

ЭДВАРД БУЛЬВЕР-ЛИТТОН

**WHAT WILL HE DO
WITH IT? – VOLUME
08**

Эдвард Джордж Бульвер-Литтон
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Edward Bulwer-Lytton

What Will He Do with It? — Volume 08

BOOK VIII

CHAPTER I

"A LITTLE FIRE BURNS UP A GREAT DEAL OF CORN."—OLD PROVERB.

Guy Darrell resumed the thread of solitary life at Fawley with a calm which was deeper in its gloom than it had been before. The experiment of return to the social world had failed. The resolutions which had induced the experiment were finally renounced. Five years nearer to death, and the last hope that had flitted across the narrowing passage to the grave, fallen like a faithless torch from his own hand, and trodden out by his own foot.

It was peculiarly in the nature of Darrell to connect his objects with posterity—to regard eminence in the Present but as a beacon-height from which to pass on to the Future the

name he had taken from the Past. All his early ambition, sacrificing pleasure to toil, had placed its goal at a distance, remote from the huzzas of bystanders; and Ambition halted now, baffled and despairing. Childless, his line would perish with himself—himself, who had so vaunted its restoration in the land! His genius was childless also—it would leave behind it no offspring of the brain. By toil he had amassed ample wealth; by talent he had achieved a splendid reputation. But the reputation was as perishable as the wealth. Let a half-century pass over his tomb, and nothing would be left to speak of the successful lawyer the applauded orator, save traditional anecdotes, a laudatory notice in contemporaneous memoirs—perhaps, at most, quotations of eloquent sentences lavished on forgotten cases and obsolete debates—shreds and fragments of a great intellect, which another half-century would sink without a bubble into the depths of Time. He had enacted no laws—he had administered no state—he had composed no books. Like the figure on a clock, which adorns the case and has no connection with the movement, he, so prominent an ornament to time, had no part in its works. Removed, the eye would miss him for a while; but a nation's literature or history was the same, whether with him or without. Some with a tithe of his abilities have the luck to fasten their names to things that endure; they have been responsible for measures they did not invent, and which, for good or evil, influence long generations. They have written volumes out of which a couplet of verse, a period in prose, may

cling to the rock of ages, as a shell that survives a deluge. But the orator, whose effects are immediate—who enralls his audience in proportion as he nicks the hour—who, were he speaking like Burke what, apart from the subject-matter, closet students would praise, must, like Burke, thin his audience, and exchange present oratorical success for ultimate intellectual renown—a man, in short, whose oratory is emphatically that of the DEBATER is, like an actor, rewarded with a loud applause and a complete oblivion. Waife on the village stage might win applause no less loud, followed by oblivion not more complete.

Darrell was not blind to the brevity of his fame. In his previous seclusion he had been resigned to that conviction—now it saddened him. Then, unconfessed by himself, the idea that he might yet reappear in active life, and do something which the world would not willingly let die, had softened the face of that tranquil Nature from which he must soon now pass out of reach and sight. On the tree of Time he was a leaf already sear upon the bough—not an inscription graven into the rind.

Ever slow to yield to weak regrets—ever seeking to combat his own enemies within—Darrell said to himself one night, while Fairthorn's flute was breathing an air of romance through the melancholy walls: "Is it too late yet to employ this still busy brain upon works that will live when I am dust, and make Posterity supply the heir that fails to my house?"

He shut himself up with immortal authors—he meditated on the choice of a theme; his knowledge was wide, his taste

