from the day this record is completed will the seal I shall place on it be broken and the secrets it contains be disclosed. I claim that congeniality with you which I have found not among my own coevals. *Their* thoughts, their feelings, their views, have nothing kindred to my own. I speak their language, but it is not as a native: *they* know not a syllable of mine! With a future age my heart may have more in common; to a future age my thoughts may be less unfamiliar, and my sentiments less strange. I trust these confessions to the trial!

Children of an after century, between you and the being who has traced the pages ye behold —that busy, versatile, restless being—there is but one step,—but that step is a century! His *now* is separated from your now by an interval of three generations! While he writes, he is exulting in the vigour of health and manhood; while ye read, the very worms are starving upon his dust. This commune between the living and the dead; this intercourse between that which breathes and moves and *is*, and that which life animates not nor mortality knows,—annihilates falsehood, and chills even self-delusion into awe. Come, then, and look upon the picture of a past day and of a gone being, without apprehension of deceit; and as the shadows and lights of a checkered and wild existence flit before you, watch if in your own hearts there be aught which mirrors the reflection.

MORTON DEVEREUX.

NOTE TO THE PRESENT EDITION (1852)

If this work possess any merit of a Narrative order, it will perhaps be found in its fidelity to the characteristics of an Autobiography. The reader must, indeed, comply with the condition exacted from his imagination and faith; that is to say, he must take the hero of the story upon the terms for which Morton Devereux himself stipulates; and regard the supposed Count as one who lived and wrote in the last century, but who (dimly conscious that the tone of his mind harmonized less with his own age than with that which was to come) left his biography as a legacy to the present. This assumption (which is not an unfair one) liberally conceded, and allowed to account for occasional anachronisms in sentiment, Morton Devereux will be found to write as a man who is not constructing a romance, but narrating a life. He gives to Love, its joy and its sorrow, its due share in an eventful and passionate existence; but it is the share of biography, not of fiction. He selects from the crowd of personages with whom he is brought into contact, not only those who directly influence his personal destinies, but those of whom a sketch or an anecdote would appear to a biographer likely to have interest for posterity. Louis XIV., the Regent Orleans, Peter the Great, Lord Bolingbroke, and others less eminent, but still of mark in their own day, if growing obscure to ours, are introduced not for the purposes and agencies of fiction, but as an autobiographer's natural illustrations of the men and manners of his time.

And here be it pardoned if I add that so minute an attention has been paid to accuracy that even in petty details, and in relation to historical characters but slightly known to the ordinary reader, a critic deeply acquainted with the memoirs of the age will allow that the novelist is always merged in the narrator.

Unless the Author has failed more in his design than, on revising the work of his early youth with the comparatively impartial eye of maturer judgment, he is disposed to concede, Morton Devereux will also be found with that marked individuality of character which distinguishes the man who has lived and laboured from the hero of romance. He admits into his life but few passions; those are tenacious and intense: conscious that none who are around him will sympathize with his deeper feelings, he veils them under the sneer of an irony which is often affected and never mirthful. Wherever we find him, after surviving the brief episode of love, we feel—though he does not tell us so—that he is alone in the world. He is represented as a keen observer and a successful actor in the busy theatre of mankind, precisely in proportion as no cloud from the heart obscures the cold clearness of the mind. In the scenes of pleasure there is no joy in his smile; in the contests of ambition there is no quicker beat of the pulse. Attaining in the prime of manhood such position and honour as would first content and then sate a man of this mould, he has nothing left but to discover the vanities of this world and to ponder on the hopes of the next; and, his last passion dying out in the retribution that falls on his foe, he finally sits down in retirement to rebuild the ruined home of his youth,—unconscious that to that solitude the Destinies have led him to repair the waste and ravages of his own melancholy soul.

But while outward Dramatic harmonies between cause and effect, and the proportionate agencies which characters introduced in the Drama bring to bear upon event and catastrophe, are carefully shunned,—as real life does for the most part shun them,—yet there is a latent coherence in all that, by influencing the mind, do, though indirectly, shape out the fate and guide the actions.

Dialogue and adventures which, considered dramatically, would be episodical,—considered biographically, will be found essential to the formation, change, and development of the narrator's character. The grave conversations with Bolingbroke and Richard Cromwell, the light scenes in London and at Paris, the favour obtained with the Czar of Russia, are all essential to the creation of that mixture of wearied satiety and mournful thought which conducts the Probationer to the lonely

spot in which he is destined to learn at once the mystery of his past life and to clear his reason from the doubts that had obscured the future world.

Viewing the work in this more subtile and contemplative light, the reader will find not only the true test by which to judge of its design and nature, but he may also recognize sources of interest in the story which might otherwise have been lost to him; and if so, the Author will not be without excuse for this criticism upon the scope and intention of his own work. For it is not only the privilege of an artist, but it is also sometimes his duty to the principles of Art, to place the spectator in that point of view wherein the light best falls upon the canvas. “Do not place yourself there,” says the painter; “to judge of my composition you must stand where I place you.”

DEVEREUX

BOOK I

CHAPTER I

OF THE HERO'S BIRTH AND PARENTAGE.—NOTHING CAN DIFFER MORE FROM THE END OF THINGS THAN THEIR BEGINNING

MY grandfather, Sir Arthur Devereux (peace be with his ashes!) was a noble old knight and cavalier, possessed of a property sufficiently large to have maintained in full dignity half a dozen peers,—such as peers have been since the days of the first James. Nevertheless, my grandfather loved the equestrian order better than the patrician, rejected all offers of advancement, and left his posterity no titles but those to his estate.

Sir Arthur had two children by wedlock,—both sons; at his death, my father, the younger, bade adieu to the old hall and his only brother, prayed to the grim portraits of his ancestors to inspire him, and set out—to join as a volunteer the armies of that Louis, afterwards surnamed *le grand*. Of him I shall say but little; the life of a soldier has only two events worth recording,—his first campaign and his last. My uncle did as his ancestors had done before him, and, cheap as the dignity had grown, went up to court to be knighted by Charles II. He was so delighted with what he saw of the metropolis that he forswore all intention of leaving it, took to Sedley and champagne, flirted with Nell Gwynne, lost double the value of his brother's portion at one sitting to the chivalrous Grammont, wrote a comedy corrected by Etherege, and took a wife recommended by Rochester. The wife brought him a child six months after marriage, and the infant was born on the same day the comedy was acted. Luckily for the honour of the house, my uncle shared the fate of Plemneus, king of Sicyon, and all the offspring he ever had (that is to say, the child and the play) "died as soon as they were born." My uncle was now only at a loss what to do with his wife,—that remaining treasure, whose readiness to oblige him had been so miraculously evinced. She saved him the trouble of long cogitation, an exercise of intellect to which he was never too ardently inclined. There was a gentleman of the court, celebrated for his sedateness and solemnity; my aunt was piqued into emulating Orpheus, and, six weeks after her confinement, she put this rock into motion,—they eloped. Poor gentleman! it must have been a severe trial of patience to a man never known before to transgress the very slowest of all possible walks, to have had two events of the most rapid nature happen to him in the same week: scarcely had he recovered the shock of being run away with by my aunt, before, terminating forever his vagrancies, he was run through by my uncle. The wits made an epigram upon the event, and my uncle, who was as bold as a lion at the point of a sword, was, to speak frankly, terribly disconcerted by the point of a jest. He retired to the country in a fit of disgust and gout. Here his natural goodness soon recovered the effects of the artificial atmosphere to which it had been exposed, and he solaced himself by righteously governing domains worthy of a prince, for the mortifications he had experienced in the dishonourable career of a courtier.

Hitherto I have spoken somewhat slightingly of my uncle, and in his dissipation he deserved it, for he was both too honest and too simple to shine in that galaxy of prostituted genius of which Charles II. was the centre. But in retirement he was no longer the same person; and I do not think that

the elements of human nature could have furnished forth a more amiable character than Sir William Devereux presiding at Christmas over the merriment of his great hall.

Good old man! his very defects were what we loved best in him: vanity was so mingled with good-nature, that it became graceful, and we reverenced one the most, while we most smiled at the other.

One peculiarity had he which the age he had lived in and his domestic history rendered natural enough; namely, an exceeding distaste to the matrimonial state: early marriages were misery, imprudent marriages idiotism, and marriage, at the best, he was wont to say, with a kindling eye and a heightened colour, marriage at the best was the devil! Yet it must not be supposed that Sir William Devereux was an ungallant man. On the contrary, never did the *beau sexe* have a humbler or more devoted servant. As nothing in his estimation was less becoming to a wise man than matrimony, so nothing was more ornamental than flirtation.

He had the old man's weakness, garrulity; and he told the wittiest stories in the world, without omitting anything in them but the point. This omission did not arise from the want either of memory or of humour; but solely from a deficiency in the malice natural to all jesters. He could not persuade his lips to repeat a sarcasm hurting even the dead or the ungrateful; and when he came to the drop of gall which should have given zest to the story, the milk of human kindness broke its barrier, despite of himself,—and washed it away. He was a fine wreck, a little prematurely broken by dissipation, but not perhaps the less interesting on that account; tall, and somewhat of the jovial old English girth, with a face where good-nature and good living mingled their smiles and glow. He wore the garb of twenty years back, and was curiously particular in the choice of his silk stockings. Between you and me, he was not a little vain of his leg, and a compliment on that score was always sure of a gracious reception.

The solitude of my uncle's household was broken by an invasion of three boys,—none of the quietest,—and their mother, who, the gentlest and saddest of womankind, seemed to follow them, the emblem of that primeval silence from which all noise was born. These three boys were my two brothers and myself. My father, who had conceived a strong personal attachment for Louis XIV., never quitted his service, and the great King repaid him by orders and favours without number; he died of wounds received in battle,—a Count and a Marshal, full of renown and destitute of money. He had married twice: his first wife, who died without issue, was a daughter of the noble house of La Tremouille; his second, our mother, was of a younger branch of the English race of Howard. Brought up in her native country, and influenced by a primitive and retired education, she never loved that gay land which her husband had adopted as his own. Upon his death she hastened her return to England, and refusing, with somewhat of honourable pride, the magnificent pension which Louis wished to settle upon the widow of his favourite, came to throw herself and her children upon those affections which she knew they were entitled to claim.

My uncle was unaffectedly rejoiced to receive us; to say nothing of his love for my father, and his pride at the honours the latter had won to their ancient house, the good gentleman was very well pleased with the idea of obtaining four new listeners, out of whom he might select an heir, and he soon grew as fond of us as we were of him. At the time of our new settlement, I had attained the age of twelve; my second brother (we were twins) was born an hour after me; my third was about fifteen months younger. I had never been the favourite of the three. In the first place, my brothers (my youngest especially) were uncommonly handsome, and, at most, I was but tolerably good-looking: in the second place, my mind was considered as much inferior to theirs as my body; I was idle and dull, sullen and haughty,—the only wit I ever displayed was in sneering at my friends, and the only spirit, in quarrelling with my twin brother; so said or so thought all who saw us in our childhood; and it follows, therefore, that I was either very unamiable or very much misunderstood.

But, to the astonishment of myself and my relations, my fate was now to be reversed; and I was no sooner settled at Devereux Court than I became evidently the object of Sir William's pre-eminent attachment. The fact was, that I really liked both the knight and his stories better than my brothers

did; and the very first time I had seen my uncle, I had commented on the beauty of his stocking, and envied the constitution of his leg; from such trifles spring affection! In truth, our attachment to each other so increased that we grew to be constantly together; and while my childish anticipations of the world made me love to listen to stories of courts and courtiers, my uncle returned the compliment by declaring of my wit, as the angler declared of the River Lea, that one would find enough in it, if one would but angle sufficiently long.

Nor was this all; my uncle and myself were exceedingly like the waters of Alpheus and Arethusa,—nothing was thrown into the one without being seen very shortly afterwards floating upon the other. Every witticism or legend Sir William imparted to me (and some, to say truth, were a little tinged with the licentiousness of the times he had lived in), I took the first opportunity of retailing, whatever might be the audience; and few boys, at the age of thirteen, can boast of having so often as myself excited the laughter of the men and the blushes of the women. This circumstance, while it aggravated my own vanity, delighted my uncle's; and as I was always getting into scrapes on his account, so he was perpetually bound, by duty, to defend me from the charges of which he was the cause. No man defends another long without loving him the better for it; and perhaps Sir William Devereux and his eldest nephew were the only allies in the world who had no jealousy of each other.

CHAPTER II

A FAMILY CONSULTATION.—A PRIEST, AND AN ERA IN LIFE

"YOU are ruining the children, my dear Sir William," said my gentle mother, one day when I had been particularly witty; "and the Abbe Montreuil declares it absolutely necessary that they should go to school."

"To school!" said my uncle, who was caressing his right leg, as it lay over his left knee,—"to school, Madam! you are joking. What for, pray?"

"Instruction, my dear Sir William," replied my mother.

"Ah, ah; I forgot that; true, true!" said my uncle, despondingly, and there was a pause. My mother counted her rosary; my uncle sank into a revery; my twin brother pinched my leg under the table, to which I replied by a silent kick; and my youngest fixed his large, dark, speaking eyes upon a picture of the Holy Family, which hung opposite to him.

My uncle broke the silence; he did it with a start.

"Od's fish, Madam,"—(my uncle dressed his oaths, like himself, a little after the example of Charles II.)—"od's fish, Madam, I have thought of a better plan than that; they shall have instruction without going to school for it."

"And how, Sir William?"

"I will instruct them myself, Madam," and William slapped the calf of the leg he was caressing.

My mother smiled.

"Ay, Madam, you may smile; but I and my Lord Dorset were the best scholars of the age; you shall read my play."

"Do, Mother," said I, "read the play. Shall I tell her some of the jests in it, Uncle?"

My mother shook her head in anticipative horror, and raised her finger reprovingly. My uncle said nothing, but winked at me; I understood the signal, and was about to begin, when the door opened, and the Abbe Montreuil entered. My uncle released his right leg, and my jest was cut off. Nobody ever inspired a more dim, religious awe than the Abbe Montreuil. The priest entered with a smile. My mother hailed the entrance of an ally.

"Father," said she, rising, "I have just represented to my good brother the necessity of sending my sons to school; he has proposed an alternative which I will leave you to discuss with him."

"And what is it?" said Montreuil, sliding into a chair, and patting Gerald's head with a benignant air.

"To educate them himself," answered my mother, with a sort of satirical gravity. My uncle moved uneasily in his seat, as if, for the first time, he saw something ridiculous in the proposal.

The smile, immediately fading from the thin lips of the priest, gave way to an expression of respectful approbation. "An admirable plan," said he slowly, "but liable to some little exceptions, which Sir William will allow me to point out."

My mother called to us, and we left the room with her. The next time we saw my uncle, the priest's reasonings had prevailed. The following week we all three went to school. My father had been a Catholic, my mother was of the same creed, and consequently we were brought up in that unpopular faith. But my uncle, whose religion had been sadly undermined at court, was a terrible caviller at the holy mysteries of Catholicism; and while his friends termed him a Protestant, his enemies hinted, falsely enough, that he was a sceptic. When Montreuil first followed us to Devereux Court, many and bitter were the little jests my worthy uncle had provided for his reception; and he would shake his head with a notable archness whenever he heard our reverential description of the expected guest. But, somehow or other, no sooner had he seen the priest than all his proposed railleries deserted him. Not a single witticism came to his assistance, and the calm, smooth face of the ecclesiastic seemed to operate upon the fierce resolves of the facetious knight in the same manner as the human eye is supposed to awe into impotence the malignant intentions of the ignobler animals. Yet nothing could be blander than the demeanour of the Abbe Montreuil; nothing more worldly, in their urbanity, than his manner and address. His garb was as little clerical as possible, his conversation rather familiar than formal, and he invariably listened to every syllable the good knight uttered with a countenance and mien of the most attentive respect.

What then was the charm by which the singular man never failed to obtain an ascendency, in some measure allied with fear, over all in whose company he was thrown? This was a secret my uncle never could solve, and which only in later life I myself was able to discover. It was partly by the magic of an extraordinary and powerful mind, partly by an expression of manner, if I may use such a phrase, that seemed to sneer most, when most it affected to respect; and partly by an air like that of a man never exactly at ease; not that he was shy, or ungraceful, or even taciturn,—no! it was an indescribable embarrassment, resembling that of one playing a part, familiar to him, indeed, but somewhat distasteful. This embarrassment, however, was sufficient to be contagious, and to confuse that dignity in others, which, strangely enough, never forsook himself.

He was of low origin, but his address and appearance did not betray his birth. Pride suited his mien better than familiarity; and his countenance, rigid, thoughtful, and cold, even through smiles, in expression was strikingly commanding. In person he was slightly above the middle standard; and had not the texture of his frame been remarkably hard, wiry, and muscular, the total absence of all superfluous flesh would have given the lean gauntness of his figure an appearance of almost spectral emaciation. In reality, his age did not exceed twenty-eight years; but his high broad forehead was already so marked with line and furrow, his air was so staid and quiet, his figure so destitute of the roundness and elasticity of youth, that his appearance always impressed the beholder with the involuntary idea of a man considerably more advanced in life. Abstemious to habitual penance, and regular to mechanical exactness in his frequent and severe devotions, he was as little inwardly addicted to the pleasures and pursuits of youth, as he was externally possessed of its freshness and its bloom.

Nor was gravity with him that unmeaning veil to imbecility which Rochefoucauld has so happily called "the mystery of the body." The variety and depth of his learning fully sustained the respect which his demeanour insensibly created. To say nothing of his lore in the dead tongues, he possessed a knowledge of the principal European languages besides his own, namely, English, Italian, German, and Spanish, not less accurate and little less fluent than that of a native; and he had not only gained the key to these various coffers of intellectual wealth, but he had also possessed himself of their

treasures. He had been educated at St. Omer: and, young as he was, he had already acquired no inconsiderable reputation among his brethren of that illustrious and celebrated Order of Jesus which has produced some of the worst and some of the best men that the Christian world has ever known,—which has, in its successful zeal for knowledge, and the circulation of mental light, bequeathed a vast debt of gratitude to posterity; but which, unhappily encouraging certain scholastic doctrines, that by a mind at once subtle and vicious can be easily perverted into the sanction of the most dangerous and systematized immorality, has already drawn upon its professors an almost universal odium.

So highly established was the good name of Montreuil that when, three years prior to the time of which I now speak, he had been elected to the office he held in our family, it was scarcely deemed a less fortunate occurrence for us to gain so learned and so pious a preceptor, than it was for him to acquire a situation of such trust and confidence in the household of a Marshal of France and the especial favourite of Louis XIV.

It was pleasant enough to mark the gradual ascendency he gained over my uncle; and the timorous dislike which the good knight entertained for him, yet struggled to conceal. Perhaps that was the only time in his life in which Sir William Devereux was a hypocrite.

Enough of the priest at present; I return to his charge. To school we went: our parting with our uncle was quite pathetic; mine in especial. “Hark ye, Sir Count,” whispered he (I bore my father’s title), “hark ye, don’t mind what the old priest tells you; your real man of wit never wants the musty lessons of schools in order to make a figure in the world. Don’t cramp your genius, my boy; read over my play, and honest George Etherege’s ‘Man of Mode;’ they’ll keep your spirits alive, after dozing over those old pages which Homer (good soul!) dozed over before. God bless you, my child; write to me; no one, not even your mother, shall see your letters; and—and be sure, my fine fellow, that you don’t fag too hard. The glass of life is the best book, and one’s natural wit the only diamond that can write legibly on it.”

Such were my uncle’s parting admonitions; it must be confessed that, coupled with the dramatic gifts alluded to, they were likely to be of infinite service to the *debutant* for academical honours. In fact, Sir William Devereux was deeply impregnated with the notion of his time,—that ability and inspiration were the same thing, and that, unless you were thoroughly idle, you could not be thoroughly a genius. I verily believe that he thought wisdom got its gems, as Abu Zeid al Hassan[1] declares some Chinese philosophers thought oysters got their pearls, namely, *by gaping*!

CHAPTER III

A CHANGE IN CONDUCT AND IN CHARACTER: OUR EVIL PASSIONS WILL SOMETIMES PRODUCE GOOD EFFECTS; AND ON THE CONTRARY, AN ALTERATION FOR THE BETTER IN MANNERS WILL, NOT UNFREQUENTLY, HAVE AMONGST ITS CAUSES A LITTLE CORRUPTION OF MIND; FOR THE FEELINGS ARE SO BLENDED THAT, IN SUPPRESSING THOSE DISAGREEABLE TO OTHERS, WE OFTEN SUPPRESS THOSE WHICH ARE AMIABLE IN THEMSELVES

MY twin brother, Gerald, was a tall, strong, handsome boy, blessed with a great love for the orthodox academical studies, and extraordinary quickness of ability. Nevertheless, he was indolent by nature in things which were contrary to his taste; fond of pleasure; and, amidst all his personal courage, ran a certain vein of irresolution, which rendered it easy for a cool and determined mind

[1] In his Commentary on the account of China by two Travellers.

to awe or to persuade him. I cannot help thinking, too, that, clever as he was, there was something commonplace in the cleverness; and that his talent was of that mechanical yet quick nature which makes wonderful boys but mediocre men. In any other family he would have been considered the beauty; in ours he was thought the genius.

My youngest brother, Aubrey, was of a very different disposition of mind and frame of body; thoughtful, gentle, susceptible, acute; with an uncertain bravery, like a woman's, and a taste for reading, that varied with the caprice of every hour. He was the beauty of the three, and my mother's favourite. Never, indeed, have I seen the countenance of man so perfect, so glowingly yet delicately handsome, as that of Aubrey Devereux. Locks, soft, glossy, and twining into ringlets, fell in dark profusion over a brow whiter than marble; his eyes were black and tender as a Georgian girl's; his lips, his teeth, the contour of his face, were all cast in the same feminine and faultless mould; his hands would have shamed those of Madame de la Tisseur, whose lover offered six thousand marks to any European who could wear her glove; and his figure would have made Titania give up her Henchman, and the King of the Fairies be anything but pleased with the exchange.

Such were my two brothers; or, rather (so far as the internal qualities are concerned), such they seemed to me; for it is a singular fact that we never judge of our near kindred so well as we judge of others; and I appeal to any one, whether, of all people by whom he has been mistaken, he has not been most often mistaken by those with whom he was brought up.

I had always loved Aubrey, but they had not suffered him to love me; and we had been so little together that we had in common none of those childish remembrances which serve, more powerfully than all else in later life, to cement and soften affection. In fact, I was the scapegoat of the family. What I must have been in early childhood I cannot tell; but before I was ten years old I was the object of all the despondency and evil forebodings of my relations. My father said I laughed at *la gloire et le grand monarque* the very first time he attempted to explain to me the value of the one and the greatness of the other. The countess said I had neither my father's eye nor her own smile, —that I was slow at my letters and quick with my tongue; and throughout the whole house nothing was so favourite a topic as the extent of my rudeness and the venom of my repartee. Montreuil, on his entrance into our family, not only fell in with, but favoured and fostered, the reigning humour against me; whether from that *divide et impera* system, which was so grateful to his temper, or from the mere love of meddling and intrigue, which in him, as in Alberoni, attached itself equally to petty as to large circles, was not then clearly apparent; it was only certain that he fomented the dissensions and widened the breach between my brothers and myself. Alas! after all, I believe my sole crime was my candour. I had a spirit of frankness which no fear could tame, and my vengeance for any infantine punishment was in speaking veraciously of my punishers. Never tell me of the pang of falsehood to the slandered: nothing is so agonizing to the fine skin of vanity as the application of a rough truth!

