ЭДВАРД БУЛЬВЕР-ЛИТТОН

"MY NOVEL" — VOLUME 11

Эдвард Бульвер-Литтон

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Содержание

Edward Bulwer-Lytton
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BOOK ELEVENTH

INITIAL CHAPTER

ON THE IMPORTANCE OF HATE AS AN AGENT IN CIVILIZED LIFE

It is not an uncommon crotchet amongst benevolent men to maintain that wickedness is necessarily a sort of insanity, and that nobody would make a violent start out of the straight path unless stung to such disorder by a bee in his bonnet. Certainly when some very clever, well-educated person like our friend, Randal Leslie, acts upon the fallacious principle that "roguery is the best policy," it is curious to see how many points he has in common with the insane: what over-cunning, what irritable restlessness, what suspicious belief that the rest of the world are in a conspiracy against him, which it requires all his wit to baffle and turn to his own proper aggrandizement and profit. Perhaps some of my readers may have thought that I have represented Randal as unnaturally far-fetched in his schemes, too wire-drawn and subtle in his speculations; yet that is commonly the case with very refining intellects, when they choose to play the knave; it helps to disguise from themselves the ugliness of their ambition, just as a philosopher delights in the ingenuity of some metaphysical process, which ends in what plain men call "atheism," who would be infinitely shocked and offended if he were called an atheist.

Having premised thus much on behalf of the "Natural" in Randal Leslie's character, I must here fly off to say a word or two on the agency in human life exercised by a passion rarely seen without a mask in our debonair and civilized age,—I mean Hate.

In the good old days of our forefathers, when plain speaking and hard blows were in fashion, when a man had his heart at the tip of his tongue, and four feet of sharp iron dangling at his side, Hate played an honest, open part in the theatre of the world. In fact, when we read History, Hate seems to have "starred it" on the stage. But now, where is Hate? Who ever sees its face? Is it that smiling, good-tempered creature, that presses you by the hand so cordially, or that dignified figure of state that calls you its "Right Honourable friend"? Is it that bowing, grateful dependent; is it that soft-eyed Amaryllis? Ask not, guess not: you will only know it to be hate when the poison is in your cup, or the poniard in your breast. In the Gothic age, grim Humour painted "the Dance of Death;" in our polished century, some sardonic wit should give us "the Masquerade of Hate."

Certainly, the counter-passion betrays itself with ease to our gaze. Love is rarely a hypocrite. But Hate—how detect, and how guard against it? It lurks where you least suspect it; it is created by causes that you can the least foresee; and Civilization multiplies its varieties, whilst it favours its disguise: for Civilization increases the number of contending interests, and Refinement renders more susceptible to the least irritation the cuticle of Self-Love. But Hate comes covertly forth from some self-interest we have crossed, or some self-love we have wounded; and, dullards that we are, how seldom we are aware of our offence! You may be hated by a man you have never seen in your life: you may be hated as often by one you have loaded with benefits; you may so walk as not to tread on a worm; but you must sit fast on your easy-chair till you are carried out to your bier, if you would be sure not to tread on some snake of a foe. But, then, what harm does the hate do us? Very often

the harm is as unseen by the world as the hate is unrecognized by us. It may come on us, unawares, in some solitary byway of our life; strike us in our unsuspecting privacy; thwart as in some blessed hope we have never told to another; for the moment the world sees that it is Hate that strikes us, its worst power of mischief is gone.

We have a great many names for the same passion,—Envy, Jealousy, Spite, Prejudice, Rivalry; but they are so many synonyms for the one old heathen demon. When the death-giving shaft of Apollo sent the plague to some unhappy Achaean, it did not much matter to the victim whether the god were called Helios or Smintheus.

No man you ever met in the world seemed more raised above the malice of Hate than Audley Egerton: even in the hot war of politics he had scarcely a personal foe; and in private life he kept himself so aloof and apart from others that he was little known, save by the benefits the waste of his wealth conferred. That the hate of any one could reach the austere statesman on his high pinnacle of esteem,—you would have smiled at the idea! But Hate is now, as it ever has been, an actual Power amidst "the Varieties of Life;" and, in spite of bars to the door, and policemen in the street, no one can be said to sleep in safety while there wakes the eye of a single foe.