refined;—words!—he could not want words! Why should he not write? Alas; why indeed?—He who has never been a writer in his youth, can no more be a writer in his age than he can be a painter—a musician. What! not write a book! Oh, yes—as he may paint a picture or set a song. But a writer, in the emphatic sense of the word—a writer as Darrell was an orator—oh, no! And, least of all, will he be a writer if he has been an orator by impulse and habit— an orator too happily gifted to require, and too laboriously occupied to resort to, the tedious aids of written preparation—an orator as modern life forms orators—not, of course, an orator like those of the classic world, who elaborated sentences before delivery, and who, after delivery, polished each extemporaneous interlude into rhetorical exactitude and musical perfection. And how narrow the range of compositions to a man burdened already by a grave reputation! He cannot have the self- abandonment—he cannot venture the headlong charge—with which Youth flings the reins to genius, and dashes into the ranks of Fame. Few and austere his themes—fastidious and hesitating his taste. Restricted are the movements of him who walks for the first time into the Forum of Letters with the purple hem on his senatorial toga. Guy Darrell, at his age, entering among authors as a novice!—he, the great lawyer, to whom attorneys would have sent no briefs had he been suspected of coquetting with a muse,—he, the great orator who had electrified audiences in proportion to the sudden effects which distinguish oral inspiration from written

eloquence—he achieve now, in an art which his whole life had neglected, any success commensurate to his contemporaneous repute;—how unlikely! But a success which should outlive that repute, win the "everlasting inheritance" which could alone have nerved him to adequate effort—how impossible! He could not himself comprehend why, never at a loss for language felicitously opposite or richly ornate when it had but to flow from his thought to his tongue, nor wanting ease, even eloquence, in epistolary correspondence confidentially familiar—he should find words fail ideas, and ideas fail words, the moment his pen became a wand that conjured up the Ghost of the dread Public! The more copious his thoughts, the more embarrassing their selection; the more exquisite his perception of excellence in others, the more timidly frigid his efforts at faultless style. It would be the same with the most skilful author, if the Ghost of the Public had not long since ceased to haunt him. While he writes, the true author's solitude is absolute or peopled at his will. But take an audience from an orator, what is he? He commands the living public—the Ghost of the Public awes himself.

"Surely once," sighed Darrell, as he gave his blurred pages to the flames—"surely once I had some pittance of the author's talent, and have spent it upon lawsuits!"

The author's talent, no doubt, Guy Darrell once had—the author's temperament never. What is the author's temperament? Too long a task to define. But without it a man may write a clever book, a useful book, a book that may live a year,

ten years, fifty years. He will not stand out to distant ages a representative of the age that rather lived in him than he in it. The author's temperament is that which makes him an integral, earnest, original unity, distinct from all before and all that may succeed him. And as a Father of the Church has said that the consciousness of individual being is the sign of immortality, not granted to the inferior creatures—so it is in this individual temperament one and indivisible, and in the intense conviction of it, more than in all the works it may throw off, that the author becomes immortal. Nay, his works may perish like those of Orpheus or Pythagoras; but he himself, in his name, in the footprint of his being, remains, like Orpheus or Pythagoras, undestroyed, indestructible.

Resigning literature, the Solitary returned to Science. There he was more at home. He had cultivated science, in his dazzling academical career, with ardour and success; he had renewed the study, on his first retirement to Fawley, as a distraction from tormenting memories or unextinguished passions. He now for the first time regarded the absorbing abstruse occupation as a possible source of fame. To be one in the starry procession of those sons of light who have solved a new law in the statute-book of heaven! Surely a grand ambition, not unbecoming to his years and station, and pleasant in its labours to a man who loved Nature's outward scenery with poetic passion, and had studied her inward mysteries with a sage's minute research. Science needs not the author's art—she rejects its graces—he recoils

with a shudder from its fancies. But Science requires in the mind of the discoverer a limpid calm. The lightnings that reveal Diespiter must flash in serene skies. No clouds store that thunder

"Quo bruta tellus, et vaga flumina,
Quo Styx, et invisi horrida Taenari
Sedes, Atlanteusque finis
Concutitur!"

So long as you take science only as a distraction, science will not lead you to discovery. And from some cause or other, Guy Darrell was more unquiet and perturbed in his present than in his past seclusion. Science this time failed even to distract. In the midst of august meditations— of close experiment—some haunting angry thought from the far world passed with rude shadow between Intellect and Truth—the heart eclipsed the mind. The fact is, that Darrell's genius was essentially formed for Action. His was the true orator's temperament, with the qualities that belong to it—the grasp of affairs—the comprehension of men and states —the constructive, administrative faculties. In such career, and in such career alone, could he have developed all his powers, and achieved an imperishable name. Gradually as science lost its interest, he retreated from all his former occupations, and would wander for long hours over the wild unpopulated landscapes round him. As if it were his object to fatigue the body, and in that fatigue tire out the restless brain, he would make his gun the excuse for rambles from sunrise to

twilight over the manors he had purchased years ago, lying many miles off from Fawley. There are times when a man who has passed his life in cultivating his mind finds that the more he can make the physical existence predominate, the more he can lower himself to the rude vigour of the gamekeeper, or his day-labourer—why, the more he can harden his nerves to support the weight of his reflections.