As I grew older, I saw my power and indulged it; and, being scolded for sarcasm, I was flattered into believing I had wit; so I punned and jested, lampooned and satirized, till I was as much a torment to others as I was tormented myself. The secret of all this was that I was unhappy. Nobody loved me: I felt it to my heart of hearts. I was conscious of injustice, and the sense of it made me bitter. Our feelings, especially in youth, resemble that leaf which, in some old traveller, is described as expanding itself to warmth, but when chilled, not only shrinking and closing, but presenting to the spectator thorns which had lain concealed upon the opposite side of it before.

With my brother Gerald, I had a deadly and irreconcilable feud. He was much stouter, taller, and stronger than myself; and, far from conceding to me that respect which I imagined my priority of birth entitled me to claim, he took every opportunity to deride my pretensions, and to vindicate the cause of the superior strength and vigour which constituted his own. It would have done your heart good to have seen us cuff one another, we did it with such zeal. There is nothing in human passion like a good brotherly hatred! My mother said, with the most feeling earnestness, that she used to feel us fighting even before our birth: we certainly lost no time directly after it. Both my

parents were secretly vexed that I had come into the world an hour sooner than my brother; and Gerald himself looked upon it as a sort of juggle,—a kind of jockeyship by which he had lost the prerogative of birthright. This very early rankled in his heart, and he was so much a greater favourite than myself that, instead of rooting out so unfortunate a feeling on his part, my good parents made no scruple of openly lamenting my seniority. I believe the real cause of our being taken from the domestic instructions of the Abbe (who was an admirable teacher) and sent to school, was solely to prevent my uncle deciding everything in my favour. Montreuil, however, accompanied us to our academy, and remained with us during the three years in which we were perfecting ourselves in the blessings of education.

At the end of the second year, a prize was instituted for the best proficient at a very severe examination; two months before it took place we went home for a few days. After dinner my uncle asked me to walk with him in the park. I did so: we strolled along to the margin of a rivulet which ornamented the grounds. There my uncle, for the first time, broke silence.

"Morton," said he, looking down at his left leg, "Morton, let me see; thou art now of a reasonable age,—fourteen at the least."

"Fifteen, if it please you, sir," said I, elevating my stature as much as I was able.

"Humph! my boy; and a pretty time of life it is, too. Your brother Gerald is taller than you by two inches."

"But I can beat him for all that, uncle," said I, colouring, and clenching my fist.

My uncle pulled down his right ruffle. "'Gad so, Morton, you're a brave fellow," said he; "but I wish you were less of a hero and more of a scholar. I wish you could beat him in Greek as well as in boxing. I will tell you what Old Rowley said," and my uncle occupied the next quarter of an hour with a story. The story opened the good old gentleman's heart; my laughter opened it still more. "Hark ye, sirrah!" said he, pausing abruptly, and grasping my hand with a vigorous effort of love and muscle, "hark ye, sirrah,—I love you,—'Sdeath, I do. I love you better than both your brothers, and that crab of a priest into the bargain; but I am grieved to the heart to hear what I do of you. They tell me you are the idlest boy in the school; that you are always beating your brother Gerald, and making a scurrilous jest of your mother or myself."

"Who says so? who dares say so?" said I, with an emphasis that would have startled a less hearty man than Sir William Devereux. "They lie, Uncle; by my soul they do. Idle I am; quarrelsome with my brother I confess myself; but jesting at you or my mother—never—never. No, no; *you*, too, who have been so kind to me,—the only one who ever was. No, no; do not think I could be such a wretch:" and as I said this the tears gushed from my eyes.

My good uncle was exceedingly affected. "Look ye, child," said he, "I do not believe them. 'Sdeath, not a word; I would repeat to you a good jest now of Sedley's, 'Gad, I would, but I am really too much moved just at present. I tell you what, my boy, I tell you what you shall do: there is a trial coming on at school—eh?—well, the Abbe tells me Gerald is certain of being first, and you of being last. Now, Morton, you shall beat your brother, and shame the Jesuit. There; my mind's spoken; dry your tears, my boy, and I'll tell you the jest Sedley made: it was in the Mulberry Garden one day—" And the knight told his story.

I dried my tears, pressed my uncle's hand, escaped from him as soon as I was able, hastened to my room, and surrendered myself to reflection.

When my uncle so good-naturedly proposed that I should conquer Gerald at the examination, nothing appeared to him more easy; he was pleased to think I had more talent than my brother, and talent, according to his creed, was the only master-key to unlock every science. A problem in Euclid or a phrase in Pindar, a secret in astronomy or a knotty passage in the Fathers, were all riddles, with the solution of which application had nothing to do. One's mother-wit was a precious sort of necromancy, which could pierce every mystery at first sight; and all the gifts of knowledge, in his opinion, like reading and writing in that of the sage Dogberry, "came by nature." Alas! I was not under the same

pleasurable delusion; I rather exaggerated than diminished the difficulty of my task, and thought, at the first glance, that nothing short of a miracle would enable me to excel my brother. Gerald, a boy of natural talent, and, as I said before, of great assiduity in the orthodox studies,—especially favoured too by the instruction of Montreuil,—had long been esteemed the first scholar of our little world; and though I knew that with some branches of learning I was more conversant than himself, yet, as my emulation had been hitherto solely directed to bodily contention, I had never thought of contesting with him a reputation for which I cared little, and on a point in which I had been early taught that I could never hope to enter into any advantageous comparison with the "genius" of the Devereuxs.

A new spirit now passed into me: I examined myself with a jealous and impartial scrutiny; I weighed my acquisitions against those of my brother; I called forth, from their secret recesses, the unexercised and almost unknown stores I had from time to time laid up in my mental armoury to moulder and to rust. I surveyed them with a feeling that they might yet be polished into use; and, excited alike by the stimulus of affection on one side and hatred on the other, my mind worked itself from despondency into doubt, and from doubt into the sanguineness of hope. I told none of my design; I exacted from my uncle a promise not to betray it; I shut myself in my room; I gave out that I was ill; I saw no one, not even the Abbe; I rejected his instructions, for I looked upon him as an enemy; and, for the two months before my trial, I spent night and day in an unrelaxing application, of which, till then, I had not imagined myself capable.

Though inattentive to the school exercises, I had never been wholly idle. I was a lover of abstruser researches than the hackneyed subjects of the school, and we had really received such extensive and judicious instructions from the Abbe during our early years that it would have been scarcely possible for any of us to have fallen into a thorough distaste for intellectual pursuits. In the examination I foresaw that much which I had previously acquired might be profitably displayed,—much secret and recondite knowledge of the customs and manners of the ancients, as well as their literature, which curiosity had led me to obtain, and which I knew had never entered into the heads of those who, contented with their reputation in the customary academical routine, had rarely dreamed of wandering into less beaten paths of learning. Fortunately too for me, Gerald was so certain of success that latterly he omitted all precaution to obtain it; and as none of our schoolfellows had the vanity to think of contesting with him, even the Abbe seemed to imagine him justified in his supineness.

The day arrived. Sir William, my mother, the whole aristocracy of the neighbourhood, were present at the trial. The Abbe came to my room a few hours before it commenced: he found the door locked.

"Ungracious boy," said he, "admit me; I come at the earnest request of your brother Aubrey to give you some hints preparatory to the examination."

"He has indeed come at my wish," said the soft and silver voice of Aubrey, in a supplicating tone: "do admit him, dear Morton, for my sake!"

"Go," said I, bitterly, from within, "go: ye are both my foes and slanderers; you come to insult my disgrace beforehand; but perhaps you will yet be disappointed."

"You will not open the door?" said the priest.

"I will not; begone."

"He will indeed disgrace his family," said Montreuil, moving away.

"He will disgrace himself," said Aubrey, dejectedly.

I laughed scornfully. If ever the consciousness of strength is pleasant, it is when we are thought most weak.

The greater part of our examination consisted in the answering of certain questions in writing, given to us in the three days immediately previous to the grand and final one; for this last day was reserved the paper of composition (as it was termed) in verse and prose, and the personal examination in a few showy, but generally understood, subjects. When Gerald gave in his paper, and answered the

verbal questions, a buzz of admiration and anxiety went round the room. His person was so handsome, his address so graceful, his voice so assured and clear, that a strong and universal sympathy was excited in his favour. The head-master publicly complimented him. He regretted only the deficiency of his pupil in certain minor but important matters. I came next, for I stood next to Gerald in our class. As I walked up the hall, I raised my eyes to the gallery in which my uncle and his party sat. I saw that my mother was listening to the Abbe, whose eye, severe, cold, and contemptuous, was bent upon me. But my uncle leaned over the railing of the gallery, with his plumed hat in his hand, which, when he caught my look, he waved gently,—as if in token of encouragement, and with an air so kind and cheering, that I felt my step grow prouder as I approached the conclave of the masters.

"Morton Devereux," said the president of the school, in a calm, loud, austere voice, that filled the whole hall, "we have looked over your papers on the three previous days, and they have given us no less surprise than pleasure. Take heed and time how you answer us now."

At this speech a loud murmur was heard in my uncle's party, which gradually spread round the hall. I again looked up: my mother's face was averted; that of the Abbe was impenetrable; but I saw my uncle wiping his eyes, and felt a strange emotion creeping into my own, I turned hastily away, and presented my paper; the head master received it, and, putting it aside, proceeded to the verbal examination. Conscious of the parts in which Gerald was likely to fail, I had paid especial attention to the minutiae of scholarship, and my forethought stood me in good stead at the present moment. My trial ceased; my last paper was read. I bowed, and retired to the other end of the hall. I was not so popular as Gerald; a crowd was assembled round him, but I stood alone. As I leaned against a column, with folded arms, and a countenance which I felt betrayed little of my internal emotions, my eye caught Gerald's. He was very pale, and I could see that his hand trembled. Despite of our enmity, I felt for him. The worst passions are softened by triumph, and I foresaw that mine was at hand.

The whole examination was over. Every boy had passed it. The masters retired for a moment; they reappeared and reseated themselves. The first sound I heard was that of my own name. I was the victor of the day: I was more; I was one hundred marks before my brother. My head swam round; my breath forsook me. Since then I have been placed in many trials of life, and had many triumphs; but never was I so overcome as at that moment. I left the hall; I scarcely listened to the applauses with which it rang. I hurried to my own chamber, and threw myself on the bed in a delirium of intoxicated feeling, which had in it more of rapture than anything but the gratification of first love or first vanity can bestow.

Ah! it would be worth stimulating our passions if it were only for the pleasure of remembering their effect; and all violent excitement should be indulged less for present joy than for future retrospection.

My uncle's step was the first thing which intruded on my solitude.

"Od's fish, my boy," said he, crying like a child, "this is fine work,—'Gad, so it is. I almost wish I were a boy myself to have a match with you,—faith I do,—see what it is to learn a little of life! If you had never read my play, do you think you would have done half so well?—no, my boy, I sharpened your wits for you. Honest George Etherege and I,—we were the making of you! and when you come to be a great man, and are asked what made you so, you shall say, 'My uncle's play;' 'Gad, you shall. Faith, boy, never smile! Od's fish, I'll tell you a story as *a propos* to the present occasion as if it had been made on purpose. Rochester and I and Sedley were walking one day, and—*entre nous*—awaiting certain appointments—hem!—for my part I was a little melancholy or so, thinking of my catastrophe,—that is, of my play's catastrophe; and so, said Sedley, winking at Rochester, 'Our friend is sorrowful.' 'Truly,' said I, seeing they were about to banter me,—for you know they were arch fellows,—'truly, little Sid' (we called Sedley Sid), 'you are greatly mistaken;'—you see, Morton, I was thus sharp upon him because when you go to court you will discover that it does not do to take without giving. And then Rochester said, looking roguishly towards me, the wittiest thing against Sedley that ever I heard; it was the most celebrated *bon mot* at court for three weeks; he said—no,

boy, od's fish, it was so stinging I can't tell it thee; faith, I can't. Poor Sid; he was a good fellow, though malicious,—and he's dead now. I'm sorry I said a word about it. Nay, never look so disappointed, boy. You have all the cream of the story as it is. And now put on your hat, and come with me. I've got leave for you to take a walk with your old uncle."

That night, as I was undressing, I heard a gentle rap at the door, and Aubrey entered. He approached me timidly, and then, throwing his arms round my neck, kissed me in silence. I had not for years experienced such tenderness from him; and I sat now mute and surprised. At last I said, with the sneer which I must confess I usually assumed towards those persons whom I imagined I had a right to think ill of:—

"Pardon me, my gentle brother, there is something portentous in this sudden change. Look well round the room, and tell me at your earliest leisure what treasure it is that you are desirous should pass from my possession into your own."

"Your love, Morton," said Aubrey, drawing back, but apparently in pride, not anger; "your love: I ask nothing more."

"Of a surety, kind Aubrey," said I, "the favour seems somewhat slight to have caused your modesty such delay in requesting it. I think you have been now some years nerving your mind to the exertion."

"Listen to me, Morton," said Aubrey, suppressing his emotion; "you have always been my favourite brother. From our first childhood my heart yearned to you. Do you remember the time when an enraged bull pursued me, and you, then only ten years old, placed yourself before it and defended me at the risk of your own life? Do you think I could ever forget that,—child as I was? —never, Morton, never!"

Before I could answer the door was thrown open, and the Abbe entered. "Children," said he, and the single light of the room shone full upon his unmoved, rigid, commanding features—"children, be as Heaven intended you,—friends and brothers. Morton, I have wronged you, I own it; here is my hand: Aubrey, let all but early love, and the present promise of excellence which your brother displays, be forgotten."

With these words the priest joined our hands. I looked on my brother, and my heart melted. I flung myself into his arms and wept.

"This is well," said Montreuil, surveying us with a kind of grim complacency, and, taking my brother's arm, he blest us both, and led Aubrey away.

That day was a new era in my boyish life. I grew henceforth both better and worse. Application and I having once shaken hands became very good acquaintance. I had hitherto valued myself upon supplying the frailties of a delicate frame by an uncommon agility in all bodily exercises. I now strove rather to improve the deficiencies of my mind, and became orderly, industrious, and devoted to study. So far so well; but as I grew wiser, I grew also more wary. Candour no longer seemed to me the finest of virtues. I thought before I spoke: and second thought sometimes quite changed the nature of the intended speech; in short, gentlemen of the next century, to tell you the exact truth, the little Count Devereux became somewhat of a hypocrite!

CHAPTER IV

A CONTEST OF ART AND A LEAGUE OF FRIENDSHIP.—TWO CHARACTERS IN MUTUAL IGNORANCE OF EACH OTHER, AND THE READER NO WISER THAN EITHER OF THEM

THE Abbe was now particularly courteous to me. He made Gerald and myself breakfast with him, and told us nothing was so amiable as friendship among brothers. We agreed to the sentiment,

and, like all philosophers, did not agree a bit the better for acknowledging the same first principles. Perhaps, notwithstanding his fine speeches, the Abbe was the real cause of our continued want of cordiality. However, we did not fight any more: we avoided each other, and at last became as civil and as distant as those mathematical lines which appear to be taking all possible pains to approach one another and never get a jot the nearer for it. Oh! your civility is the prettiest invention possible for dislike! Aubrey and I were inseparable, and we both gained by the intercourse. I grew more gentle, and he more masculine; and, for my part, the kindness of his temper so softened the satire of mine that I learned at last to smile full as often as to sneer.

The Abbe had obtained a wonderful hold over Aubrey; he had made the poor boy think so much of the next world, that he had lost all relish for this. He lived in a perpetual fear of offence: he was like a chemist of conscience, and weighed minutiae by scruples. To play, to ride, to run, to laugh at a jest, or to banquet on a melon, were all sins to be atoned for; and I have found (as a penance for eating twenty-three cherries instead of eighteen) the penitent of fourteen standing, barefooted, in the coldest nights of winter, upon the hearthstones, almost utterly naked, and shivering like a leaf, beneath the mingled effect of frost and devotion. At first I attempted to wrestle with this exceeding holiness, but finding my admonitions received with great distaste and some horror, I suffered my brother to be happy in his own way. I only looked with a very evil and jealous eye upon the good Abbe, and examined, while I encouraged them, the motives of his advances to myself. What doubled my suspicions of the purity of the priest was my perceiving that he appeared to hold out different inducements for trusting him to each of us, according to his notions of our respective characters. My brother Gerald he alternately awed and persuaded, by the sole effect of superior intellect. With Aubrey he used the mechanism of superstition. To me, he, on the one hand, never spoke of religion, nor, on the other, ever used threats or persuasion, to induce me to follow any plan suggested to my adoption; everything seemed to be left to my reason and my ambition. He would converse with me for hours upon the world and its affairs, speak of courts and kings, in an easy and unpedantic strain; point out the advantage of intellect in acquiring power and controlling one's species; and, whenever I was disposed to be sarcastic upon the human nature I had read of, he supported my sarcasm by illustrations of the human nature he had seen. We were both, I think (for myself I can answer), endeavouring to pierce the real nature of the other; and perhaps the talent of diplomacy for which, years afterwards, I obtained some applause, was first learnt in my skirmishing warfare with the Abbe Montreuil.

At last, the evening before we quitted school for good arrived. Aubrey had just left me for solitary prayers, and I was sitting alone by my fire, when Montreuil entered gently. He sat himself down by me, and, after giving me the salutation of the evening, sank into a silence which I was the first to break.

"Pray, Abbe," said I, "have one's years anything to do with one's age?"

The priest was accustomed to the peculiar tone of my sagacious remarks, and answered dryly,—

"Mankind in general imagine that they have."

"Faith, then," said I, "mankind know very little about the matter. To-day I am at school, and a boy; to-morrow I leave school; if I hasten to town I am presented at court; and lo! I am a man; and this change within half-a-dozen changes of the sun! therefore, most reverend father, I humbly opine that age is measured by events, not years."

"And are you not happy at the idea of passing the age of thraldom, and seeing arrayed before you the numberless and dazzling pomps and pleasures of the great world?" said Montreuil, abruptly, fixing his dark and keen eye upon me.

"I have not yet fully made up my mind whether to be happy or not," said I, carelessly.

"It is a strange answer;" said the priest; "but" (after a pause) "you are a strange youth: a character that resembles a riddle is at your age uncommon, and, pardon me, unamiable. Age, naturally repulsive, requires a mask; and in every wrinkle you may behold the ambush of a scheme: but the heart of youth should be open as its countenance! However, I will not weary you with homilies; let us change the

topic. Tell me, Morton, do you repent having turned your attention of late to those graver and more systematic studies which can alone hereafter obtain you distinction?"

"No, father," said I, with a courtly bow, "for the change has gained me your good opinion."

A smile, of peculiar and undefinable expression, crossed the thin lips of the priest; he rose, walked to the door, and saw that it was carefully closed. I expected some important communication, but in vain; pacing the small room to and fro, as if in a musing mood, the Abbe remained silent, till, pausing opposite some fencing foils, which among various matters (books, papers, quoits, etc.) were thrown idly in one corner of the room, he said,—

"They tell me that you are the best fencer in the school—is it so?"

"I hope not, for fencing is an accomplishment in which Gerald is very nearly my equal," I replied.

"You run, ride, leap, too, better than any one else, according to the votes of your comrades?"

"It is a noble reputation," said I, "in which I believe I am only excelled by our huntsman's eldest son."

"You are a strange youth," repeated the priest; "no pursuit seems to give you pleasure, and no success to gratify your vanity. Can you not think of any triumph which would elate you?"

I was silent.

"Yes," cried Montreuil, approaching me,—"yes," cried he, "I read your heart, and I respect it; these are petty competitions and worthless honours. You require a nobler goal, and a more glorious reward. He who feels in his soul that Fate has reserved for him a great and exalted part in this world's drama may reasonably look with indifference on these paltry rehearsals of common characters."

I raised my eye, and as it met that of the priest, I was irresistibly struck with the proud and luminous expression which Montreuil's look had assumed. Perhaps something kindred to its nature was perceptible in my own; for, after surveying me with an air of more approbation than he had ever honoured me with before, he grasped my arm firmly, and said, "Morton, you know me not; for many years I have not known you: that time is past. No sooner did your talents develop themselves than I was the first to do homage to their power: let us henceforth be more to each other than we have been; let us not be pupil and teacher; let us be friends. Do not think that I invite you to an unequal exchange of good offices: you may be the heir to wealth and a distinguished name; I may seem to you but an unknown and undignified priest; but the authority of the Almighty can raise up, from the sheepfold and the cotter's shed, a power, which, as the organ of His own, can trample upon sceptres and dictate to the supremacy of kings. And *I*—*I*"—the priest abruptly paused, checked the warmth of his manner, as if he thought it about to encroach on indiscretion, and, sinking into a calmer tone, continued, "yes, I, Morton, insignificant as I appear to you, can, in *every* path through this intricate labyrinth of life, be more useful to your desires than you can ever be to mine. I offer to you in my friendship a fervour of zeal and energy of power which in none of your equals, in age and station, you can hope to find. Do you accept my offer?"

"Can you doubt," said I, with eagerness, "that I would avail myself of the services of any man, however displeasing to me, and worthless in himself? How, then, can I avoid embracing the friendship of one so extraordinary in knowledge and intellect as yourself? I do embrace it, and with rapture."

The priest pressed my hand. "But," continued he, fixing his eyes upon mine, "all alliances have their conditions: I require implicit confidence; and for some years, till time gives you experience, regard for your interests induces me also to require obedience. Name any wish you may form for worldly advancement, opulence, honour, the smile of kings, the gifts of states, and—I—I will pledge myself to carry that wish into effect. Never had eastern prince so faithful a servant among the Dives and Genii as Morton Devereux shall find in me: but question me not of the sources of my power; be satisfied when their channel wafts you the success you covet. And, more, when I in my turn (and this shall be but rarely) request a favour of you, ask me not for what end nor hesitate to adopt the

means I shall propose. You seem startled; are you content at this understanding between us, or will you retract the bond?"

"My father," said I, "there is enough to startle me in your proposal; it greatly resembles that made by the Old Man of the Mountains to his vassals, and it would not exactly suit my inclinations to be called upon some morning to act the part of a private executioner."

The priest smiled. "My young friend," said he, "those days have passed; neither religion nor friendship requires of her votaries sacrifices of blood. But make yourself easy; whenever I ask of you what offends your conscience, even in a punctilio, refuse my request. With this exception, what say you?"

"That I think I will agree to the bond: but, father, I am an irresolute person; I must have time to consider."

"Be it so. To-morrow, having surrendered my charge to your uncle, I depart for France."

"For France!" said I; "and how? Surely the war will prevent your passage."