CHAPTER II

The glory of Bond Street is no more. The title of Bond Street Lounger has faded from our lips. In vain the crowd of equipages and the blaze of shops: the renown of Bond Street was in its pavement, its pedestrians. Art thou old enough, O reader! to remember the Bond Street Lounger and his incomparable generation? For my part, I can just recall the decline of the grand era. It was on its wane when, in the ambition of boyhood, I first began to muse upon high neck cloths and Wellington boots. But the ancient /habitues/—the /magni nominis umbrae/, contemporaries of Brummell in his zenith, boon companions of George IV. in his regency— still haunted the spot. From four to six in the hot month of June, they sauntered stately to and fro, looking somewhat mournful even then, foreboding the extinction of their race. The Bond Street Lounger was rarely seen alone: he was a social animal, and walked arm in arm with his fellow-man. He did not seem born for the cares of these ruder times; not made was he for an age in which Finsbury returns members to parliament. He loved his small talk; and never since then has talk been so pleasingly small. Your true Bond Street Lounger had a very dissipated look. His youth had been spent with heroes who loved their bottle. He himself had perhaps supped with Sheridan. He was by nature a spendthrift: you saw it in the roll of his walk. Men who make money rarely saunter; men who save money rarely swagger. But saunter and swagger both united to stamp PRODIGAL on the Bond Street Lounger. And so familiar as he was with his own set, and so amusingly supercilious with the vulgar residue of mortals whose faces were strange to Bond Street! But he is gone. The world, though sadder for his loss, still strives to do its best without him; and our young men, nowadays, attend to model cottages, and incline to Tractarianism. Still the place, to an unreflecting eye, has its brilliancy and bustle; but it is a thoroughfare, not a lounge. And adown the thoroughfare, somewhat before the hour when the throng is thickest, passed two gentlemen of an appearance exceedingly out of keeping with the place.—Yet both had the air of men pretending to aristocracy,—an old- world air of respectability and stake in the country, and Church-and- Stateism. The burlier of the two was even rather a beau in his way. He had first learned to dress, indeed, when Bond Street was at its acme, and Brummell in his pride. He still retained in his garb the fashion of his youth; only what then had spoken of the town, now betrayed the life of the country. His neckcloth ample and high, and of snowy whiteness, set off to comely advantage a face smooth-shaven, and of clear florid hues; his coat of royal blue, with buttons in which you might have seen yourself "veluti in speculum", was rather jauntily buttoned across a waist that spoke of lusty middle age, free from the ambition, the avarice, and the anxieties that fret Londoners into thread-papers; his small-clothes, of grayish drab, loose at the thigh and tight at the knee, were made by Brummell's own breeches-maker, and the gaiters to match (thrust half-way down the calf), had a manly dandyism that would have done honour to the beau-ideal of a county member. The profession of this gentleman's companion was unmistakable,—the shovel-hat, the clerical cut of the coat, the neckcloth without collar, that seemed made for its accessory the band, and something very decorous, yet very mild, in the whole mien of this personage, all spoke of one who was every inch the gentleman and the parson.

"No," said the portlier of these two persons,—"no, I can't say I like Frank's looks at all. There's certainly something on his mind. However, I suppose it will be all out this evening."

"He dines with you at your hotel, Squire? Well, you must be kind to him. We can't put old heads upon young shoulders."

"I don't object to his bead being young," returned the squire; "but I wish he had a little of Randal Leslie's good sense in it. I see how it will end; I must take him back to the country; and if he wants occupation, why, he shall keep the hounds, and I'll put him into Brooksby farm."

"As for the hounds," replied the parson, "hounds necessitate horses; and I think more mischief comes to a young man of spirit from the stables than from any other place in the world. They ought to be exposed from the pulpit, those stables!" added Mr. Dale, thoughtfully; "see what they entailed upon

Nimrod! But Agriculture is a healthful and noble pursuit, honoured by sacred nations, and cherished by the greatest men in classical times. For instance, the Athenians were—"

"Bother the Athenians!" cried the squire, irreverently; "you need not go so far back for an example. It is enough for a Hazeldean that his father and his grandfather and his great-grandfather all farmed before him; and a devilish deal better, I take it, than any of those musty old Athenians, no offence to them. But I'll tell you one thing, Parson, a man to farm well, and live in the country, should have a wife; it is half the battle."

