ЭДВАРД БУЛЬВЕР-ЛИТТОН

THE DISOWNED — COMPLETE

Эдвард Бульвер-Литтон

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Содержание

Edward Bulwer-Lytton
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CHAPTER I

I'll tell you a story if you please to attend.

G. KNIGHT: Limbo.

It was the evening of a soft, warm day in the May of 17—. The sun had already set, and the twilight was gathering slowly over the large, still masses of wood which lay on either side of one of those green lanes so peculiar to England. Here and there, the outline of the trees irregularly shrunk back from the road, leaving broad patches of waste land covered with fern and the yellow blossoms of the dwarf furze, and at more distant intervals thick clusters of rushes, from which came the small hum of gnats,—those "evening revellers" alternately rising and sinking in the customary manner of their unknown sports,—till, as the shadows grew darker and darker, their thin and airy shapes were no longer distinguishable, and no solitary token of life or motion broke the voiceless monotony of the surrounding woods.

The first sound which invaded the silence came from the light, quick footsteps of a person whose youth betrayed itself in its elastic and unmeasured tread, and in the gay, free carol which broke out by fits and starts upon the gentle stillness of the evening.

There was something rather indicative of poetical taste than musical science in the selection of this vesper hymn, which always commenced with,—

"'T is merry, 't is merry, in good green wood,"

and never proceeded a syllable further than the end of the second line,—

"when birds are about and singing;"

from the last word of which, after a brief pause, it invariably started forth into joyous "iteration."

Presently a heavier, yet still more rapid, step than that of the youth was heard behind; and, as it overtook the latter, a loud, clear, good-humoured voice gave the salutation of the evening. The tone in which this courtesy was returned was frank, distinct, and peculiarly harmonious.

"Good evening, my friend. How far is it to W——? I hope I am not out of the direct road?"

"To W——, sir?" said the man, touching his hat, as he perceived, in spite of the dusk, something in the air and voice of his new acquaintance which called for a greater degree of respect than he was at first disposed to accord to a pedestrian traveller,—"to W——, sir? why, you will not surely go there to-night? it is more than eight miles distant, and the roads none of the best."

"Now, a curse on all rogues!" quoth the youth, with a serious sort of vivacity. "Why, the miller at the foot of the hill assured me I should be at my journey's end in less than an hour."

"He may have said right, sir," returned the man, "yet you will not reach W—— in twice that time."

"How do you mean?" said the younger stranger.

"Why, that you may for once force a miller to speak truth in spite of himself, and make a public-house, about three miles hence, the end of your day's journey."

"Thank you for the hint," said the youth. "Does the house you speak of lie on the road-side?"

"No, sir: the lane branches off about two miles hence, and you must then turn to the right; but till then our way is the same, and if you would not prefer your own company to mine we can trudge on together."

"With all my heart," rejoined the younger stranger; "and not the less willingly from the brisk pace you walk. I thought I had few equals in pedestrianism; but it should not be for a small wager that I would undertake to keep up with you."

"Perhaps, sir," said the man, laughing, "I'll have had in the course of my life a better usage and a longer experience of my heels than you have."

Somewhat startled by a speech of so equivocal a meaning, the youth, for the first time, turned round to examine, as well as the increasing darkness would permit, the size and appearance of his companion. He was not perhaps too well satisfied with his survey. His fellow pedestrian was about six feet high, and of a corresponding girth of limb and frame, which would have made him fearful odds in any encounter where bodily strength was the best means of conquest. Notwithstanding the mildness of the weather, he was closely buttoned in a rough great-coat, which was well calculated to give all due effect to the athletic proportions of the wearer.

There was a pause of some moments.

"This is but a wild, savage sort of scene for England, sir, in this day of new-fashioned ploughs and farming improvements," said the tall stranger, looking round at the ragged wastes and grim woods, which lay steeped in the shade beside and before them.

"True," answered the youth; "and in a few years agricultural innovation will scarcely leave, even in these wastes, a single furze-blossom for the bee or a tuft of green-sward for the grasshopper; but, however unpleasant the change may be for us foot-travellers, we must not repine at what they tell us is so sure a witness of the prosperity of the country."

"They tell us! who tell us?" exclaimed the stranger, with great vivacity. "Is it the puny and spiritless artisan, or the debased and crippled slave of the counter and the till, or the sallow speculator on morals, who would mete us out our liberty, our happiness, our very feelings by the yard and inch and fraction? No, no, let them follow what the books and precepts of their own wisdom teach them; let them cultivate more highly the lands they have already parcelled out by dikes and fences, and leave, though at scanty intervals, some green patches of unpolluted land for the poor man's beast and the free man's foot."

"You are an enthusiast on this subject," said the younger traveller, not a little surprised at the tone and words of the last speech; "and if I were not just about to commence the world with a firm persuasion that enthusiasm on any matter is a great obstacle to success, I could be as warm though not so eloquent as yourself."

"Ah, sir," said the stranger, sinking into a more natural and careless tone, "I have a better right than I imagine you can claim to repine or even to inveigh against the boundaries which are, day by day and hour by hour, encroaching upon what I have learned to look upon as my own territory. You were, just before I joined you, singing an old song; I honour you for your taste: and no offence, sir, but a sort of fellowship in feeling made me take the liberty to accost you. I am no very great scholar in other things; but I owe my present circumstances of life solely to my fondness for those old songs and quaint madrigals. And I believe no person can better apply to himself Will Shakspeare's invitation,—

'Under the greenwood tree
Who loves to lie with me,
And tune his merry note
Unto the sweet bird's throat,
Come hither, come hither, come hither,
Here shall he see

No enemy
But winter and rough weather.'"

Relieved from his former fear, but with increased curiosity at this quotation, which was half said, half sung, in a tone which seemed to evince a hearty relish for the sense of the words, the youth replied,—

"Truly, I did not expect to meet among the travellers of this wild country with so well-stored a memory. And, indeed, I should have imagined that the only persons to whom your verses could exactly have applied were those honourable vagrants from the Nile whom in vulgar language we term gypsies."

"Precisely so, sir," answered the tall stranger, indifferently; "precisely so. It is to that ancient body that I belong."

"The devil you do!" quoth the youth, in unsophisticated surprise; "the progress of education is indeed astonishing!"

"Why," answered the stranger, laughing, "to tell you the truth, sir, I am a gypsy by inclination, not birth. The illustrious Bamfylde Moore Carew is not the only example of one of gentle blood and honourable education whom the fleshpots of Egypt have seduced."

"I congratulate myself," quoth the youth, in a tone that might have been in jest, "upon becoming acquainted with a character at once so respectable and so novel; and, to return your quotation in the way of a compliment, I cry out with the most fashionable author of Elizabeth's days,—

'O for a bowl of fat Canary,
Rich Palermo, sparkling Sherry,'

in order to drink to our better acquaintance."

"Thank you, sir,—thank you," cried the strange gypsy, seemingly delighted with the spirit with which his young acquaintance appeared to enter into his character, and his quotation from a class of authors at that time much less known and appreciated than at present; "and if you have seen already enough of the world to take up with ale when neither Canary, Palermo, nor Sherry are forthcoming, I will promise, at least, to pledge you in large draughts of that homely beverage. What say you to passing a night with us? our tents are yet more at hand than the public-house of which I spoke to you." The young man hesitated a moment, then replied,—

"I will answer you frankly, my friend, even though I may find cause to repent my confidence. I have a few guineas about me, which, though not a large sum, are my all. Now, however ancient and honourable your fraternity may be, they labour under a sad confusion, I fear, in their ideas of meum and tuum."

"Faith, sir, I believe you are right; and were you some years older, I think you would not have favoured me with the same disclosure you have done now; but you may be quite easy on that score. If you were made of gold, the rascals would not filch off the corner of your garment as long as you were under my protection. Does this assurance satisfy you?"

"Perfectly," said the youth; "and now how far are we from your encampment? I assure you I am all eagerness to be among a set of which I have witnessed such a specimen."

"Nay, nay," returned the gypsy, "you must not judge of all my brethren by me: I confess that they are but a rough tribe. However, I love them dearly; and am only the more inclined to think them honest to each other, because they are rogues to all the rest of the world."

By this time our travellers had advanced nearly two miles since they had commenced companionship; and at a turn in the lane, about three hundred yards farther on, they caught a glimpse of a distant fire burning brightly through the dim trees. They quickened their pace, and striking a

little out of their path into a common, soon approached two tents, the Arab homes of the vagrant and singular people with whom the gypsy claimed brotherhood and alliance.

CHAPTER II

Here we securely live and eat
The cream of meat;
And keep eternal fires
By which we sit and do divine.

HERRICK: Ode to Sir Clipseby Crew.

Around a fire which blazed and crackled beneath the large seething-pot, that seemed an emblem of the mystery and a promise of the good cheer which are the supposed characteristics of the gypsy race, were grouped seven or eight persons, upon whose swarthy and strong countenances the irregular and fitful flame cast a picturesque and not unbecoming glow. All of these, with the exception of an old crone who was tending the pot, and a little boy who was feeding the fire with sundry fragments of stolen wood, started to their feet upon the entrance of the stranger.

"What ho! my bob cuffins," cried the gypsy guide, "I have brought you a gentry cove, to whom you will show all proper respect: and hark ye, my maunders, if ye dare beg, borrow, or steal a single croker,—ay, but a bawbee of him, I'll—but ye know me." The gypsy stopped abruptly, and turned an eye, in which menace vainly struggled with good-humour, upon each of his brethren, as they submissively bowed to him and his protege, and poured forth a profusion of promises, to which their admonitor did not even condescend to listen. He threw off his great-coat, doubled it down by the best place near the fire, and made the youth forthwith possess himself of the seat it afforded. He then lifted the cover of the mysterious caldron. "Well, Mort," cried he to the old woman, as he bent wistfully down, "what have we here?"

"Two ducks, three chickens, and a rabbit, with some potatoes," growled the old hag, who claimed the usual privilege of her culinary office, to be as ill-tempered as she pleased.

"Good!" said the gypsy; "and now, Mim, my cull, go to the other tent, and ask its inhabitants, in my name, to come here and sup; bid them bring their caldron to eke out ours: I'll find the lush."

With these words (which Mim, a short, swarthy member of the gang, with a countenance too astute to be pleasing, instantly started forth to obey) the gypsy stretched himself at full length by the youth's side, and began reminding him, with some jocularity and at some length, of his promise to drink to their better acquaintance.

Something there was in the scene, the fire, the caldron, the intent figure and withered countenance of the old woman, the grouping of the other forms, the rude but not unpicturesque tent, the dark still woods on either side, with the deep and cloudless skies above, as the stars broke forth one by one upon the silent air, which (to use the orthodox phrase of the novelist) would not have been wholly unworthy the bold pencil of Salvator himself.

The youth eyed, with that involuntary respect which personal advantages always command, the large yet symmetrical proportions of his wild companion; nor was the face which belonged to that frame much less deserving of attention. Though not handsome, it was both shrewd and prepossessing in its expression; the forehead was prominent, the brows overhung the eyes, which were large, dark, and, unlike those of the tribe in general, rather calm than brilliant; the complexion, though sunburnt, was not swarthy, and the face was carefully and cleanly shaved, so as to give all due advantage of contrast to the brown luxuriant locks which fell rather in flakes than curls, on either side of the healthful and manly cheeks. In age, he was about thirty-five, and, though his air and mien were assuredly not lofty nor aristocratic, yet they were strikingly above the bearing of his vagabond companions: those companions were in all respects of the ordinary race of gypsies; the cunning and

flashing eye, the raven locks, the dazzling teeth, the bronzed colour, and the low, slight, active form, were as strongly their distinguishing characteristics as the tokens of all their tribe.

But to these, the appearance of the youth presented a striking and beautiful contrast.

He had only just passed the stage of boyhood, perhaps he might have seen eighteen summers, probably not so many. He had, in imitation of his companion, and perhaps from mistaken courtesy to his new society, doffed his hat; and the attitude which he had chosen fully developed the noble and intellectual turn of his head and throat. His hair, as yet preserved from the disfiguring fashions of the day, was of a deep auburn, which was rapidly becoming of a more chestnut hue, and curled in short close curls from the nape of the neck to the commencement of a forehead singularly white and high. His brows finely and lightly pencilled, and his long lashes of the darkest dye, gave a deeper and perhaps softer shade than they otherwise would have worn to eyes quick and observant in their expression and of a light hazel in their colour. His cheek was very fair, and the red light of the fire cast an artificial tint of increased glow upon a complexion that had naturally rather bloom than colour; while a dark riding frock set off in their full beauty the fine outline of his chest and the slender symmetry of his frame.

But it was neither his features nor his form, eminently handsome as they were, which gave the principal charm to the young stranger's appearance: it was the strikingly bold, buoyant, frank, and almost joyous expression which presided over all. There seemed to dwell the first glow and life of youth, undimmed by a single fear and unbaffled in a single hope. There were the elastic spring, the inexhaustible wealth of energies which defied in their exulting pride the heaviness of sorrow and the harassments of time. It was a face that, while it filled you with some melancholy foreboding of the changes and chances which must, in the inevitable course of fate, cloud the openness of the unwrinkled brow, and soberize the fire of the daring and restless eye, instilled also within you some assurance of triumph, and some omen of success,—a vague but powerful sympathy with the adventurous and cheerful spirit which appeared literally to speak in its expression. It was a face you might imagine in one born under a prosperous star; and you felt, as you gazed, a confidence in that bright countenance, which, like the shield of the British Prince, [Prince Arthur.—See "The Faerie Queene."] seemed possessed with a spell to charm into impotence the evil spirits who menaced its possessor.

"Well, sir," said his friend, the gypsy, who had in his turn been surveying with admiration the sinewy and agile frame of his young guest, "well, sir, how fares your appetite? Old Dame Bingo will be mortally offended if you do not do ample justice to her good cheer."

"If so," answered our traveller, who, young as he was, had learnt already the grand secret of making in every situation a female friend, "if so, I shall be likely to offend her still more."

"And how, my pretty master?" said the old crone with an iron smile.

"Why, I shall be bold enough to reconcile matters with a kiss, Mrs. Bingo," answered the youth.

"Ha! Ha!" shouted the tall gypsy; "it is many a long day since my old Mort slapped a gallant's face for such an affront. But here come our messmates. Good evening, my mumpers; make your bows to this gentleman who has come to bowse with us to-night. 'Gad, we'll show him that old ale's none the worse for keeping company with the moon's darlings. Come, sit down, sit down. Where's the cloth, ye ill-mannered loons, and the knives and platters? Have we no holiday customs for strangers, think ye? Mim, my cove, off to my caravan; bring out the knives, and all other rattletraps; and harkye, my cuffin, this small key opens the inner hole, where you will find two barrels; bring one of them. I'll warrant it of the best, for the brewer himself drank some of the same sort but two hours before I nimm'd them. Come, stump, my cull, make yourself wings. Ho, Dame Bingo, is not that pot of thine seething yet? Ah, my young gentleman, you commence betimes; so much the better; if love's a summer's day, we all know how early a summer morning begins," added the jovial Egyptian in a lower voice (feeling perhaps that he was only understood by himself), as he gazed complacently on the youth, who, with that happy facility of making himself everywhere at home so uncommon to his

countrymen, was already paying compliments suited to their understanding to two fair daughters of the tribe who had entered with the new-comers. Yet had he too much craft or delicacy, call it which you will, to continue his addresses to that limit where ridicule or jealousy from the male part of the assemblage might commence; on the contrary, he soon turned to the men, and addressed them with a familiarity so frank and so suited to their taste that he grew no less rapidly in their favour than he had already done in that of the women, and when the contents of the two caldrons were at length set upon the coarse but clean cloth which in honour of his arrival covered the sod, it was in the midst of a loud and universal peal of laughter which some broad witticism of the young stranger had produced that the party sat down to their repast.

Bright were the eyes and sleek the tresses of the damsel who placed herself by the side of the stranger, and many were the alluring glances and insinuated compliments which replied to his open admiration and profuse flattery; but still there was nothing exclusive in his attentions; perhaps an ignorance of the customs of his entertainers, and a consequent discreet fear of offending them, restrained him; or perhaps he found ample food for occupation in the plentiful dainties which his host heaped before him.

"Now tell me," said the gypsy chief (for chief he appeared to be), "if we lead not a merrier life than you dreamt of? or would you have us change our coarse fare and our simple tents, our vigorous limbs and free hearts, for the meagre board, the monotonous chamber, the diseased frame, and the toiling, careful, and withered spirit of some miserable mechanic?"

"Change!" cried the youth, with an earnestness which, if affected, was an exquisite counterfeit, "by Heaven, I would change with you myself."

"Bravo, my fine cove!" cried the host, and all the gang echoed their sympathy with his applause.

The youth continued: "Meat, and that plentiful; ale, and that strong; women, and those pretty ones: what can man desire more?"

"Ay," cried the host, "and all for nothing,—no, not even a tax; who else in this kingdom can say that? Come, Mim, push round the ale."

And the ale was pushed round, and if coarse the merriment, loud at least was the laugh that rang ever and anon from the old tent; and though, at moments, something in the guest's eye and lip might have seemed, to a very shrewd observer, a little wandering and absent, yet, upon the whole, he was almost as much at ease as the rest, and if he was not quite as talkative he was to the full as noisy.

By degrees, as the hour grew later and the barrel less heavy, the conversation changed into one universal clatter. Some told their feats in beggary; others, their achievements in theft; not a viand they had fed on but had its appropriate legend; even the old rabbit, which had been as tough as old rabbit can well be, had not been honestly taken from his burrow; no less a person than Mim himself had purloined it from a widow's footman who was carrying it to an old maid from her nephew the Squire.

"Silence," cried the host, who loved talking as well as the rest, and who for the last ten minutes had been vainly endeavouring to obtain attention. "Silence! my maunders, it's late, and we shall have the queer cuffins [magistrates] upon us if we keep it up much longer. What, ho, Mim, are you still gabbling at the foot of the table when your betters are talking? As sure as my name's King Cole, I'll choke you with your own rabbit skin, if you don't hush your prating cheat,—nay, never look so abashed: if you will make a noise, come forward, and sing us a gypsy song. You see, my young sir," turning to his guest, "that we are not without our pretensions to the fine arts."

At this order, Mim started forth, and taking his station at the right hand of the soi-disant King Cole, began the following song, the chorus of which was chanted in full diapason by the whole group, with the additional force of emphasis that knives, feet, and fists could bestow:—

THE GYPSY'S SONG

The king to his hall, and the steed to his stall,
And the cit to his bilking board;
But we are not bound to an acre of ground,
For our home is the houseless sward.
We sow not, nor toil; yet we glean from the soil
As much as its reapers do;
And wherever we rove, we feed on the cove
Who gibes at the mumping crew.
CHORUS.—So the king to his hall, etc.

We care not a straw for the limbs of the law,
Nor a fig for the cuffin queer;
While Hodge and his neighbour shall lavish and labour,
Our tent is as sure of its cheer.
CHORUS.—So the king to his hall, etc.

The worst have an awe of the harman's [constable] claw,
And the best will avoid the trap; [bailiff]
But our wealth is as free of the bailiff's see
As our necks of the twisting crap. [gallows]
CHORUS.—So the king to his hall, etc.

They say it is sweet to win the meat
For the which one has sorely wrought;
But I never could find that we lacked the mind
For the food that has cost us nought!
CHRUS.—So the king to his hall, etc.

And when we have ceased from our fearless feast
Why, our jigger [door] will need no bars;
Our sentry shall be on the owlet's tree,
And our lamps the glorious stars.

CHORUS.
So the king to his hall, and the steed to his stall,
And the cit to his bilking board;
But we are not bound to an acre of ground,
For our home is the houseless sward.

Rude as was this lawless stave, the spirit with which it was sung atoned to the young stranger for its obscurity and quaintness; as for his host, that curious personage took a lusty and prominent part in the chorus; nor did the old woods refuse their share of the burden, but sent back a merry echo to the chief's deep voice and the harsher notes of his jovial brethren.

When the glee had ceased, King Cole rose, the whole band followed his example, the cloth was cleared in a trice, the barrel—oh! what a falling off was there!—was rolled into a corner of the tent, and the crew to whom the awning belonged began to settle themselves to rest; while those who owned the other encampment marched forth, with King Cole at their head. Leaning with no light weight upon his guest's arm, the lover of ancient minstrelsy poured into the youth's ear a strain of eulogy, rather eloquent than coherent, upon the scene they had just witnessed.

"What," cried his majesty in an enthusiastic tone, "what can be so truly regal as our state? Can any man control us? Are we not above all laws? Are we not the most despotic of kings? Nay, more than the kings of earth, are we not the kings of Fairyland itself? Do we not realize the golden dreams of the old rhymers, luxurious dogs that they were? Who would not cry out,—

'Blest silent groves! Oh, may ye be
Forever Mirth's best nursery!
May pure Contents
Forever pitch their tents
Upon these downs, these meads, these rocks, these mountains.'"

Uttering this notable extract from the thrice-honoured Sir Henry Wotton, King Cole turned abruptly from the common, entered the wood which skirted it, and, only attended by his guest and his minister Mim, came suddenly, by an unexpected and picturesque opening in the trees, upon one of those itinerant vehicles termed caravans, he ascended the few steps which led to the entrance, opened the door, and was instantly in the arms of a pretty and young woman. On seeing our hero (for such we fear the youth is likely to become), she drew back with a blush not often found upon regal cheeks.

"Pooh," said King Cole, half tauntingly, half fondly, "pooh, Lucy, blushes are garden flowers, and ought never to be found wild in the woods:" then changing his tone, he said, "come, put some fresh straw in the corner, this stranger honours our palace to-night; Mim, unload thyself of our royal treasures; watch without and vanish from within!"

Depositing on his majesty's floor the appurtenances of the regal supper-table, Mim made his respectful adieus and disappeared; meanwhile the queen scattered some fresh straw over a mattress in the narrow chamber, and, laying over all a sheet of singularly snowy hue, made her guest some apology for the badness of his lodging; this King Cole interrupted by a most elaborately noisy yawn and a declaration of extreme sleepiness. "Now, Lucy, let us leave the gentleman to what he will like better than soft words even from a queen. Good night, sir, we shall be stirring at daybreak;" and with this farewell King Cole took the lady's arm, and retired with her into an inner compartment of the caravan.

Left to himself, our hero looked round with surprise at the exceeding neatness which reigned over the whole apartment. But what chiefly engrossed the attention of one to whose early habits books had always been treasures were several volumes, ranged in comely shelves, fenced with wirework, on either side of the fireplace. "Courage," thought he, as he stretched himself on his humble couch, "my adventures have commenced well: a gypsy tent, to be sure, is nothing very new; but a gypsy who quotes poetry, and enjoys a modest wife, speaks better than books do for the improvement of the world!"

CHAPTER III

Hath not old custom made this life more sweet
Than that of painted pomp?

—As You Like It.

The sun broke cheerfully through the small lattice of the caravan, as the youth opened his eyes and saw the good-humoured countenance of his gypsy host bending over him complacently.

"You slept so soundly, sir, that I did not like to disturb you; but my good wife only waits your rising to have all ready for breakfast."

"It were a thousand pities," cried the guest, leaping from his bed, "that so pretty a face should look cross on my account, so I will not keep her waiting an instant."

The gypsy smiled, as he answered, "I require no professional help from the devil, sir, to foretell your fortune."