The priest smiled. Nothing ever displeased me more than that priest's smile. "The ecclesiastics," said he, "are the ambassadors of Heaven, and have nothing to do with the wars of earth. I shall find no difficulty in crossing the Channel. I shall not return for several months, perhaps not till the expiration of a year: I leave you, till then, to decide upon the terms I have proposed to you. Meanwhile, gratify my vanity by employing my power; name some commission in France which you wish me to execute."

"I can think of none,—yet, stay;" and I felt some curiosity to try the power of which he boasted, —"I have read that kings are blest with a most accommodating memory, and perfectly forget their favourites when they can be no longer useful. You will see, perhaps, if my father's name has become a Gothic and unknown sound at the court of the Great King. I confess myself curious to learn this, though I can have no personal interest in it."

"Enough, the commission shall be done. And now, my child, Heaven bless you! and send you many such friends as the humble priest, who, whatever be his failings, has, at least, the merit of wishing to serve those whom he loves."

So saying, the priest closed the door. Sinking into a revery, as his footsteps died upon my ear, I muttered to myself: "Well, well, my sage ecclesiastic, the game is not over yet; let us see if, at sixteen, we cannot shuffle cards, and play tricks with the gamester of thirty. Yet he may be in earnest, and faith I believe he is; but I must look well before I leap, or consign my actions into such spiritual keeping. However, if the worst come to the worst, if I do make this compact, and am deceived,—if, above all, I am ever seduced, or led blindfold into one of those snares which priestcraft sometimes lays to the cost of honour,—why, I shall have a sword, which I shall never be at a loss to use, and it can find its way through a priest's gown as well as a soldier's corselet."

Confess that a youth who could think so promptly of his sword was well fitted to wear one!

CHAPTER V

RURAL HOSPITALITY.—AN EXTRAORDINARY GUEST. —A FIN$ GENTLEMAN IS NOT NECESSARILY A FOOL

WE were all three (my brothers and myself) precocious geniuses. Our early instructions, under a man like the Abbe, at once learned and worldly, and the society into which we had been initiated from our childhood, made us premature adepts in the manners of the world; and I, in especial, flattered myself that a quick habit of observation rendered me no despicable profiter by my experience. Our academy, too, had been more like a college than a school; and we had enjoyed a license that seemed to the superficial more likely to benefit our manners than to strengthen our morals. I do not think, however, that the latter suffered by our freedom from restraint. On the contrary, we the earlier learned

that vice, but for the piquancy of its unlawfulness, would never be so captivating a goddess; and our errors and crimes in after life had certainly not their origin in our wanderings out of academical bounds.

It is right that I should mention our prematurity of intellect, because, otherwise, much of my language and reflections, as detailed in the first book of this history, might seem ill suited to the tender age at which they occurred. However, they approach, as nearly as possible, to my state of mind at that period; and I have, indeed, often mortified my vanity in later life by thinking how little the march of time has ripened my abilities, and how petty would have been the intellectual acquisitions of manhood, if they had not brought me something like content!

My uncle had always, during his retirement, seen as many people as he could assemble out of the "mob of gentlemen who *live at* ease." But, on our quitting school and becoming men, he resolved to set no bounds to his hospitality. His doors were literally thrown open; and as he was by far the greatest person in the district—to say nothing of his wines, and his French cook—many of the good people of London did not think it too great an honour to confer upon the wealthy representative of the Devereuxs the distinction of their company and compliments. Heavens! what notable samples of court breeding and furbelows did the crane-neck coaches, which made our own family vehicle look like a gilt tortoise, pour forth by couples and leashes into the great hall; while my gallant uncle, in new periwig and a pair of silver-clocked stockings (a present from a *ci-devant* fine lady), stood at the far end of the picture-gallery to receive his visitors with all the graces of the last age.

My mother, who had preserved her beauty wonderfully, sat in a chair of green velvet, and astonished the courtiers by the fashion of a dress only just imported. The worthy Countess (she had dropped in England the loftier distinction of *Madame la Marechale*) was however quite innocent of any intentional affectation of the *mode*; for the new stomacher, so admired in London, had been the last alteration in female garniture at Paris a month before my father died. Is not this "Fashion" a noble divinity to possess such zealous adherents?—a pitiful, lackey-like creature, which struts through one country with the cast-off finery of another!

As for Aubrey and Gerald, they produced quite an effect; and I should most certainly have been thrown irrevocably into the background had I not been born to the good fortune of an eldest son. This was far more than sufficient to atone for the comparative plainness of my person; and when it was discovered that I was also Sir William's favourite, it is quite astonishing what a beauty I became! Aubrey was declared too effeminate; Gerald too tall. And the Duchess of Lackland one day, when she had placed a lean, sallow ghost of a daughter on either side of me, whispered my uncle in a voice, like the *aside* of a player, intended for none but the whole audience, that the young Count had the most imposing air and the finest eyes she had ever seen. All this inspired me with courage, as well as contempt; and not liking to be beholden solely to my priority of birth for my priority of distinction, I resolved to become as agreeable as possible. If I had not in the vanity of my heart resolved also to be "myself alone," Fate would have furnished me at the happiest age for successful imitation with an admirable model.

Time rolled on; two years were flown since I had left school, and Montreuil was not yet returned. I had passed the age of eighteen, when the whole house, which, as it was summer, when none but cats and physicians were supposed gifted by Providence with the power to exist in town, was uncommonly full,—the whole house, I say, was thrown into a positive fever of expectation. The visit of a guest, if not of greater consequence at least of greater interest than any who had hitherto honoured my uncle, was announced. Even the young Count, with the most imposing air in the world and the finest eyes, was forgotten by everybody but the Duchess of Lackland and her daughters, who had just returned to Devereux Court to observe how amazingly the Count had grown! Oh! what a prodigy wisdom would be, if it were but blest with a memory as keen and constant as that of interest!

Struck with the universal excitement, I went to my uncle to inquire the name of the expected guest. My uncle was occupied in fanning the Lady Hasselton, a daughter of one of King Charles's

Beauties. He had only time to answer me literally, and without comment; the guest's name was Mr. St. John.

I had never conned the "Flying Post," and I knew nothing about politics. "Who is Mr. St. John?" said I; my uncle had renewed the office of a zephyr. The daughter of the Beauty heard and answered, "The most charming person in England." I bowed and turned away. "How vastly explanatory!" said I. I met a furious politician. "Who is Mr. St. John?" I asked.

"The cleverest man in England," answered the politician, hurrying off with a pamphlet in his hand.

"Nothing can be more satisfactory," thought I. Stopping a coxcomb of the first water, "Who is Mr. St. John?" I asked.

"The finest gentleman in England," answered the coxcomb, settling his cravat.

"Perfectly intelligible!" was my reflection on this reply; and I forthwith arrested a Whig parson, —"Who is Mr. St. John?" said I.

"The greatest reprobate in England!" answered the Whig parson, and I was too stunned to inquire more.

Five minutes afterwards the sound of carriage wheels was heard in the courtyard, then a slight bustle in the hall, and the door of the ante-room being thrown open Mr. St. John entered.

He was in the very prime of life, about the middle height, and of a mien and air so strikingly noble that it was some time before you recovered the general effect of his person sufficiently to examine its peculiar claims to admiration. However, he lost nothing by a further survey: he possessed not only an eminently handsome but a very extraordinary countenance. Through an air of *nonchalance*, and even something of lassitude; through an ease of manners sometimes sinking into effeminate softness, sometimes bordering upon licentious effrontery,—his eye thoughtful, yet wandering, seemed to announce that the mind partook but little of the whim of the moment, or of those levities of ordinary life over which the grace of his manner threw so peculiar a charm. His brow was, perhaps, rather too large and prominent for the exactness of perfect symmetry, but it had an expression of great mental power and determination. His features were high, yet delicate, and his mouth, which, when closed, assumed a firm and rather severe expression, softened, when speaking, into a smile of almost magical enchantment. Richly but not extravagantly dressed, he appeared to cultivate rather than disdain the ornaments of outward appearance; and whatever can fascinate or attract was so inherent in this singular man that all which in others would have been most artificial was in him most natural: so that it is no exaggeration to add that to be well dressed seemed to the elegance of his person not so much the result of art as of a property innate and peculiar to himself.

Such was the outward appearance of Henry St. John; one well suited to the qualities of a mind at once more vigorous and more accomplished than that of any other person with whom the vicissitudes of my life have ever brought me into contact.

I kept my eye on the new guest throughout the whole day: I observed the mingled liveliness and softness which pervaded his attentions to women, the intellectual yet unpedantic superiority he possessed in his conversations with men; his respectful demeanour to age; his careless, yet not over-familiar, ease with the young; and, what interested me more than all, the occasional cloud which passed over his countenance at moments when he seemed sunk into a revery that had for its objects nothing in common with those around him.

Just before dinner St. John was talking to a little group, among whom curiosity seemed to have drawn the Whig parson whom I have before mentioned. He stood at a little distance, shy and uneasy; one of the company took advantage of so favourable a butt for jests, and alluded to the bystander in a witticism which drew laughter from all but St. John, who, turning suddenly towards the parson, addressed an observation to him in the most respectful tone. Nor did he cease talking with him (fatiguing as the conference must have been, for never was there a duller ecclesiastic than the gentleman conversed with) until we descended to dinner. Then, for the first time, I learned that

nothing can constitute good breeding that has not good-nature for its foundation; and then, too, as I was leading Lady Barbara Lackland to the great hall by the tip of her forefinger I made another observation. Passing the priest, I heard him say to a fellow-clerk,—

"Certainly, he is the greatest man in England;" and I mentally remarked, "There is no policy like politeness; and a good manner is the best thing in the world, either to get one a good name or to supply the want of it."

CHAPTER VI

A DIALOGUE, WHICH MIGHT BE DULL IF IT WERE LONGER

THREE days after the arrival of St. John, I escaped from the crowd of impertinents, seized a volume of Cowley, and, in a fit of mingled poetry and melancholy, strolled idly into the park. I came to the margin of the stream, and to the very spot on which I had stood with my uncle on the evening when he had first excited my emulation to scholastic rather than manual contention with my brother; I seated myself by the water-side, and, feeling indisposed to read, leaned my cheek upon my hand, and surrendered my thoughts as prisoners to the reflections which I could not resist.

I continued I know not how long in my meditation, till I was roused by a gentle touch upon my shoulder; I looked up, and saw St. John.

"Pardon me, Count," said he, smiling, "I should not have disturbed your reflections had not your neglect of an old friend emboldened me to address you upon his behalf." And St. John pointed to the volume of Cowley which he had taken up without my perceiving it.

"Well," added he, seating himself on the turf beside me, "in my younger days, poetry and I were better friends than we are now. And if I had had Cowley as a companion, I should not have parted with him as you have done, even for my own reflections."

"You admire him then?" said I.

"Why, that is too general a question. I admire what is fine in him, as in every one else, but I do not love him the better for his points and his conceits. He reminds me of what Cardinal Pallavicino said of Seneca, that he 'perfumes his conceits with civet and ambergris.' However, Count, I have opened upon a beautiful motto for you:—

"'Here let me, careless and unthoughtful lying,
Hear the soft winds above me flying,
With all their wanton boughs dispute,
And the more tuneful birds to both replying;
Nor be myself too mute.'

"What say you to that wish? If you have a germ of poetry in you such verse ought to bring it into flower."

"Ay," answered I, though not exactly in accordance with the truth; "but I have not that germ. I destroyed it four years ago. Reading the dedications of poets cured me of the love for poetry. What a pity that the Divine Inspiration should have for its oracles such mean souls!"

"Yes, and how industrious the good gentlemen are in debasing themselves! Their ingenuity is never half so much shown in a simile as in a compliment; I know nothing in nature more melancholy than the discovery of any meanness in a great man. There is so little to redeem the dry mass of follies and errors from which the materials of this life are composed, that anything to love or to reverence becomes, as it were, the sabbath for the mind. It is better to feel, as we grow older, how the respite is abridged, and how the few objects left to our admiration are abased. What a foe not only to life, but to

all that dignifies and ennobles it, is Time! Our affections and our pleasures resemble those fabulous trees described by Saint Oderic: the fruits which they bring forth are no sooner ripened into maturity than they are transformed into birds and fly away. But these reflections cannot yet be familiar to you. Let us return to Cowley. Do you feel any sympathy with his prose writings? For some minds they have a great attraction."

"They have for mine," answered I: "but then I am naturally a dreamer; and a contemplative egotist is always to me a mirror in which I behold myself."

"The world," answered St. John, with a melancholy smile, "will soon dissolve, or forever confirm, your humour for dreaming; in either case, Cowley will not be less a favourite. But you must, like me, have long toiled in the heat and travail of business, or of pleasure, which is more wearisome still, in order fully to sympathize with those beautiful panegyrics upon solitude which make perhaps the finest passages in Cowley. I have often thought that he whom God hath gifted with a love of retirement possesses, as it were, an extra sense. And among what our poet so eloquently calls 'the vast and noble scenes of Nature,' we find the balm for the wounds we have sustained among the 'pitiful shifts of policy;' for the attachment to solitude is the surest preservative from the ills of life: and I know not if the Romans ever instilled, under allegory, a sublimer truth than when they inculcated the belief that those inspired by Feronia, the goddess of woods and forests, could walk barefoot and uninjured over burning coals."

At this part of our conference, the bell swinging hoarsely through the long avenues, and over the silent water, summoned us to the grand occupation of civilized life; we rose and walked slowly towards the house.

"Does not," said I, "this regular routine of petty occurrence, this periodical solemnity of trifles, weary and disgust you? For my part, I almost long for the old days of knight-errantry, and would rather be knocked on the head by a giant, or carried through the air by a flying griffin, than live in this circle of dull regularities,—the brute at the mill."

"You may live even in these days," answered St. John, "without too tame a regularity. Women and politics furnish ample food for adventure, and you must not judge of all life by country life."

"Nor of all conversation," said I, with a look which implied a compliment, "by the insipid idlers who fill our saloons. Behold them now, gathered by the oriel window, yonder; precious distillers of talk,—sentinels of society with certain set phrases as watchwords, which they never exceed; sages, who follow Face's advice to Dapper,—

"'Hum thrice, and buzz as often.'"

CHAPTER VII

A CHANGE OF PROSPECTS.—A NEW INSIGHT INTO THE CHARACTER OF THE HERO.—A CONFERENCE BETWEEN TWO BROTHERS

A DAY or two after the conversation recorded in my last chapter, St. John, to my inexpressible regret, left us for London; however, we had enjoyed several conferences together during his stay, and when we parted it was with a pressing invitation on his side to visit him in London, and a most faithful promise on mine to avail myself of the request.

No sooner was he fairly gone than I went to seek my uncle; I found him reading one of Farquhar's comedies. Despite my sorrow at interrupting him in so venerable a study, I was too full of my new plot to heed breaking off that in the comedy. In very few words I made the good knight understand that his descriptions had infected me, and that I was dying to ascertain their truth; in a

word, that his hopeful nephew was fully bent on going to town. My uncle first stared, then swore, then paused, then looked at his leg, drew up his stocking, frowned, whistled, and told me at last to talk to him about it another time. Now, for my part, I think there are only two classes of people in the world authorized to put one off to "another time,"—prime ministers and creditors; accordingly, I would not take my uncle's dismissal. I had not read plays, studied philosophy, and laid snares for the Abbe Montreuil without deriving some little wisdom from my experience; so I took to teasing, and a notable plan it is too! Whoever has pursued it may guess the result. My uncle yielded, and that day fortnight was fixed for my departure.

Oh! with what transport did I look forward to the completion of my wishes, the goal of my ambition! I hastened forth; I hurried into the woods; I sang out in the gladness of my heart, like a bird released; I drank in the air with a rapturous sympathy in its freedom; my step scarcely touched the earth, and my whole frame seemed ethereal, elated, exalted by the vivifying inspiration of my hopes. I paused by a little streamlet, which, brawling over stones and through unpenetrated thicknesses of wood, seemed, like confined ambition, not the less restless for its obscurity.

"Wild brooklet," I cried, as my thoughts rushed into words, "fret on, our lot is no longer the same; your wanderings and your murmurs are wasted in solitude and shade; your voice dies and re-awakes, but without an echo; your waves spread around their path neither fertility nor terror; their anger is idle, and their freshness is lavished on a sterile soil; the sun shines in vain for you, through these unvarying wastes of silence and gloom; Fortune freights not your channel with her hoarded stores, and Pleasure ventures not her silken sails upon your tide; not even the solitary idler roves beside you, to consecrate with human fellowship your melancholy course; no shape of beauty bends over your turbid waters, or mirrors in your breast the loveliness that hallows earth. Lonely and sullen, through storm or sunshine, you repine along your desolate way, and only catch, through the matted boughs that darken over you, the beams of the wan stars, which, like human hopes, tremble upon your breast, and are broken, even before they fade, by the very turbulence of the surface on which they fall. Rove, repine, murmur on! Such was my fate, but the resemblance is no more. I shall no longer be a lonely and regretful being; my affections will no longer waste themselves upon barrenness and stone. I go among the living and warm world of mortal energies and desires; my existence shall glide alternately through crested cities, and bowers in which Poetry worships Love; and the clear depths of my heart shall reflect whatever its young dreams have shadowed forth, the visioned form, the gentle and fairy spirit, the Eve of my soul's imagined and foreboded paradise."

Venting, in this incoherent strain, the exultation which filled my thoughts, I wandered on, throughout the whole day, till my spirits had exhausted themselves by indulgence; and, wearied alike by mental excitement and bodily exertion, I turned, with slow steps, towards the house. As I ascended the gentle acclivity on which it stood, I saw a figure approaching towards me: the increasing shades of the evening did not allow me to recognize the shape until it was almost by my side; it was Aubrey.

Of late I had seen very little of him. His devotional studies and habits seemed to draw him from the idle pursuits of myself and my uncle's guests; and Aubrey was one peculiarly susceptible of neglect, and sore, to morbidity, at the semblance of unkindness; so that he required to be sought, and rarely troubled others with advances: that night, however, his greeting was unusually warm.

"I was uneasy about you, Morton," said he, drawing my arm in his; "you have not been seen since morning; and, oh! Morton, my uncle told me, with tears in his eyes, that you were going to leave us. Is it so?"

"Had he tears in his eyes? Kind old man! And you, Aubrey, shall you, too, grieve for my departure?"

"Can you ask it, Morton? But why will you leave us? Are we not all happy here, now? *Now* that there is no longer any barrier or difference between us,—*now* that I may look upon you, and listen to you, and love you, and *own* that I love you? Why will you leave us now? And [continued Aubrey, as if fearful of giving me time to answer]—and every one praises you so here; and my uncle and all

of us are so proud of you. Why should you desert our affections merely because they are not new? Why plunge into that hollow and cold world which all who have tried it picture in such fearful hues? Can you find anything there to repay you for the love you leave behind?"

"My brother," said I, mournfully, and in a tone which startled him,—it was so different from that which I usually assumed,—"my brother, hear before you reproach me. Let us sit down upon this bank, and I will suffer you to see more of my restless and secret heart than any hitherto have beheld."

We sat down upon a little mound: how well I remember the spot! I can see the tree which shadows it from my window at this moment. How many seasons have the sweet herb and the emerald grass been withered there and renewed! Ah, what is this revival of all things fresh and youthful in external Nature but a mockery of the wintry spot which lies perished and *irrenewable* within!

We drew near to each other, and as my arm wound around him, I said, "Aubrey, your love has been to me a more precious gift than any who have not, like me, thirsted and longed even for the love of a dog, can conceive. Never let me lose that affection! And do not think of me hereafter as of one whose heart echoed all that his lip uttered. Do not believe that irony, and sarcasm, and bitterness of tongue flowed from a malignant or evil source. That disposition which seems to you alternately so light and gloomy had, perhaps, its origin in a mind too intense in its affections, and too exacting in having them returned. Till you sought my friendship, three short years ago, none but my uncle, with whom I could have nothing in common but attachment, seemed to care for my very existence. I blame them not; they were deceived in my nature: but blame *me* not too severely if my temper suffered from their mistake. Your friendship came to me, not too late to save me from a premature misanthropy, but too late to eradicate every morbidity of mind. Something of sternness on the one hand, and of satire on the other, has mingled so long with my better feelings that the taint and the stream have become inseparable. Do not sigh, Aubrey. To be unamiable is not to be ungrateful; and I shall not love you the less if I have but a few objects to love. You ask me my inducement to leave you. 'The World' will be sufficient answer. I cannot share your contempt of it, nor your fear. I am, and have been of late, consumed with a thirst,—eager, and burning, and unquenchable: it is ambition!"

"Oh, Morton!" said Aubrey, with a second sigh, longer and deeper than the first, "that evil passion! the passion which lost an angel heaven."

"Let us not now dispute, my brother, whether it be sinful in itself, or whether, if its object be virtuous, it is not a virtue. In baring my soul before you, I only speak of my motives, and seek not to excuse them. Perhaps on this earth there is no good without a little evil. When my mind was once turned to the acquisition of mental superiority, every petty acquisition I made increased my desire to attain more, and partial emulation soon widened into universal ambition. We three, Gerald and ourselves, are the keepers of a treasure more valuable than gold,—the treasure of a not ignoble nor sullied name. For my part, I confess that I am impatient to increase the store of honour which our father bequeathed to us. Nor is this all: despite our birth, we are poor in the gifts of fortune. We are all dependants on my uncle's favour; and, however we may deserve it, there would be something better in earning an independence for ourselves."

"That," said Aubrey, "may be an argument for mine and Gerald's exertions; but not for yours. You are the eldest, and my uncle's favourite. Nature and affection both point to you as his heir."

"If so, Aubrey, may many years pass before that inheritance be mine! Why should those years that might produce so much lie fallow? But though I would not affect an unreal delicacy, and disown my chance of future fortune, yet you must remember that it is a matter possible, not certain. My birthright gives me no claim over my uncle, whose estates are in his own gift; and favour, even in the good, is a wind which varies without power on our side to calculate the season or the cause. However this be,—and I love the person on whom fortune depends so much that I cannot, without pain, speak of the mere chance of its passing from his possession into mine,—you will own at least that I shall not hereafter deserve wealth the less for the advantages of experience."

"Alas!" said Aubrey, raising his eyes, "the worship of our Father in Heaven finds us ample cause for occupation, even in retirement; and the more we mix with His creatures, the more, I fear, we may forget the Creator. But if it must be so, I will pray for you, Morton; and you will remember that the powerless and poor Aubrey can still lift up his voice in your behalf."

As Aubrey thus spoke, I looked with mingled envy and admiration upon the countenance beside me, which the beauty of a spirit seemed at once to soften and to exalt.

Since our conference had begun, the dusk of twilight had melted away; and the moon had called into lustre—living, indeed, but unlike the common and unhallowing life of day—the wood and herbage, and silent variations of hill and valley, which slept around us; and, as the still and shadowy light fell over the upward face of my brother, it gave to his features an additional, and not wholly earth-born, solemnity of expression. There was indeed in his face and air that from which the painter of a seraph might not have disdained to copy: something resembling the vision of an angel in the dark eyes that swam with tears, in which emotion had so little of mortal dross; in the youthful and soft cheeks, which the earnestness of divine thought had refined by a pale but transparent hue; in the high and unclouded forehead, over which the hair, parted in the centre, fell in long and wavelike curls; and in the lips, silent, yet moving with internal prayer, which seemed the more fervent, because unheard.