"As to a battle, a man who is married is pretty sure of half, though not always the better half, of it," answered the parson, who seemed peculiarly facetious that day. "Ah, Squire, I wish I could think Mrs. Hazeldean right in her conjecture!—you would have the prettiest daughter-in-law in the three kingdoms. And I do believe that, if I could have a good talk with the young lady apart from her father, we could remove the only objection I know to the marriage. Those Popish errors—"

"Ah, very true!" cried the squire; "that Pope sticks hard in my gizzard. I could excuse her being a foreigner, and not having, I suppose, a shilling in her pocket—bless her handsome face!—but to be worshipping images in her room instead of going to the parish church, that will never do. But you think you could talk her out of the Pope, and into the family pew?"

"Why, I could have talked her father out of the Pope, only, when he had not a word to say for himself, he bolted out of the window. Youth is more ingenuous in confessing its errors."

"I own," said the squire, "that both Harry and I had a favourite notion of ours till this Italian girl got into our heads. Do you know we both took a great fancy to Randal's little sister,—pretty, blushing, English- faced girl as ever you saw. And it went to Harry's good heart to see her so neglected by that silly, fidgety mother of hers, her hair hanging about her ears; and I thought it would be a fine way to bring Randal and Frank more together, and enable me to do something for Randal himself,—a good boy with Hazeldean blood in his veins. But Violante is so handsome, that I don't wonder at the boy's choice; and then it is our fault,—we let them see so much of each other as children. However, I should be very angry if Rickeybockey had been playing sly, and running away from the Casino in order to give Frank an opportunity to carry on a clandestine intercourse with his daughter."

"I don't think that would be like Riccabocca; more like him to run away in order to deprive Frank of the best of all occasions to court Violante, if he so desired; for where could he see more of her than at the Casino?"

SQUIRE.—"That's well put. Considering he was only a foreign doctor, and, for aught we know, once went about in a caravan, he is a gentleman- like fellow, that Rickeybockey. I speak of people as I find them. But what is your notion about Frank? I see you don't think he is in love with Violante, after all. Out with it, man; speak plain."

PARSON.—"Since you so urge me, I own I do not think him in love with her; neither does my Carry, who is uncommonly shrewd in such matters."

SQUIRE.—"Your Carry, indeed!—as if she were half as shrewd as my Harry.

Carry—nonsense!"

PARSON (reddening).—-"I don't want to make invidious remarks; but, Mr. Hazeldean, when you sneer at my Carry, I should not be a man if I did not say that—"

SQUIRE (interrupting).—"She is a good little woman enough; but to compare her to my Harry!"

PARSON.—"I don't compare her to your Harry; I don't compare her to any woman in England, Sir. But you are losing your temper, Mr. Hazeldean!"

SQUIRE.—"I!"

PARSON.—"And people are staring at you, Mr. Hazeldean. For decency's sake, compose yourself, and change the subject. We are just at the Albany. I hope that we shall not find poor Captain Higginbotham as ill as he represents himself in his letter. Ah, is it possible? No, it cannot be. Look —look!"

SQUIRE.—"Where—what—where? Don't pinch so hard. Bless me, do you see a ghost?"

PARSON.—"There! the gentleman in black!"

SQUIRE.—"Gentleman in black! What! in broad daylight! Nonsense!"

Here the parson made a spring forward, and, catching the arm of the person in question, who himself had stopped, and was gazing intently on the pair, exclaimed,

"Sir, pardon me; but is not your name Fairfield? Ah, it is Leonard,—it is—my dear, dear boy! What joy! So altered, so improved, but still the same honest face. Squire, come here—your old friend, Leonard Fairfield."

"And he wanted to persuade me," said the squire, shaking Leonard heartily by the hand, "that you were the Gentleman in Black; but, indeed, he has been in strange humours. and tantrums all the morning. Well, Master Lenny; why, you are grown quite a gentleman! The world thrives with you, eh? I suppose you are head-gardener to some grandee."