"No!—and what is it?"

"Honour, reputation, success: all that are ever won by a soft tongue, if it be backed by a bold heart."

Bright and keen was the flash which shot over the countenance of the one for whom this prediction was made, as he listened to it with a fondness for which his reason rebuked him.

He turned aside with a sigh, which did not escape the gypsy, and bathed his face in the water which the provident hand of the good woman had set out for his lavations.

"Well," said his host, when the youth had finished his brief toilet, "suppose we breathe the fresh air, while Lucy smooths your bed and prepares the breakfast?"

"With all my heart," replied the youth, and they descended the steps which led into the wood. It was a beautiful, fresh morning; the air was like a draught from a Spirit's fountain, and filled the heart with new youth and the blood with a rapturous delight; the leaves—the green, green leaves of spring —were quivering on the trees, among which the happy birds fluttered and breathed the gladness of their souls in song. While the dewdrops that—

"strewed
A baptism o'er the flowers"—

gave back in their million mirrors the reflected smiles of the cloudless and rejoicing sun.

"Nature," said the gypsy, "has bestowed on her children a gorgeous present in such a morning."

"True," said the youth; "and you, of us two, perhaps only deserve it; as for me, when I think of the long road of dust, heat, and toil, that lies before me, I could almost wish to stop here and ask an admission into the gypsy's tents."

"You could not do a wiser thing!" said the gypsy, gravely.

"But fate leaves me no choice," continued the youth, as seriously as if he were in earnest; "and I must quit you immediately after I have a second time tasted of your hospitable fare."

"If it must be so," answered the gypsy, "I will see you, at least, a mile or two on your road." The youth thanked him for a promise which his curiosity made acceptable, and they turned once more to the caravan.

The meal, however obtained, met with as much honour as it could possibly have received from the farmer from whom its materials were borrowed.

It was not without complacency that the worthy pair beheld the notice their guest lavished upon a fair, curly-headed boy of about three years old, the sole child and idol of the gypsy potentates. But they did not perceive, when the youth rose to depart, that he slipped into the folds of the child's dress a ring of some value, the only one he possessed.

"And now," said he, after having thanked his entertainers for their hospitality, "I must say good-by to your flock, and set out upon my day's journey."

Lucy, despite her bashfulness, shook hands with her handsome guest; and the latter, accompanied by the gypsy chief, strolled down to the encampments.

Open and free was his parting farewell to the inmates of the two tents, and liberal was the hand which showered upon all—especially on the damsel who had been his Thais of the evening feast—the silver coins which made no inconsiderable portion of his present property.

It was amidst the oracular wishes and favourable predictions of the whole crew that he recommenced his journey with the gypsy chief.

When the tents were fairly out of sight, and not till then, King Cole broke the silence which had as yet subsisted between them.

"I suppose, my young gentleman, that you expect to meet some of your friends or relations at W——? I know not what they will say when they hear where you have spent the night."

"Indeed!" said the youth; "whoever hears my adventures, relation or not, will be delighted with my description; but in sober earnest, I expect to find no one at W—— more my friend than a surly innkeeper, unless it be his dog."

"Why, they surely do not suffer a stripling of your youth and evident quality to wander alone!" cried King Cole, in undisguised surprise.

The young traveller made no prompt answer, but bent down as if to pluck a wild-flower which grew by the road-side: after a pause, he said,—

"Nay, Master Cole, you must not set me the example of playing the inquisitor, or you cannot guess how troublesome I shall be. To tell you the truth, I am dying with curiosity to know something more about you than you may be disposed to tell me: you have already confessed that, however boon companions your gypsies may be, it is not among gypsies that you were born and bred."

King Cole laughed: perhaps he was not ill pleased by the curiosity of his guest, nor by the opportunity it afforded him of being his own hero.

"My story, sir," said he, "would be soon told, if you thought it worth the hearing, nor does it contain anything which should prevent my telling it."

"If so," quoth the youth, "I shall conceive your satisfying my request a still greater favour than those you have already bestowed upon me."

The gypsy relaxed his pace into an indolent saunter, as he commenced:—

"The first scene that I remember was similar to that which you witnessed last night. The savage tent, and the green moor; the fagot blaze; the eternal pot, with its hissing note of preparation; the old dame who tended it, and the ragged urchins who learned from its contents the first reward of theft and the earliest temptation to it,—all these are blended into agreeable confusion as the primal impressions of my childhood. The woman who nurtured me as my mother was rather capricious than kind, and my infancy passed away, like that of more favoured scions of fortune, in alternate chastisement and caresses. In good truth, Kinching Meg had the shrillest voice and the heaviest hand of the whole crew; and I cannot complain of injustice, since she treated me no worse than the rest. Notwithstanding the irregularity of my education, I grew up strong and healthy, and my reputed mother had taught me so much fear for herself that she left me none for anything else; accordingly, I became bold, reckless, and adventurous, and at the age of thirteen was as thorough a reprobate as the tribe could desire. At that time a singular change befell me: we (that is, my mother and myself) were begging not many miles hence at the door of a rich man's house in which the mistress lay on her death-bed. That mistress was my real mother, from whom Meg had stolen me in the first year of existence. Whether it was through

the fear of conscience or the hope of reward, no sooner had Meg learnt the dangerous state of my poor mother, the constant grief, which they said had been the sole though slow cause of her disease, and the large sums which had been repeatedly offered for my recovery; no sooner, I say, did Meg ascertain all these particulars than she fought her way up to the sick-chamber, fell on her knees before the bed, owned her crime, and produced myself. Various little proofs of time, place, circumstance; the clothing I had worn when stolen, and which was still preserved, joined to the striking likeness I bore to both my parents, especially to my father, silenced all doubt and incredulity: I was welcomed home with a joy which it is in vain to describe. My return seemed to recall my mother from the grave; she lingered on for many months longer than her physicians thought it possible, and when she died her last words commended me to my father's protection."

"My surviving parent needed no such request. He lavished upon me all that superfluity of fondness and food of which those good people who are resolved to spoil their children are so prodigal. He could not bear the idea of sending me to school; accordingly he took a tutor for me,—a simple-hearted, gentle, kind man, who possessed a vast store of learning rather curious than useful. He was a tolerable, and at least an enthusiastic antiquarian, a more than tolerable poetaster; and he had a prodigious budget full of old ballads and songs, which he loved better to teach and I to learn, than all the 'Latin, Greek, geography, astronomy, and the use of the globes,' which my poor father had so sedulously bargained for."

"Accordingly, I became exceedingly well-informed in all the 'precious conceits' and 'golden garlands' of our British ancients, and continued exceedingly ignorant of everything else, save and except a few of the most fashionable novels of the day, and the contents of six lying volumes of voyages and travels, which flattered both my appetite for the wonderful and my love of the adventurous. My studies, such as they were, were not by any means suited to curb or direct the vagrant tastes my childhood had acquired: on the contrary, the old poets, with their luxurious description of the 'green wood' and the forest life; the fashionable novelists, with their spirited accounts of the wanderings of some fortunate rogue, and the ingenious travellers, with their wild fables, so dear to the imagination of every boy, only fomented within me a strong though secret regret at my change of life, and a restless disgust to the tame home and bounded roamings to which I was condemned. When I was about seventeen, my father sold his property (which he had become possessed of in right of my mother), and transferred the purchase money to the security of the Funds. Shortly afterwards he died; the bulk of his fortune became mine; the remainder was settled upon a sister, many years older than myself, whom, in consequence of her marriage and residence in a remote part of Wales, I had never yet seen."

"Now, then, I was perfectly free and unfettered; my guardian lived in Scotland, and left me entirely to the guidance of my tutor, who was both too simple and too indolent to resist my inclinations. I went to London, became acquainted with a set of most royal scamps, frequented the theatres and the taverns, the various resorts which constitute the gayeties of a blood just above the middle class, and was one of the noisiest and wildest 'blades' that ever heard the 'chimes by midnight' and the magistrate's lecture for matins. I was a sort of leader among the jolly dogs I consorted with."

"My earlier education gave a raciness and nature to my delineations of 'life' which delighted them. But somehow or other I grew wearied of this sort of existence. About a year after I was of age my fortune was more than three parts spent; I fell ill with drinking and grew dull with remorse: need I add that my comrades left me to myself? A fit of the spleen, especially if accompanied with duns, makes one wofully misanthropic; so, when I recovered from my illness, I set out on a tour through Great Britain and France,—alone, and principally on foot. Oh, the rapture of shaking off the half friends and cold formalities of society and finding oneself all unfettered, with no companion but Nature, no guide but youth, and no flatterer but hope!"

"Well, my young friend, I travelled for two years, and saw even in that short time enough of this busy world to weary and disgust me with its ordinary customs. I was not made to be polite, still less to be ambitious. I sighed after the coarse comrades and the free tents of my first associates; and

a thousand remembrances of the gypsy wanderings, steeped in all the green and exhilarating colours of childhood, perpetually haunted my mind. On my return from my wanderings I found a letter from my sister, who, having become a widow, had left Wales, and had now fixed her residence in a well visited watering-place in the west of England. I had never yet seen her, and her letter was a fine-ladylike sort of epistle, with a great deal of romance and a very little sense, written in an extremely pretty hand, and ending with a quotation from Pope (I never could endure Pope, nor indeed any of the poets of the days of Anne and her successors). It was a beautiful season of the year: I had been inured to pedestrian excursions; so I set off on foot to see my nearest surviving relative. On the way, I fell in (though on a very different spot) with the very encampment you saw last night. By heavens, that was a merry meeting to me! I joined, and journeyed with them for several days: never do I remember a happier time. Then, after many years of bondage and stiffness, and accordance with the world, I found myself at ease, like a released bird; with what zest did I join in the rude jokes and the knavish tricks, the stolen feasts and the roofless nights of those careless vagabonds!"

"I left my fellow-travellers at the entrance of the town where my sister lived. Now came the contrast. Somewhat hot, rather coarsely clad, and covered with the dust of a long summer's day, I was ushered into a little drawing-room, eighteen feet by twelve, as I was afterwards somewhat pompously informed. A flaunting carpet, green, red, and yellow, covered the floor. A full-length picture of a thin woman, looking most agreeably ill-tempered, stared down at me from the chimney-piece; three stuffed birds—how emblematic of domestic life!—stood stiff and imprisoned, even after death, in a glass cage. A fire-screen and a bright fireplace; chairs covered with holland, to preserve them from the atmosphere; and long mirrors, wrapped as to the frame-work in yellow muslin, to keep off the flies,—finish the panorama of this watering-place mansion. The door opened, silks rustled, a voice shrieked 'My Brother!' and a figure, a thin figure, the original of the picture over the chimney-piece, rushed in."

"I can well fancy her joy," said the youth.

"You can do no such thing, begging your pardon, sir," resumed King Cole. "She had no joy at all: she was exceedingly surprised and disappointed. In spite of my early adventures, I had nothing picturesque or romantic about me at all. I was very thirsty, and I called for beer; I was very tired, and I lay down on the sofa; I wore thick shoes and small buckles; and my clothes were made God knows where, and were certainly put on God knows how. My sister was miserably ashamed of me: she had not even the manners to disguise it. In a higher rank of life than that which she held she would have suffered far less mortification; for I fancy great people pay but little real attention to externals. Even if a man of rank is vulgar, it makes no difference in the orbit in which he moves: but your 'genteel gentlewomen' are so terribly dependent upon what Mrs. Tomkins will say; so very uneasy about their relations and the opinion they are held in; and, above all, so made up of appearances and clothes; so undone if they do not eat, drink, and talk a la mode,—that I can fancy no shame like that of my poor sister at having found, and being found with, a vulgar brother."

"I saw how unwelcome I was and I did not punish myself by a long visit. I left her house and returned towards London. On my road, I again met with my gypsy friends: the warmth of their welcome enchanted me; you may guess the rest. I stayed with them so long that I could not bear to leave them; I re-entered their crew: I am one among them. Not that I have become altogether and solely of the tribe: I still leave them whenever the whim seizes me, and repair to the great cities and thoroughfares of man. There I am soon driven back again to my favourite and fresh fields, as a reed upon a wild stream is dashed back upon the green rushes from which it has been torn. You perceive that I have many comforts and distinctions above the rest; for, alas, sir, there is no society, however free and democratic, where wealth will not create an aristocracy; the remnant of my fortune provides me with my unostentatious equipage and the few luxuries it contains; it repays secretly to the poor what my fellow-vagrants occasionally filch from them; it allows me to curb among the crew all the grosser and heavier offences against the law to which want might otherwise compel them; and

it serves to keep up that sway and ascendency which my superior education and fluent spirits enabled me at first to attain. Though not legally their king, I assume that title over the few encampments with which I am accustomed to travel; and you perceive that I have given my simple name both to the jocular and kingly dignity of which the old song will often remind you. My story is done."

"Not quite," said his companion: "your wife? How came you by that blessing?"

"Ah! thereby hangs a pretty and a love-sick tale, which would not stand ill in an ancient ballad; but I will content myself with briefly sketching it. Lucy is the daughter of a gentleman farmer: about four years ago I fell in love with her. I wooed her clandestinely, and at last I owned I was a gypsy: I did not add my birth nor fortune; no, I was full of the romance of the Nut-brown Maid's lover, and attempted a trial of woman's affection, which even in these days was not disappointed. Still her father would not consent to our marriage, till very luckily things went bad with him; corn, crops, cattle,—the deuce was in them all; an execution was in his house, and a writ out against his person. I settled these matters for him, and in return received a father-in-law's blessing, and we are now the best friends in the world. Poor Lucy is perfectly reconciled to her caravan and her wandering husband, and has never, I believe, once repented the day on which she became the gypsy's wife!"

"I thank you heartily for your history," said the youth, who had listened very attentively to this detail; "and though my happiness and pursuits are centred in that world which you despise, yet I confess that I feel a sensation very like envy at your singular choice; and I would not dare to ask of my heart whether that choice is not happier, as it is certainly more philosophical, than mine."

They had now reached a part of the road where the country assumed a totally different character; the woods and moors were no longer visible, but a broad and somewhat bleak extent of country lay before them. Here and there only a few solitary trees broke the uniformity of the wide fields and scanty hedgerows, and at distant intervals the thin spires of the scattered churches rose, like the prayers of which they were the symbols, to mingle themselves with heaven.

The gypsy paused: "I will accompany you," said he, "no farther; your way lies straight onwards, and you will reach W—— before noon; farewell, and may God watch over you!"

"Farewell!" said the youth, warmly pressing the hand which was extended to him. "If we ever meet again, it will probably solve a curious riddle; namely, whether you are not disgusted with the caravan and I with the world!"

"The latter is more likely than the former," said the gypsy, for one stands a much greater chance of being disgusted with others than with one's self; so changing a little the old lines, I will wish you adieu after my own fashion, namely, in verse,—

'Go, set thy heart on winged wealth,
Or unto honour's towers aspire;
But give me freedom and my health,
And there's the sum of my desire!'"

CHAPTER IV

The letter, madam; have you none for me?

—The Rendezvous.

Provide surgeons.

—Lover's Progress.

Our solitary traveller pursued his way with the light step and gay spirits of youth and health.

"Turn gypsy, indeed!" he said, talking to himself; "there is something better in store for me than that. Ay, I have all the world before me where to choose—not my place of rest. No, many a long year will pass away ere any place of rest will be my choice! I wonder whether I shall find the letter at W——; the letter, the last letter I shall ever have from home but it is no home to me now; and I—I, insulted, reviled, trampled upon, without even a name—well, well, I will earn a still fairer one than that of my forefathers. They shall be proud to own me yet." And with these words the speaker broke off abruptly, with a swelling chest and a flashing eye; and as, an unknown and friendless adventurer, he gazed on the expanded and silent country around him, he felt like Castruccio Castrucani that he could stretch his hands to the east and to the west and exclaim, "Oh, that my power kept pace with my spirit, then should it grasp the corners of the earth!"

The road wound at last from the champaign country, through which it had for some miles extended itself, into a narrow lane, girded on either side by a dead fence. As the youth entered this lane, he was somewhat startled by the abrupt appearance of a horseman, whose steed leaped the hedge so close to our hero as almost to endanger his safety. The rider, a gentleman of about five-and-twenty, pulled up, and in a tone of great courtesy apologized for his inadvertency; the apology was readily admitted, and the horseman rode onwards in the direction of W——.

Trifling as this incident was, the air and mien of the stranger were sufficient to arrest irresistibly the thoughts of the young traveller; and before they had flowed into a fresh channel he found himself in the town and at the door of the inn to which his expedition was bound. He entered the bar; a buxom landlady and a still more buxom daughter were presiding over the spirits of the place.

"You have some boxes and a letter for me, I believe," said the young gentleman to the comely hostess.

"To you, sir!—the name, if you please?"

"To—to—to C—— L——," said the youth; "the initials C. L., to be left till called for."

"Yes, sir, we have some luggage; came last night by the van; and a letter besides, sir, to C. L. also."

The daughter lifted her large dark eyes at the handsome stranger, and felt a wonderful curiosity to know what the letter to C. L. could possibly be about; meanwhile mine hostess, raising her hand to a shelf on which stood an Indian slop-basin, the great ornament of the bar at the Golden Fleece, brought from its cavity a well-folded and well-sealed epistle.

"That is it," cried the youth; "show me a private room instantly."

"What can he want a private room for?" thought the landlady's daughter.

"Show the gentleman to the Griffin, No. 4, John Merrylack," said the landlady herself.

With an impatient step the owner of the letter followed a slipshod and marvellously unwashed waiter into No. 4,—a small square asylum for town travellers, country yeomen, and "single

gentlemen;" presenting, on the one side, an admirable engraving of the Marquis of Granby, and on the other an equally delightful view of the stable-yard.

Mr. C. L. flung himself on a chair (there were only four chairs in No. 4), watched the waiter out of the room, seized his letter, broke open the seal, and read—yea, reader, you shall read it too —as follows:—

"Enclosed is the sum to which you are entitled; remember, that it is all which you can ever claim at my hands; remember also that you have made the choice which now nothing can persuade me to alter. Be the name you have so long iniquitously borne henceforth and always forgotten; upon that condition you may yet hope from my generosity the future assistance which you must want, but which you could not ask from my affection. Equally by my heart and my reason you are forever DISOWNED."

The letter fell from the reader's hands. He took up the inclosure: it was an order payable in London for 1,000 pounds; to him it seemed like the rental of the Indies.

"Be it so!" he said aloud, and slowly; "be it so! With this will I carve my way: many a name in history was built upon a worse foundation!"

With these words he carefully put up the money, re-read the brief note which enclosed it, tore the latter into pieces, and then, going towards the aforesaid view of the stable-yard, threw open the window and leaned out, apparently in earnest admiration of two pigs which marched gruntingly towards him, one goat regaling himself upon a cabbage, and a broken-winded, emaciated horse, which having just been what the hostler called "rubbed down," was just going to be what the hostler called "fed."

While engaged in this interesting survey, the clatter of hoofs was suddenly heard upon the rough pavement, a bell rang, a dog barked, the pigs grunted, the hostler ran out, and the stranger, whom our hero had before met on the road, trotted into the yard.

It was evident from the obsequiousness of the attendants that the horseman was a personage of no mean importance; and indeed there was something singularly distinguished and highbred in his air and carriage.

"Who can that be?" said the youth, as the horseman, having dismounted, turned towards the door of the inn: the question was readily answered, "There goes pride and poverty!" said the hostler, "Here comes Squire Mordaunt!" said the landlady.

At the farther end of the stable-yard, through a narrow gate, the youth caught a glimpse of the green sward and the springing flowers of a small garden. Wearied with the sameness of No. 4 rather than with his journey, he sauntered towards the said gate, and, seating himself in a small arbour within the garden, surrendered himself to reflection.

The result of this self-conference was a determination to leave the Golden Fleece by the earliest conveyance which went to that great object and emporium of all his plans and thoughts, London. As, full of this resolution and buried in the dream which it conjured up, he was returning with downcast eyes and unheeding steps through the stable-yard, to the delights of No. 4, he was suddenly accosted by a loud and alarmed voice,—

"For God's sake, sir, look out, or—"

The sentence was broken off, the intended warning came too late, our hero staggered back a few steps, and fell, stunned and motionless, against the stable door. Unconsciously he had passed just behind the heels of the stranger's horse, which being by no means in good humour with the clumsy manoeuvres of his shampooer, the hostler, had taken advantage of the opportunity presented to him of working off his irritability, and had consequently inflicted a severe kick upon the right shoulder of Mr. C. L.

The stranger, honoured by the landlady with the name and title of Squire Mordaunt, was in the yard at the moment. He hastened towards the sufferer, who as yet was scarcely sensible, and led him into the house. The surgeon of the village was sent for and appeared. This disciple of Galen,

commonly known by the name of Jeremiah Bossolton, was a gentleman considerably more inclined to breadth than length. He was exactly five feet one inch in height, but thick and solid as a milestone; a wig of modern cut, carefully curled and powdered, gave somewhat of a modish and therefore unseemly grace to a solemn eye; a mouth drawn down at the corners; a nose that had something in it exceedingly consequential; eyebrows sage and shaggy; ears large and fiery; and a chin that would have done honour to a mandarin. Now Mr. Jeremiah Bossolton had a certain peculiarity of speech to which I shall find it difficult to do justice. Nature had impressed upon his mind a prodigious love of the grandiloquent; Mr. Bossolton, therefore, disdained the exact language of the vulgar, and built unto himself a lofty fabric of words in which his sense managed very frequently to lose itself. Moreover, upon beginning a sentence of peculiar dignity, Mr. Bossolton was, it must be confessed, sometimes at a loss to conclude it in a period worthy of the commencement; and this caprice of nature which had endowed him with more words than thoughts (necessity is, indeed, the mother of invention) drove him into a very ingenious method of remedying the deficiency; this was simply the plan of repeating the sense by inverting the sentence.

"How long a period of time," said Mr. Bossolton, "has elapsed since this deeply-to-be-regretted and seriously-to-be-investigated accident occurred?"

"Not many minutes," said Mordaunt; "make no further delay, I beseech you, but examine the arm; it is not broken, I trust?"

"In this world, Mr. Mordaunt," said the practitioner, bowing very low, for the person he addressed was of the most ancient lineage in the county, "in this world, Mr. Mordaunt, even at the earliest period of civilization, delay in matters of judgment has ever been considered of such vital importance, and—and such important vitality, that we find it inculcated in the proverbs of the Greeks and the sayings of the Chaldeans as a principle of the most expedient utility, and—and—the most useful expediency!"

"Mr. Bossolton," said Mordaunt, in a tone of remarkable and even artificial softness and civility, "have the kindness immediately to examine this gentleman's bruises."

Mr. Bossolton looked up to the calm but haughty face of the speaker, and without a moment's hesitation proceeded to handle the arm, which was already stripped for his survey.

"It frequently occurs," said Mr. Bossolton, "in the course of my profession, that the forcible, sudden, and vehement application of any hard substance, like the hoof of a quadruped, to the soft, tender, and carniferous parts of the human frame, such as the arm, occasions a pain—a pang, I should rather say—of the intensest acuteness, and—and of the acutest intensity."

"Pray, Mr. Bossolton, is the bone broken?" asked Mordaunt.