I did not interrupt him in the prayer, which my soul felt, though my ear caught it not, was for me. But when he had ceased, and turned towards me, I clasped him to my breast. "My brother," I said, "we shall part, it is true, but not till our hearts have annihilated the space that was between them; not till we have felt that the love of brotherhood can pass the love of woman. Whatever await you, your devoted and holy mind will be, if not your shield from affliction, at least your balm for its wounds. Remain here. The quiet which breathes around you well becomes your tranquillity within; and sometimes bless me in your devotions, as you have done now. For me, I shall not regret those harder and harsher qualities which you blame in me, if thereafter their very sternness can afford me an opportunity of protecting your gentleness from evil, or redressing the wrongs from which your nature may be too innocent to preserve you. And now let us return home in the conviction that we have in our friendship one treasure beyond the reach of fate."

Aubrey did not answer; but he kissed my forehead, and I felt his tears upon my cheek. We rose, and with arms still embracing each other as we walked, bent our steps to the house.

Ah, earth! what hast thou more beautiful than the love of those whose ties are knit by nature, and whose union seems ordained to begin from the very moment of their birth?

CHAPTER VIII

FIRST LOVE

WE are under very changeful influences in this world! The night on which occurred the interview with Aubrey that I have just narrated, I was burning to leave Devereux Court. Within one little week from that time my eagerness was wonderfully abated. The sagacious reader will readily discover the cause of this alteration. About eight miles from my uncle's house was a seaport town; there were many and varied rides leading to it, and the town was a favourite place of visitation with all the family. Within a few hundred yards of the town was a small cottage, prettily situated in the midst of a garden, kept with singular neatness, and ornamented with several rare shrubs and exotics. I had more than once observed in the garden of this house a female in the very first blush of youth, and beautiful enough to excite within me a strong curiosity to learn the owner of the cottage. I inquired, and ascertained that its tenant was a Spaniard of high birth, and one who had acquired a melancholy celebrity by his conduct and misfortunes in the part he had taken in a certain feeble but gallant insurrection in his native country. He had only escaped with life and a very small sum of money,

and now lived in the obscure seaport of———, a refugee and a recluse. He was a widower, and had only one child,—a daughter; and I was therefore at no loss to discover who was the beautiful female I had noted and admired.

On the day after my conversation with Aubrey detailed in the last chapter, in riding past this cottage alone, I perceived a crowd assembled round the entrance; I paused to inquire the cause.

"Why, your honour," quoth a senior of the village, "I believe the tipstaves be come to take the foreigner for not paying his rent; and he does not understand our English liberty like, and has drawn his sword, and swears, in his outlandish lingo, he will not be made prisoner alive."

I required no further inducement to make me enter the house. The crowd gave way when they saw me dismount, and suffered me to penetrate into the first apartment. There I found the gallant old Spaniard with his sword drawn, keeping at bay a couple of sturdy-looking men, who appeared to be only prevented from using violence by respect for the person or the safety of a young woman, who clung to her father's knees and implored him not to resist where resistance was so unavailing. Let me cut short this scene; I dismissed the bailiffs, and paid the debt. I then endeavoured to explain to the Spaniard, in French, for he scarcely understood three words of our language, the cause of a rudeness towards him which he persisted in calling a great insult and inhospitality manifested to a stranger and an exile. I succeeded at length in pacifying him. I remained for more than an hour at the cottage, and I left it with a heart beating at a certain persuasion that I had established therein the claim of acquaintance and visitation.

Will the reader pardon me for having curtailed this scene? It is connected with a subject on which I shall better endure to dwell as my narrative proceeds. From that time I paid frequent visits to the cottage; the Spaniard soon grew intimate with me, and I thought the daughter began to blush when I entered, and to sigh when I departed.

One evening I was conversing with Don Diego D'Alvarez (such was the Spaniard's name), as he sat without the threshold, inhaling the gentle air, that stole freshness from the rippling sea that spread before us, and fragrance from the earth, over which the summer now reigned in its most mellow glory. Isora (the daughter) sat at a little distance.

"How comes it," said Don Diego, "that you have never met our friend Senor Bar—Bar—these English names are always escaping my memory. How is he called, Isora?"

"Mr.—Mr. Barnard," said Isora (who, brought early to England, spoke its language like a native), but with evident confusion, and looking down as she spoke—"Mr. Barnard, I believe, you mean."

"Right, my love," rejoined the Spaniard, who was smoking a long pipe with great gravity, and did not notice his daughter's embarrassment,—"a fine youth, but somewhat shy and over-modest in manner."

"Youth!" thought I, and I darted a piercing look towards Isora. "How comes it, indeed," I said aloud, "that I have not met him? Is he a friend of long standing?"

"Nay, not very,—perhaps of some six weeks earlier date than you, Senor Don Devereux. I pressed him, when he called this morning, to tarry your coming: but, poor youth, he is diffident, and not yet accustomed to mix freely with strangers, especially those of rank; our own presence a little overawes him;" and from Don Diego's gray mustachios issued a yet fuller cloud than was ordinarily wont to emerge thence.

My eyes were still fixed on Isora; she looked up, met them, blushed deeply, rose, and disappeared within the house. I was already susceptible of jealousy. My lip trembled as I resumed: "And will Don Diego pardon me for inquiring how commenced his knowledge of this ingenuous youth?"

The question was a little beyond the pale of good breeding; perhaps the Spaniard, who was tolerably punctilious in such matters, thought so, for he did not reply. I was sensible of my error, and apologizing for it, insinuated, nevertheless, the question in a more respectful and covert shape. Still

Don Diego, inhaling the fragrant weed with renewed vehemence, only—like Pion's tomb, recorded by Pausanias—replied to the request of his petitioner *by smoke*. I did not venture to renew my interrogatories, and there was a long silence. My eyes fixed their gaze on the door by which Isora had disappeared. In vain; she returned not; and as the chill of the increasing evening began now to make itself felt by the frame of one accustomed to warmer skies, the Spaniard soon rose to re-enter his house, and I took my farewell for the night.

There were many ways (as I before said) by which I could return home, all nearly equal in picturesque beauty; for the county in which my uncle's estates were placed was one where stream roved and woodland flourished even to the very strand or cliff of the sea. The shortest route, though one the least frequented by any except foot-passengers, was along the coast, and it was by this path that I rode slowly homeward. On winding a curve in the road about one mile from Devereux Court, the old building broke slowly, tower by tower, upon me. I have never yet described the house, and perhaps it will not be uninteresting to the reader if I do so now.

It had anciently belonged to Ralph de Bigod. From his possession it had passed into that of the then noblest branch the stem of Devereux, whence, without break or flaw in the direct line of heritage, it had ultimately descended to the present owner. It was a pile of vast extent, built around three quadrangular courts, the farthest of which spread to the very verge of the gray, tall cliffs that overhung the sea; in this court was a rude tower, which, according to tradition, had contained the apartments ordinarily inhabited by our ill-fated namesake and distant kinsman, Robert Devereux, the favourite and the victim of Elizabeth, whenever he had honoured the mansion with a visit. There was nothing, it is true, in the old tower calculated to flatter the tradition, for it contained only two habitable rooms, communicating with each other, and by no means remarkable for size or splendour; and every one of our household, save myself, was wont to discredit the idle rumour which would assign to so distinguished a guest so unseemly a lodgment. But, as I looked from the narrow lattices of the chambers, over the wide expanse of ocean and of land which they commanded; as I noted, too, that the tower was utterly separated from the rest of the house, and that the convenience of its site enabled one on quitting it, to escape at once, and privately, either to the solitary beach, or to the glades and groves of the wide park which stretched behind,—I could not help indulging the belief that the unceremonious and not unromantic noble had himself selected his place of retirement, and that, in so doing, the gallant of a stately court was not perhaps undesirous of securing at well-chosen moments a brief relaxation from the heavy honours of country homage; or that the patron and poetic admirer of the dreaming Spenser might have preferred, to all more gorgeous accommodation, the quiet and unseen egress to that sea and shore, which, if we may believe the accomplished Roman,[2] are so fertile in the powers of inspiration.

"O sea, O shore, true and secret sanctuary of the Muses, how many things ye dictate, how many things ye discover!"

However this be, I had cheated myself into the belief that my conjecture was true, and I had petitioned my uncle, when, on leaving school, he assigned to each of us our several apartments, to grant me the exclusive right to this dilapidated tower. I gained my boon easily enough; and—so strangely is our future fate compounded from past trifles—I verily believe that the strong desire which thenceforth seized me to visit courts and mix with statesmen—which afterwards hurried me into intrigue, war, the plots of London, the dissipations of Paris, the perilous schemes of Petersburg, nay, the very hardships of a Cossack tent—was first formed by the imaginary honour of inhabiting the same chamber as the glittering but ill-fated courtier of my own name. Thus youth imitates where it should avoid; and thus that which should have been to me a warning became an example.

In the oaken floor to the outer chamber of this tower was situated a trap-door, the entrance into a lower room or rather cell, fitted up as a bath; and here a wooden door opened into a long

[2] "O mare, O litus, verum secretumque Movoetov, quam multa dictatis, quam multa invenitis!"—PLINIUS.

subterranean passage that led out into a cavern by the sea-shore. This cave, partly by nature, partly by art, was hollowed into a beautiful Gothic form; and here, on moonlight evenings, when the sea crept gently over the yellow and smooth sands and the summer tempered the air from too keen a freshness, my uncle had often in his younger days, ere gout and rheum had grown familiar images, assembled his guests. It was a place which the echoes peculiarly adapted for music; and the scene was certainly not calculated to diminish the effect of "sweet sounds." Even now, though my uncle rarely joined us, we were often wont to hold our evening revels in this spot; and the high cliffs, circling either side in the form of a bay, tolerably well concealed our meetings from the gaze of the vulgar. It is true (for these cliffs were perforated with numerous excavations) that some roving peasant, mariner, or perchance smuggler, would now and then, at low water, intrude upon us. But our London Nereids and courtly Tritons were always well pleased with the interest of what they graciously termed "an adventure;" and our assemblies were too numerous to think an unbroken secrecy indispensable. Hence, therefore, the cavern was almost considered a part of the house itself; and though there was an iron door at the entrance which it gave to the passage leading to my apartments, yet so great was our confidence in our neighbours or ourselves that it was rarely secured, save as a defence against the high tides of winter.

The stars were shining quietly over the old gray castle (for castle it really was), as I now came within view of it. To the left, and in the rear of the house, the trees of the park, grouped by distance, seemed blent into one thick mass of wood; to the right, as I now (descending the cliff by a gradual path) entered on the level sands, and at about the distance of a league from the main shore, a small islet, notorious as the resort and shelter of contraband adventurers, scarcely relieved the wide and glassy azure of the waves. The tide was out; and passing through one of the arches worn in the bay, I came somewhat suddenly by the cavern. Seated there on a crag of stone I found Aubrey.

My acquaintance with Isora and her father had so immediately succeeded the friendly meeting with Aubrey which I last recorded, and had so utterly engrossed my time and thoughts, that I had not taken of that interview all the brotherly advantage which I might have done. My heart now smote me for my involuntary negligence. I dismounted, and fastening my horse to one of a long line of posts that ran into the sea, approached Aubrey and accosted him.

"Alone, Aubrey? and at an hour when my uncle always makes the old walls ring with revel? Hark! can you not hear the music even now? It comes from the ball-room, I think, does it not?"

"Yes," said Aubrey, briefly, and looking down upon a devotional book, which (as was his wont) he had made his companion.

"And we are the only truants!—Well, Gerald will supply our places with a lighter step, and, perhaps, a merrier heart."

Aubrey sighed. I bent over him affectionately (I loved that boy with something of a father's as well as a brother's love), and as I did bend over him, I saw that his eyelids were red with weeping.

"My brother—my own dear brother," said I, "what grieves you?—are we not friends, and more than friends?—what can grieve you that grieves not me?"

Suddenly raising his head, Aubrey gazed at me with a long, searching intentness of eye; his lips moved, but he did not answer.

"Speak to me, Aubrey," said I, passing my arm over his shoulder; "has any one, anything, hurt you? See, now, if I cannot remedy the evil."

"Morton," said Aubrey, speaking very slowly, "do you believe that Heaven pre-orders as well as foresees our destiny?"

"It is the schoolman's question," said I, smiling; "but I know how these idle subtleties vex the mind; and you, my brother, are ever too occupied with considerations of the future. If Heaven does pre-order our destiny, we know that Heaven is merciful, and we should be fearless, as we arm ourselves in that knowledge."

"Morton Devereux," said Aubrey, again repeating my name, and with an evident inward effort that left his lip colourless, and yet lit his dark dilating eye with a strange and unwonted fire,—"Morton Devereux, I feel that I am predestined to the power of the Evil One!"

I drew back, inexpressibly shocked. "Good Heavens!" I exclaimed, "what can induce you to cherish so terrible a phantasy? what can induce you to wrong so fearfully the goodness and mercy of our Creator?"

Aubrey shrank from my arm, which had still been round him, and covered his face with his hands. I took up the book he had been reading; it was a Latin treatise on predestination, and seemed fraught with the most gloomy and bewildering subtleties. I sat down beside him, and pointed out the various incoherencies and contradictions of the work, and the doctrine it espoused: so long and so earnestly did I speak that at length Aubrey looked up, seemingly cheered and relieved.

"I wish," said he, timidly, "I wish that you loved me, and that you loved *me only*: but you love pleasure, and power, and show, and wit, and revelry; and you know not what it is to feel for me as I feel at times for you,—nay, perhaps you really dislike or despise me."

Aubrey's voice grew bitter in its tone as he concluded these words, and I was instantly impressed with the belief that some one had insinuated distrust of my affection for him.

"Why should you think thus?" I said; "has any cause occurred of late to make you deem my affection for you weaker than it was? Has any one hinted a surmise that I do not repay your brotherly regard?"

Aubrey did not answer.

"Has Gerald," I continued, "jealous of our mutual attachment, uttered aught tending to diminish it? Yes, I see that he has."

Aubrey remained motionless, sullenly gazing downward and still silent.

"Speak," said I, "in justice to both of us,—speak! You know, Aubrey, how I *have* loved and love you: put your arms round me, and say that thing on earth which you wish me to do, and it shall be done!"

Aubrey looked up; he met my eyes, and he threw himself upon my neck, and burst into a violent paroxysm of tears.

I was greatly affected. "I see my fault," said I, soothing him; "you are angry, and with justice, that I have neglected you of late; and, perhaps, while I ask your confidence, you suspect that there is some subject on which I should have granted you mine. You are right, and, at a fitter moment, I will. Now let us return homeward: our uncle is never merry when we are absent; and when my mother misses your dark locks and fair cheek, I fancy that she sees little beauty in the ball. And yet, Aubrey," I added, as he now rose from my embrace and dried his tears, "I will own to you that I love this scene better than any, however gay, within;" and I turned to the sea, starlit as it was, and murmuring with a silver voice, and I became suddenly silent.

There was a long pause. I believe we both felt the influence of the scene around us, softening and tranquillizing our hearts; for, at length, Aubrey put his hand in mine, and said, "You were always more generous and kind than I, Morton, though there are times when you seem different from what you are; and I know you have already forgiven me."

I drew him affectionately towards me, and we went home. But although I meant from that night to devote myself more to Aubrey than I had done of late, my hourly increasing love for Isora interfered greatly with my resolution. In order, however, to excuse any future neglect, I, the very next morning, bestowed upon him my confidence. Aubrey did not much encourage my passion: he represented to me Isora's situation, my own youth, my own worldly ambition; and, more than all (reminding me of my uncle's aversion even to the most prosperous and well-suited marriage), he insisted upon the certainty that Sir William would never yield consent to the lawful consummation of so unequal a love. I was not too well pleased with this reception of my tale, and I did not much trouble my adviser with any further communication and confidence on the subject. Day after day I renewed my visits to

the Spaniard's cottage; and yet time passed on, and I had not told Isora a syllable of my love. I was inexpressibly jealous of this Barnard, whom her father often eulogized, and whom I never met. There appeared to be some mystery in his acquaintance with Don Diego, which that personage carefully concealed; and once, when I was expressing my surprise to have so often missed seeing his friend, the Spaniard shook his head gravely, and said that he had now learnt the real reason for it: there were circumstances of state which made men fearful of new acquaintances even in their own country. He drew back, as if he had said too much, and left me to conjecture that Barnard was connected with him in some intrigue, more delightful in itself than agreeable to the government. This belief was strengthened by my noting that Alvarez was frequently absent from home, and this too in the evening, when he was generally wont to shun the bleakness of the English air,—an atmosphere, by the by, which I once heard a Frenchman wittily compare to Augustus placed between Horace and Virgil; namely, in the *bon mot* of the emperor himself, *between sighs and tears*.

But Isora herself never heard the name of this Barnard mentioned without a visible confusion, which galled me to the heart; and at length, unable to endure any longer my suspense upon the subject, I resolved to seek from her own lips its termination. I long tarried my opportunity; it was one evening that coming rather unexpectedly to the cottage, I was informed by the single servant that Don Diego had gone to the neighbouring town, but that Isora was in the garden. Small as it was, this garden had been cultivated with some care, and was not devoid of variety. A high and very thick fence of living box-wood, closely interlaced with the honeysuckle and the common rose, screened a few plots of rarer flowers, a small circular fountain, and a rustic arbour, both from the sea breezes and the eyes of any passer-by, to which the open and unsheltered portion of the garden was exposed. When I passed through the opening cut in the fence, I was somewhat surprised at not immediately seeing Isora. Perhaps she was in the arbour. I approached the arbour trembling. What was my astonishment and my terror when I beheld her stretched lifeless on the ground!

I uttered a loud cry, and sprang forward. I raised her from the earth, and supported her in my arms; her complexion—through whose pure and transparent white the wandering blood was wont so gently, yet so glowingly, to blush, undulating while it blushed, as youngest rose-leaves which the air just stirs into trembling—was blanched into the hues of death. My kisses tinged it with a momentary colour not its own; and yet as I pressed her to my heart, methought hers, which seemed still before, began as if by an involuntary sympathy, palpably and suddenly to throb against my own. My alarm melted away as I held her thus,—nay, I would not, if I could, have recalled her *yet* to life; I was forgetful, I was unheeding, I was unconscious of all things else,—a few broken and passionate words escaped my lips, but even they ceased when I felt her breath just stirring and mingling with my own. It seemed to me as if all living kind but ourselves had, by a spell, departed from the earth, and we were left alone with the breathless and inaudible Nature from which spring the love and the life of all things.

Isora slowly recovered; her eyes in opening dwelt upon mine; her blood rushed at once to her cheek, and as suddenly left it hueless as before. She rose from my embrace, but I still extended my arms towards her; and words over which I had no control, and of which now I have no remembrance, rushed from my lips. Still pale, and leaning against the side of the arbour, Isora heard me, as—confused, incoherent, impetuous, but still intelligible to her—my released heart poured itself forth. And when I had ceased, she turned her face towards me, and my blood seemed at once frozen in its channel. Anguish, deep ineffable anguish, was depicted upon every feature; and when she strove at last to speak, her lips quivered so violently that, after a vain effort, she ceased abruptly. I again approached; I seized her hand, which I covered with my kisses.

"Will you not answer me, Isora?" said I, trembling. "*Be* silent, then; but give me one look, one glance of hope, of pardon, from those dear eyes, and I ask no more."

Isora's whole frame seemed sinking beneath her emotions; she raised her head, and looked hurriedly and fearfully round; my eye followed hers, and I then saw upon the damp ground the recent print of a man's footstep, not my own: and close to the spot where I had found Isora lay a man's

glove. A pang shot through me; I felt my eyes flash fire, and my brow darken, as I turned to Isora and said, “I see it; I see all: I have a rival, who has but just left you; you love me not; your affections are for him!” Isora sobbed violently, but made no reply. “You love him,” said I, but in a milder and more mournful tone, “you love him; it is enough; I will persecute you no more; and yet—” I paused a moment, for the remembrance of many a sign, which my heart had interpreted flatteringly, flashed upon me, and my voice faltered. “Well, I have no right to murmur—only, Isora—only tell me with your lips that you love another, and I will depart in peace.”

Very slowly Isora turned her eyes to me, and even through her tears they dwelt upon me with a tender and a soft reproach.

“You love another?” said I; and from her lips, which scarcely parted, came a single word which thrilled to my heart like fire,—“No!”

“No!” I repeated, “no? say that again, and again; yet who then is this that has dared so to agitate and overpower you? Who is he whom you have met, and whom, even now while I speak, you tremble to hear me recur to? Answer me one word: is it this mysterious stranger whom your father honours with his friendship? is it Barnard?”

Alarm and fear again wholly engrossed the expression of Isora’s countenance.

“Barnard!” she said; “yes—yes—it is Barnard!”

“Who is he?” I cried vehemently; “who or what is he; and of what nature is his influence upon you? Confide in me,” and I poured forth a long tide of inquiry and solicitation.

By the time I had ended, Isora seemed to have recovered herself. With her softness was mingled something of spirit and self-control, which was rare alike in her country and her sex.

“Listen to me!” said she, and her voice, which faltered a little at first, grew calm and firm as she proceeded. “You profess to love me: I am not worthy your love; and if, Count Devereux, I do not reject nor disclaim it—for I am a woman, and a weak and fond one—I will not at least wrong you by encouraging hopes which I may not and I dare not fulfil. I cannot,—” here she spoke with a fearful distinctness,—“I cannot, I can never be yours; and when you ask me to be so, you know not what you ask nor what perils you incur. Enough; I am grateful to you. The poor exiled girl is grateful for your esteem—and—and your affection. She will never forget them,—never! But be this our last meeting—our very last—God bless you, Morton!” and, as she read my heart, pierced and agonized as it was, in my countenance, Isora bent over me, for I knelt beside her, and I felt her tears upon my cheek,—“God bless you—and farewell!”

“You insult, you wound me,” said I, bitterly, “by this cold and taunting kindness; tell me, tell me only, who it is that you love better than me.”

Isora had turned to leave me, for I was too proud to detain her; but when I said this, she came back, after a moment’s pause, and laid her hand upon my arm.

“If it make you happy to know *my* unhappiness,” she said, and the tone of her voice made me look full in her face, which was one deep blush, “know that I am not insensible—”

I heard no more: my lips pressed themselves involuntarily to hers,—a long, long kiss,—burning, intense, concentrating emotion, heart, soul, all the rays of life’s light into a single focus; and she tore herself away from me,—and I was alone.

CHAPTER IX

A DISCOVERY AND A DEPARTURE

I HASTENED home after my eventful interview with Isora, and gave myself up to tumultuous and wild conjecture. Aubrey sought me the next morning: I narrated to him all that had occurred: he said little, but that little enraged me, for it was contrary to the dictates of my own wishes. The

character of Morose in the “Silent Woman” is by no means an uncommon one. Many men—certainly many lovers—would say with equal truth, always provided they had equal candour, “All discourses but my own afflict me; they seem harsh, impertinent, and irksome.” Certainly I felt that amiable sentiment most sincerely with regard to Aubrey. I left him abruptly: a resolution possessed me. “I will see,” said I, “this Barnard; I will lie in wait for him; I will demand and obtain, though it be by force, the secret which evidently subsists between him and this exiled family.”