"Not that, sir," said Leonard, smiling; "but the world has thriven with me at last, though not without some rough usage at starting. Ah, Mr. Dale, you can little guess how often I have thought of you and your discourse on Knowledge; and, what is more, how I have lived to feel the truth of your words, and to bless the lesson."

PARSON (much touched and flattered).—"I expected nothing less from you, Leonard; you were always a lad of great sense, and sound judgment. So you have thought of my little discourse on Knowledge, have you?"

SQUIRE.—"Hang knowledge! I have reason to hate the word. It burned down three ricks of mine; the finest ricks you ever set eyes on, Mr. Fairfield."

PARSON.—"That was not knowledge, Squire; that was ignorance."

SQUIRE.—"Ignorance! The deuce it was. I'll just appeal to you, Mr. Fairfield. We have been having sad riots in the shire, and the ringleader was just such another lad as you were!"

LEONARD.—"I am very much obliged to you, Mr. Hazeldean. In what respect?"

SQUIRE.—"Why, he was a village genius, and always reading some cursed little tract or other; and got mighty discontented with King, Lords, and Commons, I suppose, and went about talking of the wrongs of the poor, and the crimes of the rich, till, by Jove, sir, the whole mob rose one day with pitchforks and sickles, and smash went Farmer Smart's thrashing- machines; and on the same night my ricks were on fire. We caught the rogues, and they were all tried; but the poor deluded labourers were let off with a short imprisonment. The village genius, thank Heaven, is sent packing to Botany Bay."

LEONARD.—"But did his books teach him to burn ricks and smash machines?"

PARSON.—"No; he said quite the contrary, and declared that he had no hand in those misdoings."

SQUIRE.—"But he was proved to have excited, with his wild talk, the boobies who had! 'Gad, sir, there was a hypocritical Quaker once, who said to his enemy, 'I can't shed thy blood, friend, but I will hold thy head under water till thou art drowned.' And so there is a set of demagogical fellows, who keep calling out, 'Farmer, this is an oppressor, and Squire, that is a vampire! But no violence! Don't smash their machines, don't burn their ricks! Moral force, and a curse on all tyrants!' Well, and if poor Hodge thinks moral force is all my eye, and that the recommendation is to be read backwards, in the devil's way of reading the Lord's prayer, I should like to know which of the two ought to go to Botany Bay,—Hodge, who comes out like a man, if he thinks he is wronged, or t' other sneaking chap, who makes use of his knowledge to keep himself out of the scrape?"

PARSON.—"It may be very true; but when I saw that poor fellow at the bar, with his intelligent face, and heard his bold clear defence, and thought of all his hard struggles for knowledge, and how they had ended, because he forgot that knowledge is like fire, and must not be thrown amongst flax, —why, I could have given my right hand to save him. And, oh, Squire, do you remember his poor mother's shriek of despair when he was sentenced to transportation for life—I hear it now! And what,

Leonard—what do you think had misled him? At the bottom of all the mischief was a tinker's bag. You cannot forget Sprott?"

LEONARD.—"Tinker's bag! Sprott!"

SQUIRE.—-"That rascal, sir, was the hardest follow to nab you could possibly conceive; as full of quips and quirks as an Old Bailey lawyer. But we managed to bring it home to him. Lord! his bag was choke-full of tracts against every man who had a good coat on his back; and as if that was not enough, cheek by jowl with the tracts were lucifers, contrived on a new principle, for teaching my ricks the theory of spontaneous combustion. The labourers bought the lucifers—"

PARSON.—"And the poor village genius bought the tracts."

SQUIRE.—"All headed with a motto, 'To teach the working classes that knowledge is power.' So that I was right in saying that knowledge had burnt my ricks; knowledge inflamed the village genius, the village genius inflamed fellows more ignorant than himself, and they inflamed my stackyard. However, lucifers, tracts, village genius, and Sprott are all off to Botany Bay; and the shire has gone on much the better for it. So no more of your knowledge for me, begging your pardon, Mr. Fairfield. Such uncommonly fine ricks as mine were too! I declare, Parson, you are looking as if you felt pity for Sprott; and I saw you, indeed, whispering to him as he was taken out of court."