In these rambles he was not always alone. Fairthorn contrived to insinuate himself much more than formerly into his master's habitual companionship. The faithful fellow had missed Darrell so sorely in that long unbroken absence of five years, that on recovering him, Fairthorn seemed resolved to make up for lost time. Departing from his own habits, he would, therefore, lie in wait for Guy Darrell—creeping out of a bramble or bush, like a familiar sprite; and was no longer to be awed away by a curt syllable or a contracted brow. And Darrell, at first submitting reluctantly, and out of compassionate kindness to the flute-player's obtrusive society, became by degrees to welcome and relax in it. Fairthorn knew the great secrets of his life. To Fairthorn alone on all earth could he speak with out reserve of one name and of one sorrow. Speaking to Fairthorn was like talking to himself, or to his pointers, or to his favourite doe, upon which last he bestowed a new collar, with an inscription that implied more of the true cause that had driven him a second time to the shades of Fawley than he would have let out to Alban Morley or even to Lionel Haughton. Alban was too old for that

confidence —Lionel much too young. But the Musician, like Art itself, was of no age; and if ever the gloomy master unbent his outward moodiness and secret spleen in any approach to gaiety, it was in a sort of saturnine playfulness to this grotesque, grown-up infant. They cheered each other, and they teased each other. Stalking side by side over the ridged fallows, Darrell would sometimes pour forth his whole soul, as a poet does to his muse; and at Fairthorn's abrupt interruption or rejoinder, turn round on him with fierce objurgation or withering sarcasm, or what the flute-player abhorred more than all else, a truculent quotation from Horace, which drove Fairthorn away into some vanishing covert or hollow, out of which Darrell had to entice him, sure that, in return, Fairthorn would take a sly occasion to send into his side a vindictive prickle. But as the two came home in the starlight, the dogs dead beat and poor Fairthorn too,—ten to one but what the musician was leaning all his weight on his master's nervous arm, and Darrell was looking with tender kindness in the face of the SOMEONE left to lean upon him still.

One evening, as they were sitting together in the library, the two hermits, each in his corner, and after a long silence, the flute-player said abruptly

"I have been thinking—"

"Thinking!" quoth Darrell, with his mechanical irony; "I am sorry for you. Try not to do so again."

FAIRTHORN.—"Your poor dear father—"

DARRELL (wincing, startled, and expectant of a prickle).

—"Eh? my father—"

FAIRTHORN.—"Was a great antiquary. How it would have pleased him could he have left a fine collection of antiquities as an heirloom to the nation!—his name thus preserved for ages, and connected with the studies of his life. There are the Elgin Marbles. The parson was talking to me yesterday of a new Vernon Gallery; why not in the British Museum an everlasting Darrell room? Plenty to stock it mouldering yonder in the chambers which you will never finish."

"My dear Dick," Said Darrell, starting up, "give me your hand. What a brilliant thought! I could do nothing else to preserve my dear father's name. Eureka! You are right. Set the carpenters at work to-morrow. Remove the boards; open the chambers; we will inspect their stores, and select what would worthily furnish 'A Darrell Room.' Perish Guy Darrell the lawyer! Philip Darrell the antiquary at least shall live!"