Full of this idea, I drew my cloak round me, and repaired on foot to the neighbourhood of the Spaniard’s cottage. There was no place near it very commodious for accommodation both of vigil and concealment. However, I made a little hill, in a field opposite the house, my warder’s station, and, lying at full length on the ground, wrapt in my cloak, I trusted to escape notice. The day passed: no visitor appeared. The next morning I went from my own rooms, through the subterranean passage into the castle cave, as the excavation I have before described was generally termed. On the shore I saw Gerald by one of the small fishing-boats usually kept there. I passed him with a sneer at his amusements, which were always those of conflicts against fish or fowl. He answered me in the same strain, as he threw his nets into the boat, and pushed out to sea. “How is it that you go alone?” said I; “is there so much glory in the capture of mackerel and dogfish that you will allow no one to share it?”

“There are other sports besides those for men,” answered Gerald, colouring indignantly: “my taste is confined to amusements in which he is but a fool who seeks companionship; and if you could read character better, my wise brother, you would know that the bold rover is ever less idle and more fortunate than the speculative dreamer.”

As Gerald said this, which he did with a significant emphasis, he rowed vigorously across the water, and the little boat was soon half way to the opposite islet. My eyes followed it musingly as it glided over the waves, and my thoughts painfully revolved the words which Gerald had uttered. “What can he mean?” said I, half aloud; “yet what matters it? Perhaps some low amour, some village conquest, inspires him with that becoming fulness of pride and vain-glory; joy be with so bold a rover!” and I strode away along the beach towards my place of watch; once only I turned to look at Gerald; he had then just touched the islet, which was celebrated as much for the fishing it afforded as the smuggling it protected.

I arrived at last at the hillock, and resumed my station. Time passed on, till, at the dusk of evening, the Spaniard came out. He walked slowly towards the town; I followed him at a distance. Just before he reached the town, he turned off by a path which led to the beach. As the evening was unusually fresh and chill, I felt convinced that some cause, not wholly trivial, drew the Spaniard forth to brave it. My pride a little revolted at the idea of following him; but I persuaded myself that Isora’s happiness, and perhaps her father’s safety, depended on my obtaining some knowledge of the character and designs of this Barnard, who appeared to possess so dangerous an influence over both daughter and sire; nor did I doubt but that the old man was now gone forth to meet him. The times were those of mystery and of intrigue: the emissaries of the House of Stuart were restlessly at work among all classes; many of them, obscure and mean individuals, made their way the more dangerously from their apparent insignificance. My uncle, a moderate Tory, was opposed, though quietly and without vehemence, to the claims of the banished House. Like Sedley, who became so stanch a revolutionist, he had seen the Court of Charles II. and the character of that King’s brother too closely to feel much respect for either; but he thought it indecorous to express opposition loudly against a party among whom were many of his early friends; and the good old knight was too much attached to private ties to be very much alive to public feeling. However, at his well-filled board, conversation, generally, though displeasingly to himself, turned upon politics, and I had there often listened, of late, to dark hints of the danger to which we were exposed, and of the restless machinations of the Jacobites. I did not, therefore, scruple to suspect this Barnard of some plot against the existing state, and I did it the more from observing that the Spaniard often spoke bitterly of the English Court, which had rejected some claims he had imagined himself entitled to make upon it; and that he was naturally of a temper

vehemently opposed to quiet and alive to enterprise. With this impression, I deemed it fair to seize any opportunity of seeing, at least, even if I could not question, the man whom the Spaniard himself confessed to have state reasons for concealment; and my anxiety to behold one whose very name could agitate Isora, and whose presence could occasion the state in which I had found her, sharpened this desire into the keenness of a passion.

While Alvarez descended to the beach, I kept the upper path, which wound along the cliff. There was a spot where the rocks were rude and broken into crags, and afforded me a place where, unseen, I could behold what passed below. The first thing I beheld was a boat approaching rapidly towards the shore; one man was seated in it; he reached the shore, and I recognized Gerald. That was a dreadful moment. Alvarez now slowly joined him; they remained together for nearly an hour. I saw Gerald give the Spaniard a letter, which appeared to make the chief subject of their conversation. At length they parted, with the signs rather of respect than familiarity. Don Diego returned homeward, and Gerald re-entered the boat. I watched its progress over the waves with feelings of a dark and almost unutterable nature. "My enemy! my rival! ruiner of my hopes!—*my brother*!—*my twin brother*!" I muttered bitterly between my ground teeth.

The boat did not make to the open sea: it skulked along the shore, till distance and shadow scarcely allowed me to trace the outline of Gerald's figure. It then touched the beach, and I could just descry the dim shape of another man enter; and Gerald, instead of returning homewards, pushed out towards the islet. I spent the greater part of the night in the open air. Wearied and exhausted by the furious indulgence of my passions, I gained my room at length. There, however, as elsewhere, thought succeeded to thought, and scheme to scheme. Should I speak to Gerald? Should I confide in Alvarez? Should I renew my suit to Isora? If the first, what could I hope to learn from my enemy? If the second, what could I gain from the father, while the daughter remained averse to me? If the third,—there my heart pointed, and the third scheme I resolved to adopt.

But was I sure that Gerald was this Barnard? Might there not be some hope that he was not? No, I could perceive none. Alvarez had never spoken to me of acquaintance with any other Englishman than Barnard; I had no reason to believe that he ever held converse with any other. Would it not have been natural too, unless some powerful cause, such as love to Isora, induced silence,—would it not have been natural that Gerald should have mentioned his acquaintance with the Spaniard? Unless some dark scheme, such as that which Barnard appeared to have in common with Don Diego, commanded obscurity, would it have been likely that Gerald should have met Alvarez alone,—at night,—on an unfrequented spot? What that scheme *was*, I guessed not,—I cared not. All my interest in the identity of Barnard with Gerald Devereux was that derived from the power he seemed to possess over Isora. Here, too, at once, was explained the pretended Barnard's desire of concealment, and the vigilance with which it had been effected. It was so certain that Gerald, if my rival, would seek to avoid me; it was so easy for him, who could watch all my motions, to secure the power of doing so. Then I remembered Gerald's character through the country as a gallant and a general lover; and I closed my eyes as if to shut out the vision when I recalled the beauty of his form contrasted with the comparative plainness of my own.

"There is no hope," I repeated; and an insensibility, rather than sleep, crept over me. Dreadful and fierce dreams peopled my slumbers; and, when I started from them at a late hour the next day, I was unable to rise from my bed: my agitation and my wanderings had terminated in a burning fever. In four days, however, I recovered sufficiently to mount my horse: I rode to the Spaniard's house; I found there only the woman who had been Don Diego's solitary domestic. The morning before, Alvarez and his daughter had departed, none knew for certain whither; but it was supposed their destination was London. The woman gave me a note: it was from Isora; it contained only these lines:

Forget me: we are now parted forever. As you value my peace of mind—of happiness I do not speak—seek not to discover our next retreat. I implore you to think no more of what has been;

you are young, very young. Life has a thousand paths for you; any one of them will lead you from remembrance of me. Farewell, again and again!

ISORA D'ALVAREZ.

With this note was another, in French, from Don Diego: it was colder and more formal than I could have expected; it thanked me for my attentions towards him; it regretted that he could not take leave of me in person, and it enclosed the sum by the loan of which our acquaintance had commenced.

"It is well!" said I, calmly, to myself, "it is well; I will forget her:" and I rode instantly home. "But," I resumed in my soliloquy, "I will yet strive to obtain confirmation to what perhaps needs it not. I will yet strive to see if Gerald can deny the depth of his injuries towards me; there will be at least some comfort in witnessing either his defiance or his confusion."

Agreeably to this thought, I hastened to seek Gerald. I found him in his apartment; I shut the door, and seating myself, with a smile thus addressed him,—

"Dear Gerald, I have a favour to ask of you."

"What is it?"

"How long have you known a certain Mr. Barnard?" Gerald changed colour; his voice faltered as he repeated the name "Barnard!"

"Yes," said I, with affected composure, "Barnard! a great friend of Don Diego D'Alvarez."

"I perceive," said Gerald, collecting himself, "that you are in some measure acquainted with my secret: how far it is known to you I cannot guess; but I tell you, very fairly, that from me you will not increase the sum of your knowledge."

When one is in a good sound rage, it is astonishing how calm one can be! I was certainly somewhat amazed by Gerald's hardihood and assurance, but I continued, with a smile,

"And Donna Isora, how long, if not very intrusive on your confidence, have you known her?"

"I tell you," answered Gerald, doggedly, "that I will answer no questions."

"You remember the old story," returned I, "of the two brothers, Eteocles and Polynices, whose very ashes refused to mingle; faith, Gerald, our love seems much of the same sort. I know not if our ashes will exhibit so laudible an antipathy: but I think our hearts and hands will do so while a spark of life animates them; yes, though our blood" (I added, in a voice quivering with furious emotion) "prevents our contest by the sword, it prevents not the hatred and the curses of the heart."

Gerald turned pale. "I do not understand you," he faltered out,—"I know you abhor me; but why, why this excess of malice?"

I cast on him a look of bitter scorn, and turned from the room.

It is not pleasing to place before the reader these dark passages of fraternal hatred: but in the record of all passions there is a moral; and it is wise to see to how vast a sum the units of childish animosity swell, when they are once brought into a heap, by some violent event, and told over by the nice accuracy of Revenge.

But I long to pass from these scenes, and my history is about to glide along others of more glittering and smiling aspect. Thank Heaven, I write a tale, not only of love, but of a life; and that which I cannot avoid I can at least condense.

CHAPTER X

A VERY SHORT CHAPTER,—CONTAINING A VALET

MY uncle for several weeks had flattered himself that I had quite forgotten or foregone the desire of leaving Devereux Court for London. Good easy man! he was not a little distressed when I renewed the subject with redoubled firmness, and demanded an early period for that event. He

managed, however, still to protract the evil day. At one time it was impossible to part with me, because the house was so full; at another time it was cruel to leave him, when the house was so empty. Meanwhile, a new change came over me. As the first shock of Isora's departure passed away, I began to suspect the purity of her feelings towards me. Might not Gerald—the beautiful, the stately, the glittering Gerald—have been a successful wooer under the disguised name of Barnard, and *hence* Isora's confusion when that name was mentioned, and hence the power which its possessor exercised over her?

This idea, once admitted, soon gained ground. It is true that Isora had testified something of favourable feelings towards me; but this might spring from coquetry or compassion. My love had been a boy's love, founded upon beauty and coloured by romance. I had not investigated the character of the object; and I had judged of the mind solely by the face. I might easily have been deceived: I persuaded myself that I was. Perhaps Gerald had provided their present retreat for sire and daughter; perhaps they at this moment laughed over my rivalry and my folly. Methought Gerald's lip wore a contemptuous curve when we met. "It shall have no cause," I said, stung to the soul; "I will indeed forget this woman, and yet, though in other ways, eclipse this rival. Pleasure, ambition, the brilliancy of a court, the resources of wealth, invite me to a thousand joys. I will not be deaf to the call. Meanwhile I will not betray to Gerald, to any one, the scar of the wound I have received; and I will mortify Gerald, by showing him that, handsome as he is, he shall be forgotten in my presence!"

Agreeably to this exquisite resolution, I paid incessant court to the numerous dames by whom my uncle's mansion was thronged; and I resolved to prepare, among them, the reputation for gallantry and for wit which I proposed to establish in town.

"You are greatly altered since your love," said Aubrey, one day to me, "but not by your love. Own that I did right in dissuading you from its indulgence!"

"Tell me!" said I, sinking my voice to a whisper, "do you think Gerald was my rival?" and I recounted the causes of my suspicion.

Aubrey's countenance testified astonishment as he listened. "It is strange, very strange," said he; "and the evidence of the boat is almost conclusive; still I do not think it quite sufficient to leave no loop-hole of doubt. But what matters it? you have conquered your love now."

"Ay," I said, with a laugh, "I have conquered it, and I am now about to find some other empress of the heart. What think you of the Lady Hasselton?—a fair dame and a sprightly. I want nothing but her love to be the most enviable of men, and a French *valet-de-chambre* to be the most irresistible."

"The former is easier to obtain than the latter, I fear," returned Aubrey; "all places produce light dames, but the war makes a scarcity of French valets."

"True," said I, "but I never thought of instituting a comparison between their relative value. The Lady Hasselton, no disparagement to her merits, is but one woman; but a French valet who knows his *metier* arms one for conquest over a thousand;" and I turned to the saloon.

Fate, which had destined to me the valuable affections of the Lady Hasselton, granted me also, at a yet earlier period, the greater boon of a French valet. About two or three weeks after this sapient communication with Aubrey, the most charming person in the world presented himself a candidate *pour le supreme bonheur de soigner Monsieur le Comte*. Intelligence beamed in his eye; a modest assurance reigned upon his brow; respect made his step vigilant as a zephyr's; and his ruffles were the envy of the world!

I took him at a glance; and I presented to the admiring inmates of the house a greater coxcomb than the Count Devereux in the ethereal person of Jean Desmarais.

CHAPTER XI

THE HERO ACQUITS HIMSELF HONOURABLY AS A COXCOMB.—A FINE LADY OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY, AND A FASHIONABLE DIALOGUE; THE SUBSTANCE OF FASHIONABLE DIALOGUE BEING IN ALL CENTURIES THE SAME

"I AM thinking, Morton," said my uncle, "that if you are to go to town, you should go in a style suitable to your rank. What say you to flying along the road in my green and gold chariot? 'Sdeath! I'll make you a present of it. Nay—no thanks; and you may have four of my black Flanders mares to draw you."

"Now, my dear Sir William," cried Lady Hasselton, who, it may be remembered, was the daughter of one of King Charles's Beauties, and who alone shared the breakfast-room with my uncle and myself,—"now, my dear Sir William, I think it would be a better plan to suffer the Count to accompany us to town. We go next week. He shall have a seat in our coach, help Lovell to pay our post-horses, protect us at inns, scold at the drawers in the pretty oaths of the fashion, which are so innocent that I will teach them to his Countship myself; and unless I am much more frightful than my honoured mother, whose beauties you so gallantly laud, I think you will own, Sir William, that this is better for your nephew than doing solitary penance in your chariot of green and gold, with a handkerchief tied over his head to keep away cold, and with no more fanciful occupation than composing sonnets to the four Flanders mares."

"'Sdeath, Madam, you inherit your mother's wit as well as beauty," cried my uncle, with an impassioned air.

"And his Countship," said I, "will accept your invitation without asking his uncle's leave."

"Come, that is bold for a gentleman of—let me see, thirteen—are you not?"

"Really," answered I, "one learns to forget time so terribly in the presence of Lady Hasselton that I do not remember even how long it has existed for me."

"Bravo!" cried the knight, with a moistening eye; "you see, Madam, the boy has not lived with his old uncle for nothing."

"I am lost in astonishment!" said the lady, glancing towards the glass; "why, you will eclipse all our beaux at your first appearance; but—but—Sir William—how green those glasses have become! Bless me, there is something so contagious in the effects of the country that the very mirrors grow verdant. But—Count—Count—where are you, Count? [I was exactly opposite to the fair speaker.] Oh, there you are! Pray, do you carry a little pocket-glass of the true quality about you? But, of course you do; lend it me."

"I have not the glass you want, but I carry with me a mirror that reflects your features much more faithfully."

"How! I protest I do not understand you!"

"The mirror is here!" said I, laying my hand to my heart.

"'Gad, I must kiss the boy!" cried my uncle, starting up.

"I have sworn," said I, fixing my eyes upon the lady,—"I have sworn never to be kissed, even by women. You must pardon me, Uncle."

"I declare," cried the Lady Hasselton, flirting her fan, which was somewhat smaller than the screen that one puts into a great hall, in order to take off the discomfort of too large a room,—"I declare, Count, there is a vast deal of originality about you. But tell me, Sir William, where did your nephew acquire, at so early an age—eleven, you say, he is—such a fund of agreeable assurance?"

"Nay, Madam, let the boy answer for himself."

"*Imprimis*, then," said I, playing with the ribbon of my cane,—"*imprimis*, early study of the best authors,—Congreve and Farquhar, Etherege and Rochester; secondly, the constant intercourse of company which gives one the spleen so overpoweringly that despair inspires one with boldness—to get rid of them; thirdly, the personal example of Sir William Devereux; and, fourthly, the inspiration of hope."

"Hope, sir?" said the Lady Hasselton, covering her face with her fan, so as only to leave me a glimpse of the farthest patch upon her left cheek,—"hope, sir?"

"Yes, the hope of being pleasing to you. Suffer me to add that the hope has now become certainty."

"Upon my word, Count—"

"Nay, you cannot deny it; if one can once succeed in impudence, one is irresistible."

"Sir William," cried Lady Hasselton, "you may give the Count your chariot of green and gold, and your four Flanders mares, and send his mother's maid with him. He shall not go with me."

"Cruel! and why?" said I.

"You are too"—the lady paused, and looked at me over her fan. She was really very handsome —"you are too *old*, Count. You must be more than nine."

"Pardon me," said I, "I *am* nine,—a very mystical number nine is too, and represents the Muses, who, you know, were always attendant upon Venus—or you, which is the same thing; so you can no more dispense with my company than you can with that of the Graces."

"Good morning, Sir William," cried the Lady Hasselton, rising.

I offered to hand her to the door; with great difficulty, for her hoop was of the very newest enormity of circumference; I effected this object. "Well, Count," said she, "I am glad to see you have brought so much learning from school; make the best use of it while it lasts, for your memory will not furnish you with a single simile out of the mythology by the end of next winter."

"That would be a pity," said I, "for I intend having as many goddesses as the heathens had, and I should like to worship them in a classical fashion."

"Oh, the young reprobate!" said the beauty, tapping me with her fan. "And pray, what other deities besides Venus do I resemble?"

"All!" said I,—"at least, all the celestial ones!"

Though half way through the door, the beauty extricated her hoop, and drew back. "Bless me, the gods as well as the goddesses?"

"Certainly."

"You jest: tell me how."

"Nothing can be easier; you resemble Mercury because of your thefts."

"Thefts!"

"Ay; stolen hearts, and," added I, in a whisper, "glances; Jupiter, partly because of your lightning, which you lock up in the said glances,—principally because all things are subservient to you; Neptune, because you are as changeable as the seas; Vulcan, because you live among the flames you excite; and Mars, because—"

"You are so destructive," cried my uncle.

"Exactly so; and because," added I—as I shut the door upon the beauty—"because, thanks to your hoop, you cover nine acres of ground."

"Ods fish, Morton," said my uncle, "you surprise me at times: one while you are so reserved, at another so assured; to-day so brisk, to-morrow so gloomy. Why now, Lady Hasselton (she is very comely, eh! faith, but not comparable to her mother) told me, a week ago, that she, gave you up in despair, that you were dull, past hoping for; and now, 'Gad, you had a life in you that Sid himself could not have surpassed. How comes it, Sir, eh?"

"Why, Uncle, you have explained the reason; it was exactly because she said I was dull that I was resolved to convict her in an untruth."

"Well, now, there is some sense in that, boy; always contradict ill report by personal merit. But what think you of her ladyship? 'Gad, you know what old Bellair said of Emilia. 'Make much of her: she's one of the best of your acquaintance. I like her countenance and behaviour. Well, she has a modesty not i' this age, a-dad she has.' Applicable enough; eh, boy?"

"'I know her value, Sir, and esteem her accordingly,'" answered I, out of the same play, which by dint of long study I had got by heart. "But, to confess the truth," added I, "I think you might have left out the passage about her modesty."

"There, now; you young chaps are so censorious; why, 'sdeath, sir, you don't think the worse of her virtue because of her wit?"

"Humph!"

"Ah, boy! when you are my age, you'll know that your demure cats are not the best; and that reminds me of a little story; shall I tell it you, child?"

"If it so please you, Sir."

"Zauns—where's my snuff-box?—oh, here it is. Well, Sir, you shall have the whole thing, from beginning to end. Sedley and I were one day conversing together about women. Sid was a very deep fellow in that game: no passion you know; no love on his own side; nothing of the sort; all done by rule and compass; knew women as well as dice, and calculated the exact moment when his snares would catch them, according to the principles of geometry. D——d clever fellow, faith; but a confounded rascal: but let it go no further; mum's the word! must not slander the dead; and 'tis only my suspicion, you know, after all. Poor fellow: I don't think he was such a rascal; he gave a beggar an angel once,—well, boy, have a pinch?—Well, so I said to Sir Charles, 'I think you will lose the widow, after all,—'Gad I do.' 'Upon what principle of science, Sir William?' said he. 'Why, faith, man, she is so modest, you see, and has such a pretty way of blushing.' 'Hark ye, friend Devereux,' said Sir Charles, smoothing his collar and mincing his words musically, as he was wont to do,—'hark ye, friend Devereux, I will give you the whole experience of my life in one maxim: I can answer for its being new, and I think it is profound; and that maxim is—,' no, faith, Morton—no, I can't tell it thee: it is villanous, and then it's so desperately against all the sex."

"My dear uncle, don't tantalize me so: pray tell it me; it shall be a secret."

"No, boy, no: it will corrupt thee; besides, it will do poor Sid's memory no good. But, 'sdeath, it was a most wonderfully shrewd saying,—i' faith, it was. But, zounds, Morton, I forgot to tell you that I have had a letter from the Abbe to-day."

"Ha! and when does he return?"

"To-morrow, God willing!" said the knight, with a sigh.

"So soon, or rather after so long an absence! Well, I am glad of it. I wish much to see him before I leave you."

"Indeed!" quoth my uncle; "you have an advantage over me, then! But, ods fish, Morton, how is it that you grew so friendly with the priest before his departure? He used to speak very suspiciously of thee formerly; and, when I last saw him, he lauded thee to the skies."

"Why, the clergy of his faith have a habit of defending the strong and crushing the weak, I believe; that's all. He once thought I was dull enough to damn my fortune, and then he had some strange doubts for my soul; now he thinks me wise enough to become prosperous, and it is astonishing what a respect he has conceived for my principles."

"Ha! ha! ha!—you have a spice of your uncle's humour in you; and, 'Gad, you have no small knowledge of the world, considering you have seen so little of it."

A hit at the popish clergy was, in my good uncle's eyes, the exact acme of wit and wisdom. We are always clever with those who imagine we think as they do. To be shallow you must differ from people: to be profound you must agree with them. "Why, Sir," answered the sage nephew, "you forget that I have seen more of the world than many of twice my age. Your house has been full of company ever since I have been in it, and you set me to making observations on what I saw before I

was thirteen. And then, too, if one is reading books about real life, at the very time one is mixing in it, it is astonishing how naturally one remarks and how well one remembers."

"Especially if one has a genius for it,—eh, boy? And then too, you have read my play; turned Horace's Satires into a lampoon upon the boys at school; been regularly to assizes during the vacation; attended the county balls, and been a most premature male coquette with the ladies. Ods fish, boy! it is quite curious to see how the young sparks of the present day get on with their lovemaking."

"Especially if one has a genius for it,—eh, sir?" said I.