By this time the patient, who had been hitherto in that languor which extreme pain always produces at first, especially on young frames, was sufficiently recovered to mark and reply to the kind solicitude of the last speaker: "I thank you, sir," said he with a smile, "for your anxiety, but I feel that the bone is not broken; the muscles are a little hurt, that is all."

"Young gentleman," said Mr. Bossolton, "you must permit me to say that they who have all their lives been employed in the pursuit, and the investigation, and the analysis of certain studies are in general better acquainted with those studies than they who have neither given them any importance of consideration—nor—nor any consideration of importance. Establishing this as my hypothesis, I shall now proceed to—"

"Apply immediate remedies, if you please, Mr. Bossolton," interrupted Mr. Mordaunt, in that sweet and honeyed tone which somehow or other always silenced even the garrulous practitioner.

Driven into taciturnity, Mr. Bossolton again inspected the arm, and proceeded to urge the application of liniments and bandages, which he promised to prepare with the most solicitudinous despatch and the most despatchful solicitude.

CHAPTER V

Your name, Sir!
Ha! my name, you say—my name?
'T is well—my name—is—nay, I must consider.

—Pedrillo.

This accident occasioned a delay of some days in the plans of the young gentleman, for whom we trust very soon, both for our own convenience and that of our reader, to find a fitting appellation.

Mr. Mordaunt, after seeing every attention paid to him both surgical and hospitable, took his departure with a promise to call the next day; leaving behind him a strong impression of curiosity and interest to serve our hero as some mental occupation until his return. The bonny landlady came up in a new cap, with blue ribbons, in the course of the evening, to pay a visit of inquiry to the handsome patient, who was removed from the Griffin, No. 4, to the Dragon, No. 8,—a room whose merits were exactly in proportion to its number, namely, twice as great as those of No. 4.

"Well, sir," said Mrs. Taptape, with a courtesy, "I trust you find yourself better."

"At this moment I do," said the gallant youth, with a significant air.

"Hem," quoth the landlady.

A pause ensued. In spite of the compliment, a certain suspicion suddenly darted across the mind of the hostess. Strong as are the prepossessions of the sex, those of the profession are much stronger.

"Honest folk," thought the landlady, "don't travel with their initials only; the last 'Whitehall Evening' was full of shocking accounts of swindlers and cheats; and I gave nine pounds odd shillings for the silver teapot John has brought him up,—as if the delft one was not good enough for a foot traveller!"

Pursuing these ideas, Mrs. Taptape, looking bashfully down, said,—

"By the by, sir; Mr. Bossolton asked me what name he should put down in his book for the medicines; what would you please me to say, sir?"

"Mr. who?" said the youth, elevating his eyebrows.

"Mr. Bossolton, sir, the apothecary."

"Oh! Bossolton! very odd name that,—not near so pretty as—dear me, what a beautiful cap that is of yours!" said the young gentleman.

"Lord, sir, do you think so? The ribbon is pretty enough; but—but, as I was saying, what name shall I tell Mr. Bossolton to put in his book?" "This," thought Mrs. Taptape, "is coming to the point."

"Well!" said the youth, slowly, and as if in a profound reverie, "well, Bossolton is certainly the most singular name I ever heard; he does right to put it in a book: it is quite a curiosity! is he clever?"

"Very, sir," said the landlady, somewhat sharply; "but it is your name, not his, that he wishes to put into his book."

"Mine?" said the youth, who appeared to have been seeking to gain time in order to answer a query which most men find requires very little deliberation, "mine, you say; my name is Linden—Clarence Linden—you understand?"

"What a pretty name!" thought the landlady's daughter, who was listening at the keyhole; "but how could he admire that odious cap of Ma's!"

"And, now, landlady, I wish you would send up my boxes; and get me a newspaper, if you please."

"Yes, sir," said the landlady, and she rose to retire.

"I do not think," said the youth to himself, "that I could have hit on a prettier name, and so novel a one too!—Clarence Linden,—why, if I were that pretty girl at the bar I could fall in love with the very words. Shakspeare was quite wrong when he said,—

'A rose by any other name would smell as sweet.'"

"A rose by any name would not smell as sweet; if a rose's name was Jeremiah Bossolton, for instance, it would not, to my nerves at least, smell of anything but an apothecary's shop!"

When Mordaunt called the next morning, he found Clarence much better, and carelessly turning over various books, part of the contents of the luggage superscribed C. L. A book of whatever description was among the few companions for whom Mordaunt had neither fastidiousness nor reserve; and the sympathy of taste between him and the sufferer gave rise to a conversation less cold and commonplace than it might otherwise have been. And when Mordaunt, after a stay of some length, rose to depart, he pressed Linden to return his visit before he left that part of the country; his place, he added, was only about five miles distant from W——. Linden, greatly interested in his visitor, was not slow in accepting the invitation, and, perhaps for the first time in his life, Mordaunt was shaking hands with a stranger he had only known two days.

CHAPTER VI

While yet a child, and long before his time,
He had perceived the presence and the power
Of greatness.
.....
But eagerly he read, and read again.
.....
Yet still uppermost
Nature was at his heart, as if he felt,
Though yet he knew not how, a wasting power
In all things that from her sweet influence
Might seek to wean him. Therefore with her hues,
Her forms, and with the spirit of her forms,
He clothed the nakedness of austere truth.

WORDSWORTH.

Algernon Mordaunt was the last son of an old and honourable race, which had centuries back numbered princes in its line. His parents had had many children, but all (save Algernon, the youngest) died in their infancy. His mother perished in giving him birth. Constitutional infirmity and the care of mercenary nurses contributed to render Algernon a weakly and delicate child: hence came a taste for loneliness and a passion for study; and from these sprung, on the one hand, the fastidiousness and reserve which render us apparently unamiable, and, on the other, the loftiness of spirit and the kindness of heart which are the best and earliest gifts of literature, and more than counterbalance our deficiencies in the “minor morals” due to society by their tendency to increase our attention to the greater ones belonging to mankind. Mr. Mordaunt was a man of luxurious habits and gambling propensities: wedded to London, he left the house of his ancestors to moulder into desertion and decay; but to this home Algernon was constantly consigned during his vacations from school; and its solitude and cheerlessness gave to a disposition naturally melancholy and thoughtful those colours which subsequent events were calculated to deepen, not efface.

Truth obliges us to state, despite our partiality to Mordaunt, that, when he left his school after a residence of six years, it was with the bitter distinction of having been the most unpopular boy in it. Why, nobody could exactly explain, for his severest enemies could not accuse him of ill-nature, cowardice, or avarice, and these make the three capital offences of a school-boy; but Algernon Mordaunt had already acquired the knowledge of himself, and could explain the cause, though with a bitter and swelling heart. His ill health, his long residence at home, his unfriended and almost orphan situation, his early habits of solitude and reserve, all these, so calculated to make the spirit shrink within itself, made him, on his entrance at school, if not unsocial, appear so: this was the primary reason of his unpopularity; the second was that he perceived, for he was sensitive (and consequently acute) to the extreme, the misfortune of his manner, and in his wish to rectify it, it became doubly unprepossessing; to reserve, it now added embarrassment, to coldness, gloom; and the pain he felt in addressing or being addressed by another was naturally and necessarily reciprocal, for the effects of sympathy are nowhere so wonderful, yet so invisible, as in the manners.

By degrees he shunned the intercourse which had for him nothing but distress, and his volatile acquaintances were perhaps the first to set him the example. Often in his solitary walks he stopped afar off to gaze upon the sports which none ever solicited him to share; and as the shout of laughter

and of happy hearts came, peal after peal, upon his ear, he turned enviously, yet not malignantly away, with tears, which not all his pride could curb, and muttered to himself, “And these, these hate me!”

There are two feelings common to all high or affectionate natures,—that of extreme susceptibility to opinion and that of extreme bitterness at its injustice. These feelings were Mordaunt’s: but the keen edge which one blow injures, the repetition blunts; and by little and little, Algernon became not only accustomed, but, as he persuaded himself, indifferent, to his want of popularity; his step grew more lofty, and his address more collected, and that which was once diffidence gradually hardened into pride.

His residence at the University was neither without honour nor profit. A college life was then, as now, either the most retired or the most social of all others; we need scarcely say which it was to Mordaunt, but his was the age when solitude is desirable, and when the closet forms the mind better than the world. Driven upon itself, his intellect became inquiring and its resources profound; admitted to their inmost recesses, he revelled among the treasures of ancient lore, and in his dreams of the Nymph and Naiad, or his researches after truth in the deep wells of the Stagyrite or the golden fountains of Plato, he forgot the loneliness of his lot and exhausted the hoarded enthusiasm of his soul.

But his mind, rather thoughtful than imaginative, found no idol like “Divine Philosophy.” It delighted to plunge itself into the mazes of metaphysical investigation; to trace the springs of the intellect; to connect the arcana of the universe; to descend into the darkest caverns, or to wind through the minutest mysteries of Nature, and rise, step by step, to that arduous elevation on which Thought stands dizzy and confused, looking beneath upon a clouded earth, and above upon an unfathomable heaven.

Rarely wandering from his chamber, known personally to few and intimately by none, Algernon yet left behind him at the University the most remarkable reputation of his day. He had obtained some of the highest of academical honours, and by that proverbial process of vulgar minds which ever frames the magnificent from the unknown, the seclusion in which he lived and the recondite nature of his favourite pursuits attached to his name a still greater celebrity and interest than all the orthodox and regular dignities he had acquired. There are few men who do not console themselves for not being generally loved, if they can reasonably hope that they are generally esteemed. Mordaunt had now grown reconciled to himself and to his kind. He had opened to his interest a world in his own breast, and it consoled him for his mortification in the world without. But, better than this, his habits as well as studies had strengthened the principles and confirmed the nobility of his mind. He was not, it is true, more kind, more benevolent, more upright than before; but those virtues now emanated from principle, not emotion: and principle to the mind is what a free constitution is to a people; without that principle or that free constitution, the one may be for the moment as good, the other as happy; but we cannot tell how long the goodness and the happiness will continue.

On leaving the University, his father sent for him to London. He stayed there a short time, and mingled partially in its festivities; but the pleasures of English dissipation have for a century been the same, heartless without gayety, and dull without refinement. Nor could Mordaunt, the most fastidious, yet warm-hearted of human beings, reconcile either his tastes or his affections to the cold insipidities of patrician society. His father’s habits and evident distresses deepened his disgust to his situation; for the habits were incurable and the distresses increasing; and nothing but a circumstance which Mordaunt did not then understand prevented the final sale of an estate already little better than a pompous incumbrance.

It was therefore with the half painful, half pleasurable sensation with which we avoid contemplating a ruin we cannot prevent that Mordaunt set out upon that Continental tour deemed then so necessary a part of education. His father, on taking leave of him, seemed deeply affected. “Go, my son,” said he, “may God bless you, and not punish me too severely. I have wronged you deeply, and I cannot bear to look upon your face.”

To these words Algernon attached a general, but they cloaked a peculiar, meaning: in three years, he returned to England; his father had been dead some months, and the signification of his parting address was already deciphered,—but of this hereafter.

In his travels Mordaunt encountered an Englishman whose name I will not yet mention: a person of great reputed wealth; a merchant, yet a man of pleasure; a voluptuary in life, yet a saint in reputation; or, to abstain from the antithetical analysis of a character which will not be corporeally presented to the reader till our tale is considerably advanced, one who drew from nature a singular combination of shrewd but false conclusions, and a peculiar philosophy, destined hereafter to contrast the colours and prove the practical utility of that which was espoused by Mordaunt.

There can be no education in which the lessons of the world do not form a share. Experience, in expanding Algernon's powers, had ripened his virtues. Nor had the years which had converted knowledge into wisdom failed in imparting polish to refinement. His person had acquired a greater grace, and his manners an easier dignity than before. His noble and generous mind had worked its impress upon his features and his mien; and those who could overcome the first coldness and shrinking hauteur of his address found it required no minute examination to discover the real expression of the eloquent eye and the kindling lip.

He had not been long returned before he found two enemies to his tranquillity,—the one was love, the other appeared in the more formidable guise of a claimant to his estate. Before Algernon was aware of the nature of the latter he went to consult with his lawyer.

"If the claim be just, I shall not, of course, proceed to law," said Mordaunt.

"But without the estate, sir, you have nothing!"

"True," said Algernon, calmly.

But the claim was not just, and to law he went.

In this lawsuit, however, he had one assistant in an old relation, who had seen, indeed, but very little of him, but who compassionated his circumstances, and above all hated his opponent. This relation was rich and childless; and there were not wanting those who predicted that his money would ultimately discharge the mortgages and repair the house of the young representative of the Mordaunt honours. But the old kinsman was obstinate, self-willed, and under the absolute dominion of patrician pride; and it was by no means improbable that the independence of Mordaunt's character would soon create a disunion between them, by clashing against the peculiarities of his relation's temper.

It was a clear and sunny morning when Linden, tolerably recovered of his hurt, set out upon a sober and aged pony, which after some natural pangs of shame he had hired of his landlord, to Mordaunt Court.

Mordaunt's house was situated in the midst of a wild and extensive park, surrounded with woods, and interspersed with trees of the stateliest growth, now scattered into irregular groups, now marshalled into sweeping avenues; while, ever and anon, Linden caught glimpses of a rapid and brawling rivulet, which in many a slight but sounding waterfall gave a music strange and spirit-like to the thick copses and forest glades through which it went exulting on its way. The deer lay half concealed by the fern among which they couched, turning their stately crests towards the stranger, but not stirring from their rest; while from the summit of beeches which would have shamed the pavilion of Tityrus the rooks—those monks of the feathered people—were loud in their confused but not displeasing confabulations.

As Linden approached the house, he was struck with the melancholy air of desolation which spread over and around it: fragments of stone, above which clomb the rank weed, insolently proclaiming the triumph of Nature's meanest offspring over the wrecks of art; a moat dried up; a railing once of massive gilding, intended to fence a lofty terrace on the right from the incursions of the deer, but which, shattered and decayed, now seemed to ask with the satirist,—

"To what end did our lavish ancestors

Erect of old these stately piles of ours?”

—a chapel on the left, perfectly in ruins,—all appeared strikingly to denote that time had outstripped fortune, and that the years, which alike hallow and destroy, had broken the consequence, in deepening the antiquity, of the House of Mordaunt.

The building itself agreed but too well with the tokens of decay around it; most of the windows were shut up, and the shutters of dark oak, richly gilt, contrasted forcibly with the shattered panes and mouldered framing of the glass. It was a house of irregular architecture. Originally built in the fifteenth century, it had received its last improvement, with the most lavish expense, during the reign of Anne; and it united the Gallic magnificence of the latter period with the strength and grandeur of the former; it was in a great part overgrown with ivy, and, where that insidious ornament had not reached, the signs of decay, and even ruin, were fully visible. The sun itself, bright and cheering as it shone over Nature, making the green sod glow like emeralds, and the rivulet flash in its beam, like one of those streams of real light, imagined by Swedenborg in his visions of heaven, and clothing tree and fell, brake and hillock, with the lavish hues of infant summer,—the sun itself only made more desolate, because more conspicuous, the venerable fabric, which the youthful traveller frequently paused more accurately to survey, and its laughing and sportive beams playing over chink and crevice, seemed almost as insolent and untimeous as the mirth of the young mocking the silent grief of some gray-headed and solitary mourner.

Clarence had now reached the porch, and the sound of the shrill bell he touched rang with a strange note through the general stillness of the place. A single servant appeared, and ushered Clarence through a screen hall, hung round with relics of armour, and ornamented on the side opposite the music gallery with a solitary picture of gigantic size, and exhibiting the full length of the gaunt person and sable steed of that Sir Piers de Mordaunt who had so signalized himself in the field in which Henry of Richmond changed his coronet for a crown. Through this hall Clarence was led to a small chamber clothed with uncouth and tattered arras, in which, seemingly immersed in papers, he found the owner of the domain.

“Your studies,” said Linden, after the salutations of the day, “seem to harmonize with the venerable antiquity of your home;” and he pointed to the crabbed characters and faded ink of the papers on the table.

“So they ought,” answered Mordaunt, with a faint smile; “for they are called from their quiet archives in order to support my struggle for that home. But I fear the struggle is in vain, and that the quibbles of law will transfer into other hands a possession I am foolish enough to value the more from my inability to maintain it.”

Something of this Clarence had before learned from the communicative gossip of his landlady; and less desirous to satisfy his curiosity than to lead the conversation from a topic which he felt must be so unwelcome to Mordaunt, he expressed a wish to see the state apartments of the house. With something of shame at the neglect they had necessarily experienced, and something of pride at the splendour which no neglect could efface, Mordaunt yielded to the request, and led the way up a staircase of black oak, the walls and ceiling of which were covered with frescoes of Italian art, to a suite of apartments in which time and dust seemed the only tenants. Lingeringly did Clarence gaze upon the rich velvet, the costly mirrors, the motley paintings of a hundred ancestors, and the antique cabinets, containing, among the most hoarded relics of the Mordaunt race, curiosities which the hereditary enthusiasm of a line of cavaliers had treasured as the most sacred of heirlooms, and which, even to the philosophical mind of Mordaunt, possessed a value he did not seek too minutely to analyze. Here was the goblet from which the first prince of Tudor had drunk after the field of Bosworth. Here the ring with which the chivalrous Francis the First had rewarded a signal feat of that famous Robert de Mordaunt, who, as a poor but adventurous cadet of the house, had brought to the “first gentleman of France” the assistance of his sword. Here was the glove which Sir Walter had

received from the royal hand of Elizabeth, and worn in the lists upon a crest which the lance of no antagonist in that knightly court could abase. And here, more sacred than all, because connected with the memory of misfortune, was a small box of silver which the last king of a fated line had placed in the hands of the gray-headed descendant of that Sir Walter after the battle of the Boyne, saying, "Keep this, Sir Everard Mordaunt, for the sake of one who has purchased the luxury of gratitude at the price of a throne!"

As Clarence glanced from these relics to the figure of Mordaunt, who stood at a little distance leaning against the window, with arms folded on his breast and with eyes abstractedly wandering over the noble woods and extended park, which spread below, he could not but feel that if birth had indeed the power of setting its seal upon the form, it was never more conspicuous than in the broad front and lofty air of the last descendant of the race by whose memorials he was surrounded. Touched by the fallen fortunes of Mordaunt, and interested by the uncertainty which the chances of law threw over his future fate, Clarence could not resist exclaiming, with some warmth and abruptness,—

"And by what subterfuge or cavil does the present claimant of these estates hope to dislodge their rightful possessor?"

"Why," answered Mordaunt, "it is a long story in detail, but briefly told in epitome. My father was a man whose habits greatly exceeded his fortune, and a few months after his death, Mr. Vavasour, a distant relation, produced a paper, by which it appeared that my father had, for a certain sum of ready money, disposed of his estates to this Mr. Vavasour, upon condition that they should not be claimed nor the treaty divulged till after his death; the reason for this proviso seems to have been the shame my father felt for his exchange, and his fear of the censures of that world to which he was always devoted."

"But how unjust to you!" said Clarence.

"Not so much so as it seems," said Mordaunt, deprecatingly; "for I was then but a sickly boy, and according to the physicians, and I sincerely believe according also to my poor father's belief, almost certain of a premature death. In that case Vavasour would have been the nearest heir; and this expectancy, by the by, joined to the mortgages on the property, made the sum given ridiculously disproportioned to the value of the estate. I must confess that the news came upon me like a thunderbolt. I should have yielded up possession immediately, but was informed by my lawyers that my father had no legal right to dispose of the property; the discussion of that right forms the ground of the present lawsuit. But," continued Mordaunt, proudly, yet mournfully, "I am prepared for the worst; if, indeed, I should call that the worst which can affect neither intellect nor health nor character nor conscience."

Clarence was silent, and Mordaunt after a brief pause once more resumed his guidance. Their tour ended in a large library filled with books, and this Mordaunt informed his guest was his chosen sitting-room.

An old carved table was covered with works which for the most part possessed for the young mind of Clarence, more accustomed to imagine than reflect, but a very feeble attraction; on looking over them, he, however, found, half hid by a huge folio of Hobbes, and another of Locke, a volume of Milton's poems; this paved the way to a conversation in which both had an equal interest, for both were enthusiastic in the character and genius of that wonderful man, for whom "the divine and solemn countenance of Freedom" was dearer than the light of day, and whose solitary spell, accomplishing what the whole family of earth once vainly began upon the plain of Shinar, has built of materials more imperishable than "slime and brick" "a city and a tower whose summit has reached to heaven."

It was with mutual satisfaction that Mordaunt and his guest continued their commune till the hour of dinner was announced to them by a bell, which, formerly intended as an alarum, now served the peaceful purpose of a more agreeable summons.

The same servant who had admitted Clarence ushered them through the great hall into the dining-room, and was their solitary attendant during their repast.

The temper of Mordaunt was essentially grave and earnest, and his conversation almost invariably took the tone of his mind; this made their conference turn upon less minute and commonplace topics than one between such new acquaintances, especially of different ages, usually does.

"You will positively go to London to-morrow, then?" said Mordaunt, as the servant, removing the appurtenances of dinner, left them alone.

"Positively," answered Clarence. "I go there to carve my own fortunes, and, to say truth, I am impatient to begin." Mordaunt looked earnestly at the frank face of the speaker, and wondered that one so young, so well-educated, and, from his air and manner, evidently of gentle blood, should appear so utterly thrown upon his own resources.

"I wish you success," said he, after a pause; "and it is a noble part of the organization of this world that, by increasing those riches which are beyond fortune, we do in general take the surest method of obtaining those which are in its reach."

Clarence looked inquiringly at Mordaunt, who, perceiving it, continued, "I see that I should explain myself further. I will do so by using the thoughts of a mind not the least beautiful and accomplished which this country has produced. 'Of all which belongs to us,' said Bolingbroke, 'the least valuable parts can alone fall under the will of others. Whatever is best is safest; lies out of the reach of human power; can neither be given nor taken away. Such is this great and beautiful work of Nature, the world. Such is the mind of man, which contemplates and admires the world whereof it makes the noblest part. These are inseparably ours, and as long as we remain in one we shall enjoy the other.'"

"Beautiful, indeed!" exclaimed Clarence, with the enthusiasm of a young and pure heart, to which every loftier sentiment is always beautiful.

"And true as beautiful!" said Mordaunt. "Nor is this all, for the mind can even dispense with that world 'of which it forms a part' if we can create within it a world still more inaccessible to chance. But (and I now return to and explain my former observation) the means by which we can effect this peculiar world can be rendered equally subservient to our advancement and prosperity in that which we share in common with our race; for the riches which by the aid of wisdom we heap up in the storehouses of the mind are, though not the only, the most customary coin by which external prosperity is bought. So that the philosophy which can alone give independence to ourselves becomes; under the name of honesty, the best policy in commerce with our kind."

In conversation of this nature, which the sincerity and lofty enthusiasm of Mordaunt rendered interesting to Clarence, despite the distaste to the serious so ordinary to youth, the hours passed on, till the increasing evening warned Linden to depart.

"Adieu!" said he to Mordaunt. "I know not when we shall meet again, but if we ever do, I will make it my boast, whether in prosperity or misfortune, not to have forgotten the pleasure I have this day enjoyed!"

Returning his guest's farewell with a warmth unusual to his manner, Mordaunt followed him to the door and saw him depart.

Fate ordained that they should pursue in very different paths their several destinies; nor did it afford them an opportunity of meeting again, till years and events had severely tried the virtue of one and materially altered the prospects of the other.