PARSON (looking sheepish).—"Indeed, Squire, I was only asking him what had become of his donkey, an unoffending creature."

SQUIRE.—"Unoffending! Upset me amidst a thistle-bed in my own village green! I remember it. Well, what did he say had become of the donkey?"

PARSON.—"He said but one word; but that showed all the vindictiveness of his disposition. He said it with a horrid wink, that made my blood run cold. 'What's become of your poor donkey?' said I, and he answered—"

SQUIRE.—"Go on. He answered—"

PARSON.—"'Sausages.'"

SQUIRE.—"Sausages! Like enough; and sold to the poor; and that's what the poor will come to if they listen to such revolutionizing villains. Sausages! Donkey sausages! "(spitting)—"'T is bad as eating one another; perfect cannibalism."

Leonard, who had been thrown into grave thought by the history of Sprott and the village genius, now pressing the parson's hand, asked permission to wait on him before Mr. Dale quitted London; and was about to withdraw, when the parson, gently detaining him, said, "No; don't leave me yet, Leonard,—I have so much to ask you, and to talk about. I shall be at leisure shortly. We are just now going to call on a relation of the squire's, whom you must recollect, I am sure,—Captain Higginbotham— Barnabas Higginbotham. He is very poorly."

"And I am sure he would take it kind in you to call too," said the squire, with great good-nature.

LEONARD.—"Nay, sir, would not that be a great liberty?"

SQUIRE.—"Liberty! To ask a poor sick gentleman how he is? Nonsense. And I say, Sir, perhaps, as no doubt you have been living in town, and know more of newfangled notions than I do, —perhaps you can tell us whether or not it is all humbug,—that new way of doctoring people."

LEONARD.—"What new way, sir. There are so many."

SQUIRE.—"Are there? Folks in London do look uncommonly sickly. But my poor cousin (he was never a Solomon) has got hold, he says, of a homely— homely—-What's the word, Parson?"

PARSON. "Homoeopathist."

SQUIRE.—"That's it. You see the captain went to live with one Sharpe Currie, a relation who had a great deal of money, and very little liver; —made the one, and left much of the other in Ingee, you understand. The captain had expectations of the money. Very natural, I dare say; but Lord, sir, what do you think has happened? Sharpe Currie has done him. Would not die, Sir; got back his liver, and the captain has lost his own. Strangest thing you ever heard. And then the ungrateful old Nabob

has dismissed the captain, saying, 'He can't bear to have invalids about him;' and is going to marry, and I have no doubt will have children by the dozen!"

PARSON.—" It was in Germany, at one of the Spas, that Mr. Currie recovered; and as he had the selfish inhumanity to make the captain go through a course of waters simultaneously with himself, it has so chanced that the same waters that cured Mr. Currie's liver have destroyed Captain Higginbotham's. An English homoeopathic physician, then staying at the Spa, has attended the captain hither, and declares that he will restore him by infinitesimal doses of the same chemical properties that were found in the waters which diseased him. Can there be anything in such a theory?"

LEONARD.—"I once knew a very able, though eccentric homoeopathist, and I am inclined to believe there may be something in the system. My friend went to Germany; it may possibly be the same person who attends the captain. May I ask his name?"

SQUIRE.—-"Cousin Barnabas does not mention it. You may ask it of himself, for here we are at his chambers. I say, Parson" (whispering slyly), "if a small dose of what hurt the captain is to cure him, don't you think the proper thing would be a—legacy? Ha! ha!"

PARSON (trying not to laugh).—"Hush, Squire. Poor human nature! We must be merciful to its infirmities. Come in, Leonard."

Leonard, interested in his doubt whether he might thus chance again upon Dr. Morgan, obeyed the invitation, and with his two companions followed the woman, who "did for the captain and his rooms," across the small lobby, into the presence of the sufferer.

CHAPTER III

Whatever the disposition towards merriment at his cousin's expense entertained by the squire, it vanished instantly at the sight of the captain's doleful visage and emaciated figure.

"Very good in you to come to town to see me,—very good in you, cousin, and in you, too, Mr. Dale. How very well you are both looking! I'm a sad wreck. You might count every bone in my body."