"Besides, too," said my uncle, ironically, "you have had the Abbe's instructions."

"Ay, and if the priests would communicate to their pupils their experience in frailty, as well as in virtue, how wise they would make us!"

"Ods fish! Morton, you are quite oracular. How got you that fancy of priests?—by observation in life already?"

"No, Uncle: by observation in plays, which you tell me are the mirrors of life; you remember what Lee says,—

> ""'Tis thought
> That earth is more obliged to priests for bodies
> Than Heaven for souls.'"

And my uncle laughed, and called me a smart fellow.

CHAPTER XII

THE ABBE'S RETURN.—A SWORD, AND A SOLILOQUY

THE next evening, when I was sitting alone in my room, the Abbe Montreuil suddenly entered. "Ah, is it you? welcome!" cried I. The priest held out his arms, and embraced me in the most paternal manner.

"It is your friend," said he, "returned at last to bless and congratulate you. Behold my success in your service," and the Abbe produced a long leather case richly inlaid with gold.

"Faith, Abbe," said I, "am I to understand that this is a present for your eldest pupil?"

"You are," said Montreuil, opening the case, and producing a sword. The light fell upon the hilt, and I drew back, dazzled with its lustre; it was covered with stones, apparently of the most costly value. Attached to the hilt was a label of purple velvet, on which, in letters of gold, was inscribed, "To the son of Marshal Devereux, the soldier of France, and the friend of Louis XIV."

Before I recovered my surprise at this sight, the Abbe said: "It was from the King's own hand that I received this sword, and I have authority to inform you that if ever you wield it in the service of France it will be accompanied by a post worthy of your name."

"The service of France!" I repeated; "why, at present that is the service of an enemy."

"An enemy only to a *part* of England!" said the Abbe, emphatically; "perhaps I have overtures to you from other monarchs, and the friendship of the court of France may be synonymous with the friendship of the true sovereign of England."

There was no mistaking the purport of this speech, and even in the midst of my gratified vanity I drew back alarmed.

The Abbe noted the changed expression of my countenance, and artfully turned the subject to comments on the sword, on which I still gazed with a lover's ardour. Thence he veered to a description of the grace and greatness of the royal donor: he dwelt at length upon the flattering terms in which Louis had spoken of my father, and had inquired concerning myself; he enumerated all the hopes that

the illustrious house into which my father had first married expressed for a speedy introduction to his son; he lingered with an eloquence more savouring of the court than of the cloister on the dazzling circle which surrounded the French throne; and when my vanity, my curiosity, my love of pleasure, my ambition, all that are most susceptible in young minds, were fully aroused, he suddenly ceased, and wished me a good night.

"Stay," said I; and looking at him more attentively than I had hitherto done, I perceived a change in his external appearance which somewhat startled and surprised me. Montreuil had always hitherto been remarkably plain in his dress; but he was now richly attired, and by his side hung a rapier, which had never adorned it before. Something in his aspect seemed to suit the alteration in his garb: and whether it was that long absence had effaced enough of the familiarity of his features to allow me to be more alive than formerly to the real impression they were calculated to produce, or whether a commune with kings and nobles had of late dignified their old expression, as power was said to have clothed the soldier-mien of Cromwell with a monarch's bearing,—I do not affect to decide; but I thought that, in his high brow and Roman features, the compression of his lip, and his calm but haughty air, there was a nobleness, which I acknowledged for the first time. "Stay, my father," said I, surveying him, "and tell me, if there be no irreverence in the question, whether brocade and a sword are compatible with the laws of the Order of Jesus?"

"Policy, Morton," answered Montreuil, "often dispenses with custom; and the declarations of the Institute provide, with their usual wisdom, for worldly and temporary occasions. Even while the constitution ordains us to discard habits repugnant to our professions of poverty, the following exception is made: 'Si in occurrenti aliqua occasione, vel necessitate, quis vestibus melioribus, honestis tamen, indueretur.'"[3]

"There is now, then, some occasion for a more glittering display than ordinary?" said I.

"There is, my pupil," answered Montreuil; "and whenever you embrace the offer of my friendship made to you more than two years ago,—whenever, too, your ambition points to a lofty and sublime career,—whenever to make and unmake kings, and in the noblest sphere to execute the will of God, indemnifies you for a sacrifice of petty wishes and momentary passions,—I will confide to you schemes worthy of your ancestors and yourself."

With this the priest departed. Left to myself, I revolved his hints, and marvelled at the power he seemed to possess. "Closeted with kings," said I, soliloquizing,—"bearing their presents through armed men and military espionage; speaking of empires and their overthrow as of ordinary objects of ambition; and he himself a low-born and undignified priest, of a poor though a wise order,—well, there is more in this than I can fathom: but I will hesitate before I embark in his dangerous and concealed intrigues; above all, I will look well ere I hazard my safe heritage of these broad lands in the service of that House which is reported to be ungrateful, and which is certainly exiled."

After this prudent and notable resolution, I took up the sword, re-examined it, kissed the hilt once and the blade twice, put it under my pillow, sent for my valet, undressed, went to bed, fell asleep, and dreamed that I was teaching the Marechal de Villars the thrust *en seconde*.

But Fate, that arch-gossip, who, like her prototypes on earth, settles all our affairs for us without our knowledge of the matter, had decreed that my friendship with the Abbe Montreuil should be of very short continuance, and that my adventures on earth should flow through a different channel than, in all probability, they would have done under his spiritual direction.

[3] "But should there chance any occasion or necessity, one may wear better though still decorous garments."

CHAPTER XIII

A MYSTERIOUS LETTER.—A DUEL.— THE DEPARTURE OF ONE OF THE FAMILY

THE next morning I communicated to the Abbe my intention of proceeding to London. He received it with favour. “I myself,” said he, “shall soon meet you there: my office in your family has expired; and your mother, after so long an absence, will perhaps readily dispense with my spiritual advice to her. But time presses: since you depart so soon, give me an audience to-night in your apartment. Perhaps our conversation may be of moment.”

I agreed; the hour was fixed, and I left the Abbe to join my uncle and his guests. While I was employing among them my time and genius with equal dignity and profit, one of the servants informed me that a man at the gate wished to see me—and alone.

Somewhat surprised, I followed the servant out of the room into the great hall, and desired him to bid the stranger attend me there. In a few minutes, a small, dark man, dressed between gentility and meanness, made his appearance. He greeted me with great respect, and presented a letter, which, he said, he was charged to deliver into my own hands, “with,” he added in a low tone, “a special desire that none should, till I had carefully read it, be made acquainted with its contents.” I was not a little startled by this request; and, withdrawing to one of the windows, broke the seal. A letter, enclosed in the envelope, in the Abbe’s own handwriting, was the first thing that met my eyes. At that instant the Abbe himself rushed into the hall. He cast one hasty look at the messenger, whose countenance evinced something of surprise and consternation at beholding him; and, hastening up to me, grasped my hand vehemently, and, while his eye dwelt upon the letter I held, cried, “Do not read it—not a word—not a word: there is poison in it!” And so saying, he snatched desperately at the letter. I detained it from him with one hand, and pushing him aside with the other, said,—

“Pardon me, Father, directly I have read it you shall have that pleasure,—not till then!” and, as I said this, my eye falling upon the letter discovered my own name written in two places. My suspicions were aroused. I raised my eyes to the spot where the messenger had stood, with the view of addressing some question to him respecting his employer, when, to my surprise, I perceived he was already gone; I had no time, however, to follow him.

“Boy,” said the Abbe, gasping for breath, and still seizing me with his lean, bony hand,—“boy, give me that letter instantly; I charge you not to disobey me.”

“You forget yourself, Sir,” said I, endeavouring to shake him off, “you forget yourself: there is no longer between us the distinction of pupil and teacher; and if you have not yet learned the respect due to my station, suffer me to tell you that it is time you should.”

“Give me that letter, I beseech you,” said Montreuil, changing his voice from anger to supplication; “I ask your pardon for my violence: the letter does not concern you but me; there is a secret in those lines which you see are in my handwriting that implicates my personal safety. Give it me, my dear, dear son: your own honour, if not your affection for me, demands that you should.”

I was staggered. His violence had confirmed my suspicions, but his gentleness weakened them. “Besides,” thought I, “the handwriting *is his*; and even if my life depended upon reading the letter of another, I do not think my honour would suffer me to do so against his consent.” A thought struck me,—

“Will you swear,” said I, “that this letter does not concern me?”

“Solemnly,” answered the Abbe, raising his eyes.

“Will you swear that I am not even mentioned in it?”

“Upon peril of my soul, I will.”

"Liar! traitor! perjured blasphemer!" cried I, in an inexpressible rage, "look here, and here!" and I pointed out to the priest various lines in which my name legibly and frequently occurred. A change came over Montreuil's face: he released my arm and staggered back against the wainscot; but recovering his composure instantaneously, he said, "I forgot, my son—I forgot—your name is mentioned, it is true, but with honourable eulogy, that is all."

"Bravo, honest Father!" cried I, losing my fury in admiring surprise at his address,—"bravo! However, if that be all, you can have no objection to allow me to read the lines in which my name occurs; your benevolence cannot refuse me such a gratification as the sight of your written panegyric!"

"Count Devereux," said the Abbe, sternly, while his dark face worked with suppressed passion, "this is trifling with me, and I warn you not to push my patience too far. I *will* have that letter, or—" he ceased abruptly, and touched the hilt of his sword.

"Dare you threaten me?" I said, and the natural fierceness of my own disposition, deepened by vague and strong suspicions of some treachery designed against me, spoke in the tones of my voice.

"Dare I?" repeated Montreuil, sinking and sharpening his voice into a sort of inward screech. "Dare I!—ay, were your whole tribe arrayed against me. Give me the letter, or you will find me now and forever your most deadly foe; deadly—ay—deadly, deadly!" and he shook his clenched hand at me, with an expression of countenance so malignant and menacing that I drew back involuntarily, and laid my hand on my sword.

The action seemed to give Montreuil a signal for which he had hitherto waited. "Draw then," he said through his teeth, and unsheathed his rapier.

Though surprised at his determination, I was not backward in meeting it. Thrusting the letter in my bosom, I drew my sword in time to parry a rapid and fierce thrust. I had expected easily to master Montreuil, for I had some skill at my weapon: I was deceived; I found him far more adroit than myself in the art of offence; and perhaps it would have fared ill for the hero of this narrative had Montreuil deemed it wise to direct against my life all the science he possessed. But the moment our swords crossed, the constitutional coolness of the man, which rage or fear had for a brief time banished, returned at once, and he probably saw that it would be as dangerous to him to take away the life of his pupil as to forfeit the paper for which he fought. He, therefore, appeared to bend all his efforts towards disarming me. Whether or not he would have effected this it is hard to say, for my blood was up, and any neglect of my antagonist, in attaining an object very dangerous, when engaged with a skilful and quick swordsman, might have sent him to the place from which the prayers of his brethren have (we are bound to believe) released so many thousands of souls. But, meanwhile, the servants, who at first thought the clashing of swords was the wanton sport of some young gallants as yet new to the honour of wearing them, grew alarmed by the continuance of the sound, and flocked hurriedly to the place of contest. At their intrusion we mutually drew back. Recovering my presence of mind (it was a possession I very easily lost at that time), I saw the unseemliness of fighting with my preceptor, and a priest. I therefore burst, though awkwardly enough, into a laugh, and, affecting to treat the affair as a friendly trial of skill between the Abbe and myself, resheathed my sword and dismissed the intruders, who, evidently disbelieving my version of the story, retreated slowly, and exchanging looks. Montreuil, who had scarcely seconded my attempt to gloss over our *rencontre*, now approached me.

"Count," he said, with a collected and cool voice, "suffer me to request you to exchange three words with me in a spot less liable than this to interruption."

"Follow me then!" said I; and I led the way to a part of the grounds which lay remote and sequestered from intrusion. I then turned round, and perceived that the Abbe had left his sword behind. "How is this?" I said, pointing to his unarmed side, "have you not come hither to renew our engagement?"

"No!" answered Montreuil, "I repent me of my sudden haste, and I have resolved to deny myself all further possibility of unseemly warfare. That letter, young man, I still demand from you; I

demanded it from your own sense of honour and of right: it was written by me; it was not intended for your eye; it contains secrets implicating the lives of others besides myself; now, read it if you will."

"You are right, Sir," said I, after a short pause; "there is the letter; never shall it be said of Morton Devereux that he hazarded his honour to secure his safety. But the tie between us is broken now and forever!"

So saying, I flung down the debated epistle, and strode away. I re-entered the great hall. I saw by one of the windows a sheet of paper; I picked it up, and perceived that it was the envelope in which the letter had been enclosed. It contained only these lines, addressed me in French:—

A friend of the late Marshal Devereux encloses to his son a letter, the contents of which it is essential for His safety that he should know.

C. D. B.

"Umph!" said I, "a very satisfactory intimation, considering that the son of the late Marshal Devereux is so very well assured that he shall not know one line of the contents of the said letter. But let me see after this messenger!" and I immediately hastened to institute inquiry respecting him. I found that he was already gone; on leaving the hall he had remounted his horse and taken his departure. One servant, however, had seen him, as he passed the front court, address a few words to my valet, Desmarais, who happened to be loitering there. I summoned Desmarais and questioned him.

"The dirty fellow," said the Frenchman, pointing to his spattered stockings with a lachrymose air, "splashed me, by a prance of his horse, from head to foot, and while I was screaming for very anguish, he stopped and said, 'Tell the Count Devereux that I was unable to tarry, but that the letter requires no answer.'"

I consoled Desmarais for his misfortune, and hastened to my uncle with a determination to reveal to him all that had occurred. Sir William was in his dressing-room, and his gentleman was very busy in adorning his wig. I entreated him to dismiss the *coiffeur*, and then, without much preliminary detail, acquainted him with all that had passed between the Abbe and myself.

The knight seemed startled when I came to the story of the sword. "'Gad, Sir Count, what have you been doing?" said he; "know you not that this may be a very ticklish matter? The King of France is a very great man, to be sure,—a very great man,—and a very fine gentleman; but you will please to remember that we are at war with his Majesty, and I cannot guess how far the accepting such presents may be held treasonable."

And Sir William shook his head with a mournful significance. "Ah," cried he, at last (when I had concluded my whole story), with a complacent look, "I have not lived at court, and studied human nature, for nothing: and I will wager my best full-bottom to a night-cap that the crafty old fox is as much a Jacobite as he is a rogue! The letter would have proved it, Sir; it would have proved it!"

"But what shall be done now?" said I; "will you suffer him to remain any longer in the house?"

"Why," replied the knight, suddenly recollecting his reverence to the fair sex, "he is your mother's guest, not mine; we must refer the matter to her. But zauns, Sir, with all deference to her ladyship, we cannot suffer our house to be a conspiracy-hatch as well as a popish chapel; and to attempt your life too—the devil! Ods fish, boy, I will go to the countess myself, if you will just let Nicholls finish my wig,—never attend the ladies *en deshabille*,—always, with them, take care of your person most, when you most want to display your mind;" and my uncle ringing a little silver bell on his dressing-table, the sound immediately brought Nicholls to his toilet.

Trusting the cause to the zeal of my uncle, whose hatred to the ecclesiastic would, I knew, be an efficacious adjunct to his diplomatic address, and not unwilling to avoid being myself the person to acquaint my mother with the suspected delinquency of her favourite, I hastened from the knight's apartment in search of Aubrey. He was not in the house. His attendants (for my uncle, with old-fashioned grandeur of respect, suitable to his great wealth and aristocratic temper, allotted to each of us a separate suite of servants as well as of apartments) believed he was in the park. Thither I

repaired, and found him, at length, seated by an old tree, with a large book of a religious cast before him, on which his eyes were intently bent.

"I rejoice to have found thee, my gentle brother," said I, throwing myself on the green turf by his side; "in truth you have chosen a fitting and fair place for study."

"I have chosen," said Aubrey, "a place meet for the peculiar study I am engrossed in; for where can we better read of the power and benevolence of God than among the living testimonies of both? Beautiful—how very beautiful!—is this happy world; but I fear," added Aubrey, and the glow of his countenance died away,—"I fear that we enjoy it too much."

"We hold different interpretations of our creed then," said I, "for I esteem enjoyment the best proof of gratitude; nor do I think we can pay a more acceptable duty to the Father of all Goodness than by showing ourselves sensible of the favours He bestows upon us."

Aubrey shook his head gently, but replied not.

"Yes," resumed I, after a pause,—"yes, it is indeed a glorious and fair world which we have for our inheritance. Look how the sunlight sleeps yonder upon fields covered with golden corn; and seems, like the divine benevolence of which you spoke, to smile upon the luxuriance which its power created. This carpet at our feet, covered with flowers that breathe, sweet as good deeds, to Heaven; the stream that breaks through that distant copse, laughing in the light of noon, and sending its voice through the hill and woodland, like a messenger of glad tidings; the green boughs over our head, vocal with a thousand songs, all inspirations of a joy too exquisite for silence; the very leaves, which seem to dance and quiver with delight,—think you, Aubrey, that these are so sullen as not to return thanks for the happiness they imbibe with being: what are those thanks but the incense of their joy? The flowers send it up to heaven in fragrance; the air and the wave, in music. Shall the heart of man be the only part of His creation that shall dishonour His worship with lamentation and gloom? When the inspired writers call upon us to praise our Creator, do they not say to us,—'Be *joyful* in your God?'"

"How can we be joyful with the Judgment-Day ever before us?" said Aubrey; "how can we be joyful" (and here a dark shade crossed his countenance, and his lip trembled with emotion) "while the deadly passions of this world plead and rankle at the heart? Oh, none but they who have known the full blessedness of a commune with Heaven can dream of the whole anguish and agony of the conscience, when it feels itself sullied by the mire and crushed by the load of earth!" Aubrey paused, and his words, his tone, his look, made upon me a powerful impression. I was about to answer, when, interrupting me, he said, "Let us talk not of these matters; speak to me on more worldly topics."

"I sought you," said I; "that I might do so," and I proceeded to detail to Aubrey as much of my private intercourse with the Abbe as I deemed necessary in order to warn him from too close a confidence in the wily ecclesiastic. Aubrey listened to me with earnest attention: the affair of the letter; the gross falsehood of the priest in denying the mention of my name, in his epistle, evidently dismayed him. "But," said he, after a long silence,—"but it is not for us, Morton,—weak, ignorant, inexperienced as we are,—to judge prematurely of our spiritual pastors. To them also is given a far greater license of conduct than to us, and ways enveloped in what to our eyes are mystery and shade; nay, I know not whether it be much less impious to question the paths of God's chosen than to scrutinize those of the Deity Himself."

"Aubrey, Aubrey, this is childish!" said I, somewhat moved to anger. "Mystery is always the trick of imposture: God's chosen should be distinguished from their flock only by superior virtue, and not by a superior privilege in deceit."

"But," said Aubrey, pointing to a passage in the book before him, "see what a preacher of the word has said!" and Aubrey recited one of the most dangerous maxims in priestcraft, as reverently as if he were quoting from the Scripture itself. "'The nakedness of truth should never be too openly exposed to the eyes of the vulgar. It was wisely feigned by the ancients that Truth did lie concealed in a well!'"

"Yes," said I, with enthusiasm, "but that well is like the holy stream at Dodona, which has the gift of enlightening those who seek it, and the power of illumining every torch which touches the surface of its water!"

Whatever answer Aubrey might have made was interrupted by my uncle, who appeared approaching towards us with unusual satisfaction depicted on his comely countenance.

"Well, boys, well," said he, when he came within hearing, "a holyday for you! Ods fish,—and a holier day than my old house has known since its former proprietor, Sir Hugo, of valorous memory, demolished the nunnery, of which some remains yet stand on yonder eminence. Morton, my man of might, the thing is done; the court is purified; the wicked one is departed. Look here, and be as happy as I am at our release;" and he threw me a note in Montreuil's writing:—

TO SIR WILLIAM DEVEREUX, KT.

MY HONOURED FRIEND,—In consequence of a dispute between your eldest nephew, Count Morton Devereux, and myself, in which he desired me to remember, not only that our former relationship of tutor and pupil was at an end, but that friendship for his person was incompatible with the respect due to his superior station, I can neither so far degrade the dignity of letters, nor, above all, so meanly debase the sanctity of my divine profession, as any longer to remain beneath your hospitable roof,—a guest not only unwelcome to, but insulted by, your relation and apparent heir. Suffer me to offer you my gratitude for the favours you have hitherto bestowed on me, and to bid you farewell forever.

I have the honour to be,

With the most profound respect, etc.,
JULIAN MONTREUIL.

"Well, sir, what say you?" cried my uncle, stamping his cane firmly on the ground, when I had finished reading the letter, and had transmitted it to Aubrey.

"That the good Abbe has displayed his usual skill in composition. And my mother? Is she imbued with our opinion of his priestship?"

"Not exactly, I fear. However, Heaven bless her, she is too soft to say 'nay.' But those Jesuits are so smooth-tongued to women. 'Gad, they threaten damnation with such an irresistible air, that they are as much like William the Conqueror as Edward the Confessor. Ha! master Aubrey, have you become amorous of the old Jacobite, that you sigh over his crabbed writing, as if it were a *billet-doux*?"

"There seems a great deal of feeling in what he says, Sir," said Aubrey, returning the letter to my uncle.

"Feeling!" cried the knight; "ay, the reverend gentry always have a marvellously tender feeling for their own interest,—eh, Morton?"

"Right, dear sir," said I, wishing to change a subject which I knew might hurt Aubrey; "but should we not join yon party of dames and damsels? I see they are about to make a water excursion."

"'Sdeath, sir, with all my heart," cried the good-natured knight; "I love to see the dear creatures amuse themselves; for, to tell you the truth, Morton," said he, sinking his voice into a knowing whisper, "the best thing to keep them from playing the devil is to encourage them in playing the fool!" and, laughing heartily at the jest he had purloined from one of his favourite writers, Sir William led the way to the water-party.

CHAPTER XIV

BEING A CHAPTER OF TRIFLES

THE Abby disappeared! It is astonishing how well everybody bore his departure. My mother scarcely spoke on the subject; but along the irrefragable smoothness of her temperament all things glided without resistance to their course, or trace where they had been. Gerald, who, occupied solely in rural sports or rustic loves, seldom mingled in the festivities of the house, was equally silent on the subject. Aubrey looked grieved for a day or two: but his countenance soon settled into its customary and grave softness; and, in less than a week, so little was the Abbe spoken of or missed that you would scarcely have imagined Julian Montreuil had ever passed the threshold of our gate. The oblivion of one buried is nothing to the oblivion of one disgraced.

Meanwhile I pressed for my departure; and, at length, the day was finally fixed. Ever since that conversation with Lady Hasselton which has been set before the reader, that lady had lingered and lingered—though the house was growing empty, and London, in all seasons, was, according to her, better than the country in any—until the Count Devereux, with that amiable modesty which so especially characterized him, began to suspect that the Lady Hasselton lingered on his account. This emboldened that bashful personage to press in earnest for the fourth seat in the beauty's carriage, which we have seen in the conversation before mentioned had been previously offered to him in jest. After a great affectation of horror at the proposal, the Lady Hasselton yielded. She had always, she said, been dotingly fond of children, and it was certainly very shocking to send such a chit as the little Count to London by himself.