The next morning Clarence Linden was on his road to London.

CHAPTER VII

"Upon my word," cries Jones, "thou art a very odd fellow, and I like thy humour extremely."—FIELDING.

The rumbling and jolting vehicle which conveyed Clarence to the metropolis stopped at the door of a tavern in Holborn. Linden was ushered into a close coffee-room and presented with a bill of fare. While he was deliberating between the respective merits of mutton chops and beefsteaks, a man with a brown coat, brown breeches, and a brown wig, walked into the room; he cast a curious glance at Clarence and then turned to the waiter.

"A pair of slippers!"

"Yes, sir," and the waiter disappeared.

"I suppose," said the brown gentleman to Clarence, "I suppose, sir, you are the gentleman just come to town?"

"You are right, sir," said Clarence.

"Very well, very well indeed," resumed the stranger, musingly. "I took the liberty of looking at your boxes in the passage; I knew a lady, sir, a relation of yours, I think."

"Sir!" exclaimed Linden, colouring violently.

"At least I suppose, for her name was just the same as yours, only, at least, one letter difference between them: yours is Linden I see, sir; hers was Minden. Am I right in my conjecture that you are related to her?"

"Sir," answered Clarence, gravely, "notwithstanding the similarity of our names, we are not related."

"Very extraordinary," replied the stranger.

"Very," repeated Linden.

"I had the honour, sir," said the brown gentleman, "to make Mrs. Minden many presents of value, and I should have been very happy to have obliged you in the same manner, had you been in any way connected with that worthy gentlewoman."

"You are very kind," said Linden, "you are very kind; and since such were your intentions, I believe I must have been connected with Mrs. Minden. At all events, as you justly observe, there is only the difference of a letter between our names, a discrepancy too slight, I am sure, to alter your benevolent intentions."

Here the waiter returned with the slippers.

The stranger slowly unbuttoned his gaiters. "Sir," said he to Linden, "we will renew our conversation presently."

No sooner had the generous friend of Mrs. Minden deposited his feet in their easy tenements than he quitted the room. "Pray," said Linden to the waiter, when he had ordered his simple repast, "who is that gentleman in brown?"

"Mr. Brown," replied the waiter.

"And who or what is Mr. Brown?" asked our hero.

Before the waiter could reply, Mr. Brown returned, with a large bandbox, carefully enveloped in a blue handkerchief. "You come from ——, sir?" said Mr. Brown, quietly seating himself at the same table as Linden.

"No, sir, I do not."

"From ——, then?"

"No, sir,—from W——."

"W——?—ay—well. I knew a lady with a name very like W—— (the late Lady Waddilove) extremely well. I made her some valuable presents: her ladyship was very sensible of it."

"I don't doubt it, sir," replied Clarence; "such instances of general beneficence rarely occur!"

"I have some magnificent relics of her ladyship in this box," returned Mr. Brown.

"Really! then she was no less generous than yourself, I presume?"

"Yes, her ladyship was remarkably generous. About a week before she died (the late Lady Waddilove was quite sensible of her danger), she called me to her,—'Brown,' said she, 'you are a good creature; I have had my most valuable things from you. I am not ungrateful: I will leave you —my maid! She is as clever as you are and as good.' I took the hint, sir, and married. It was an excellent bargain. My wife is a charming woman; she entirely fitted up Mrs. Minden's wardrobe and I furnished the house. Mrs. Minden was greatly indebted to us."

"Heaven help me!" thought Clarence, "the man is certainly mad."

The waiter entered with the dinner; and Mr. Brown, who seemed to have a delicate aversion to any conversation in the presence of the Ganymede of the Holborn tavern, immediately ceased his communications; meanwhile, Clarence took the opportunity to survey him more minutely than he had hitherto done.

His new acquaintance was in age about forty-eight; in stature, rather under the middle height; and thin, dried, withered, yet muscular withal, like a man who, in stinting his stomach for the sake of economy, does not the less enjoy the power of undergoing any fatigue or exertion that an object of adequate importance may demand. We have said already that he was attired, like twilight, "in a suit of sober brown;" and there was a formality, a precision, and a cat-like sort of cleanliness in his garb, which savoured strongly of the respectable coxcombry of the counting-house. His face was lean, it is true, but not emaciated; and his complexion, sallow and adust, harmonized well with the colours of his clothing. An eye of the darkest hazel, sharp, shrewd, and flashing at times, especially at the mention of the euphonious name of Lady Waddilove,—a name frequently upon the lips of the inheritor of her abigail,—with a fire that might be called brilliant, was of that modest species which can seldom encounter the straightforward glance of another; on the contrary, it seemed restlessly uneasy in any settled place, and wandered from ceiling to floor, and corner to corner, with an inquisitive though apparently careless glance, as if seeking for something to admire or haply to appropriate; it also seemed to be the especial care of Mr. Brown to veil, as far as he was able, the vivacity of his looks beneath an expression of open and unheeding good-nature, an expression strangely enough contrasting with the closeness and sagacity which Nature had indelibly stamped upon features pointed, aquiline, and impressed with a strong mixture of the Judaical physiognomy. The manner and bearing of this gentleman partook of the same undecided character as his countenance: they seemed to be struggling between civility and importance; a real eagerness to make the acquaintance of the person he addressed, and an assumed recklessness of the advantages which that acquaintance could bestow; —it was like the behaviour of a man who is desirous of having the best possible motives imputed to him, but is fearful lest that desire should not be utterly fulfilled. At the first glance you would have pledged yourself for his respectability; at the second, you would have half suspected him to be a rogue; and, after you had been half an hour in his company, you would confess yourself in the obscurest doubt which was the better guess, the first or the last.

"Waiter!" said Mr. Brown, looking enviously at the viands upon which Linden, having satisfied his curiosity, was now with all the appetite of youth regaling himself. "Waiter!"

"Yes, sir!"

"Bring me a sandwich—and—and, waiter, see that I have plenty of—plenty of—"

"What, sir?"

"Plenty of mustard, waiter."

"Mustard" (and here Mr. Brown addressed himself to Clarence) "is a very wonderful assistance to the digestion. By the by, sir, if you want any curiously fine mustard, I can procure you some pots quite capital,—a great favour, though,—they were smuggled from France, especially for the use of the late Lady Waddilove."

"Thank you," said Linden, dryly; "I shall be very happy to accept anything you may wish to offer me."

Mr. Brown took a pocket-book from his pouch. "Six pots of mustard, sir,—shall I say six?"

"As many as you please," replied Clarence; and Mr. Brown wrote down "Six pots of French mustard."

"You are a very young gentleman, sir," said Mr. Brown, "probably intended for some profession: I don't mean to be impertinent, but if I can be of any assistance—"

"You can, sir," replied Linden, "and immediately—have the kindness to ring the bell."

Mr. Brown, with a grave smile, did as he was desired; the waiter re-entered, and, receiving a whispered order from Clarence, again disappeared.

"What profession did you say, sir?" renewed Mr. Brown, artfully.

"None!" replied Linden.

"Oh, very well,—very well indeed. Then as an idle, independent gentleman, you will of course be a bit of a beau; want some shirts, possibly; fine cravats, too; gentlemen wear a particular pattern now; gloves, gold, or shall I say gilt chain, watch and seals, a ring or two, and a snuff-box?"

"Sir, you are vastly obliging," said Clarence, in undisguised surprise.

"Not at all, I would do anything for a relation of Mrs. Minden."

The waiter re-entered; "Sir," said he to Linden, "your room is quite ready."

"I am glad to hear it," said Clarence, rising. "Mr. Brown, I have the honour of wishing you a good evening."

"Stay, sir—stay; you have not looked into these things belonging to the late Lady Waddilove."

"Another time," said Clarence, hastily.

"To-morrow, at ten o'clock," muttered Mr. Brown.

"I am exceedingly glad I have got rid of that fellow," said Linden to himself, as he stretched his limbs in his easy-chair, and drank off the last glass of his pint of port. "If I have not already seen, I have already guessed, enough of the world, to know that you are to look to your pockets when a man offers you a present; they who 'give,' also 'take away.' So here I am in London, with an order for 1000 pounds in my purse, the wisdom of Dr. Latinas in my head, and the health of eighteen in my veins; will it not be my own fault if I do not both enjoy and make myself—"

And then, yielding to meditations of future success, partaking strongly of the inexperienced and sanguine temperament of the soliloquist, Clarence passed the hours till his pillow summoned him to dreams no less ardent and perhaps no less unreal.

CHAPTER VIII

"Oh, how I long to be employed!"
—Every Man in his Humour.

Clarence was sitting the next morning over the very unsatisfactory breakfast which tea made out of broomsticks, and cream out of chalk (adulteration thrived even in 17—) afforded, when the waiter threw open the door and announced Mr. Brown.

"Just in time, sir, you perceive," said Mr. Brown; "I am punctuality itself: exactly a quarter of a minute to ten. I have brought you the pots of French mustard, and I have some very valuable articles which you must want, besides."

"Thank you, sir," said Linden, not well knowing what to say; and Mr. Brown, untying a silk handkerchief, produced three shirts, two pots of pomatum, a tobacco canister with a German pipe, four pair of silk stockings, two gold seals, three rings, and a stuffed parrot!

"Beautiful articles these, sir," said Mr. Brown, with a snuffle "of inward sweetness long drawn out," and expressive of great admiration of his offered treasures; "beautiful articles, sir, ar'n't they?"

"Very, the parrot in particular," said Clarence.

"Yes, sir," returned Mr. Brown, "the parrot is indeed quite a jewel; it belonged to the late Lady Waddilove; I offer it to you with considerable regret, for—"

"Oh!" interrupted Clarence, "pray do not rob yourself of such a jewel; it really is of no use to me."

"I know that, sir,—I know that," replied Mr. Brown; "but it will be of use to your friends; it will be inestimable to any old aunt, sir, any maiden lady living at Hackney, any curious elderly gentleman fond of a knack-knack. I knew you would know some one to send it to as a present, even though you should not want it yourself."

"Bless me!" thought Linden, "was there ever such generosity? Not content with providing for my wants, he extends his liberality even to any possible relations I may possess!"

Mr. Brown now re-tied "the beautiful articles" in his handkerchief. "Shall I leave them, sir?" said he.

"Why, really," said Clarence, "I thought yesterday that you were in jest; but you must be aware that I cannot accept presents from any gentleman so much,—so much a stranger to me as you are."

"No, sir, I am aware of that," replied Mr. Brown; "and in order to remove the unpleasantness of such a feeling, sir, on your part,—merely in order to do that, I assure you with no other view, sir, in the world,—I have just noted down the articles on this piece of paper; but as you will perceive, at a price so low as still to make them actually presents in everything but the name. Oh, sir, I perfectly understand your delicacy, and would not for the world violate it."

So saying, Mr. Brown put a paper into Linden's hands, the substance of which a very little more experience of the world would have enabled Clarence to foresee; it ran thus:—

CLARENCE LINDEN, ESQ., DR.
TO Mr. MORRIS BROWN.

	l.	s.	d.
To Six Pots of French Mustard.....	1	4	0
To Three Superfine Holland Shirts, with Cambric Bosoms, Complete.....	4	1	0
To Two Pots of Superior French Pomatum.....	0	10	0
To a Tobacco Canister of enamelled Tin, with a finely			

Executed Head of the Pretender; slight flaw in the same. 0 12 6
To a German Pipe, second hand, as good as new, belonging to the late Lady Waddilove..... 1 18 0
To Four Pair of Black Silk Hose, ditto, belonging to her Ladyship's Husband..... 2 8 0
To Two Superfine Embossed Gold Watch Seals, with a Classical Motto and Device to each, namely, Mouse Trap, and "Prenez Garde," to one, and "Who the devil can this be from?" [One would not have thought these ingenious devices had been of so ancient a date as the year 17—.] to the other..... 1 1 0
To a remarkably fine Antique Ring, having the head of a Monkey..... 0 16 6
A ditto, with blue stones..... 0 12 6
A ditto, with green ditto..... 0 12 6
A Stuffed Green Parrot, a remarkable favourite of the late Lady W..... 2 2 0

Sum Total..... 15 18 0
Deduction for Ready Money..... 0 13 6

15 4 6
Mr. Brown's Profits for Brokerage..... 1 10 0

Sum Total..... 16 14 6
Received of Clarence Linden, Esq., this day of 17—.

It would have been no unamusing study to watch the expression of Clarence's face as it lengthened over each article until he had reached the final conclusion. He then carefully folded up the paper, restored it to Mr. Brown, with a low bow, and said, "Excuse me, sir, I will not take advantage of your generosity; keep your parrot and other treasures for some more worthy person. I cannot accept of what you are pleased to term your very valuable presents!"

"Oh, very well, very well," said Mr. Brown, pocketing the paper, and seeming perfectly unconcerned at the termination of his proposals; "perhaps I can serve you in some other way?"

"In none, I thank you," replied Linden.

"Just consider, sir!—you will want lodgings; I can find them for you cheaper than you can yourself; or perhaps you would prefer going into a nice, quiet, genteel family where you can have both board and lodging, and be treated in every way as the pet child of the master?"

A thought crossed Linden's mind. He was going to stay in town some time; he was ignorant of its ways; he had neither friends nor relations, at least none whom he could visit and consult; moreover, hotels, he knew, were expensive; lodgings, though cheaper, might, if tolerably comfortable, greatly exceed the sum prudence would allow him to expend would not this plan proposed by Mr. Brown, of going into a "nice quiet genteel family," he the most advisable one he could adopt? The generous benefactor of the late and ever-to-be-remembered Lady Waddilove perceived his advantage, and making the most of Clarence's hesitation, continued,—

"I know of a charming little abode, sir, situated in the suburbs of London, quite rus in urbe, as the scholars say; you can have a delightful little back parlour, looking out upon the garden, and all to yourself, I dare say."

"And pray, Mr. Brown," interrupted Linden, "what price do you think would be demanded for such enviable accommodation? If you offer me them as 'a present,' I shall have nothing to say to them."

"Oh, sir," answered Mr. Brown, "the price will be a trifle,—a mere trifle; but I will inquire, and let you know the exact sum in the course of the day: all they want is a respectable gentlemanlike lodger; and I am sure so near a relation of Mrs. Minden will upon my recommendation be received with avidity. Then you won't have any of these valuable articles, sir? You'll repent it, sir; take my word for it—hem!

"Since," replied Clarence, dryly, "your word appears of so much more value than your articles, pardon me, if I prefer taking the former instead of the latter."

Mr. Brown forced a smile,—"Well, sir, very well, very well indeed. You will not go out before two o'clock? and at that time I shall call upon you respecting the commission you have favoured me with."

"I will await you," said Clarence; and he bowed Mr. Brown out of the room.

"Now, really," said Linden to himself, as he paced the narrow limits of his apartment, "I do not see what better plan I can pursue; but let me well consider what is my ultimate object. A high step in the world's ladder! how is this to be obtained? First, by the regular method of professions; but what profession should I adopt? The Church is incompatible with my object, the army and navy with my means. Next come the irregular methods of adventure and enterprise, such as marriage with a fortune,"—here he paused and looked at the glass,—"the speculation of a political pamphlet, or an ode to the minister; attendance on some dying miser of my own name, without a relation in the world; or, in short, any other mode of making money that may decently offer itself. Now, situated as I am, without a friend in this great city, I might as well purchase my experience at as cheap a rate and in as brief a time as possible, nor do I see any plan of doing so more promising than that proposed by Mr. Brown."

These and such like reflections, joined to the inspiriting pages of the "Newgate Calendar" and "The Covent Garden Magazine," two works which Clarence dragged from their concealment under a black tea-tray, afforded him ample occupation till the hour of two, punctual to which time Mr. Morris Brown returned.

"Well, sir," said Clarence, "what is your report?"

The friend of the late Lady W. wiped his brow and gave three long sighs before he replied: "A long walk, sir—a very long walk I have had; but I have succeeded. No thanks, sir,—no thanks, —the lady, a most charming, delightful, amiable woman, will receive you with pleasure; you will have the use of a back parlour (as I said) all the morning, and a beautiful little bedroom entirely to yourself; think of that, sir. You will have an egg for breakfast, and you will dine with the family at three o'clock: quite fashionable hours you see, sir."

"And the terms?" said Linden, impatiently.

"Why, sir," replied Mr. Brown, "the lady was too genteel to talk to me about them; you had better walk with me to her house and see if you cannot yourself agree with her."

"I will," said Clarence. "Will you wait here till I have dressed?"

Mr. Brown bowed his assent.

"I might as well," thought Clarence, as he ascended to his bedroom, "inquire into the character of this gentleman to whose good offices I am so rashly intrusting myself." He rang his bell; the chambermaid appeared, and was dismissed for the waiter. The character was soon asked, and soon given. For our reader's sake we will somewhat enlarge upon it.

Mr. Morris Brown originally came into the world with the simple appellation of Moses, a name which his father—honest man—had, as the Minories can still testify, honourably borne before him. Scarcely, however, had the little Moses attained the age of five, when his father, for causes best known to himself, became a Christian. Somehow or other there is a most potent connection between

the purse and the conscience, and accordingly the blessings of Heaven descended in golden showers upon the proselyte. “I shall die worth a plum,” said Moses the elder (who had taken unto himself the Christian cognomen of Brown); “I shall die worth a plum,” repeated he, as he went one fine morning to speculate at the Exchange. A change of news, sharp and unexpected as a change of wind, lowered the stocks and blighted the plum. Mr. Brown was in the “Gazette” that week, and his wife in weeds for him the next. He left behind him, besides the said wife, several debts and his son Moses. Beggared by the former, our widow took a small shop in Wardour Street to support the latter. Patient, but enterprising—cautious of risking pounds, indefatigable in raising pence—the little Moses inherited the propensities of his Hebrew ancestors; and though not so capable as his immediate progenitor of making a fortune, he was at least far less likely to lose one. In spite, however, of all the industry both of mother and son, the gains of the shop were but scanty; to increase them capital was required, and all Mr. Moses Brown’s capital lay in his brain. “It is a bad foundation,” said the mother, with a sigh. “Not at all!” said the son, and leaving the shop, he turned broker. Now a broker is a man who makes an income out of other people’s funds,—a gleaner of stray extravagances; and by doing the public the honour of living upon them may fairly be termed a little sort of state minister in his way. What with haunting sales, hawking china, selling the curiosities of one old lady and purchasing the same for another, Mr. Brown managed to enjoy a very comfortable existence. Great pains and small gains will at last invert their antithesis, and make little trouble and great profit; so that by the time Mr. Brown had attained his fortieth year, the petty shop had become a large warehouse; and, if the worthy Moses, now christianized into Morris, was not so sanguine as his father in the gathering of plums, he had been at least as fortunate in the collecting of windfalls. To say truth, the abigail of the defunct Lady Waddilove had been no unprofitable helpmate to our broker. As ingenious as benevolent, she was the owner of certain rooms of great resort in the neighbourhood of St. James’s,—rooms where caps and appointments were made better than anywhere else, and where credit was given and character lost upon terms equally advantageous to the accommodating Mrs. Brown.

Meanwhile her husband, continuing through liking what he had begun through necessity, slackened not his industry in augmenting his fortune; on the contrary, small profits were but a keener incentive to large ones,—as the glutton only sharpened by luncheon his appetite for dinner. Still was Mr. Brown the very Alcibiades of brokers, the universal genius, suiting every man to his humour. Business of whatever description, from the purchase of a borough to that of a brooch, was alike the object of Mr. Brown’s most zealous pursuit: taverns, where country cousins put up; rustic habitations, where ancient maidens resided; auction or barter; city or hamlet,—all were the same to that enterprising spirit, which made out of every acquaintance—a commission! Sagacious and acute, Mr. Brown perceived the value of eccentricity in covering design, and found by experience that whatever can be laughed at as odd will be gravely considered as harmless. Several of the broker’s peculiarities were, therefore, more artificial than natural; and many were the sly bargains which he smuggled into effect under the comfortable cloak of singularity. No wonder, then, that the crafty Morris grew gradually in repute as a person of infinite utility and excellent qualifications; or that the penetrating friends of his deceased sire bowed to the thriving itinerant, with a respect which they denied to many in loftier professions and more general esteem.

CHAPTER IX

Trust me you have an exceeding fine lodging here,—very neat and private.—BEN JONSON.

It was a tolerably long walk to the abode of which the worthy broker spoke in such high terms of commendation. At length, at the suburbs towards Paddington, Mr. Brown stopped at a very small house; it stood rather retired from its surrounding neighbours, which were of a loftier and more pretending aspect than itself, and, in its awkward shape and pitiful bashfulness, looked exceedingly like a school-boy finding himself for the first time in a grown up party, and shrinking with all possible expedition into the obscurest corner he can discover. Passing through a sort of garden, in which a spot of grass lay in the embraces of a stripe of gravel, Mr. Brown knocked upon a very bright knocker at a very new door. The latter was opened, and a foot-boy appeared.

"Is Mrs. Copperas within?" asked the broker.

"Yees, sir," said the boy.

"Show this gentleman and myself up stairs," resumed Brown.

"Yees," reiterated the lackey.

Up a singularly narrow staircase, into a singularly diminutive drawing-room, Clarence and his guide were ushered. There, seated on a little chair by a little work-table, with one foot on a little stool and one hand on a little book, was a little—very little lady.

"This is the young gentleman," said Mr. Brown; and Clarence bowed low, in token of the introduction.

The lady returned the salutation with an affected bend, and said, in a mincing and grotesquely subdued tone, "You are desirous, sir, of entering into the bosom of my family. We possess accommodations of a most elegant description; accustomed to the genteelest circles, enjoying the pure breezes of the Highgate hills, and presenting to any guest we may receive the attractions of a home rather than of a lodging, you will find our retreat no less eligible than unique. You are, I presume, sir, in some profession, some city avocation—or—or trade?"

"I have the misfortune," said he, smiling, "to belong to no profession."

The lady looked hard at the speaker, and then at the broker. With certain people to belong to no profession is to be of no respectability.

"The most unexceptionable references will be givenmand required," resumed Mrs. Copperas.

"Certainly," said Mr. Brown, "certainly, the gentleman is a relation of Mrs. Minden, a very old customer of mine."

"In that case," said Mrs. Copperas, "the affair is settled;" and, rising, she rang the bell, and ordered the foot-boy, whom she addressed by the grandiloquent name of "De Warens" to show the gentleman the apartments. While Clarence was occupied in surveying the luxuries of a box at the top of the house, called a bed-chamber, which seemed just large and just hot enough for a chrysalis, and a corresponding box below, termed the back parlour, which would certainly not have been large enough for the said chrysalis when turned into a butterfly, Mr. Morris Brown, after duly, expatiating on the merits of Clarence, proceeded to speak of the terms; these were soon settled, for Clarence was yielding and the lady not above three times as extortionate as she ought to have been.

Before Linden left the house, the bargain was concluded. That night his trunks were removed to his new abode, and having with incredible difficulty been squeezed into the bedroom, Clarence surveyed them with the same astonishment with which the virtuoso beheld the flies in amber,—

"Not that the things were either rich or rare,
He wondered how the devil they got there!"

CHAPTER X

Such scenes had tempered with a pensive grace
The maiden lustre of that faultless face;
Had hung a sad and dreamlike spell upon
The gliding music of her silver tone,
And shaded the soft soul which loved to lie
In the deep pathos of that volumed eye.