It is marvellous with what charm Fairthorn's lucky idea seized upon Darrell's mind. The whole of the next day he spent in the forlorn skeleton of the unfinished mansion slowly decaying beside his small and homely dwelling. The pictures, many of which were the rarest originals in early Flemish and Italian art, were dusted with tender care, and hung from hasty nails upon the bare ghastly walls. Delicate ivory carvings, wrought by the matchless hand of Cellini-early Florentine bronzes, priceless specimens of Raffaele ware and Venetian glass—the precious trifles, in short, which the collector of mediaeval curiosities

amasses for his heirs to disperse amongst the palaces of kings and the cabinets of nations—were dragged again to unfamiliar light. The invaded sepulchral building seemed a very Pompeii of the /Cinque Cento/. To examine, arrange, methodise, select for national purposes, such miscellaneous treasures would be the work of weeks. For easier access, Darrell caused a slight hasty passage to be thrown over the gap between the two edifices. It ran from the room nicked into the gables of the old house, which, originally fitted up for scientific studies, now became his habitual apartment, into the largest of the uncompleted chambers which had been designed for the grand reception-gallery of the new building. Into the pompous gallery thus made contiguous to his monk-like cell, he gradually gathered the choicest specimens of his collection. The damps were expelled by fires on grateless hearthstones; sunshine admitted from windows now for the first time exchanging boards for glass; rough iron sconces, made at the nearest forge, were thrust into the walls, and sometimes lighted at night—Darrell and Fairthorn walking arm-in-arm along the unpolished floors, in company with Holbein's Nobles, Perugino's Virgins. Some of that highbred company displaced and banished the next day, as repeated inspection made the taste more rigidly exclusive. Darrell had found object, amusement, occupation—frivolous if Compared with those lenses, and glasses, and algebraical scrawls which had once whiled lonely hours in the attic-room hard by; but not frivolous even to the judgment of the austere sage, if that sage had not reasoned away his heart. For

here it was not Darrell's taste that was delighted; it was Darrell's heart that, ever hungry, had found food. His heart was connecting those long-neglected memorials of an ambition baffled and relinquished—here with a nation, there with his father's grave! How his eyes sparkled! how his lip smiled! Nobody would have guessed it—none of us know each other; least of all do we know the interior being of those whom we estimate by public repute;—but what a world of simple, fond affection lay coiled and wasted in that proud man's solitary breast!

CHAPTER II

THE LEARNED COMPUTE THAT SEVEN HUNDRED AND SEVEN MILLIONS OF MILLIONS OF VIBRATIONS HAVE PENETRATED THE EYE BEFORE THE EYE CAN DISTINGUISH THE TINTS OF A VIOLET. WHAT PHILOSOPHY CAN CALCULATE THE VIBRATIONS OF THE HEART BEFORE IT CAN DISTINGUISH THE COLOURS OF LOVE?

While Guy Darrell thus passed his hours within the unfinished fragments of a dwelling builded for posterity, and amongst the still relics of remote generations, Love and Youth were weaving their warm eternal idyll on the sunny lawns by the gliding river.

There they are, Love and Youth, Lionel and Sophy, in the arbour round which her slight hands have twined the honeysuckle, fond imitation of that bower endeared by the memory of her earliest holiday—she seated coyly, he on the ground at her feet, as when Titania had watched his sleep. He has been reading to her, the book has fallen from his hand. What book? That volume of poems so unintelligibly obscure to all but the dreaming young, who are so unintelligibly obscure to themselves. But to the merit of those poems, I doubt if even George did justice. It is not true, I believe, that they are not durable. Some day or other, when all the jargon so feelingly

denounced by Colonel Morley about "esthetics," and "objective," and "subjective," has gone to its long home, some critic who can write English will probably bring that poor little volume fairly before the public; and, with all its manifold faults, it will take a place in the affections, not of one single generation of the young, but —everlasting, ever-dreaming, ever-growing youth. But you and I, reader, have no other interest in these poems, except this —that they were written by the brother-in-law of that whimsical, miserly Frank Vance, who perhaps, but for such a brother-in-law, would never have gone through the labour by which he has cultivated the genius that achieved his fame; and if he had not cultivated that genius, he might never have known Lionel; and if he had never known Lionel, Lionel might never perhaps have gone to the Surrey village, in which he saw the Phenomenon: And, to push farther still that Voltaireian philosophy of ifs— if either Lionel or Frank Vance had not been so intimately associated in the minds of Sophy and Lionel with the golden holiday on the beautiful river, Sophy and Lionel might not have thought so much of those poems; and if they had not thought so much of those poems, there might not have been between them that link of poetry without which the love of two young people is a sentiment, always very pretty it is true, but much too commonplace to deserve special commemoration in a work so uncommonly long as this is likely to be. And thus it is clear that Frank Vance is not a superfluous and episodal personage amongst the characters of this history, but, however indirectly,

still essentially, one of those beings without whom the author must have given a very different answer to the question, "What will he do with it?"