My uncle was charmed with the arrangement. The beauty was a peculiar favourite of his, and, in fact, he was sometimes pleased to hint that he had private reasons for love towards her mother's daughter. Of the truth of this insinuation I am, however, more than somewhat suspicious, and believe it was only a little ruse of the good knight, in order to excuse the vent of those kindly affections with which (while the heartless tone of the company his youth had frequented made him ashamed to own it) his breast overflowed. There was in Lady Hasselton's familiarity—her ease of manner—a certain good-nature mingled with her affectation, and a gayety of spirit, which never flagged,—something greatly calculated to win favour with a man of my uncle's temper.

An old gentleman who filled in her family the office of "the *chevalier*" in a French one; namely, who told stories; not too long, and did not challenge you for interrupting them; who had a good air, and unexceptionable pedigree,—a turn for wit, literature, note-writing, and the management of lap-dogs; who could attend *Madame* to auctions, plays, courts, and the puppet-show; who had a right to the best company, but would, on a signal, give up his seat to any one the pretty *capricieuse* whom he served might select from the worst,—in short a very useful, charming personage, "vastly" liked by all, and "prodigiously" respected by none,—this gentleman, I say, by name Mr. Lovell, had attended her ladyship in her excursion to Devereux Court. Besides him there came also a widow lady, a distant relation, with one eye and a sharp tongue,—the Lady Needleham, whom the beauty carried about with her as a sort of *gouvernante* or duenna. These excellent persons made my *compagnons de voyage*, and filled the remaining complements of the coach. To say truth, and to say nothing of my *tendresse* for the Lady Hasselton, I was very anxious to escape the ridicule of crawling up to the town like a green beetle, in my uncle's verdant chariot, with the four Flanders mares trained not to exceed two miles an hour. And my Lady Hasselton's *private* raileries—for she was really well bred, and made no jest of my uncle's antiquities of taste, in his presence, at least—had considerably heightened my intuitive dislike to that mode of transporting myself to the metropolis. The day before my departure, Gerald, for the first time, spoke of it.

Glancing towards the mirror, which gave in full contrast the magnificent beauty of his person, and the smaller proportions and plainer features of my own, he said with a sneer, “Your appearance must create a wonderful sensation in town.”

“No doubt of it,” said I, taking his words literally, and arraying my laced cravat with the air of a *petit-maitre*.

“What a wit the Count has!” whispered the Duchess of Lackland, who had not yet given up all hope of the elder brother.

“Wit!” said the Lady Hasselton; “poor child, he is a perfect simpleton!”

CHAPTER XV

THE MOTHER AND SON.—VIRTUE SHOULD BE THE SOVEREIGN OF THE FEELINGS, NOT THEIR DESTROYER

I TOOK the first opportunity to escape from the good company who were so divided in opinion as to my mental accomplishments, and repaired to my mother; for whom, despite of her evenness of disposition, verging towards insensibility, I felt a powerful and ineffaceable affection. Indeed, if purity of life, rectitude of intentions, and fervour of piety can win love, none ever deserved it more than she. It was a pity that, with such admirable qualities, she had not more diligently cultivated her affections. The seed was not wanting; but it had been neglected. Originally intended for the veil, she had been taught, early in life, that much feeling was synonymous with much sin; and she had so long and so carefully repressed in her heart every attempt of the forbidden fruit to put forth a single blossom, that the soil seemed at last to have become incapable of bearing it. If, in one corner of this barren but sacred spot, some green and tender verdure of affection did exist, it was, with a partial and petty reserve for my twin-brother, kept exclusive, and consecrated to Aubrey. His congenial habits of pious silence and rigid devotion; his softness of temper; his utter freedom from all boyish excesses, joined to his almost angelic beauty,—a quality which, in no female heart, is ever without its value,—were exactly calculated to attract her sympathy, and work themselves into her love. Gerald was also regular in his habits, attentive to devotion, and had, from an early period, been high in the favour of her spiritual director. Gerald, too, if he had not the delicate and dream-like beauty of Aubrey, possessed attractions of a more masculine and decided order; and for Gerald, therefore, the Countess gave the little of love that she could spare from Aubrey. To me she manifested the most utter indifference. My difficult and fastidious temper; my sarcastic turn of mind; my violent and headstrong passions; my daring, reckless and, when roused, almost ferocious nature,—all, especially, revolted the even and polished and quiescent character of my maternal parent. The little extravagances of my childhood seemed to her pure and inexperienced mind the crimes of a heart naturally distorted and evil; my jesting vein, which, though it never, even in the wantonness of youth, attacked the substances of good, seldom respected its semblances and its forms, she considered as the effusions of malignity; and even the bursts of love, kindness, and benevolence, which were by no means unfrequent in my wild and motley character, were so foreign to her stillness of temperament that they only revolted her by their violence, instead of affecting her by their warmth.

Nor did she like me the better for the mutual understanding between my uncle and myself. On the contrary, shocked by the idle and gay turn of the knight’s conversation, the frivolities of his mind, and his heretical disregard for the forms of the religious sect which she so zealously espoused, she was utterly insensible to the points which redeemed and ennobled his sterling and generous character; utterly obtuse to his warmth of heart,—his overflowing kindness of disposition,—his charity,—his high honour,—his justice of principle, that nothing save benevolence could warp,—and the shrewd, penetrating sense, which, though often clouded by foibles and humorous eccentricity, still made the

stratum of his intellectual composition. Nevertheless, despite her prepossessions against us both, there was in her temper something so gentle, meek, and unupbraiding, that even the sense of injustice lost its sting, and one could not help loving the softness of her character, while one was most chilled by its frigidity. Anger, hope, fear, the faintest breath or sign of passion, never seemed to stir the breezeless languor of her feelings; and quiet was so inseparable from her image that I have almost thought, like that people described by Herodotus, her very sleep could never be disturbed by dreams.

Yes! how fondly, how tenderly I loved her! What tears, secret but deep, bitter but unreproaching, have I retired to shed, when I caught her cold and unaffectionate glance! How (unnoticed and uncared for) have I watched and prayed and wept without her door when a transitory sickness or suffering detained her within; and how, when stretched myself upon the feverish bed to which my early weakness of frame often condemned me,—how have I counted the moments to her punctilious and brief visit, and started as I caught her footstep, and felt my heart leap within me as she approached! and then, as I heard her cold tone and looked upon her unmoved face, how bitterly have I turned away with all that repressed and crushed affection which was construed into sullenness or disrespect! O mighty and enduring force of early associations, that almost seems, in its unconquerable strength, to partake of an innate prepossession, that binds the son to the mother who concealed him in her womb and purchased life for him with the travail of death?—fountain of filial love, which coldness cannot freeze, nor injustice embitter, nor pride divert into fresh channels, nor time, and the hot suns of our toiling manhood, exhaust,—even at this moment, how livingly do you gush upon my heart, and water with your divine waves the memories that yet flourish amidst the sterility of years?

I approached the apartments appropriated to my mother: I knocked at her door; one of her women admitted me. The Countess was sitting on a high-backed chair, curiously adorned with tapestry. Her feet, which were remarkable for their beauty, were upon a velvet cushion; three handmaids stood round her, and she herself was busily employed in a piece of delicate embroidery, an art in which she eminently excelled.

"The Count, Madam!" said the woman who had admitted me, placing a chair beside my mother, and then retiring to join her sister maidens.

"Good day to you, my son," said the Countess, lifting her eyes for a moment, and then dropping them again upon her work.

"I have come to seek you, dearest mother, as I know not, if, among the crowd of guests and amusements which surround us, I shall enjoy another opportunity of having a private conversation with you: will it please you to dismiss your women?"

My mother again lifted up her eyes. "And why, my son? surely there *can* be nothing between us which requires their absence; what is your reason?"

"I leave you to-morrow, Madam: is it strange that a son should wish to see his mother alone before his departure?"

"By no means, Morton; but your absence will not be very long, will it?"

"Forgive my importunity, dear Mother; but *will* you dismiss your attendants?"

"If you wish it, certainly; but I dislike feeling alone, especially in these large rooms; nor did I think being unattended quite consistent with our rank: however, I never contradict you, my son," and the Countess directed her women to wait in the anteroom.

"Well, Morton, what is your wish?"

"Only to bid you farewell, and to ask if London contains nothing which you will commission me to obtain for you?"

The Countess again raised her eyes from her work. "I am greatly obliged to you, my dear son; this is a very delicate attention on your part. I am informed that stomachers are worn a thought less pointed than they were. I care not, you well know, for such vanities; but respect for the memory of your illustrious father renders me desirous to retain a seemly appearance to the world, and my women shall give you written instructions thereon to Madame Tourville; she lives in St. James's Street, and

is the only person to be employed in these matters. She is a woman who has known misfortune, and appreciates the sorrowful and subdued tastes of those whom an exalted station has not preserved from like afflictions. So you go to-morrow: will you get me the scissors? They are on the ivory table yonder. When do you return?"

"Perhaps never!" said I, abruptly.

"Never, Morton; how singular—why?"

"I may join the army, and be killed."

"I hope not. Dear, how cold it is: will you shut the window? pray forgive my troubling you, but you *would* send away the women. Join the army, you say? It is a very dangerous profession; your poor father might be alive now but for having embraced it; nevertheless, in a righteous cause, under the Lord of Hosts, there is great glory to be obtained beneath its banners. Alas, however, for its private evils! alas, for the orphan and the widow! You will be sure, my dear son, to give the note to Madame Tourville herself? Her assistants have not her knowledge of my misfortunes, nor indeed of my exact proportions; and at my age, and in my desolate state, I would fain be decorous in these things, and that reminds me of dinner. Have you aught else to say, Morton?"

"Yes!" said I, suppressing my emotions, "yes, Mother! do bestow on me one warm wish, one kind word, before we part: see,—I kneel for your blessing,—will you not give it me?"

"Bless you, my child,—bless you! look you now; I have dropped my needle!"

I rose hastily, bowed profoundly (my mother returned the courtesy with the grace peculiar to herself), and withdrew. I hurried into the great drawing-room, found Lady Needleham alone, rushed out in despair, encountered the Lady Hasselton, and coquetted with her the rest of the evening. Vain hope! to forget one's real feelings by pretending those one never felt!

The next morning, then, after suitable adieux to all (Gerald excepted) whom I left behind; after some tears too from my uncle, which, had it not been for the presence of the Lady Hasselton, I could have returned with interest; and after a long caress to his dog Ponto, which now, in parting with that dear old man, seemed to me as dog never seemed before, I hurried into the Beauty's carriage, bade farewell forever to the Rubicon of Life, and commenced my career of manhood and citizenship by learning, under the tuition of the prettiest coquette of her time, the dignified duties of a Court Gallant and a Town Beau.

BOOK II

CHAPTER I

THE HERO IN LONDON.—PLEASURE IS OFTEN THE SHORTEST, AS IT IS THE EARLIEST ROAD TO WISDOM, AND WE MAY SAY OF THE WORLD WHAT ZEAL-OF-THE-LAND-BUSY SAYS OF THE PIG-BOOTH, "WE ESCAPE SO MUCH OF THE OTHER VANITIES BY OUR EARLY ENTERING."

IT had, when I first went to town, just become the fashion for young men of fortune to keep house, and to give their bachelor establishments the importance hitherto reserved for the household of a Benedict.

Let the reader figure to himself a suite of apartments, magnificently furnished, in the vicinity of the court. An anteroom is crowded with divers persons, all messengers in the various negotiations of pleasure. There, a French valet,—that inestimable valet, Jean Desmarais,—sitting over a small fire, was watching the operations of a coffee-pot, and conversing, in a mutilated attempt at the language of our nation, though with the enviable fluency of his own, with the various loiterers who were beguiling the hours they were obliged to wait for an audience of the master himself, by laughing at the master's Gallic representative. There stood a tailor with his books of patterns just imported from Paris,—that modern Prometheus, who makes a man what he is! Next to him a tall, gaunt fellow, in a coat covered with tarnished lace, a night-cap wig, and a large whip in his hands, comes to vouch for the pedigree and excellence of the three horses he intends to dispose of, out of pure love and amity for the buyer. By the window stood a thin starveling poet, who, like the grammarian of Cos, might have put lead in his pockets to prevent being blown away, had he not, with a more paternal precaution, put so much in his works that he had left none to spare. Excellent trick of the times, when ten guineas can purchase every virtue under the sun, and when an author thinks to vindicate the sins of his book by proving the admirable qualities of the paragon to whom it is dedicated.[4] There with an air of supercilious contempt upon his smooth cheeks, a page, in purple and silver, sat upon the table, swinging his legs to and fro, and big with all the reflected importance of a *billet-doux*. There stood the pert haberdasher, with his box of silver-fringed gloves, and lace which Diana might have worn. At that time there was indeed no enemy to female chastity like the former article of man-millinery: the delicate whiteness of the glove, the starry splendour of the fringe, were irresistible, and the fair Adorna, in poor Lee's tragedy of "Caesar Borgia," is far from the only lady who has been killed by a pair of gloves.

Next to the haberdasher, dingy and dull of aspect, a book-hunter bent beneath the load of old works gathered from stall and shed, and about to be re-sold according to the price exacted from all literary gallants who affect to unite the fine gentleman with the profound scholar. A little girl, whose brazen face and voluble tongue betrayed the growth of her intellectual faculties, leaned against the wainscot, and repeated, in the anteroom, the tart repartees which her mistress (the most celebrated actress of the day) uttered on the stage; while a stout, sturdy, bull-headed gentleman, in a gray surtout and a black wig, mingled with the various voices of the motley group the gentle phrases of Hockley-in-the-Hole, from which place of polite merriment he came charged with a message of invitation. While such were the inmates of the anteroom, what picture shall we draw of the *salon* and its occupant?

[4] Thank Heaven, for the honour of literature, *nous avons change tout cela!*—ED.

A table was covered with books, a couple of fencing foils, a woman's mask, and a profusion of letters; a scarlet cloak, richly laced, hung over, trailing on the ground. Upon a slab of marble lay a hat, looped with diamonds, a sword, and a lady's lute. Extended upon a sofa, loosely robed in a dressing-gown of black velvet, his shirt collar unbuttoned, his stockings ungartered, his own hair (undressed and released for a brief interval from the false locks universally worn) waving from his forehead in short yet dishevelled curls, his whole appearance stamped with the morning negligence which usually follows midnight dissipation, lay a young man of about nineteen years. His features were neither handsome nor ill-favoured, and his stature was small, slight, and somewhat insignificant, but not, perhaps, ill-formed either for active enterprise or for muscular effort. Such, reader, is the picture of the young prodigal who occupied the apartments I have described, and such (though somewhat flattered by partiality) is a portrait of Morton Devereux, six months after his arrival in town.

The door was suddenly thrown open with that unhesitating rudeness by which our friends think it necessary to signify the extent of their familiarity; and a young man of about eight-and-twenty, richly dressed, and of a countenance in which a dissipated *nonchalance* and an aristocratic *hauteur* seemed to struggle for mastery, abruptly entered.

"What! ho, my noble royster," cried he, flinging himself upon a chair, "still suffering from St. John's Burgundy! Fie, fie, upon your apprenticeship!—why, before I had served half your time, I could take my three bottles as easily as the sea took the good ship 'Revolution,' swallow them down with a gulp, and never show the least sign of them the next morning!"

"I really believe you, most magnanimous Tarleton. Providence gives to each of its creatures different favours,—to one wit, to the other a capacity for drinking. A thousand pities that they are never united!"

"So bitter, Count!—ah, what will ever cure you of sarcasm?"

"A wise man by conversation, or fools by satiety."

"Well, I dare say that is witty enough, but I never admire fine things of a morning. I like letting my faculties live till night in a deshabille; let us talk easily and sillily of the affairs of the day. *Imprimis*, will you stroll to the New Exchange? There is a black eye there that measures out ribbons, and my green ones long to flirt with it."

"With all my heart—and in return you shall accompany me to Master Powell's puppet-show."

"You speak as wisely as Solomon himself in the puppet-show. I own that I love that sight: 'tis a pleasure to the littleness of human nature to see great things abased by mimicry; kings moved by bobbins, and the pomps of the earth personated by Punch."

"But how do you like sharing the mirth of the groundlings, the filthy plebeians, and letting them see how petty are those distinctions which you value so highly, by showing them how heartily you can laugh at such distinctions yourself? Allow, my superb Coriolanus, that one purchases pride by the loss of consistency."

"Ah, Devereux, you poison my enjoyment by the mere word 'plebeian'! Oh, what a beastly thing is a common person!—a shape of the trodden clay without any alloy; a compound of dirty clothes, bacon breaths, villanous smells, beggarly cowardice, and cattish ferocity. Pah, Devereux! rub civet on the very thought!"

"Yet they will laugh to-day at the same things you will, and consequently there would be a most flattering congeniality between you. Emotion, whether of ridicule, anger, or sorrow; whether raised at a puppet-show, a funeral, or a battle,—is your grandest of levellers. The man who would be always superior should be always apathetic."

"Oracular, as usual, Count,—but, hark, the clock gives tongue. One, by the Lord!—will you not dress?"

And I rose and dressed. We passed through the anteroom; my attendant assistants in the art of wasting money drew up in a row.

"Pardon me, gentlemen," said I ("gentlemen, indeed!" cried Tarleton), "for keeping you so long. Mr. Snivelship, your waistcoats are exquisite: favour me by conversing with my valet on the width of the lace for my liveries; he has my instructions. Mr. Jockelton, your horses shall be tried to-morrow at one. Ay, Mr. Rymer, I beg you a thousand pardons; I beseech you to forgive the ignorance of my rascals in suffering a gentleman of your merit to remain for a moment unattended to. I have read your ode; it is splendid,—the ease of Horace with the fire of Pindar; your Pegasus never touches the earth, and yet in his wildest excesses you curb him with equal grace and facility: I object, sir, only to your dedication; it is too flattering."

"By no means, my Lord Count, it fits you to a hair."

"Pardon me," interrupted I, "and allow me to transfer the honour to Lord Halifax; he loves men of merit; he loves also their dedications. I will mention it to him to-morrow: everything you say of me will suit him exactly. You will oblige me with a copy of your poem directly it is printed, and suffer me to pay your bookseller for it now, and through your friendly mediation; adieu!"

"Oh, Count, this is too generous."

"A letter for me, my pretty page? Ah! tell her ladyship I shall wait upon her commands at Powell's: time will move with a tortoise speed till I kiss her hands. Mr. Fribbleden, your gloves would fit the giants at Guildhall: my valet will furnish you with my exact size; you will see to the legitimate breadth of the fringe. My little beauty, you are from Mrs. Bracegirdle: the play *shall* succeed; I have taken seven boxes; Mr. St. John promised his influence. Say, therefore, my Hebe, that the thing is certain, and let me kiss thee: thou hast dew on thy lip already. Mr. Thumpen, you are a fine fellow, and deserve to be encouraged; I will see that the next time your head is broken it shall be broken fairly: but I will not patronize the bear; consider that peremptory. What, Mr. Bookworm, again! I hope you have succeeded better this time: the old songs had an autumn fit upon them, and had lost the best part of their *leaves*; and Plato had mortgaged one half his 'Republic,' to pay, I suppose, the exorbitant sum you thought proper to set upon the other. As for Diogenes Laertius, and his philosophers—"

"Pish!" interrupted Tarleton; "are you going, by your theoretical treatises on philosophy, to make me learn the practical part of it, and prate upon learning while I am supporting myself with patience?"

"Pardon me! Mr. Bookworm; you will deposit your load, and visit me to-morrow at an earlier hour. And now, Tarleton, I am at your service."

CHAPTER II

GAY SCENES AND CONVERSATIONS.—THE NEW EXCHANGE AND THE PUPPET-SHOW.—THE ACTOR, THE SEXTON, AND THE BEAUTY

"WELL, Tarleton," said I, looking round that mart of millinery and love-making, which, so celebrated in the reign of Charles II., still preserved the shadow of its old renown in that of Anne, —"well, here we are upon the classical ground so often commemorated in the comedies which our chaste grandmothers thronged to see. Here we can make appointments, while we profess to buy gloves, and should our mistress tarry too long, beguile our impatience by a flirtation with her milliner. Is there not a breathing air of gayety about the place?—does it not still smack of the Ethereges and Sedleys?"

"Right," said Tarleton, leaning over a counter and amorously eying the pretty coquette to whom it belonged; while, with the coxcombry then in fashion, he sprinkled the long curls that touched his shoulders with a fragrant shower from a bottle of jessamine water upon the counter,—"right; saw you ever such an eye? Have you snuff of the true scent, my beauty—foh! this is for the nostril of a Welsh parson—choleric and hot, my beauty,—pulverized horse-radish,—why, it would make a nose of the

coldest constitution imaginable sneeze like a washed school-boy on a Saturday night.—Ah, this is better, my princess: there is some courtesy in this snuff; it flatters the brain like a poet's dedication. Right, Devereux, right, there is something infectious in the atmosphere; one catches good humour as easily as if it were cold. Shall we stroll on?—*my* Clelia is on the other side of the Exchange.—You were speaking of the play-writers: what a pity that our Ethereges and Wycherleys should be so frank in their gallantry that the prudish public already begins to look shy on them. They have a world of wit!"

"Ay," said I; "and, as my good uncle would say, a world of knowledge of human nature, namely, of the worst part of it. But they are worse than merely licentious: they are positively villanous; pregnant with the most redemptionless *scoundrelism*,—cheating, lying, thieving, and fraud; their humour debauches the whole moral system; they are like the Sardinian herb,—they make you laugh, it is true, but they poison you in the act. But who comes here?"

"Oh, honest Coll!—Ah, Cibber, how goes it with you?"

The person thus addressed was a man of about the middle age, very grotesquely attired, and with a periwig preposterously long. His countenance (which, in its features, was rather comely) was stamped with an odd mixture of liveliness, impudence, and a coarse yet not unjoyous spirit of reckless debauchery. He approached us with a saunter, and saluted Tarleton with an air servile enough, in spite of an affected familiarity.

"What think you," resumed my companion, "we were conversing upon?"

"Why, indeed, Mr. Tarleton," answered Cibber, bowing very low, "unless it were the exquisite fashion of your waistcoat, or your success with my Lady Duchess, I know not what to guess."

"Pooh, man," said Tarleton, haughtily, "none of your compliments;" and then added in a milder tone, "No, Colley, we were abusing the immoralities that existed on the stage until thou, by the light of thy virtuous example, didst undertake to reform it."

"Why," rejoined Cibber, with an air of mock sanctity, "Heaven be praised, I have pulled out some of the weeds from our theatrical *parterre*—"

"Hear you that, Count? Does he not look a pretty fellow for a censor?"

"Surely," said Cibber, "ever since Dicky Steele has set up for a saint, and assumed the methodistical twang, some hopes of conversion may be left even for such reprobates as myself. Where, may I ask, will Mr. Tarleton drink to-night?"

"Not with thee, Coll. The Saturnalia don't happen every day. Rid us now of thy company: but stop, I will do thee a pleasure; know you this gentleman?"

"I have not that extreme honour."