—O'Neill; or, The Rebel.

The love thus kindled between them was of no common or calculating nature: it was vigorous and delicious, and at times so suddenly intense as to appear to their young hearts for a moment or so with almost an awful character.
—Inesilla.

The reader will figure to himself a small chamber, in a remote wing of a large and noble mansion. The walls were covered with sketches whose extreme delicacy of outline and colouring betrayed the sex of the artist; a few shelves filled with books supported vases of flowers. A harp stood neglected at the farther end of the room, and just above hung the slender prison of one of those golden wanderers from the Canary Isles which bear to our colder land some of the gentlest music of their skies and zephyrs. The window, reaching to the ground, was open, and looked, through the clusters of jessamine and honeysuckle which surrounded the low veranda, beyond upon thick and frequent copses of blossoming shrubs, redolent of spring and sparkling in the sunny tears of a May shower which had only just wept itself away. Embosomed in these little groves lay plots of flowers, girdled with turf as green as ever wooed the nightly dances of the fairies; and afar off, through one artful opening, the eye caught the glittering wanderings of water, on whose light and smiles the universal happiness of the young year seemed reflected.

But in that chamber, heedless of all around, and cold to the joy with which everything else, equally youthful, beautiful, and innocent, seemed breathing and inspired, sat a very young and lovely female. Her cheek leaned upon her hand, and large tears flowed fast and burningly over the small and delicate fingers. The comb that had confined her tresses lay at her feet, and the high dress which concealed her swelling breast had been loosened, to give vent to the suffocating and indignant throbbings which had rebelled against its cincture; all appeared to announce that bitterness of grief when the mind, as it were, wreaks its scorn upon the body in its contempt for external seemings, and to proclaim that the present more subdued and softened sorrow had only succeeded to a burst far less quiet and uncontrolled. Woe to those who eat the bread of dependence their tears are wrung from the inmost sources of the heart.

Isabel St. Leger was the only child of a captain in the army who died in her infancy; her mother had survived him but a few months; and to the reluctant care and cold affections of a distant and wealthy relation of the same name the warm-hearted and penniless orphan was consigned. Major-General Cornelius St. Leger, whose riches had been purchased in India at the price of his constitution, was of a temper as hot as his curries, and he wreaked it the more unsparingly on his ward, because the superior ill-temper of his maiden sister had prevented his giving vent to it upon her. That sister, Miss Diana St. Leger, was a meagre gentlewoman of about six feet high, with a loud voice and commanding aspect. Long in awe of her brother, she rejoiced at heart to find some one whom she had such right and reason to make in awe of herself; and from the age of four to that of seventeen Isabel suffered every insult and every degradation which could be inflicted upon her by the tyranny of her two protectors.

Her spirit, however, was far from being broken by the rude shocks it received; on the contrary, her mind, gentleness itself to the kind, rose indignantly against the unjust. It was true that the sense of wrong did not break forth audibly; for, though susceptible, Isabel was meek, and her pride was concealed by the outward softness and feminacy of her temper: but she stole away from those who had wounded her heart or trampled upon its feelings, and nourished with secret but passionate tears the memory of the harshness or injustice she had endured. Yet she was not vindictive: her resentment was a noble not a debasing feeling; once, when she was yet a child, Miss Diana was attacked with a fever of the most malignant and infectious kind; her brother loved himself far too well to risk his safety by attending her; the servants were too happy to wreak their hatred under the pretence of obeying their fears; they consequently followed the example of their master; and Miss Diana St. Leger might have gone down to her ancestors "unwept, unhonoured, and unsung," if Isabel had not volunteered and enforced her attendance. Hour after hour her fairy form flitted around the sick-chamber; or sat mute and breathless by the feverish bed; she had neither fear for contagion nor bitterness for past oppression; everything vanished beneath the one hope of serving, the one gratification of feeling herself, in the wide waste of creation, not utterly without use, as she had been hitherto without friends.

Miss St. Leger recovered. "For your recovery, in the first place," said the doctor, "you will thank Heaven; in the second, you will thank your young relation;" and for several days the convalescent did overwhelm the happy Isabel with her praises and caresses. But this change did not last long: the chaste Diana had been too spoiled by the prosperity of many years for the sickness of a single month to effect much good in her disposition. Her old habits were soon resumed; and though it is probable that her heart was in reality softened towards the poor Isabel, that softening by no means extended to her temper. In truth, the brother and sister were not without affection for one so beautiful and good, but they had been torturing slaves all their lives, and their affection was, and could be, but that of a taskmaster or a planter.

But Isabel was the only relation who ever appeared within their walls; and among the guests with whom the luxurious mansion was crowded, she passed no less for the heiress than the dependant; to her, therefore, was offered the homage of many lips and hearts, and if her pride was perpetually galled and her feelings insulted in private, her vanity (had that equalled her pride and her feelings in its susceptibility) would in no slight measure have recompensed her in public. Unhappily, however, her vanity was the least prominent quality she possessed; and the compliments of mercenary adulation were not more rejected by her heart than despised by her understanding.

Yet did she bear within her a deep fund of buried tenderness, and a mine of girlish and enthusiastic romance,—dangerous gifts to one so situated, which, while they gave to her secret moments of solitude a powerful but vague attraction, probably only prepared for her future years the snare which might betray them into error or the delusion which would colour them with regret.

Among those whom the ostentatious hospitality of General St. Leger attracted to his house was one of very different character and pretensions to the rest. Formed to be unpopular with the generality of men, the very qualities that made him so were those which principally fascinate the higher description of women of ancient birth, which rendered still more displeasing the pride and coldness of his mien; of talents peculiarly framed to attract interest as well as esteem; of a deep and somewhat morbid melancholy, which, while it turned from ordinary ties, inclined yearningly towards passionate affections; of a temper where romance was only concealed from the many to become more seductive to the few; unsocial, but benevolent; disliked, but respected; of the austerest demeanour, but of passions the most fervid, though the most carefully concealed,—this man united within himself all that repels the common mass of his species, and all that irresistibly wins and fascinates the rare and romantic few. To these qualities were added a carriage and bearing of that high and commanding order which men mistake for arrogance and pretension, and women overrate in proportion to its contrast to their own. Something of mystery there was in the commencement of the deep and eventful love which took place between this person and Isabel, which I have never been able to learn whatever

it was, it seemed to expedite and heighten the ordinary progress of love; and when in the dim twilight, beneath the first melancholy smile of the earliest star, their hearts opened audibly to each other, that confession had been made silently long since and registered in the inmost recesses of the soul.

But their passion, which began in prosperity, was soon darkened. Whether he took offence at the haughtiness of Isabel's lover, or whether he desired to retain about him an object which he could torment and tyrannize over, no sooner did the General discover the attachment of his young relation than he peremptorily forbade its indulgence, and assumed so insolent and overbearing an air towards the lover that the latter felt he could no longer repeat his visits to or even continue his acquaintance with the nabob.

To add to these adverse circumstances, a relation of the lover, from whom his expectations had been large, was so enraged, not only at the insult his cousin had received, but at the very idea of his forming an alliance with one in so dependent a situation and connected with such new blood as Isabel St. Leger, that, with that arrogance which relations, however distant, think themselves authorized to assume, he enjoined his cousin, upon pain of forfeiture of favour and fortune, to renounce all idea of so disparaging an alliance. The one thus addressed was not of a temper patiently to submit to such threats: he answered them with disdain; and the breach, so dangerous to his pecuniary interest, was already begun.

So far had the history of our lover proceeded at the time in which we have introduced Isabel to the reader, and described to him the chamber to which, in all her troubles and humiliations, she was accustomed to fly, as to a sad but still unviolated sanctuary of retreat.

The quiet of this asylum was first broken by a slight rustling among the leaves; but Isabel's back was turned towards the window, and in the engrossment of her feelings she heard it not. The thick copse that darkened the left side of the veranda was pierced, and a man passed within the covered space, and stood still and silent before the window, intently gazing upon the figure, which (though the face was turned from him) betrayed in its proportions that beauty which in his eyes had neither an equal nor a fault.

The figure of the stranger, though not very tall, was above the ordinary height, and gracefully rather than robustly formed. He was dressed in the darkest colours and the simplest fashion, which rendered yet more striking the nobleness of his mien, as well as the clear and almost delicate paleness of his complexion; his features were finely and accurately formed; and had not ill health, long travel, or severe thought deepened too much the lines of the countenance, and sharpened its contour, the classic perfection of those features would have rendered him undeniably and even eminently handsome. As it was, the paleness and the somewhat worn character of his face, joined to an expression at first glance rather haughty and repellent, made him lose in physical what he certainly gained in intellectual beauty. His eyes were large, deep, and melancholy, and had the hat which now hung over his brow been removed, it would have displayed a forehead of remarkable boldness and power.

Altogether, the face was cast in a rare and intellectual mould, and, if wanting in those more luxuriant attractions common to the age of the stranger, who could scarcely have attained his twenty-sixth year, it betokened, at least, that predominance of mind over body which in some eyes is the most requisite characteristic of masculine beauty.

With a soft and noiseless step, the stranger moved from his station without the window, and, entering the room, stole towards the spot on which Isabel was sitting. He leaned over her chair, and his eye rested upon his own picture, and a letter in his own writing, over which the tears of the young orphan flowed fast.

A moment more of agitated happiness for one, of unconscious and continued sadness for the other,—

"'T is past, her lover's at her feet."

And what indeed “was to them the world beside, with all its changes of time and tide”? Joy, hope, all blissful and bright sensations, lay mingled, like meeting waters, in one sunny stream of heartfelt and unfathomable enjoyment; but this passed away, and the remembrance of bitterness and evil succeeded.

“Oh, Algernon!” said Isabel, in a low voice, “is this your promise?”

“Believe me,” said Mordaunt, for it was indeed he, “I have struggled long with my feelings, but in vain; and for both our sakes, I rejoice at the conquest they obtained. I listened only to a deceitful delusion when I imagined I was obeying the dictates of reason. Ah, dearest, why should we part for the sake of dubious and distant evils, when the misery of absence is the most certain, the most unceasing evil we can endure?”

“For your sake, and therefore for mine!” interrupted Isabel, struggling with her tears. “I am a beggar and an outcast. You must not link your fate with mine. I could bear, Heaven knows how willingly, poverty and all its evils for you and with you; but I cannot bring them upon you.”

“Nor will you,” said Mordaunt, passionately, as he covered the hand he held with his burning kisses. “Have I not enough for both of us? It is my love, not poverty, that I beseech you to share.”

“No! Algernon, you cannot deceive me; your own estate will be torn from you by the law: if you marry me, your cousin will not assist you; I, you know too well, can command nothing; and I shall see you, for whom in my fond and bright dreams I have presaged everything great and exalted, buried in an obscurity from which your talents can never rise, and suffering the pangs of poverty and dependence and humiliation like my own; and—and—I—should be the wretch who caused you all. Never, Algernon, never!—I love you too—too well!”

But the effort which wrung forth the determination of the tone in which these words were uttered was too violent to endure; and, as the full desolation of her despair crowded fast and dark upon the orphan’s mind, she sank back upon her chair in very sickness of soul, nor heeded, in her unconscious misery, that her hand was yet clasped by her lover and that her head drooped upon his bosom.

“Isabel,” he said, in a low, sweet tone, which to her ear seemed the concentration of all earthly music,—“Isabel, look up,—my own, my beloved,—look up and hear me. Perhaps you say truly when you tell me that the possessions of my house shall melt away from me, and that my relation will not offer to me the precarious bounty which, even if he did offer, I would reject; but, dearest, are there not a thousand paths open to me,—the law, the state, the army?—you are silent, Isabel,—speak!”

Isabel did not reply, but the soft eyes which rested upon his told, in their despondency, how little her reason was satisfied by the arguments he urged.

“Besides,” he continued, “we know not yet whether the law may not decide in my favour: at all events years may pass before the judgment is given; those years make the prime and verdure of our lives; let us not waste them in mourning over blighted hopes and severed hearts; let us snatch what happiness is yet in our power, nor anticipate, while the heavens are still bright above us, the burden of the thunder or the cloud.”

Isabel was one of the least selfish and most devoted of human beings, yet she must be forgiven if at that moment her resolution faltered, and the overpowering thought of being in reality his forever flashed upon her mind. It passed from her the moment it was formed; and, rising from a situation in which the touch of that dear hand and the breath of those wooing lips endangered the virtue and weakened the strength of her resolves, she withdrew herself from his grasp, and while she averted her eyes, which dared not encounter his, she said in a low but firm voice,—

“It is in vain, Algernon; it is in vain. I can be to you nothing but a blight or burden, nothing but a source of privation and anguish. Think you that I will be this?—no, I will not darken your fair hopes and impede your reasonable ambition. Go (and here her voice faltered for a moment, but soon recovered its tone), go, Algernon, dear Algernon; and if my foolish heart will not ask you to think of me no more, I can at least implore you to think of me only as one who would die rather than cost

you a moment of that poverty and debasement, the bitterness of which she has felt herself, and who for that very reason tears herself away from you forever."

"Stay, Isabel, stay!" cried Mordaunt, as he caught hold of her robe, "give me but one word more, and you shall leave me. Say that if I can create for myself a new source of independence; if I can carve out a road where the ambition you erroneously impute to me can be gratified, as well as the more moderate wishes our station has made natural to us to form,—say, that if I do this, I may permit myself to hope,—say, that when I have done it, I may claim you as my own!"

Isabel paused, and turned once more her face towards his own. Her lips moved, and though the words died within her heart, yet Mordaunt read well their import in the blushing cheek and the heaving bosom, and the lips which one ray of hope and comfort was sufficient to kindle into smiles. He gazed, and all obstacles, all difficulties, disappeared; the gulf of time seemed passed, and he felt as if already he had earned and won his reward.

He approached her yet nearer; one kiss on those lips, one pressure of that thrilling hand, one long, last embrace of that shrinking and trembling form,—and then, as the door closed upon his view, he felt that the sunshine of Nature had passed away, and that in the midst of the laughing and peopled earth he stood in darkness and alone.

CHAPTER XI

He who would know mankind must be at home with all men.
STEPHEN MONTAGUE.

We left Clarence safely deposited in his little lodgings. Whether from the heat of his apartment or the restlessness a migration of beds produces in certain constitutions, his slumbers on the first night of his arrival were disturbed and brief. He rose early and descended to the parlour; Mr. de Warens, the nobly appellatived foot-boy, was laying the breakfast-cloth. From three painted shelves which constituted the library of "Copperas Bower," as its owners gracefully called their habitation, Clarence took down a book very prettily bound; it was "Poems by a Nobleman." No sooner had he read two pages than he did exactly what the reader would have done, and restored the volume respectfully to its place. He then drew his chair towards the window, and wistfully eyed sundry ancient nursery maids, who were leading their infant charges to the "fresh fields and pastures new" of what is now the Regent's Park.

In about an hour Mrs. Copperas descended, and mutual compliments were exchanged; to her succeeded Mr. Copperas, who was well scolded for his laziness: and to them, Master Adolphus Copperas, who was also chidingly termed a naughty darling for the same offence. Now then Mrs. Copperas prepared the tea, which she did in the approved method adopted by all ladies to whom economy is dearer than renown, namely, the least possible quantity of the soi-disant Chinese plant was first sprinkled by the least possible quantity of hot water; after this mixture had become as black and as bitter as it could possibly be without any adjunct from the apothecary's skill, it was suddenly drenched with a copious diffusion, and as suddenly poured forth—weak, washy, and abominable,—into four cups, severally appertaining unto the four partakers of the matutinal nectar.

Then the conversation began to flow. Mrs. Copperas was a fine lady, and a sentimentalist,—very observant of the little niceties of phrase and manner. Mr. Copperas was a stock-jobber and a wit,—loved a good hit in each capacity; was very round, very short, and very much like a John Dory; and saw in the features and mind of the little Copperas the exact representative of himself.

"Adolphus, my love," said Mrs. Copperas, "mind what I told you, and sit upright. Mr. Linden, will you allow me to cut you a leetle piece of this roll?"

"Thank you," said Clarence, "I will trouble you rather for the whole of it."

Conceive Mrs. Copperas's dismay! From that moment she saw herself eaten out of house and home; besides, as she afterwards observed to her friend Miss Barbara York, the "vulgarity of such an amazing appetite!"

"Any commands in the city, Mr. Linden?" asked the husband; "a coach will pass by our door in a few minutes,—must be on 'Change in half an hour. Come, my love, another cup of tea; make haste; I have scarcely a moment to take my fare for the inside, before coachee takes his for the outside. Ha! ha! ha! Mr. Linden."

"Lord, Mr. Copperas," said his helpmate, "how can you be so silly? setting such an example to your son, too; never mind him, Adolphus, my love; fie, child! a'n't you ashamed of yourself? never put the spoon in your cup till you have done tea: I must really send you to school to learn manners. We have a very pretty little collection of books here, Mr. Linden, if you would like to read an hour or two after breakfast,—child, take your hands out of your pockets,—all the best English classics I believe,—'Telemachus,' and Young's 'Night Thoughts,' and 'Joseph Andrews,' and the 'Spectator,' and Pope's Iliad, and Creech's Lucretius; but you will look over them yourself! This is Liberty Hall, as well as Copperas Bower, Mr. Linden!"

"Well, my love," said the stock-jobber, "I believe I must be off. Here Tom," Tom (Mr. de Warens had just entered the room with some more hot water, to weaken still further "the poor remains of what was once"—the tea!), "Tom, just run out and stop the coach; it will be by in five minutes."

"Have not I prayed and besought you, many and many a time, Mr. Copperas," said the lady, rebukingly, "not to call De Warens by his Christian name? Don't you know that all people in genteel life, who only keep one servant, invariably call him by his surname, as if he were the butler, you know?"

"Now, that is too good, my love," said Copperas. "I will call poor Tom by any surname you please, but I really can't pass him off for a butler! Ha—ha—ha—you must excuse me there, my love!"

"And pray, why not, Mr. Copperas? I have known many a butler bungle more at a cork than he does; and pray tell me who did you ever see wait better at dinner?"

"He wait at dinner, my love! it is not he who waits."

"Who then, Mr. Copperas?"

"Why we, my love; it's we who wait for dinner; but that's the cook's fault, not his."

"Pshaw! Mr. Copperas; Adolphus, my love, sit upright, darling."

Here De Warens cried from the bottom of the stairs,—"Measter, the coach be coming up."

"There won't be room for it to turn then," said the facetious Mr. Copperas, looking round the apartment as if he took the words literally.

"What coach is it, boy?"

Now that was not the age in which coaches scoured the city every half hour, and Mr. Copperas knew the name of the coach as well as he knew his own.

"It be the Swallow coach, sir."

"Oh, very well: then since I have swallowed in the roll, I will now roll in the Swallow—ha—ha—ha! Good-by, Mr. Linden."

No sooner had the witty stock-jobber left the room than Mrs. Copperas seemed to expand into a new existence. "My husband, sir," said she, apologetically, "is so odd, but he's an excellent sterling character; and that, you know, Mr. Linden, tells more in the bosom of a family than all the shining qualities which captivate the imagination. I am sure, Mr. Linden, that the moralist is right in admonishing us to prefer the gold to the tinsel. I have now been married some years, and every year seems happier than the last; but then, Mr. Linden, it is such a pleasure to contemplate the growing graces of the sweet pledge of our mutual love.—Adolphus, my dear, keep your feet still, and take your hands out of your pockets!"

A short pause ensued.

"We see a great deal of company," said Mrs. Copperas, pompously, "and of the very best description. Sometimes we are favoured by the society of the great Mr. Talbot, a gentleman of immense fortune and quite the courtier: he is, it is true, a little eccentric in his dress: but then he was a celebrated beau in his young days. He is our next neighbour; you can see his house out of the window, just across the garden—there! We have also, sometimes, our humble board graced by a very elegant friend of mine, Miss Barbara York, a lady of very high connections, her first cousin was a lord mayor.—Adolphus, my dear, what are you about? Well, Mr. Linden, you will find your retreat quite undisturbed; I must go about the household affairs; not that I do anything more than superintend, you know, sir; but I think no lady should be above consulting her husband's interests; that's what I call true old English conjugal affection. Come, Adolphus, my dear."

And Clarence was now alone. "I fear," thought he, "that I shall get on very indifferently with these people. But it will not do for me to be misanthropical, and (as Dr. Latinas was wont to say) the great merit of philosophy, when we cannot command circumstances, is to reconcile us to them."

CHAPTER XII

A retired beau is one of the most instructive spectacles in the world.
STEPHEN MONTAGUE.

It was quite true that Mrs. Copperas saw a great deal of company, for at a certain charge, upon certain days, any individual might have the honour of sharing her family repast; and many, of various callings, though chiefly in commercial life, met at her miscellaneous board. Clarence must, indeed, have been difficult to please, or obtuse of observation, if, in the variety of her guests, he had not found something either to interest or amuse him. Heavens! what a motley group were accustomed, twice in the week, to assemble there! the little dining-parlour seemed a human oven; and it must be owned that Clarence was no slight magnet of attraction to the female part of the guests. Mrs. Copperas's bosom friend in especial, the accomplished Miss Barbara York, darted the most tender glances on the handsome young stranger; but whether or not a nose remarkably prominent and long prevented the glances from taking full effect, it is certain that Clarence seldom repaid them with that affectionate ardour which Miss Barbara York had ventured to anticipate. The only persons indeed for whom he felt any sympathetic attraction were of the same sex as himself. The one was Mr. Talbot, the old gentleman whom Mrs. Copperas had described as the perfect courtier; the other, a young artist of the name of Warner. Talbot, to Clarence's great astonishment (for Mrs. Copperas's eulogy had prepared him for something eminently displeasing) was a man of birth, fortune, and manners peculiarly graceful and attractive. It is true, however, that, despite of his vicinity, and Mrs. Copperas's urgent solicitations, he very seldom honoured her with his company, and he always cautiously sent over his servant in the morning to inquire the names and number of her expected guests; nor was he ever known to share the plenteous board of the stock-jobber's lady whenever any other partaker of its dainties save Clarence and the young artist were present. The latter, the old gentleman really liked; and as for one truly well born and well bred there is no vulgarity except in the mind, the slender means, obscure birth, and struggling profession of Warner were circumstances which, as they increased the merit of a gentle manner and a fine mind, spoke rather in his favour than the reverse. Mr. Talbot was greatly struck by Clarence Linden's conversation and appearance; and indeed there was in Talbot's tastes so strong a bias to aristocratic externals that Clarence's air alone would have been sufficient to win the good graces of a man who had, perhaps, more than most courtiers of his time, cultivated the arts of manner and the secrets of address.

"You will call upon me soon?" said he to Clarence, when, after dining one day with the Copperases and their inmate, he rose to return home. And Clarence, delighted with the urbanity and liveliness of his new acquaintance, readily promised that he would.

Accordingly the next day Clarence called upon Mr. Talbot. The house, as Mrs. Copperas had before said, adjoined her own, and was only separated from it by a garden. It was a dull mansion of brick, which had disdained the frippery of paint and whitewashing, and had indeed been built many years previously to the erection of the modern habitations which surrounded it. It was, therefore, as a consequence of this priority of birth, more sombre than the rest, and had a peculiarly forlorn and solitary look. As Clarence approached the door, he was struck with the size of the house; it was of very considerable extent, and in the more favourable situations of London, would have passed for a very desirable and spacious tenement. An old man, whose accurate precision of dress bespoke the tastes of the master, opened the door, and after ushering Clarence through two long, and, to his surprise, almost splendidly furnished rooms, led him into a third, where, seated at a small writing-table, he found Mr. Talbot. That person, one whom Clarence then little thought would hereafter exercise no small influence over his fate, was of a figure and countenance well worthy the notice of a description.