Return we to Lionel and Sophy. The poems have brought their hearts nearer and nearer together. And when the book fell from Lionel's hand, Sophy knew that his eyes were on her face, and her own eyes looked away. And the silence was so deep and so sweet! Neither had yet said to the other a word of love. And in that silence both felt that they loved and were beloved. Sophy! how childlike she looked still! How little she is changed!—except that the soft blue eyes are far more pensive, and that her merry laugh is now never heard. In that luxurious home, fostered with the tenderest care by its charming owner, the romance of her childhood realised, and Lionel by her side, she misses the old crippled vagrant. And therefore it is that her merry laugh is no longer heard! "Ah!" said Lionel, softly breaking the pause at length, "do not turn your eyes from me, or I shall think that there are tears in them!" Sophy's breast heaved, but her eyes were averted still. Lionel rose gently, and came to the other side of her quiet form. "Fie! there are tears, and you would hide them from me. Ungrateful!"

Sophy looked at him now with candid, inexpressible, guileless affection in those swimming eyes, and said with touching sweetness: "Ungrateful! Should I not be so if I were gay and happy?"

And in self-reproach for not being sufficiently unhappy while

that young consoler was by her side, she too rose, left the
arbour, and looked wistfully along the river. George Morley was
expected; he might bring tidings of the absent. And now while
Lionel, rejoining her, exerts all his eloquence to allay her anxiety
and encourage her hopes, and while they thus, in that divinest
stage of love, ere the tongue repeats what the eyes have told,
glide along—here in sunlight by lingering flowers— there in shadow
under mournful willows, whose leaves are ever the latest to fall,
let us explain by what links of circumstance Sophy became the
great lady's guest, and Waife once more a homeless wanderer.

CHAPTER III

COMPRISING MANY NEEDFUL
EXPLANATIONS ILLUSTRATIVE OF WISE SAWS;
AS FOR EXAMPLE, "HE THAT HATH AN ILL NAME
IS HALF HANGED." "HE THAT HATH BEEN BITTEN
BY A SERPENT IS AFRAID OF A ROPE." "HE THAT
LOOKS FOR A STAR PUTS OUT HIS CANDLES;"
AND, "WHEN GOD WILLS, ALL WINDS BRING
RAIN."

The reader has been already made aware how, by an impulse of womanhood and humanity, Arabella Crane had been converted from a persecuting into a tutelary agent in the destinies of Waife and Sophy. That evolution in her moral being dated from the evening on which she had sought the cripple's retreat, to warn him of Jasper's designs. We have seen by what stratagem she had made it appear that Waife and his grandchild had sailed beyond the reach of molestation; with what liberality she had advanced the money that freed Sophy from the manager's claim; and how considerately she had empowered her agent to give the reference which secured to Waife the asylum in which we last beheld him. In a few stern sentences she had acquainted Waife with her fearless inflexible resolve to associate her fate henceforth with the life of his lawless son; and, by rendering abortive all his evil projects of plunder, to compel him at last