"Know a Count, then! Count Devereux, demean yourself by sometimes acknowledging Colley Cibber, a rare fellow at a song, a bottle, and a message to an actress; a lively rascal enough, but without the goodness to be loved, or the independence to be respected."

"Mr. Cibber," said I, rather hurt at Tarleton's speech, though the object of it seemed to hear this description with the most unruffled composure—"Mr. Cibber, I am happy and proud of an introduction to the author of the 'Careless Husband.' Here is my address; oblige me with a visit at your leisure."

"How could you be so galling to the poor devil?" said I, when Cibber, with a profusion of bows and compliments, had left us to ourselves.

"Ah, hang him,—a low fellow, who pins all his happiness to the skirts of the quality, is proud of being despised, and that which would excruciate the vanity of others only flatters his. And now for my Clelia."

After my companion had amused himself with a brief flirtation with a young lady who affected a most edifying demureness, we left the Exchange, and repaired to the puppet-show.

On entering the Piazza, in which, as I am writing for the next century, it may be necessary to say that Punch held his court, we saw a tall, thin fellow, loitering under the columns, and exhibiting a countenance of the most ludicrous discontent. There was an insolent arrogance about Tarleton's

good-nature, which always led him to consult the whim of the moment at the expense of every other consideration, especially if the whim referred to a member of the *canaille* whom my aristocratic friend esteemed as a base part of the exclusive and despotic property of gentlemen.

"Egad, Devereux," said he, "do you see that fellow? he has the audacity to affect spleen. Faith, I thought melancholy was the distinguishing patent of nobility: we will smoke him." And advancing towards the man of gloom, Tarleton touched him with the end of his cane. The man started and turned round. "Pray, sirrah," said Tarleton, coldly, "pray who the devil are you that you presume to look discontented?"

"Why, Sir," said the man, good-humouredly enough, "I have some right to be angry."

"I doubt it, my friend," said Tarleton. "What is your complaint? a rise in the price of tripe, or a drinking wife? Those, I take it, are the sole misfortunes incidental to your condition."

"If that be the case," said I, observing a cloud on our new friend's brow, "shall we heal thy sufferings? Tell us thy complaints, and we will prescribe thee a silver specific; there is a sample of our skill."

"Thank you humbly, gentlemen," said the man, pocketing the money, and clearing his countenance; "and seriously, mine is an uncommonly hard case. I was, till within the last few weeks, the under-sexton of St. Paul's, Covent Garden, and my duty was that of ringing the bells for daily prayers but a man of Belial came hitherwards, set up a puppet-show, and, timing the hours of his exhibition with a wicked sagacity, made the bell I rang for church serve as a summons to Punch,—so, gentlemen, that whenever your humble servant began to pull for the Lord, his perverted congregation began to flock to the devil; and, instead of being an instrument for saving souls, I was made the innocent means of destroying them. Oh, gentlemen, it was a shocking thing to tug away at the rope till the sweat ran down one, for four shillings a week; and to see all the time that one was thinning one's own congregation and emptying one's own pockets!"

"It was indeed a lamentable dilemma; and what did you, Mr. Sexton?"

"Do, Sir? why, I could not stifle my conscience, and I left my place. Ever since then, Sir, I have stationed myself in the Piazza, to warn my poor, deluded fellow-creatures of their error, and to assure them that when the bell of St. Paul's rings, it rings for prayers, and not for puppet-shows, and—Lord help us, there it goes at this very moment; and look, look, gentlemen, how the wigs and hoods are crowding to the motion[5] instead of the minister."

"Ha! ha! ha!" cried Tarleton, "Mr. Powell is not the first man who has wrested things holy to serve a carnal purpose, and made use of church bells in order to ring money to the wide pouch of the church's enemies. Hark ye, my friend, follow my advice, and turn preacher yourself; mount a cart opposite to the motion, and I'll wager a trifle that the crowd forsake the theatrical mountebank in favour of the religious one; for the more sacred the thing played upon, the more certain is the game."

"Body of me, gentlemen," cried the ex-sexton, "I'll follow your advice."

"Do so, man, and never presume to look doleful again; leave dulness to your superiors."[6]

And with this advice, and an additional compensation for his confidence, we left the innocent assistant of Mr. Powell, and marched into the puppet-show, by the sound of the very bells the perversion of which the good sexton had so pathetically lamented.

The first person I saw at the show, and indeed the express person I came to see, was the Lady Hasselton. Tarleton and myself separated for the present, and I repaired to the coquette. "Angels of grace!" said I, approaching; "and, by the by, before I proceed another word, observe, Lady Hasselton, how appropriate the exclamation is to *you*! Angels of *grace*! why, you have moved all your patches—one—two—three—six— eight—as I am a gentleman, from the left side of your cheek to the right! What is the reason of so sudden an emigration?"

---

[5] An antiquated word in use for puppet-shows.

[6] See "Spectator," No. 14, for a letter from this unfortunate under-sexton.

"I have changed my politics, Count,[7] that is all, and have resolved to lose no time in proclaiming the change. But is it true that you are going to be married?"

"Married! Heaven forbid! which of my enemies spread so cruel a report?"

"Oh, the report is universal!" and the Lady Hasselton flirted her fan with the most flattering violence.

"It is false, nevertheless; I cannot afford to buy a wife at present, for, thanks to jointures and pin-money, these things are all matters of commerce; and (see how closely civilized life resembles the savage!) the English, like the Tartar gentleman, obtains his wife only by purchase! But who is the bride?"

"The Duke of Newcastle's rich daughter, Lady Henrietta Pelham."

"What, Harley's object of ambition![8] Faith, Madam, the report is not so cruel as I thought for!"

"Oh, you fop!—but is it not true?"

"By my honour, I fear not; my rivals are too numerous and too powerful. Look now, yonder! how they already flock around the illustrious heiress; note those smiles and simpers. Is it not pretty to see those very fine gentlemen imitating bumpkins at a fair, and grinning their best *for a gold ring*! But you need not fear me, Lady Hasselton, my love cannot wander if it would. In the quaint thought of Sidney,[9] love having once flown to my heart, burned its wings there, and cannot fly away."

"La, you now!" said the Beauty; "I do not comprehend you exactly: your master of the graces does not teach you your compliments properly."

"Yes, he does, but in your presence I forget them; and now," I added, lowering my voice into the lowest of whispers, "now that you are assured of my fidelity, will you not learn at last to discredit rumours and trust to me?"

"I love you too well!" answered the Lady Hasselton in the same tone, and that answer gives an admirable idea of the affection of every coquette! love and confidence with them are qualities that have a natural antipathy, and can never be united. Our *tete-a-tete* was at an end; the people round us became social, and conversation general.

"Betterton acts to-morrow night," cried the Lady Pratterly: "we must go!"

"We must go," cried the Lady Hasselton.

"We must go!" cried all.

And so passed the time till the puppet-show was over, and my attendance dispensed with.

It is a charming thing to be the lover of a lady of the mode! One so honoured does with his hours as a miser with his guineas; namely, nothing but count them!

CHAPTER III

MORE LIONS

THE next night, after the theatre, Tarleton and I strolled into Wills's. Half-a-dozen wits were assembled. Heavens! how they talked! actors, actresses, poets, statesmen, philosophers, critics, divines, were all pulled to pieces with the most gratifying malice imaginable. We sat ourselves down, and while Tarleton amused himself with a dish of coffee and the "Flying Post," I listened very attentively to the conversation. Certainly if we would take every opportunity of getting a grain or two of knowledge, we should soon have a chest-full; a man earned an excellent subsistence by asking

[7] Whig ladies patched on one side of the cheek, Tories on the other.

[8] Lord Bolingbroke tells us that it was the main end of Harley's administration to marry his son to this lady. Thus is the fate of nations a bundle made up of a thousand little private schemes.

[9] In the "Arcadia," that museum of oddities and beauties.

every one who came out of a tobacconist's shop for a pinch of snuff, and retailing the mixture as soon as he had filled his box.[10]

While I was listening to a tall lusty gentleman, who was abusing Dogget, the actor, a well-dressed man entered, and immediately attracted the general observation. He was of a very flat, ill-favoured countenance, but of a quick eye, and a genteel air; there was, however, something constrained and artificial in his address, and he appeared to be endeavouring to clothe a natural good-humour with a certain primness which could never be made to fit it.

"Ha, Steele!" cried a gentleman in an orange-coloured coat, who seemed by a fashionable swagger of importance desirous of giving the tone to the company,—"Ha, Steele, whence come you? from the chapel or the tavern?" and the speaker winked round the room as if he wished us to participate in the pleasure of a good thing.

Mr. Steele drew up, seemingly a little affronted; but his good-nature conquering the affectation of personal sanctity, which, at the time I refer to, that excellent writer was pleased to assume, he contented himself with nodding to the speaker, and saying,—

"All the world knows, Colonel Cleland, that you are a wit, and therefore we take your fine sayings as we take change from an honest tradesman,—rest perfectly satisfied with the coin we get, without paying any attention to it."

"Zounds, Cleland, you got the worst of it there," cried a gentleman in a flaxen wig. And Steele slid into a seat near my own.

Tarleton, who was sufficiently well educated to pretend to the character of a man of letters, hereupon thought it necessary to lay aside the "Flying Post," and to introduce me to my literary neighbour.

"Pray," said Colonel Cleland, taking snuff and swinging himself to and fro with an air of fashionable grace, "has any one seen the new paper?"

"What!" cried the gentleman in the flaxen wig, "what! the 'Tatler's' successor,—the 'Spectator'?"

"The same," quoth the colonel.

"To be sure; who has not?" returned he of the flaxen ornament. "People say Congreve writes it."

"They are very much mistaken, then," cried a little square man with spectacles; "to my certain knowledge Swift is the author."

"Pooh!" said Cleland, imperiously, "pooh! it is neither the one nor the other; I, gentlemen, am in the secret—but—you take me, eh? One must not speak well of one's self; mum is the word."

"Then," asked Steele, quietly, "we are to suppose that you, Colonel, are the writer?"

"I never said so, Dicky; but the women will have it that I am," and the colonel smoothed down his cravat.

"Pray, Mr. Addison, what say you?" cried the gentleman in the flaxen wig; "are you for Congreve, Swift, or Colonel Cleland?" This was addressed to a gentleman of a grave but rather prepossessing mien; who, with eyes fixed upon the ground, was very quietly and to all appearance very inattentively solacing himself with a pipe; without lifting his eyes, this personage, then eminent, afterwards rendered immortal, replied,

"Colonel Cleland must produce other witnesses to prove his claim to the authorship of the 'Spectator:' the women, we well know, are prejudiced in his favour."

"That's true enough, old friend," cried the colonel, looking askant at his orange-coloured coat; "but faith, Addison, I wish you would set up a paper of the same sort, d'ye see; you're a nice judge of merit, and your sketches of character would do justice to your friends."

"If ever I do, Colonel, I, or my coadjutors, will study at least to do justice to you."[11]

---

[10] "Tatler."

[11] This seems to corroborate the suspicion entertained of the identity of Colonel Cleland with the Will Honeycomb of the

"Prithee, Steele," cried the stranger in spectacles, "prithee, tell us thy thoughts on the subject: dost thou know the author of this droll periodical?"

"I saw him this morning," replied Steele, carelessly.

"Aha! and what said you to him?"

"I asked him his name."

"And what did he answer?" cried he of the flaxen wig, while all of us crowded round the speaker, with the curiosity every one felt in the authorship of a work then exciting the most universal and eager interest.

"He answered me solemnly," said Steele, "in the following words,—

"'Graeci carent ablativo, Itali dativo, ego nominativo.'"[12]

"Famous—capital!" cried the gentleman in spectacles; and then, touching Colonel Cleland, added, "what does it exactly mean?"

"Ignoramus!" said Cleland, disdainfully, "every *schoolboy knows Virgil*!"

"Devereux," said Tarleton, yawning, "what a d——d delightful thing it is to hear so much wit: pity that the atmosphere is so fine that no lungs unaccustomed to it can endure it long, Let us recover ourselves by a walk."

"Willingly," said I; and we sauntered forth into the streets.

"Wills's is not what it was," said Tarleton; "'tis a pitiful ghost of its former self, and if they had not introduced cards, one would die of the vapours there."

"I know nothing so insipid," said I, "as that mock literary air which it is so much the fashion to assume. 'Tis but a wearisome relief to conversation to have interludes of songs about Strephon and Sylvia, recited with a lisp by a gentleman with fringed gloves and a languishing look."

"Fie on it," cried Tarleton, "let us seek for a fresher topic. Are you asked to Abigail Masham's to-night, or will you come to Dame de la Riviere Manley's?"

"Dame de la what?—in the name of long words who is she?"

"Oh! Learning made libidinous: one who reads Catullus and profits by it."

"Bah, no, we will not leave the gentle Abigail for her. I have promised to meet St. John, too, at the Mashams'."

"As you like. We shall get some wine at Abigail's, which we should never do at the house of her cousin of Marlborough."

And, comforting himself with this belief, Tarleton peaceably accompanied me to that celebrated woman, who did the Tories such notable service, at the expense of being termed by the Whigs one great want divided into two parts; namely, a great want of every shilling belonging to other people, and a great want of every virtue that should have belonged to herself. As we mounted the staircase, a door to the left (a private apartment) was opened, and I saw the favourite dismiss, with the most flattering air of respect, my old preceptor, the Abbe Montreuil. He received her attentions as his due, and, descending the stairs, came full upon me. He drew back, changed neither hue nor muscle, bowed civilly enough, and disappeared. I had not much opportunity to muse over this circumstance, for St. John and Mr. Domville—excellent companions both—joined us; and the party being small, we had the unwonted felicity of talking, as well as bowing, to each other. It was impossible to think of any one else when St. John chose to exert himself; and so even the Abbe Montreuil glided out of my brain as St. John's wit glided into it. We were all of the same way of thinking on politics, and therefore were witty without being quarrelsome,—a rare thing. The trusty Abigail told us stories of the good Queen, and we added *bons mots* by way of corollary. Wine, too, wine that even Tarleton

"Spectator."

[12] "The Greek wants an ablative, the Italians a dative, I a nominative."

approved, lit up our intellects, and we spent altogether an evening such as gentlemen and Tories very seldom have the sense to enjoy.

O Apollo! I wonder whether Tories of the next century will be such clever, charming, well-informed fellows as we were!

CHAPTER IV

AN INTELLECTUAL ADVENTURE

A LITTLE affected by the vinous potations which had been so much an object of anticipation with my companion, Tarleton and I were strolling homeward when we perceived a remarkably tall man engaged in a contest with a couple of watchmen. Watchmen were in all cases the especial and natural enemies of the gallants in my young days; and no sooner did we see the unequal contest than, drawing our swords with that true English valour which makes all the quarrels of other people its own, we hastened to the relief of the weaker party.

"Gentlemen," said the elder watchman, drawing back, "this is no common brawl; we have been shamefully beaten by this here madman, and for no earthly cause."

"Who ever did beat a watchman for any earthly cause, you rascal?" cried the accused party, swinging his walking cane over the complainant's head with a menacing air.

"Very true," cried Tarleton, coolly. "Seigneurs of the watch, you are both made and paid to be beaten; *ergo*—you have no right to complain. Release this worthy cavalier, and depart elsewhere to make night hideous with your voices."

"Come, come," quoth the younger Dogberry, who perceived a reinforcement approaching, "move on, good people, and let us do our duty."

"Which," interrupted the elder watchman, "consists in taking this hulking swaggerer to the watchhouse."

"Thou speakest wisely, man of peace," said Tarleton; "defend thyself;" and without adding another word he ran the watchman through—not the body but the coat; avoiding with great dexterity the corporeal substance of the attacked party, and yet approaching it so closely as to give the guardian of the streets very reasonable ground for apprehension. No sooner did the watchman find the hilt strike against his breast, than he uttered a dismal cry and fell upon the pavement as if he had been shot.

"Now for thee, varlet," cried Tarleton, brandishing his rapier before the eyes of the other watchman, "tremble at the sword of Gideon."

"O Lord, O Lord!" ejaculated the terrified comrade of the fallen man, dropping on his knees, "for Heaven's sake, sir, have a care."

"What argument canst thou allege, thou screech-owl of the metropolis, that thou shouldst not share the same fate as thy brother owl?"

"Oh, sir!" cried the craven night-bird (a bit of a humourist in its way), "because I have a nest and seven little owlets at home, and t' other owl is only a bachelor."

"Thou art an impudent thing to jest at us," said Tarleton; "but thy wit has saved thee; rise."

At this moment two other watchmen came up.

"Gentlemen," said the tall stranger whom we had rescued, "we had better fly."

Tarleton cast at him a contemptuous look, and placed himself in a posture of offence.

"Hark ye," said I, "let us effect an honourable peace. Messieurs the watch, be it lawful for you to carry off the slain, and for us to claim the prisoners."

But our new foes understood not a jest, and advanced upon us with a ferocity which might really have terminated in a serious engagement, had not the tall stranger thrust his bulky form in front of the approaching battalion, and cried out with a loud voice, "Zounds, my good fellows, what's all

this for? If you take us up you will get broken heads to-night, and a few shillings perhaps to-morrow. If you leave us alone, you will have whole heads, and a guinea between you. Now, what say you?"

Well spoke Phaedra against the dangers of eloquence. The watchmen looked at each other. "Why really, sir," said one, "what you say alters the case very much; and if Dick here is not much hurt, I don't know what we may say to the offer."

So saying, they raised the fallen watchman, who, after three or four grunts, began slowly to recover himself.

"Are you dead, Dick?" said the owl with seven owlets.

"I think I am," answered the other, groaning.

"Are you able to drink a pot of ale, Dick?" cried the tall stranger.

"I think I am," reiterated the dead man, very lack-a-daisically. And this answer satisfying his comrades, the articles of peace were subscribed to.

Now, then, the tall stranger began searching his pockets with a most consequential air.

"Gad, so!" said he at last; "not in my breeches pocket!—well, it must be in my waistcoat. No. Well, 'tis a strange thing—demme it is! Gentlemen, I have had the misfortune to leave my purse behind me: add to your other favours by lending me wherewithal to satisfy these honest men."

And Tarleton lent him the guinea. The watchmen now retired, and we were left alone with our portly ally.

Placing his hand to his heart he made us half-a-dozen profound bows, returned us thanks for our assistance in some very courtly phrases, and requested us to allow him to make our acquaintance. We exchanged cards and departed on our several ways.

"I have met that gentleman before," said Tarleton. "Let us see what name he pretends to. 'Fielding—Fielding;' ah, by the Lord, it is no less a person! It is the great Fielding himself."

"Is Mr. Fielding, then, as elevated in fame as in stature?"

"What, is it possible that you have not yet heard of Beau Fielding, who bared his bosom at the theatre in order to attract the admiring compassion of the female part of the audience?"

"What!" I cried, "the Duchess of Cleveland's Fielding?"

"The same; the best-looking fellow of his day! A sketch of his history is in the 'Tatler,' under the name of 'Orlando the Fair.' He is terribly fallen as to fortune since the day when he drove about in a car like a sea-shell, with a dozen tall fellows, in the Austrian livery, black and yellow, running before and behind him. You know he claims relationship to the house of Hapsburg. As for the present, he writes poems, makes love, is still good-natured, humorous, and odd; is rather unhappily addicted to wine and borrowing, and rigidly keeps that oath of the Carthusians which never suffers them to carry any money about them."

"An acquaintance more likely to yield amusement than profit."

"Exactly so. He will favour you with a visit—to-morrow, perhaps, and you will remember his propensities."

"Ah! who ever forgets a warning that relates to his purse!"

"True!" said Tarleton, sighing. "Alas! my guinea, thou and I have parted company forever! *vale, vale, inquit Iolas*!"

CHAPTER V

THE BEAU IN HIS DEN, AND A PHILOSOPHER DISCOVERED

MR. FIELDING having twice favoured me with visits, which found me from home, I thought it right to pay my respects to him; accordingly one morning I repaired to his abode. It was situated in a street which had been excessively the mode some thirty years back; and the house still exhibited a

stately and somewhat ostentatious exterior. I observed a considerable cluster of infantine ragamuffins collected round the door, and no sooner did the portal open to my summons than they pressed forward in a manner infinitely more zealous than respectful. A servant in the Austrian livery, with a broad belt round his middle, officiated as porter. “Look, look!” cried one of the youthful gazers, “look at the Beau’s *keeper*!” This imputation on his own respectability and that of his master, the domestic seemed by no means to relish; for, muttering some maledictory menace, which I at first took to be German, but which I afterwards found to be Irish, he banged the door in the faces of the intrusive impertinents, and said, in an accent which suited very ill with his Continental attire,—

“And is it my master you’re wanting, Sir?”

“It is.”

“And you would be after seeing him immediately?”

“Rightly conjectured, my sagacious friend.”

“Fait then, your honour, my master’s in bed with a terrible fit of the megrims.”

“Then you will favour me by giving this card to your master, and expressing my sorrow at his indisposition.”

Upon this the orange-coloured lacquey, very quietly reading the address on the card, and spelling letter by letter in an audible mutter, rejoined,

“C—o—u (cou) n—t (unt) Count, D—e—v. Och, by my shoul, and it’s Count Devereux after all I’m thinking?”

“You think with equal profundity and truth.”

“You may well say that, your honour. Stip in a bit: I’ll tell my master; it is himself that will see you in a twinkling!”

“But you forget that your master is ill?” said I.

“Sorrow a bit for the matter o’ that: my master is never ill to a jontleman.”

And with this assurance “the Beau’s keeper” ushered me up a splendid staircase into a large, dreary, faded apartment, and left me to amuse myself with the curiosities within, while he went to perform a cure upon his master’s “megrims.” The chamber, suiting with the house and the owner, looked like a place in the other world set apart for the reception of the ghosts of departed furniture. The hangings were wan and colourless; the chairs and sofas were most spiritually unsubstantial; the mirrors reflected all things in a sepulchral sea-green; even a huge picture of Mr. Fielding himself, placed over the chimney-piece, seemed like the apparition of a portrait, so dim, watery, and indistinct had it been rendered by neglect and damp. On a huge tomb-like table in the middle of the room, lay two pencilled profiles of Mr. Fielding, a pawnbroker’s ticket, a pair of ruffles, a very little muff, an immense broadsword, a Wycherley comb, a jackboot, and an old plumed hat; to these were added a cracked pomatum-pot containing ink, and a scrap of paper, ornamented with sundry paintings of hearts and torches, on which were scrawled several lines in a hand so large and round that I could not avoid seeing the first verse, though I turned away my eyes as quickly as possible; that verse, to the best of my memory, ran thus: “Say, lovely Lesbia, when thy swain.” Upon the ground lay a box of patches, a periwig, and two or three well thumbed books of songs. Such was the reception-room of Beau Fielding, one indifferently well calculated to exhibit the propensities of a man, half bully, half fribble; a poet, a fop, a fighter, a beauty, a walking museum of all odd humours, and a living shadow of a past renown. “There are changes in wit as in fashion,” said Sir William Temple, and he proceeds to instance a nobleman who was the greatest wit of the court of Charles I., and the greatest dullard in that of Charles II.[13]

[13] The Earl of Norwich.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.