His own hair, quite white, was carefully and artificially curled, and gave a Grecian cast to features whose original delicacy, and exact though small proportions, not even age could destroy. His eyes were large, black, and sparkled with almost youthful vivacity; and his mouth, which was the best feature he possessed, developed teeth white and even as rows of ivory. Though small and somewhat too slender in the proportions of his figure, nothing could exceed the ease and the grace of his motions and air; and his dress, though singularly rich in its materials, eccentric in its fashion, and from its evident study, unseemly to his years, served nevertheless to render rather venerable than ridiculous a mien which could almost have carried off any absurdity, and which the fashion of the garb peculiarly became. The tout ensemble was certainly that of a man who was still vain of his exterior, and conscious of its effect; and it was as certainly impossible to converse with Mr. Talbot for five minutes without merging every less respectful impression in the magical fascination of his manner.

"I thank you, Mr. Linden," said Talbot, rising, "for your accepting so readily an old man's invitation. If I have felt pleasure in discovering that we were to be neighbours, you may judge what that pleasure is to-day at finding you my visitor."

Clarence, who, to do him justice, was always ready at returning a fine speech, replied in a similar strain, and the conversation flowed on agreeably enough. There was more than a moderate collection of books in the room, and this circumstance led Clarence to allude to literary subjects; these Mr. Talbot took up with avidity, and touched with a light but graceful criticism upon many of the then modern and some of the older writers. He seemed delighted to find himself understood and appreciated by Clarence, and every moment of Linden's visit served to ripen their acquaintance into intimacy. At length they talked upon Copperas Bower and its inmates.

"You will find your host and hostess," said the gentleman, "certainly of a different order from the persons with whom it is easy to see you have associated; but, at your happy age, a year or two may be very well thrown away upon observing the manners and customs of those whom, in later life, you may often be called upon to conciliate or perhaps to control. That man will never be a perfect gentleman who lives only with gentlemen. To be a man of the world, we must view that world in every grade and in every perspective. In short, the most practical art of wisdom is that which extracts from things the very quality they least appear to possess; and the actor in the world, like the actor on the stage, should find 'a basket-hilted sword very convenient to carry milk in.' [See the witty inventory of a player's goods in the "Tatler."] As for me, I have survived my relations and friends. I cannot keep late hours, nor adhere to the unhealthy customs of good society; nor do I think that, to a man of my age and habits, any remuneration would adequately repay the sacrifice of health or comfort. I am, therefore, well content to sink into a hermitage in an obscure corner of this great town, and only occasionally to revive my 'past remembrances of higher state,' by admitting a few old acquaintances to drink my bachelor's tea and talk over the news of the day. Hence, you see, Mr. Linden, I pick up two or three novel anecdotes of state and scandal, and maintain my importance at Copperas Bower by retailing them second-hand. Now that you are one of the inmates of that abode, I shall be more frequently its guest. By the by, I will let you into a secret: know that I am somewhat a lover of the marvellous, and like to indulge a little embellishing exaggeration in any place where there is no chance of finding me out. Mind, therefore, my dear Mr. Linden, that you take no ungenerous advantage of this confession; but suffer me, now and then, to tell my stories my own way, even when you think truth would require me to tell them in another."

"Certainly," said Clarence, laughing; "let us make an agreement: you shall tell your stories as you please, if you will grant me the same liberty in paying my compliments; and if I laugh aloud at the stories, you shall promise me not to laugh aloud at the compliments."

"It is a bond," said Talbot; "and a very fit exchange of service it is. It will be a problem in human nature to see who has the best of it: you shall pay your court by flattering the people present, and I mine by abusing those absent. Now, in spite of your youth and curling locks, I will wager that I

succeed the best; for in vanity there is so great a mixture of envy that no compliment is like a judicious abuse: to enchant your acquaintance, ridicule his friends."

"Ah, sir," said Clarence, "this opinion of yours is, I trust, a little in the French school, where brilliancy is more studied than truth, and where an ill opinion of our species always has the merit of passing for profound."

Talbot smiled, and shook his head. "My dear young friend," said he, "it is quite right that you, who are coming into the world, should think well of it; and it is also quite right that I, who am going out of it, should console myself by trying to despise it. However, let me tell you, my young friend, that he whose opinion of mankind is not too elevated will always be the most benevolent, because the most indulgent, to those errors incidental to human imperfection: to place our nature in too flattering a view is only to court disappointment, and end in misanthropy. The man who sets out with expecting to find all his fellow-creatures heroes of virtue will conclude by condemning them as monsters of vice; and, on the contrary, the least exacting judge of actions will be the most lenient. If God, in His own perfection, did not see so many frailties in us, think you He would be so gracious to our virtues?"

"And yet," said Clarence, "we remark every day examples of the highest excellence."

"Yes," replied Talbot, "of the highest but not of the most constant excellence. He knows very little of the human heart who imagines we cannot do a good action; but, alas! he knows still less of it who supposes we can be always doing good actions. In exactly the same ratio we see every day the greatest crimes are committed; but we find no wretch so depraved as to be always committing crimes. Man cannot be perfect even in guilt."

In this manner Talbot and his young visitor conversed, till Clarence, after a stay of unwarrantable length, rose to depart.

"Well," said Talbot, "if we now rightly understand each other, we shall be the best friends in the world. As we shall expect great things from each other sometimes, we will have no scruple in exacting a heroic sacrifice every now and then; for instance, I will ask you to punish yourself by an occasional tete-a-tete with an ancient gentleman; and, as we can also by the same reasoning pardon great faults in each other, if they are not often committed, so I will forgive you, with all my heart, whenever you refuse my invitations, if you do not refuse them often. And now farewell till we meet again."

It seemed singular and almost unnatural to Linden that a man like Talbot, of birth, fortune, and great fastidiousness of taste and temper, should have formed any sort of acquaintance, however slight and distant, with the facetious stock-jobber and his wife; but the fact is easily explained by a reference to the vanity which we shall see hereafter made the ruling passion of Talbot's nature. This vanity, which branching forth into a thousand eccentricities, displayed itself in the singularity of his dress, the studied yet graceful warmth of his manner, his attention to the minutiae of life, his desire, craving and insatiate, to receive from every one, however insignificant, his obolus of admiration,— this vanity, once flattered by the obsequious homage it obtained from the wonder and reverence of the Copperases, reconciled his taste to the disgust it so frequently and necessarily conceived; and, having in great measure resigned his former acquaintance and wholly outlived his friends, he was contented to purchase the applause which had become to him a necessary of life at the humble market more immediately at his command.

There is no dilemma in which Vanity cannot find an expedient to develop its form, no stream of circumstances in which its buoyant and light nature will not rise to float upon the surface. And its ingenuity is as fertile as that of the player who (his wardrobe allowing him no other method of playing the fop) could still exhibit the prevalent passion for distinction by wearing stockings of different colours.

CHAPTER XIII

Who dares
Interpret then my life for me as 't were
One of the undistinguishable many?

COLERIDGE: Wallenstein.

The first time Clarence had observed the young artist, he had taken a deep interest in his appearance. Pale, thin, undersized, and slightly deformed, the sanctifying mind still shed over the humble frame a spell more powerful than beauty. Absent in manner, melancholy in air, and never conversing except upon subjects on which his imagination was excited, there was yet a gentleness about him which could not fail to conciliate and prepossess; nor did Clarence omit any opportunity to soften his reserve, and wind himself into his more intimate acquaintance. Warner, the only support of an aged and infirm grandmother (who had survived her immediate children), was distantly related to Mrs. Copperas; and that lady extended to him, with ostentatious benevolence, her favour and support. It is true that she did not impoverish the young Adolphus to enrich her kinsman, but she allowed him a seat at her hospitable board, whenever it was not otherwise filled; and all that she demanded in return was a picture of herself, another of Mr. Copperas, a third of Master Adolphus, a fourth of the black cat, and from time to time sundry other lesser productions of his genius, of which, through the agency of Mr. Brown, she secretly disposed at a price that sufficiently remunerated her for whatever havoc the slender appetite of the young painter was able to effect.

By this arrangement, Clarence had many opportunities of gaining that intimacy with Warner which had become to him an object; and though the painter, constitutionally diffident and shy, was at first averse to, and even awed by, the ease, boldness, fluent speech, and confident address of a man much younger than himself, yet at last he could not resist the being decoyed into familiarity; and the youthful pair gradually advanced from companionship into friendship. There was a striking contrast between the two: Clarence was bold and frank, Warner close and timid. Both had superior abilities; but the abilities of Clarence were for action, those of Warner for art: both were ambitious; but the ambition of Clarence was that of circumstances rather than character. Compelled to carve his own fortunes without sympathy or aid, he braced his mind to the effort, though naturally too gay for the austerity, and too genial for the selfishness of ambition. But the very essence of Warner's nature was the feverish desire of fame: it poured through his veins like lava; it preyed as a worm upon his cheek; it corroded his natural sleep; it blackened the colour of his thoughts; it shut out, as with an impenetrable wall, the wholesome energies and enjoyments and objects of living men; and, taking from him all the vividness of the present, all the tenderness of the past, constrained his heart to dwell forever and forever amidst the dim and shadowy chimeras of a future he was fated never to enjoy.

But these differences of character, so far from disturbing, rather cemented their friendship; and while Warner (notwithstanding his advantage of age) paid involuntary deference to the stronger character of Clarence, he, in his turn, derived that species of pleasure by which he was most gratified, from the affectionate and unenvious interest Clarence took in his speculations of future distinction, and the unwearying admiration with which he would sit by his side, and watch the colours start from the canvas, beneath the real though uncultured genius of the youthful painter.

Hitherto, Warner had bounded his attempts to some of the lesser efforts of the art; he had now yielded to the urgent enthusiasm of his nature, and conceived the plan of an historical picture. Oh! what sleepless nights, what struggles of the teeming fancy with the dense brain, what labours of the untiring thought wearing and intense as disease itself, did it cost the ambitious artist to work

out in the stillness of his soul, and from its confused and conflicting images, the design of this long meditated and idolized performance! But when it was designed; when shape upon shape grew and swelled, and glowed from the darkness of previous thought upon the painter's mind; when, shutting his eyes in the very credulity of delight, the whole work arose before him, glossy with its fresh hues, bright, completed, faultless, arrayed as it were, and decked out for immortality,—oh! then what a full and gushing moment of rapture broke like a released stream upon his soul! What a recompense for wasted years, health, and hope! What a coronal to the visions and transports of Genius: brief, it is true, but how steeped in the very halo of a light that might well be deemed the glory of heaven!

But the vision fades, the gorgeous shapes sweep on into darkness, and, waking from his revery, the artist sees before him only the dull walls of his narrow chamber; the canvas stretched a blank upon its frame; the works, maimed, crude, unfinished, of an inexperienced hand, lying idly around; and feels himself—himself, but one moment before the creator of a world of wonders, the master spirit of shapes glorious and majestical beyond the shapes of men—dashed down from his momentary height, and despoiled both of his sorcery and his throne.

It was just in such a moment that Warner, starting up, saw Linden (who had silently entered his room) standing motionless before him.

"Oh, Linden!" said the artist, "I have had so superb a dream,—a dream which, though I have before snatched some such vision by fits and glimpses, I never beheld so realized, so perfect as now; and—but you shall see, you shall judge for yourself; I will sketch out the design for you;" and, with a piece of chalk and a rapid hand, Warner conveyed to Linden the outline of his conception. His young friend was eager in his praise and his predictions of renown, and Warner listened to him with a fondness which spread over his pale cheek a richer flush than lover ever caught from the whispers of his beloved.

"Yes," said he, as he rose, and his sunken and small eye flashed out with a feverish brightness, "yes, if my hand does not fail my thought, it shall rival even—" Here the young painter stopped short, abashed at that indiscretion of enthusiasm about to utter to another the hoarded vanities hitherto locked in his heart of hearts as a sealed secret, almost from himself.

"But come," said Clarence, affectionately, "your hand is feverish and dry, and of late you have seemed more languid than you were wont,—come, Warner, you want exercise: it is a beautiful evening, and you shall explain your picture still further to me as we walk."

Accustomed to yield to Clarence, Warner mechanically and abstractedly obeyed; they walked out into the open streets.

"Look around us," said Warner, pausing, "look among this toiling and busy and sordid mass of beings who claim with us the fellowship of clay. The poor labour; the rich feast: the only distinction between them is that of the insect and the brute; like them they fulfil the same end and share the same oblivion; they die, a new race springs up, and the very grass upon their graves fades not so soon as their memory. Who that is conscious of a higher nature would not pine and fret himself away to be confounded with these? Who would not burn and sicken and parch with a delirious longing to divorce himself from so vile a herd? What have their petty pleasures and their mean aims to atone for the abasement of grinding down our spirits to their level? Is not the distinction from their blended and common name a sufficient recompense for all that ambition suffers or foregoes? Oh, for one brief hour (I ask no more) of living honour, one feeling of conscious, unfearing certainty that Fame has conquered Death! and then for this humble and impotent clay, this drag on the spirit which it does not assist but fetter, this wretched machine of pains and aches, and feverish throbbings, and vexed inquietudes, why, let the worms consume it, and the grave hide—for Fame there is no grave."

At that moment one of those unfortunate women who earn their polluted sustenance by becoming the hypocrites of passions abruptly accosted them.

"Miserable wretch!" said Warner, loathingly, as he pushed her aside; but Clarence, with a kindlier feeling, noticed that her haggard cheek was wet with tears, and that her frame, weak and

trembling, could scarcely support itself; he, therefore, with that promptitude of charity which gives ere it discriminates put some pecuniary assistance in her hand and joined his comrade.

"You would not have spoken so tauntingly to the poor girl had you remarked her distress," said Clarence.

"And why," said Warner, mournfully, "why be so cruel as to prolong, even for a few hours, an existence which mercy would only seek to bring nearer to the tomb? That unfortunate is but one of the herd, one of the victims to pleasures which debase by their progress and ruin by their end. Yet perhaps she is not worse than the usual followers of love,—of love, that passion the most worshipped, yet the least divine,—selfish and exacting,—drawing its aliment from destruction, and its very nature from tears."

"Nay," said Clarence, "you confound the two loves, the Eros and the Anteros; gods whom my good tutor was wont so sedulously to distinguish: you surely do not inveigh thus against all love?"

"I cry you mercy," said Warner, with something of sarcasm in his pensiveness of tone. "We must not dispute; so I will hold my peace: but make love all you will; what are the false smiles of a lip which a few years can blight as an autumn leaf? what the homage of a heart as feeble and mortal as your own? Why, I, with a few strokes of a little hair and an idle mixture of worthless colours, will create a beauty in whose mouth there shall be no hollowness, in whose lip there shall be no fading; there, in your admiration, you shall have no need of flattery and no fear of falsehood; you shall not be stung with jealousy nor maddened with treachery; nor watch with a breaking heart over the waning bloom, and departing health, till the grave open, and your perishable paradise is not. No: the mimic work is mightier than the original, for it outlasts it; your love cannot wither it, or your desertion destroy; your very death, as the being who called it into life, only stamps it with a holier value."

"And so then," said Clarence, "you would seriously relinquish, for the mute copy of the mere features, those affections which no painting can express?"

"Ay," said the painter, with an energy unusual to his quiet manner, and slightly wandering in his answer from Clarence's remark, "ay, one serves not two mistresses: mine is the glory of my art. Oh! what are the cold shapes of this tame earth, where the footsteps of the gods have vanished, and left no trace, the blemished forms, the debased brows, and the jarring features, to the glorious and gorgeous images which I can conjure up at my will? Away with human beauties, to him whose nights are haunted with the forms of angels and wanderers from the stars, the spirits of all things lovely and exalted in the universe: the universe as it was; when to fountain, and stream, and hill, and to every tree which the summer clothed, was allotted the vigil of a Nymph! when through glade, and by waterfall, at glossy noontide, or under the silver stars, the forms of Godhead and Spirit were seen to walk; when the sculptor modelled his mighty work from the beauty and strength of Heaven, and the poet lay in the shade to dream of the Naiad and the Faun, and the Olympian dwellers whom he walked in rapture to behold; and the painter, not as now, shaping from shadow and in solitude the dim glories of his heart, caught at once his inspiration from the glow of earth and its living wanderers, and, lo, the canvas breathed! Oh! what are the dull realities and the abortive offspring of this altered and humbled world —the world of meaner and dwarfish men—to him whose realms are peopled with visions like these?"

And the artist, whose ardour, long excited and pent within, had at last thus audibly, and to Clarence's astonishment, burst forth, paused, as if to recall himself from his wandering enthusiasm. Such moments of excitement were indeed rare with him, except when utterly alone, and even then, were almost invariably followed by that depression of spirit by which all over-wrought susceptibility is succeeded. A change came over his face, like that of a cloud when the sunbeam which gilded leaves it; and, with a slight sigh and a subdued tone, he resumed,—

"So, my friend, you see what our art can do even for the humblest professor, when I, a poor, friendless, patronless artist, can thus indulge myself by forgetting the present. But I have not yet explained to you the attitude of my principal figure;" and Warner proceeded once more to detail the particulars of his intended picture. It must be confessed that he had chosen a fine though an

arduous subject: it was the Trial of Charles the First; and as the painter, with the enthusiasm of his profession and the eloquence peculiar to himself, dwelt upon the various expressions of the various forms which that extraordinary judgment-court afforded, no wonder that Clarence forgot, with the artist himself, the disadvantages Warner had to encounter in the inexperience of an unregulated taste and an imperfect professional education.

CHAPTER XIV

All manners take a tincture from our own,
Or come discoloured through our passions shown.

—POPE.

What! give up liberty, property, and, as the Gazeteer says, lie down to be saddled with wooden shoes?—Vicar of Wakefield.

There was something in the melancholy and reflective character of Warner resembling that of Mordaunt; had they lived in these days perhaps both the artist and the philosopher had been poets. But (with regard to the latter) at that time poetry was not the customary vent for deep thought or passionate feeling. Gray, it is true, though unjustly condemned as artificial and meretricious in his style, had infused into the scanty works which he has bequeathed to immortality a pathos and a richness foreign to the literature of the age; and, subsequently, Goldsmith, in the affecting yet somewhat enervate simplicity of his verse, had obtained for Poetry a brief respite from a school at once declamatory and powerless, and led her forth for a "Sunshine Holiday" into the village green and under the hawthorn shade. But, though the softer and meeker feelings had struggled into a partial and occasional vent, those which partook more of passion and of thought, the deep, the wild, the fervid, were still without "the music of a voice." For the after century it was reserved to restore what we may be permitted to call the spirit of our national literature; to forsake the clinquant of the French mimickers of classic gold; to exchange a thrice-adulterated Hippocrene for the pure well of Shakspeare and of Nature; to clothe philosophy in the gorgeous and solemn majesty of appropriate music; and to invest passion with a language as burning as its thought and rapid as its impulse. At that time reflection found its natural channel in metaphysical inquiry or political speculation; both valuable, perhaps, but neither profound. It was a bold, and a free, and an inquisitive age, but not one in which thought ran over its set and stationary banks, and watered even the common flowers of verse: not one in which Lucretius could have embodied the dreams of Epicurus; Shakspeare lavished the mines of a superhuman wisdom upon his fairy palaces and enchanted isles; or the Beautifier [Wordsworth] of this common earth have called forth

"The motion of the spirit that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought;"

or Disappointment and Satiety have hallowed their human griefs by a pathos wrought from whatever is magnificent and grand and lovely in the unknown universe; or the speculations of a great but visionary mind [Shelley] have raised, upon subtlety and doubt, a vast and irregular pile of verse, full of dim-lighted cells, and winding galleries, in which what treasures lie concealed! That was an age in which poetry took one path and contemplation another; those who were addicted to the latter pursued it in its orthodox roads; and many, whom Nature, perhaps intended for poets, the wizard Custom converted into speculators or critics.

It was this which gave to Algernon's studies their peculiar hue; while, on the other hand, the taste for the fine arts which then universally prevailed, directed to the creations of painting, rather than those of poetry, more really congenial to his powers, the intense imagination and passion for glory which marked and pervaded the character of the artist.

But as we have seen that that passion for glory made the great characteristic difference between Clarence and Warner, so also did that passion terminate any resemblance which Warner bore to Algernon Mordaunt. With the former a rank and unwholesome plant, it grew up to the exclusion of all else; with the latter, subdued and regulated, it sheltered, not withered, the virtues by which it was surrounded. With Warner, ambition was a passionate desire to separate himself by fame from the herd of other men; with Mordaunt, to bind himself by charity yet closer to his kind: with the one, it produced a disgust to his species; with the other, a pity and a love: with the one, power was the badge of distinction; with the other, the means to bless! But our story lingers.

It was now the custom of Warner to spend the whole day at his work, and wander out with Clarence, when the evening darkened, to snatch a brief respite of exercise and air. Often, along the lighted and populous streets, would the two young and unfriended competitors for this world's high places roam with the various crowd, moralizing as they went or holding dim conjecture upon their destinies to be. And often would they linger beneath the portico of some house where, "haunted with great resort," Pleasure and Pomp held their nightly revels, to listen to the music that, through the open windows, stole over the rare exotics with which wealth mimics the southern scents, and floated, mellowing by distance, along the unworthy streets; and while they stood together, silent and each feeding upon separate thoughts, the artist's pale lip would curl with scorn, as he heard the laugh and the sounds of a frivolous and hollow mirth ring from the crowd within, and startle the air from the silver spell which music had laid upon it. "These," would he say to Clarence, "these are the dupes of the same fever as ourselves: like us, they strive and toil and vex their little lives for a distinction from their race. Ambition comes to them, as to all: but they throw for a different prize than we do; theirs is the honour of a day, ours is immortality; yet they take the same labour and are consumed by the same care. And, fools that they are, with their gilded names and their gaudy trappings, they would shrink in disdain from that comparison with us which we, with a juster fastidiousness, blush at this moment to acknowledge."

From these scenes they would rove on, and, both delighting in contrast, enter some squalid and obscure quarter of the city. There, one night, quiet observers of their kind, they paused beside a group congregated together by some common cause of obscene merriment or unholy fellowship—a group on which low vice had set her sordid and hideous stamp—to gaze and draw strange humours or a motley moral from that depth and ferment of human nature into whose sink the thousand streams of civilization had poured their dregs and offal.

"You survey these," said the painter, marking each with the curious eye of his profession: "they are a base horde, it is true; but they have their thirst of fame, their aspirations even in the abyss of crime or the loathsomeness of famished want. Down in yon cellar, where a farthing rushlight glimmers upon haggard cheeks, distorted with the idiotcy of drink; there, in that foul attic, from whose casement you see the beggar's rags hang to dry, or rather to crumble in the reeking and filthy air; farther on, within those walls which, black and heavy as the hearts they hide, close our miserable prospect,—there, even there, in the mildewed dungeon, in the felon's cell, on the very scaffold's self, Ambition hugs her own hope or scowls upon her own despair. Yes! the inmates of those walls had their perilous game of honour, their 'hazard of the die,' in which vice was triumph and infamy success. We do but share their passion, though we direct it to a better object."