to depend upon her for an existence neither unsafe nor sordid, provided only that it were not dishonest. The moment that she revealed that design, Waife's trust in her was won. His own heart enabled him to comprehend the effect produced upon a character otherwise unamiable and rugged, by the grandeur of self-immolation and the absorption of one devoted heroic thought. In the strength and bitterness of passion which thus pledged her existence to redeem another's, he obtained the key to her vehement and jealous nature; saw why she had been so cruel to the child of a rival; why she had conceived compassion for that child in proportion as the father's unnatural indifference had quenched the anger of her own self-love; and, above all, why, as the idea of reclaiming and appropriating solely to herself the man who, for good or for evil, had grown into the all-predominant object of her life, gained more and more the mastery over her mind, it expelled the lesser and the baser passions, and the old mean revenge against an infant faded away before the light of that awakening conscience which is often rekindled from ashes by the sparks of a single better and worthier thought. And in the resolute design to reclaim Jasper Losely, Arabella came at once to a ground in common with his father, with his child. Oh what, too, would the old man owe to her, what would be his gratitude, his joy, if she not only guarded his spotless Sophy, but saved from the bottomless abyss his guilty son! Thus when Arabella Crane had, nearly five years before, sought Waife's discovered hiding-place, near the old bloodstained Tower, mutual interests

and sympathies had formed between them a bond of alliance not the less strong because rather tacitly acknowledged than openly expressed. Arabella had written to Waife from the Continent, for the first half-year pretty often, and somewhat sanguinely, as to the chance of Losely's ultimate reformation. Then the intervals of silence became gradually more prolonged, and the letters more brief. But still, whether from the wish not unnecessarily to pain the old man, or, as would be more natural to her character, which, even in its best aspects, was not gentle, from a proud dislike to confess failure, she said nothing of the evil courses which Jasper had renewed. Evidently she was always near him. Evidently, by some means or another, his life, furtive and dark, was ever under the glare of her watchful eyes.

Meanwhile Sophy had been presented to Caroline Montfort. As Waife had so fondly anticipated, the lone childless lady had taken with kindness and interest to the fair motherless child. Left to herself often for months together in the grand forlorn house, Caroline soon found an object to her pensive walks in the basket-maker's cottage. Sophy's charming face and charming ways stole more and more into affections which were denied all nourishment at home. She entered into Waife's desire to improve, by education, so exquisite a nature; and, familiarity growing by degrees, Sophy was at length coaxed up to the great house; and during the hours which Waife devoted to his rambles (for even in his settled industry he could not conquer his vagrant tastes, but would weave his reeds or osiers as he sauntered through

solitudes of turf or wood), became the docile delighted pupil in the simple chintz room which Lady Montfort had reclaimed from the desert of her surrounding palace. Lady Montfort was not of a curious turn of mind; profoundly indifferent even to the gossip of drawing-rooms, she had no rankling desire to know the secrets of village hearthstones. Little acquainted even with the great world—scarcely at all with any world below that in which she had her being, save as she approached humble sorrows by delicate charity—the contrast between Waife's calling and his conversation roused in her no vigilant suspicions. A man of some education, and born in a rank that touched upon the order of gentlemen, but of no practical or professional culture—with whimsical tastes—with roving eccentric habits—had, in the course of life, picked up much harmless wisdom, but, perhaps from want of worldly prudence, failed of fortune. Contented with an obscure retreat and a humble livelihood, he might naturally be loth to confide to others the painful history of a descent in life. He might have relations in a higher sphere, whom the confession would shame; he might be silent in the manly pride which shrinks from alms and pity and a tale of fall. Nay, grant the worst—grant that Waife had suffered in repute as well as fortune—grant that his character had been tarnished by some plausible circumstantial evidences which he could not explain away to the satisfaction of friends or the acquittal of a short-sighted world—had there not been, were there not always, many innocent men similarly afflicted? And who could hear Waife talk, or look on his

arch smile, and not feel that he was innocent? So, at least, thought Caroline Montfort. Naturally; for if, in her essentially woman-like character, there was one all-pervading and all-predominant attribute, it was PITY. Lead Fate placed her under circumstances fitted to ripen into genial development all her exquisite forces of soul, her true post in this life would have been that of the SOOTHER. What a child to some grief-worn father! What a wife to some toiling, aspiring, sensitive man of genius! What a mother to some suffering child! It seemed as if it were necessary to her to have something to compassionate and foster. She was sad when there was no one to comfort; but her smile was like a sunbeam from Eden when it chanced on a sorrow it could brighten away. Out of this very sympathy came her faults—faults of reasoning and judgment. Prudent in her own chilling path through what the world calls temptations, because so ineffably pure—because, to Fashion's light tempters, her very thought was as closed, as

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