Pausing for a moment, as his thoughts flowed into a somewhat different channel of his character, Warner continued, "We have now caught a glimpse of the two great divisions of mankind; they who riot in palaces, and they who make mirth hideous in rags and hovels: own that it is but a poor survey in either. Can we be contemptible with these or loathsome with those? Or rather have we not a nobler spark within us, which we have but to fan into a flame that shall burn forever, when these miserable meteors sink into the corruption from which they rise?"

"But," observed Clarence, "these are the two extremes; the pinnacle of civilization, too worn and bare for any more noble and vigorous fruit, and the base upon which the cloud descends in rain

and storm. Look to the central portion of society; there the soil is more genial, and its produce more rich."

"Is it so, in truth?" answered Warner; "pardon me, I believe not: the middling classes are as human as the rest. There is the region, the heart, of Avarice,—systematized, spreading, rotting, the very fungus and leprosy of social states; suspicion, craft, hypocrisy, servility to the great, oppression to the low, the waxlike mimicry of courtly vices, the hardness of flint to humble woes; thought, feeling, the faculties and impulses of man, all ulcered into one great canker, Gain,—these make the general character of the middling class, the unleavened mass of that mediocrity which it has been the wisdom of the shallow to applaud. Pah! we too are of this class, this potter's earth, this paltry mixture of mud and stone; but we, my friend, we will knead gold into our clay."

"But look," said Clarence, pointing to the group before them, "look, yon wretched mother, whose voice an instant ago uttered the coarsest accents of maudlin and intoxicated prostitution, is now fostering her infant, with a fondness stamped upon her worn cheek and hollow eye, which might shame the nice maternity of nobles; and there, too, yon wretch whom, in the reckless effrontery of hardened abandonment, we ourselves heard a few minutes since boast of his dexterity in theft, and openly exhibit its token,—look, he is now, with a Samaritan's own charity, giving the very goods for which his miserable life was risked to that attenuated and starving stripling! No, Warner, no! even this mass is not unleavened. The vilest infamy is not too deep for the Seraph Virtue to descend and illumine its abyss!"

"Out on the weak fools!" said the artist, bitterly: "it would be something, if they could be consistent even in crime!" and, placing his arm in Linden's, he drew him away.

As the picture grew beneath the painter's hand, Clarence was much struck with the outline and expression of countenance given to the regicide Bradshaw.

"They are but an imperfect copy of the living original from whom I have borrowed them," said Warner, in answer to Clarence's remark upon the sternness of the features. "But that original—a relation of mine, is coming here to-day: you shall see him."

While Warner was yet speaking, the person in question entered. His were, indeed, the form and face worthy to be seized by the painter. The peculiarity of his character made him affect a plainness of dress unusual to the day, and approaching to the simplicity, but not the neatness, of Quakerism. His hair—then, with all the better ranks, a principal object of cultivation—was wild, dishevelled, and, in wiry flakes of the sablest hue, rose abruptly from a forehead on which either thought or passion had written its annals with an iron pen; the lower part of the brow, which overhung the eye, was singularly sharp and prominent; while the lines, or rather furrows, traced under the eyes and nostrils, spoke somewhat of exhaustion and internal fatigue. But this expression was contrasted and contradicted by the firmly compressed lip; the lighted, steady, stern eye; the resolute and even stubborn front, joined to proportions strikingly athletic and a stature of uncommon height.

"Well, Wolfe," said the young painter to the person we have described, "it is indeed a kindness to give me a second sitting."

"Tusk, boy!" answered Wolfe, "all men have their vain points, and I own that I am not ill pleased that these rugged features should be assigned, even in fancy, to one of the noblest of those men who judged the mightiest cause in which a country was ever plaintiff, a tyrant criminal, and a world witness!" While Wolfe was yet speaking his countenance, so naturally harsh, took a yet sterner aspect, and the artist, by a happy touch, succeeded in transferring it to the canvas.

"But, after all," continued Wolfe, "it shames me to lend aid to an art frivolous in itself, and almost culpable in times when Freedom wants the head to design, and perhaps the hand to execute, far other and nobler works than the blazoning of her past deeds upon perishable canvas."

A momentary anger at the slight put upon his art crossed the pale brow of the artist; but he remembered the character of the man and continued his work in silence. "You consider then, sir, that these are times in which liberty is attacked?" said Clarence.

“Attacked!” repeated Wolfe,—“attacked!” and then suddenly sinking his voice into a sort of sneer, “why, since the event which this painting is designed to commemorate, I know not if we have ever had one solitary gleam of liberty break along the great chaos of jarring prejudice and barbarous law which we term forsooth a glorious constitution. Liberty attacked! no, boy; but it is a time when liberty may be gained.”

Perfectly unacquainted with the excited politics of the day, or the growing and mighty spirit which then stirred through the minds of men, Clarence remained silent; but his evident attention flattered the fierce republican, and he proceeded.

“Ay,” he said slowly, and as if drinking in a deep and stern joy from his conviction in the truth of the words he uttered,—“ay, I have wandered over the face of the earth, and I have warmed my soul at the fires which lay hidden under its quiet surface; I have been in the city and the desert,—the herded and banded crimes of the Old World, and the scattered but bold hearts which are found among the savannahs of the New; and in either I have beheld that seed sown which, from a mustard grain, too scanty for a bird’s beak, shall grow up to be a shelter and a home for the whole family of man. I have looked upon the thrones of kings, and lo, the anointed ones were in purple and festive pomp; and I looked beneath the thrones, and I saw Want and Hunger, and despairing Wrath gnawing the foundations away. I have stood in the streets of that great city where Mirth seems to hold an eternal jubilee, and beheld the noble riot while the peasant starved; and the priest built altars to Mammon, piled from the earnings of groaning Labour and cemented with blood and tears. But I looked farther, and saw, in the rear, chains sharpened into swords, misery ripening into justice, and famine darkening into revenge; and I laughed as I beheld, for I knew that the day of the oppressed was at hand.”

Somewhat awed by the prophetic tone, though revolted by what seemed to him the novelty and the fierceness of the sentiments of the republican, Clarence, after a brief pause, said,—

“And what of our own country?”

Wolfe’s brow darkened. “The oppression here,” said he, “has not been so weighty, therefore the reaction will be less strong; the parties are more blended, therefore their separation will be more arduous; the extortion is less strained, therefore the endurance will be more meek; but, soon or late, the struggle must come: bloody will it be, if the strife be even; gentle and lasting, if the people predominate.”

“And if the rulers be the strongest?” said Clarence.

“The struggle will be renewed,” replied Wolfe, doggedly.

“You still attend those oratorical meetings, cousin, I think?” said Warner.

“I do,” said Wolfe; “and if you are not so utterly absorbed in your vain and idle art as to be indifferent to all things nobler, you will learn yourself to take interest in what concerns—I will not say your country, but mankind. For you, young man” (and the republican turned to Clarence), “I would fain hope that life has not already been diverted from the greatest of human objects; if so, come to-morrow night to our assembly, and learn from worthier lips than mine the precepts and the hopes for which good men live or die.”

“I will come at all events to listen, if not to learn,” said Clarence, eagerly, for his curiosity was excited. And the republican, having now fulfilled the end of his visit, rose and departed.

CHAPTER XV

Bound to suffer persecution
And martyrdom with resolution,
T'oppose himself against the hate
And vengeance of the incensed state.

—Hudibras.

Born of respectable though not wealthy parents, John Wolfe was one of those fiery and daring spirits which, previous to some mighty revolution, Fate seems to scatter over various parts of the earth, even those removed from the predestined explosion,—heralds of the events in which they are fitted though not fated to be actors. The period at which he is presented to the reader was one considerably prior to that French Revolution so much debated and so little understood. But some such event, though not foreseen by the common, had been already foreboded by the more enlightened, eye; and Wolfe, from a protracted residence in France among the most discontented of its freer spirits, had brought hope to that burning enthusiasm which had long made the pervading passion of his existence.

Bold to ferocity, generous in devotion to folly in self-sacrifice, unflinching in his tenets to a degree which rendered their ardour ineffectual to all times, because utterly inapplicable to the present, Wolfe was one of those zealots whose very virtues have the semblance of vice, and whose very capacities for danger become harmless from the rashness of their excess.

It was not among the philosophers and reasoners of France that Wolfe had drawn strength to his opinions: whatever such companions might have done to his tenets, they would at least have moderated his actions. The philosopher may aid or expedite a change; but never does the philosopher in any age or of any sect countenance a crime. But of philosophers Wolfe knew little, and probably despised them for their temperance: it was among fanatics—ignorant, but imaginative—that he had strengthened the love without comprehending the nature of republicanism. Like Lucian's painter, whose flattery portrayed the one-eyed prince in profile, he viewed only that side of the question in which there was no defect, and gave beauty to the whole by concealing the half. Thus, though on his return to England herding with the common class of his reforming brethren, Wolfe possessed many peculiarities and distinctions of character which, in rendering him strikingly adapted to the purpose of the novelist, must serve as a caution to the reader not to judge of the class by the individual.

With a class of Republicans in England there was a strong tendency to support their cause by reasoning. With Wolfe, whose mind was little wedded to logic, all was the offspring of turbulent feelings, which, in rejecting argument, substituted declamation for syllogism. This effected a powerful and irreconcilable distinction between Wolfe and the better part of his comrades; for the habits of cool reasoning, whether true or false, are little likely to bias the mind towards those crimes to which Wolfe's unregulated emotions might possibly urge him, and give to the characters to which they are a sort of common denominator something of method and much of similarity. But the feelings—those orators which allow no calculation and baffle the tameness of comparison—rendered Wolfe alone, unique, eccentric in opinion or action, whether of vice or virtue.

Private ties frequently moderate the ardour of our public enthusiasm. Wolfe had none. His nearest relation was Warner, and it may readily be supposed that with the pensive and contemplative artist he had very little in common. He had never married, nor had ever seemed to wander from his stern and sterile path, in the most transient pursuit of the pleasures of sense. Inflexibly honest, rigidly austere,—in his moral character his bitterest enemies could detect no flaw,—poor, even to indigence, he had invariably refused all overtures of the government; thrice imprisoned and heavily fined for his

doctrines, no fear of a future, no remembrance of the past punishment could ever silence his bitter eloquence or moderate the passion of his distempered zeal; kindly, though rude, his scanty means were ever shared by the less honest and disinterested followers of his faith; and he had been known for days to deprive himself of food, and for nights of shelter, for the purpose of yielding food and shelter to another.

Such was the man doomed to forsake, through a long and wasted life, every substantial blessing, in pursuit of a shadowy good; with the warmest benevolence in his heart, to relinquish private affections, and to brood even to madness over public offences; to sacrifice everything in a generous though erring devotion for that freedom whose cause, instead of promoting, he was calculated to retard; and, while he believed himself the martyr of a high and uncompromising virtue, to close his career with the greatest of human crimes.

CHAPTER XVI

Faith, methinks his humour is good, and his purse will buy good company.—The Parson's Wedding.

When Clarence returned home, after the conversation recorded in our last chapter, he found a note from Talbot, inviting him to meet some friends of the latter at supper that evening. It was the first time Clarence had been asked, and he looked forward with some curiosity and impatience to the hour appointed in the note.

It is impossible to convey any idea of the jealous rancour felt by Mr. and Mrs. Copperas on hearing of this distinction,—a distinction which "the perfect courtier" had never once bestowed upon themselves.

Mrs. Copperas tossed her head, too indignant for words; and the stock-jobber, in the bitterness of his soul, affirmed, with a meaning air, "that he dared say, after all, that the old gentleman was not so rich as he gave out."

On entering Talbot's drawing-room, Clarence found about seven or eight people assembled; their names, in proclaiming the nature of the party, indicated that the aim of the host was to combine aristocracy and talent. The literary acquirements and worldly tact of Talbot, joined to the adventitious circumstances of birth and fortune, enabled him to effect this object, so desirable in polished society, far better than we generally find it effected now. The conversation of these guests was light and various. The last bon mot of Chesterfield, the last sarcasm of Horace Walpole, Goldsmith's "Traveller," Shenstone's "Pastorals," and the attempt of Mrs. Montagu to bring Shakspeare into fashion,—in all these subjects the graceful wit and exquisite taste of Talbot shone pre-eminent; and he had almost succeeded in convincing a profound critic that Gray was a poet more likely to live than Mason, when the servant announced supper.

That was the age of suppers! Happy age! Meal of ease and mirth; when Wine and Night lit the lamp of Wit! Oh, what precious things were said and looked at those banquets of the soul! There epicurism was in the lip as well as the palate, and one had humour for a hors d'oeuvre and repartee for an entremet. At dinner there is something too pompous, too formal, for the true ease of Table Talk. One's intellectual appetite, like the physical, is coarse but dull. At dinner one is fit only for eating; after dinner only for politics. But supper was a glorious relic of the ancients. The bustle of the day had thoroughly wound up the spirit, and every stroke upon the dial-plate of wit was true to the genius of the hour. The wallet of diurnal anecdote was full, and craved unloading. The great meal —that vulgar first love of the appetite—was over, and one now only flattered it into coquetting with another. The mind, disengaged and free, was no longer absorbed in a cutlet or burdened with a joint. The gourmand carried the nicety of his physical perception to his moral, and applauded a bon mot instead of a bonne bouche.

Then, too, one had no necessity to keep a reserve of thought for the after evening; supper was the final consummation, the glorious funeral pyre of day. One could be merry till bedtime without an interregnum. Nay, if in the ardour of convivialism one did,—I merely hint at the possibility of such an event,—if one did exceed the narrow limits of strict ebriety, and open the heart with a ruby key, one had nothing to dread from the cold, or, what is worse, the warm looks of ladies in the drawing-room; no fear that an imprudent word, in the amatory fondness of the fermented blood, might expose one to matrimony and settlements. There was no tame, trite medium of propriety and suppressed confidence, no bridge from board to bed, over which a false step (and your wine-cup is a marvellous corrupter of ambulatory rectitude) might precipitate into an irrecoverable abyss of perilous communication or unwholesome truth. One's pillow became at once the legitimate and natural bourne to "the overheated

brain;" and the generous rashness of the coenatorial reveller was not damped by untimeous caution or ignoble calculation.

But "we have changed all that now." Sobriety has become the successor of suppers; the great ocean of moral encroachment has not left us one little island of refuge. Miserable supper-lovers that we are, like the native Indians of America, a scattered and daily disappearing race, we wander among strange customs, and behold the innovating and invading Dinner spread gradually over the very space of time in which the majesty of Supper once reigned undisputed and supreme!

O, ye heavens, be kind,
And feel, thou earth, for this afflicted race.

—WORDSWORTH.

As he was sitting down to the table, Clarence's notice was arrested by a somewhat suspicious and unpleasing occurrence. The supper room was on the ground floor, and, owing to the heat of the weather, one of the windows, facing the small garden, was left open. Through this window Clarence distinctly saw the face of a man look into the room for one instant, with a prying and curious gaze, and then as instantly disappear. As no one else seemed to remark this incident, and the general attention was somewhat noisily engrossed by the subject of conversation, Clarence thought it not worth while to mention a circumstance for which the impertinence of any neighbouring servant or drunken passer-by might easily account. An apprehension, however, of a more unpleasant nature shot across him, as his eye fell upon the costly plate which Talbot rather ostentatiously displayed, and then glanced to the single and aged servant, who was, besides his master, the only male inmate of the house. Nor could he help saying to Talbot, in the course of the evening, that he wondered he was not afraid of hoarding so many articles of value in a house at once so lonely and ill guarded.

"Ill guarded!" said Talbot, rather affronted, "why, I and my servant always sleep here!"

To this Clarence thought it neither prudent nor well-bred to offer further remark.

CHAPTER XVII

Meetings or public calls he never missed,
To dictate often, always to assist.
.....
To his experience and his native sense,
He joined a bold, imperious eloquence;
The grave, stern look of men informed and wise,
A full command of feature, heart and eyes,
An awe-compelling frown, and fear-inspiring size.

—CRABBE.

The next evening Clarence, mindful of Wolfe's invitation, inquired from Warner (who repaid the contempt of the republican for the painter's calling by a similar feeling for the zealot's) the direction of the oratorical meeting, and repaired there alone. It was the most celebrated club (of that description) of the day, and well worth attending, as a gratification to the curiosity, if not an improvement to the mind.

On entering, he found himself in a long room, tolerably well lighted, and still better filled. The sleepy countenances of the audience, the whispered conversation carried on at scattered intervals, the listless attitudes of some, the frequent yawns of others, the eagerness with which attention was attracted to the opening door, when it admitted some new object of interest, the desperate resolution with which some of the more energetic turned themselves towards the orator, and then, with a faint shake of the head, turned themselves again hopelessly away,—were all signs that denoted that no very eloquent declaimer was in possession of the "house." It was, indeed, a singularly dull, monotonous voice which, arising from the upper end of the room, dragged itself on towards the middle, and expired with a sighing sound before it reached the end. The face of the speaker suited his vocal powers; it was small, mean, and of a round stupidity, without anything even in fault that could possibly command attention or even the excitement of disapprobation: the very garments of the orator seemed dull and heavy, and, like the Melancholy of Milton, had a "leaden look." Now and then some words, more emphatic than others,—stones breaking, as it were with a momentary splash, the stagnation of the heavy stream,—produced from three very quiet, unhappy-looking persons seated next to the speaker, his immediate friends, three single isolated "hears!"

"The force of friendship could no further go."

At last, the orator having spoken through, suddenly stopped; the whole meeting seemed as if a weight had been taken from it; there was a general buzz of awakened energy, each stretched his limbs, and resettled himself in his place,—

"And turning to his neighbour said,
'Rejoice!'"

A pause ensued, the chairman looked round, the eyes of the meeting followed those of the president, with a universal and palpable impatience, towards an obscure corner of the room: the pause deepened for one moment, and then was broken; a voice cried "Wolfe!" and at that signal the whole room shook with the name. The place which Clarence had taken did not allow him to see the object of these cries, till he rose from his situation, and, passing two rows of benches, stood forth in

the middle space of the room; then, from one to one went round the general roar of applause; feet stamped, hands clapped, umbrellas set their sharp points to the ground, and walking-sticks thumped themselves out of shape in the universal clamour. Tall, gaunt, and erect, the speaker possessed, even in the mere proportions of his frame, that physical power which never fails, in a popular assembly, to gain attention to mediocrity and to throw dignity over faults. He looked very slowly round the room, remaining perfectly still and motionless, till the clamour of applause had entirely subsided, and every ear, Clarence's no less eagerly than the rest, was strained, and thirsting to catch the first syllables of his voice.

It was then with a low, very deep, and somewhat hoarse tone, that he began; and it was not till he had spoken for several minutes that the iron expression of his face altered, that the drooping hand was raised, and that the suppressed, yet powerful, voice began to expand and vary in its volume. He had then entered upon a new department of his subject. The question was connected with the English constitution, and Wolfe was now preparing to put forth, in long and blackened array, the alleged evils of an aristocratical form of government. Then it was as if the bile and bitterness of years were poured forth in a terrible and stormy wrath,—then his action became vehement, and his eye flashed forth unutterable fire: his voice, solemn, swelling, and increasing with each tone in its height and depth, filled, as with something palpable and perceptible, the shaking walls. The listeners,—a various and unconnected group, bound by no tie of faith or of party, many attracted by curiosity, many by the hope of ridicule, some abhorring the tenets expressed, and nearly all disapproving their principles or doubting their wisdom,—the listeners, certainly not a group previously formed or moulded into enthusiasm, became rapt and earnest; their very breath forsook them.

Linden had never before that night heard a public speaker; but he was of a thoughtful and rather calculating mind, and his early habits of decision, and the premature cultivation of his intellect, rendered him little susceptible, in general, to the impressions of the vulgar: nevertheless, in spite of himself, he was hurried away by the stream, and found that the force and rapidity of the speaker did not allow him even time for the dissent and disapprobation which his republican maxims and fiery denunciations perpetually excited in a mind aristocratic both by creed and education. At length after a peroration of impetuous and magnificent invective, the orator ceased.

In the midst of the applause that followed, Clarence left the assembly; he could not endure the thought that any duller or more commonplace speaker should fritter away the spell which yet bound and engrossed his spirit.

CHAPTER XVIII

At the bottom of the staircase was a small door, which gave way before Nigel, as he precipitated himself upon the scene of action, a cocked pistol in one hand, etc.—Fortunes of Nigel.

The night, though not utterly dark, was rendered capricious and dim by alternate wind and rain; and Clarence was delayed in his return homeward by seeking occasional shelter from the rapid and heavy showers which hurried by. It was during one of the temporary cessations of the rain that he reached Copperas Bower; and, while he was searching in his pockets for the key which was to admit him, he observed two men loitering about his neighbour's house. The light was not sufficient to give him more than a scattered and imperfect view of their motions. Somewhat alarmed, he stood for several moments at the door, watching them as well as he was able; nor did he enter the house till the loiterers had left their suspicious position, and, walking onwards, were hid entirely from him by the distance and darkness.

"It really is a dangerous thing for Talbot," thought Clarence, as he ascended to his apartment, "to keep so many valuables, and only one servant, and that one as old as himself too. However, as I am by no means sleepy, and my room is by no means cool, I may as well open my window, and see if those idle fellows make their re-appearance." Suiting the action to the thought, Clarence opened his little casement, and leaned wistfully out.

He had no light in his room, for none was ever left for him. This circumstance, however, of course enabled him the better to penetrate the dimness and haze of the night; and, by the help of the fluttering lamps, he was enabled to take a general though not minute survey of the scene below.

I think I have before said that there was a garden between Talbot's house and Copperas Bower; this was bounded by a wall, which confined Talbot's peculiar territory of garden, and this wall, describing a parallelogram, faced also the road. It contained two entrances,—one the principal adytus, in the shape of a comely iron gate, the other a wooden door, which, being a private pass, fronted the intermediate garden before mentioned and was exactly opposite to Clarence's window.

Linden had been more than ten minutes at his post, and had just begun to think his suspicions without foundation and his vigil in vain, when he observed the same figures he had seen before advance slowly from the distance and pause by the front gate of Talbot's mansion.

Alarmed and anxious, he redoubled his attention; he stretched himself, as far as his safety would permit, out of the window; the lamps, agitated by the wind, which swept by in occasional gusts, refused to grant to his straining sight more than an inaccurate and unsatisfying survey. Presently, a blast, more violent than ordinary, suspended as it were the falling columns of rain and left Clarence in almost total darkness; it rolled away, and the momentary calm which ensued enabled him to see that one of the men was stooping by the gate, and the other standing apparently on the watch at a little distance. Another gust shook the lamps and again obscured his view; and when it had passed onward in its rapid course, the men had left the gate, and were in the garden beneath his window. They crept cautiously, but swiftly, along the opposite wall, till they came to the small door we have before mentioned; here they halted, and one of them appeared to occupy himself in opening the door. Now, then, fear was changed into certainty, and it seemed without doubt that the men, having found some difficulty or danger in forcing the stronger or more public entrance, had changed their quarter of attack. No more time was to be lost; Clarence shouted aloud, but the high wind probably prevented the sound reaching the ears of the burglars, or at least rendered it dubious and confused. The next moment, and before Clarence could repeat his alarm, they had opened the door, and were within the neighbouring garden, beyond his view. Very young men, unless their experience has outstripped their youth, seldom have much presence of mind; that quality, which is the opposite to surprise, comes

to us in those years when nothing seems to us strange or unexpected. But a much older man than Clarence might have well been at a loss to know what conduct to adopt in the situation in which our hero was placed. The visits of the watchman to that (then) obscure and ill-inhabited neighborhood were more regulated by his indolence than his duty; and Clarence knew that it would be in vain to listen for his cry or tarry for his assistance. He himself was utterly unarmed, but the stock-jobber had a pair of horse-pistols, and as this recollection flashed upon him, the pause of deliberation ceased.

With a swift step he descended the first flight of stairs, and pausing at the chamber door of the faithful couple, knocked upon its panels with a loud and hasty summons. The second repetition of the noise produced the sentence, uttered in a very trembling voice, of "Who's there?"

"It is I, Clarence Linden," replied our hero; "lose no time in opening the door."

This answer seemed to reassure the valorous stock-jobber. He slowly undid the bolt, and turned the key.

"In Heaven's name, what do you want, Mr. Linden?" said he.

"Ay," cried a sharp voice from the more internal recesses of the chamber, "what do you want, sir, disturbing us in the bosom of our family and at the dead of night?"

With a rapid voice, Clarence repeated what he had seen, and requested the broker to accompany him to Talbot's house, or at least to lend him his pistols.

"He shall do no such thing," cried Mrs. Copperas. "Come here, Mr. C., and shut the door directly."

"Stop, my love," said the stock-jobber, "stop a moment."

"For God's sake," cried Clarence, "make no delay; the poor old man may be murdered by this time."

"It's no business of mine," said the stock-jobber. "If Adolphus had not broken the rattle I would not have minded the trouble of springing it; but you are very much mistaken if you think I am going to leave my warm bed in order to have my throat cut."

"Then give me your pistols," cried Clarence; "I will go alone."

"I shall commit no such folly," said the stock-jobber; "if you are murdered, I may have to answer it to your friends and pay for your burial. Besides, you owe us for your lodgings: go to your bed, young man, as I shall to mine." And, so saying, Mr. Copperas proceeded to close the door.

But enraged at the brutality of the man and excited by the urgency of the case, Clarence did not allow him so peaceable a retreat. With a strong and fierce grasp, he seized the astonished Copperas by the throat, and shaking him violently, forced his own entrance into the sacred nuptial chamber.

"By Heaven," cried Linden, in a savage and stern tone, for his blood was up. "I will twist your coward's throat, and save the murderer his labour, if you do not instantly give me up your pistols."

The stock-jobber was panic-stricken. "Take them," he cried, in the extremest terror; "there they are on the chimney-piece close by."

"Are they primed and loaded?" said Linden, not relaxing his gripe.

"Yes, yes!" said the stock-jobber, "loose my throat, or you will choke me!" and at that instant, Clarence felt himself clasped by the invading hands of Mrs. Copperas.

"Call off your wife," said he, "or I will choke you!" and he tightened his hold, "and tell her to give me the pistols."

The next moment Mrs. Copperas extended the debated weapons towards Clarence. He seized them, flung the poor stock-jobber against the bedpost, hurried down stairs, opened the back door, which led into the garden, flew across the intervening space, arrived at the door, and entering Talbot's garden, paused to consider what was the next step to be taken.

A person equally brave as Clarence, but more cautious, would not have left the house without alarming Mr. de Warens, even in spite of the failure with his master; but Linden only thought of the pressure of time and the necessity of expedition, and he would have been a very unworthy hero of

romance had he felt fear for two antagonists, with a brace of pistols at his command and a high and good action in view.

After a brief but decisive halt, he proceeded rapidly round the house, in order to ascertain at which part the ruffians had admitted themselves, should they (as indeed there was little doubt) have already effected their entrance.

He found the shutters of one of the principal rooms on the ground-floor had been opened, and through the aperture he caught the glimpse of a moving light, which was suddenly obscured. As he was about to enter, the light again flashed out: he drew back just in time, carefully screened himself behind the shutter, and, through one of the chinks, observed what passed within. Opposite to the window was a door which conducted to the hall and principal staircase; this door was open, and in the hall at the foot of the stairs Clarence saw two men; one carried a dark lantern, from which the light proceeded, and some tools, of the nature of which Clarence was naturally ignorant: this was a middle-sized muscular man, dressed in the rudest garb of an ordinary labourer; the other was much taller and younger, and his dress was of a rather less ignoble fashion.

"Hist! hist!" said the taller one, in a low tone, "did you not hear a noise, Ben?"

"Not a pin fall; but stow your whids, man!"

This was all that Clarence heard in a connected form; but as the wretches paused, in evident doubt how to proceed, he caught two or three detached words, which his ingenuity readily formed into sentences. "No, no! sleeps to the left—old man above—plate chest; we must have the blunt too. Come, track up the dancers, and douse the glim." And at the last words the light was extinguished, and Clarence's quick and thirsting ear just caught their first steps on the stairs; they died away, and all was hushed.

It had several times occurred to Clarence to rush from his hiding-place, and fire at the ruffians, and perhaps that measure would have been the wisest he could have taken; but Clarence had never discharged a pistol in his life, and he felt, therefore, that his aim must be uncertain enough to render a favourable position and a short distance essential requisites. Both these were, at present, denied to him; and although he saw no weapons about the persons of the villains, yet he imagined they would not have ventured on so dangerous an expedition without firearms; and if he failed, as would have been most probable, in his two shots, he concluded that, though the alarm would be given, his own fate would be inevitable.

If this was reasoning upon false premises, for housebreakers seldom or never carry loaded firearms, and never stay for revenge, when their safety demands escape, Clarence may be forgiven for not knowing the customs of housebreakers, and for not making the very best of an extremely novel and dangerous situation.

No sooner did he find himself in total darkness than he bitterly reproached himself for his late backwardness, and, inwardly resolving not again to miss any opportunity which presented itself, he entered the window, groped along the room into the hall, and found his way very slowly and after much circumlocution to the staircase.

He had just gained the summit, when a loud cry broke upon the stillness: it came from a distance, and was instantly hushed; but he caught at brief intervals, the sound of angry and threatening voices. Clarence bent down anxiously, in the hope that some solitary ray would escape through the crevice of the door within which the robbers were engaged. But though the sounds came from the same floor as that on which he now trod, they seemed far and remote, and not a gleam of light broke the darkness.

He continued, however, to feel his way in the direction from which the sounds proceeded, and soon found himself in a narrow gallery; the voices seemed more loud and near, as he advanced; at last he distinctly heard the words—

"Will you not confess where it is placed?"

"Indeed, indeed," replied an eager and earnest voice, which Clarence recognized as Talbot's, "this is all the money I have in the house,—the plate is above,—my servant has the key,—take it,—take all,—but save his life and mine."

"None of your gammon," said another and rougher voice than that of the first speaker: "we know you have more blunt than this,—a paltry sum of fifty pounds, indeed!"

"Hold!" cried the other ruffian, "here is a picture set with diamonds, that will do, Ben. Let go the old man."

Clarence was now just at hand, and probably from a sudden change in the position of the dark lantern within, a light abruptly broke from beneath the door and streamed along the passage.

"No, no, no!" cried the old man, in a loud yet tremulous voice,—"no, not that, anything else, but I will defend that with my life."

"Ben, my lad," said the ruffian, "twist the old fool's neck we have no more time to lose."

At that very moment the door was flung violently open, and Clarence Linden stood within three paces of the reprobates and their prey. The taller villain had a miniature in his hand, and the old man clung to his legs with a convulsive but impotent clasp; the other fellow had already his gripe upon Talbot's neck, and his right hand grasped a long case-knife.

With a fierce and flashing eye, and a cheek deadly pale with internal and resolute excitement, Clarence confronted the robbers.

"Thank Heaven," cried he, "I am not too late!" And advancing yet another step towards the shorter ruffian, who struck mute with the suddenness of the apparition, still retained his grasp of the old man, he fired his pistol, with a steady and close aim; the ball penetrated the wretch's brain, and without sound or sigh, he fell down dead, at the very feet of his just destroyer. The remaining robber had already meditated, and a second more sufficed to accomplish, his escape. He sprang towards the door: the ball whizzed beside him, but touched him not. With a safe and swift step, long inured to darkness, he fled along the passage; and Linden, satisfied with the vengeance he had taken upon his comrade, did not harass him with an unavailing pursuit.

Clarence turned to assist Talbot. The old man was stretched upon the floor insensible, but his hand grasped the miniature which the plunderer had dropped in his flight and terror, and his white and ashen lip was pressed convulsively upon the recovered treasure.

Linden raised and placed him on his bed, and while employed in attempting to revive him, the ancient domestic, alarmed by the report of the pistol, came, poker in hand, to his assistance. By little and little they recovered the object of their attention. His eyes rolled wildly round the room, and he muttered,—"Off, off! ye shall not rob me of my only relic of her,—where is it?—have you got it?—the picture, the picture!"

"It is here, sir, it is here," said the old servant; "it is in your own hand."

Talbot's eye fell upon it; he gazed at it for some moments, pressed it to his lips, and then, sitting erect and looking wildly round, he seemed to awaken to the sense of his late danger and his present deliverance.

CHAPTER XIX

Ah, fleeter far than fleetest storm or steed,
Or the death they bear,
The heart which tender thought clothes like a dove
With the wings of care!
In the battle, in the darkness, in the need,
Shall mine cling to thee!
Nor claim one smile for all the comfort, love,
It may bring to thee!

—SHELLEY.

LETTER FROM ALGERNON MORDAUNT TO ISABEL ST. LEGER

You told me not to write to you. You know how long, but not how uselessly I have obeyed you. Did you think, Isabel, that my love was of that worldly and common order which requires a perpetual aliment to support it? Did you think that, if you forbade the stream to flow visibly, its sources would be exhausted, and its channel dried up? This may be the passion of others; it is not mine. Months have passed since we parted, and since then you have not seen me; this letter is the first token you have received from a remembrance which cannot die. But do you think that I have not watched and tended upon you, and gladdened my eyes with gazing on your beauty when you have not dreamed that I was by? Ah, Isabel, your heart should have told you of it; mine would, had you been so near me!

You receive no letters from me, it is true: think you that my hand and heart are therefore idle? No. I write to you a thousand burning lines: I pour out my soul to you; I tell you of all I suffer; my thoughts, my actions, my very dreams, are all traced upon the paper. I send them not to you, but I read them over and over, and when I come to your name, I pause and shut my eyes, and then "Fancy has her power," and lo! "you are by my side!"

Isabel, our love has not been a holiday and joyous sentiment; but I feel a solemn and unalterable conviction that our union is ordained.

Others have many objects to distract and occupy the thoughts which are once forbidden a single direction, but we have none. At least, to me you are everything. Pleasure, splendour, ambition, all are merged into one great and eternal thought, and that is you!

Others have told me, and I believed them, that I was hard and cold and stern: so perhaps I was before I knew you, but now I am weaker and softer than a child. There is a stone which is of all the hardest and the chillest, but when once set on fire it is unquenchable. You smile at my image, perhaps, and I should smile if I saw it in the writing of another; for all that I have ridiculed in romance as exaggerated seems now to me too cool and too commonplace for reality.

But this is not what I meant to write to you; you are ill, dearest and noblest Isabel, you are ill! I am the cause, and you conceal it from me; and you would rather pine away and die than suffer me to lose one of those worldly advantages which are in my eyes but as dust in the balance,—it is in vain to deny it. I heard from others of your impaired health; I have witnessed it myself. Do you remember last night, when you were in the room with your relations, and they made you sing,—a song too which you used to sing to me, and when you came to the second stanza your voice failed you, and you burst into tears, and they, instead of soothing, reproached and chid you, and you answered not, but wept on? Isabel, do you remember that a sound was heard at the window and a groan? Even they were startled, but they thought it was the wind, for the night was dark and stormy, and they saw not that it

was I: yes, my devoted, my generous love, it was I who gazed upon you, and from whose heart that voice of anguish was wrung; and I saw your cheek was pale and thin, and that the canker at the core had preyed upon the blossom.

Think you, after this, that I could keep silence or obey your request? No, dearest, no! Is not my happiness your object? I have the vanity to believe so; and am I not the best judge how that happiness is to be secured? I tell you, I say it calmly, coldly, dispassionately,—not from the imagination, not even from the heart, but solely from the reason,—that I can bear everything rather than the loss of you; and that if the evil of my love scathe and destroy you, I shall consider and curse myself as your murderer! Save me from this extreme of misery, my—yes, my Isabel! I shall be at the copse where we have so often met before, to-morrow, at noon. You will meet me; and if I cannot convince you, I will not ask you to be persuaded. A. M.

And Isabel read this letter, and placed it at her heart, and felt less miserable than she had done for months; for, though she wept, there was sweetness in the tears which the assurance of his love and the tenderness of his remonstrance had called forth. She met him: how could she refuse? and the struggle was past. Though not “convinced” she was “persuaded;” for her heart, which refused his reasonings, melted at his reproaches and his grief. But she would not consent to unite her fate with him at once, for the evils of that step to his interests were immediate and near; she was only persuaded to permit their correspondence and occasional meetings, in which, however imprudent they might be for herself, the disadvantages to her lover were distant and remote. It was of him only that she thought; for him she trembled; for him she was the coward and the woman; for herself she had no fears, and no forethought.

And Algernon was worthy of this devoted love, and returned it as it was given. Man’s love, in general, is a selfish and exacting sentiment: it demands every sacrifice and refuses all. But the nature of Mordaunt was essentially high and disinterested, and his honour, like his love, was not that of the world: it was the ethereal and spotless honour of a lofty and generous mind, the honour which custom can neither give nor take away; and, however impatiently he bore the deferring of a union, in which he deemed that he was the only sufferer, he would not have uttered a sigh or urged a prayer for that union, could it, in the minutest or remotest degree, have injured or degraded her.

These are the hearts and natures which make life beautiful; these are the shrines which sanctify love; these are the diviner spirits for whom there is kindred and commune with everything exalted and holy in heaven and earth. For them Nature unfolds her hoarded poetry and her hidden spells; for their steps are the lonely mountains, and the still woods have a murmur for their ears; for them there is strange music in the wave, and in the whispers of the light leaves, and rapture in the voices of the birds: their souls drink, and are saturated with the mysteries of the Universal Spirit, which the philosophy of old times believed to be God Himself. They look upon the sky with a gifted vision, and its dove-like quiet descends and overshadows their hearts; the Moon and the Night are to them wells of Castalian inspiration and golden dreams; and it was one of them who, gazing upon the Evening Star, felt in the inmost sanctuary of his soul its mysterious harmonies with his most worshipped hope, his most passionate desire, and dedicated it to—LOVE.

CHAPTER XX

Maria. Here's the brave old man's love,
Bianca. That loves the young man.

The Woman's Prize; or, The Tamer Tamed.

"No, my dear Clarence, you have placed confidence in me, and it is now my duty to return it; you have told me your history and origin, and I will inform you of mine, but not yet. At present we will talk of you. You have conferred upon me what our universal love of life makes us regard as the greatest of human obligations; and though I can bear a large burden of gratitude, yet I must throw off an atom or two in using my little power in your behalf. Nor is this all: your history has also given you another tie upon my heart, and, in granting you a legitimate title to my good offices, removes any scruple you might otherwise have had in accepting them."

"I have just received this letter from Lord ——, the minister for foreign affairs: you will see that he has appointed you to the office of attache at ——. You will also oblige me by looking over this other letter at your earliest convenience; the trifling sum which it contains will be repeated every quarter; it will do very well for an attache: when you are an ambassador, why, we must equip you by a mortgage on Scarsdale; and now, my dear Clarence, tell me all about the Copperases."

I need not say who was the speaker of the above sentences: sentences apparently of a very agreeable nature; nevertheless, Clarence seemed to think otherwise, for the tears gushed into his eyes, and he was unable for several moments to reply.

"Come, my young friend," said Talbot, kindly; "I have no near relations among whom I can choose a son I like better than you, nor you any at present from whom you might select a more desirable father: consequently, you must let me look upon you as my own flesh and blood; and, as I intend to be a very strict and peremptory father, I expect the most silent and scrupulous obedience to my commands. My first parental order to you is to put up those papers, and to say nothing more about them; for I have a great deal to talk to you about upon other subjects."

And by these and similar kind-hearted and delicate remonstrances, the old man gained his point. From that moment Clarence looked upon him with the grateful and venerating love of a son; and I question very much, if Talbot had really been the father of our hero, whether he would have liked so handsome a successor half so well.

The day after this arrangement, Clarence paid his debt to the Copperases and removed to Talbot's house. With this event commenced a new era in his existence: he was no longer an outcast and a wanderer; out of alien ties he had wrought the link of a close and even paternal friendship; life, brilliant in its prospects and elevated in its ascent, opened flatteringly before him; and the fortune and courage which had so well provided for the present were the best omens and auguries for the future.

One evening, when the opening autumn had made its approaches felt, and Linden and his new parent were seated alone by a blazing fire, and had come to a full pause in their conversation, Talbot, shading his face with the friendly pages of the "Whitehall Evening Paper," as if to protect it from the heat, said,—

"I told you, the other day, that I would give you, at some early opportunity, a brief sketch of my life. This confidence is due to you in return for yours; and since you will soon leave me, and I am an old man, whose life no prudent calculation can fix, I may as well choose the present time to favour you with my confessions."

Clarence expressed and looked his interest, and the old man thus commenced,—

THE HISTORY OF A VAIN MAN

I was the favourite of my parents, for I was quick at my lessons, and my father said I inherited my genius from him; and comely in my person, and my mother said that my good looks came from her. So the honest pair saw in their eldest son the union of their own attractions, and thought they were making much of themselves when they lavished their caresses upon me. They had another son, poor Arthur,—I think I see him now! He was a shy, quiet, subdued boy, of a very plain personal appearance. My father and mother were vain, showy, ambitious people of the world, and they were as ashamed of my brother as they were proud of myself. However, he afterwards entered the army and distinguished himself highly. He died in battle, leaving an only daughter, who married, as you know, a nobleman of high rank. Her subsequent fate it is now needless to relate.

Petted and pampered from my childhood, I grew up with a profound belief in my own excellences, and a feverish and irritating desire to impress every one who came in my way with the same idea. There is a sentence in Sir William Temple, which I have often thought of with a painful conviction of its truth: “A restlessness in men’s minds to be something they are not, and to have something they have not, is the root of all immorality.” [And of all good.—AUTHOR.] At school, I was confessedly the cleverest boy in my remove; and, what I valued equally as much, I was the best cricketer of the best eleven. Here, then, you will say my vanity was satisfied,—no such thing! There was a boy who shared my room, and was next me in the school; we were, therefore, always thrown together. He was a great stupid, lubberly cub, equally ridiculed by the masters and disliked by the boys. Will you believe that this individual was the express and almost sole object of my envy? He was more than my rival, he was my superior; and I hated him with all the unleavened bitterness of my soul.

I have said he was my superior: it was in one thing. He could balance a stick, nay, a cricket-bat, a poker, upon his chin, and I could not; you laugh, and so can I now, but it was no subject of laughter to me then. This circumstance, trifling as it may appear to you, poisoned my enjoyment. The boy saw my envy, for I could not conceal it; and as all fools are malicious, and most fools ostentatious, he took a particular pride and pleasure in displaying his dexterity and showing off my discontent. You can form no idea of the extent to which this petty insolence vexed and disquieted me. Even in my sleep, the clumsy and grinning features of this tormenting imp haunted me like a spectre: my visions were nothing but chins and cricket-bats; walking-sticks, sustaining themselves upon human excrescences, and pokers dancing a hornpipe upon the tip of a nose. I assure you that I have spent hours in secret seclusion, practising to rival my hated comrade, and my face—see how one vanity quarrels with another—was little better than a mass of bruises and discolorations.

I actually became so uncomfortable as to write home, and request to leave the school. I was then about sixteen, and my indulgent father, in granting my desire, told me that I was too old and too advanced in my learning to go to any other academic establishment than the University. The day before I left the school, I gave, as was usually the custom, a breakfast to all my friends; the circumstance of my tormentor’s sharing my room obliged me to invite him among the rest. However, I was in high spirits, and being a universal favourite with my schoolfellows, I succeeded in what was always to me an object of social ambition, and set the table in a roar; yet, when our festival was nearly expired, and I began to allude more particularly to my approaching departure, my vanity was far more gratified, for my feelings were far more touched, by observing the regret and receiving the good wishes of all my companions. I still recall that hour as one of the proudest and happiest of my life; but it had its immediate reverse. My evil demon put it into my tormentor’s head to give me one last parting pang of jealousy. A large umbrella happened accidentally to be in my room; Crompton—such was my schoolfellow’s name—saw and seized it. “Look here, Talbot,” said he, with his taunting and hideous sneer, “you can’t do this;” and placing the point of the umbrella upon his forehead, just above the eyebrow, he performed various antics round the room.

At that moment I was standing by the fireplace, and conversing with two boys upon whom, above all others, I wished to leave a favourable impression. My foolish soreness on this one subject had been often remarked; and, as I turned in abrupt and awkward discomposure from the exhibition, I observed my two schoolfellows smile and exchange looks. I am not naturally passionate, and even at that age I had in ordinary cases great self-command; but this observation, and the cause which led to it, threw me off my guard. Whenever we are utterly under the command of one feeling, we cannot be said to have our reason: at that instant I literally believe I was beside myself. What! in the very flush of the last triumph that that scene would ever afford me; amidst the last regrets of my early friends, to whom I fondly hoped to bequeath a long and brilliant remembrance, to be thus bearded by a contemptible rival, and triumphed over by a pitiful yet insulting superiority; to close my condolences with laughter; to have the final solemnity of my career thus terminating in mockery; and ridicule substituted as an ultimate reminiscence in the place of an admiring regret; all this, too, to be effected by one so long hated, one whom I was the only being forbidden the comparative happiness of despising? I could not brook it; the insult, the insulter, were too revolting. As the unhappy buffoon approached me, thrusting his distorted face towards mine, I seized and pushed him aside, with a brief curse and a violent hand. The sharp point of the umbrella slipped; my action gave it impetus and weight; it penetrated his eye, and—spare me, spare me the rest. [This instance of vanity, and indeed the whole of Talbot's history, is literally from facts.]

The old man bent down, and paused for a few moments before he resumed.

Crompton lost his eye, but my punishment was as severe as his. People who are very vain are usually equally susceptible, and they who feel one thing acutely will so feel another. For years, ay, for many years afterwards, the recollection of my folly goaded me with the bitterest and most unceasing remorse. Had I committed murder, my conscience could scarce have afflicted me more severely. I did not regain my self-esteem till I had somewhat repaired the injury I had done. Long after that time Crompton was in prison, in great and overwhelming distress. I impoverished myself to release him; I sustained him and his family till fortune rendered my assistance no longer necessary; and no triumphs were ever more sweet to me than the sacrifice I was forced to submit to, in order to restore him to prosperity.

It is natural to hope that this accident had at least the effect of curing me of my fault; but it requires philosophy in yourself, or your advisers, to render remorse of future avail. How could I amend my fault, when I was not even aware of it? Smarting under the effects, I investigated not the cause, and I attributed to irascibility and vindictiveness what had a deeper and more dangerous origin.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.