"Hazeldean air and roast beef will soon set you up, my boy," said the squire, kindly. "You were a great goose to leave them, and these comfortable rooms of yours in the Albany."

"They are comfortable, though not showy," said the captain, with tears in his eyes. "I had done my best to make them so. New carpets, this very chair—(morocco!), that Japan cat (holds toast and muffins)—just when— just when"—(the tears here broke forth, and the captain fairly whimpered)—"just when that ungrateful, bad-hearted man wrote me word 'he was—was dying and lone in the world;' and—and—to think what I've gone through for him;—and to treat me so! Cousin William, he has grown as hale as yourself, and—and—"

"Cheer up, cheer up!" cried the compassionate squire. "It is a very hard case, I allow. But you see, as the old proverb says, "T is ill waiting for a dead man's shoes;' and in future—I don't mean offence—but I think if you would calculate less on the livers of your relations, it would be all the better for your own. Excuse me!"

"Cousin William," replied the poor captain, "I am sure I never calculated; but still, if you had seen that deceitful man's good-for- nothing face—as yellow as a guinea—and have gone through all I've gone through, you would have felt cut to the heart, as I do. I can't bear ingratitude. I never could. But let it pass. Will that gentleman take a chair?"

PARSON.—"Mr. Fairfield has kindly called with us, because he knows something of this system of homeeopathy which you have adopted, and may, perhaps, know the practitioner. What is the name of your doctor?"

CAPTAIN (looking at his watch).—"That reminds me" (swallowing a globule). "A great relief these little pills—after the physic I've taken to please that malignant man. He always tried his doctor's stuff upon me. But there's another world, and a juster!"

With that pious conclusion the captain again began to weep.

"Touched," muttered the squire, with his forefinger on his forehead. "You seem to have a good—tidy sort of a nurse here, Cousin Barnabas. I hope she 's pleasant, and lively, and don't let you take on so."

"Hist!—don't talk of her. All mercenary; every bit of her fawning! Would you believe it? I give her ten shillings a week, besides all that goes down of my pats of butter and rolls, and I overheard the jade saying to the laundress that 'I could not last long; and she 'd—EXPECTATIONS!' Ah, Mr. Dale, when one thinks of the sinfulness there is in this life! But I'll not think of it. No, I'll not. Let us change the subject. You were asking my doctor's name. It is—"

Here the woman with "expectations" threw open the door, and suddenly announced "DR. MORGAN."

CHAPTER IV

The parson started, and so did Leonard.

The homoeopathist did not at first notice either. With an unobservant bow to the visitors, he went straight to the patient, and asked, "How go the symptoms?"

Therewith the captain commenced, in a tone of voice like a schoolboy reciting the catalogue of the ships in Homer. He had been evidently conning the symptoms, and learning them by heart. Nor was there a single nook or corner in his anatomical organization, so far as the captain was acquainted with that structure, but what some symptom or other was dragged therefrom, and exposed to day. The squire listened with horror to the morbific inventory, muttering at each dread interval, "Bless me! Lord bless me! What, more still! Death would be a very happy release!" Meanwhile the doctor endured the recital with exemplary patience, noting down in the leaves of his pocketbook what appeared to him the salient points in this fortress of disease to which he had laid siege, and then, drawing forth a minute paper said,

"Capital,—nothing can be better. This powder must be dissolved in eight tablespoonfuls of water; one spoonful every two hours."

"Tablespoonful?"

"Tablespoonful."

"'Nothing can be better,' did you say, sir?" repeated the squire, who in his astonishment at that assertion applied to the captain's description of his sufferings, had hitherto hung fire,—"nothing can be better?"

"For the diagnosis, sir!" replied Dr. Morgan.

"For the dogs' noses, very possibly," quoth the squire; "but for the inside of Cousin Higginbotham, I should think nothing could be worse."

"You are mistaken, sir," replied Dr. Morgan. "It is not the captain who speaks here,—it is his liver. Liver, sir, though a noble, is an imaginative organ, and indulges in the most extraordinary fictions. Seat of poetry and love and jealousy—the liver. Never believe what it says. You have no idea what a liar it is! But—ahem—ahem. Cott—I think I've seen you before, sir. Surely your name's Hazeldean?"

"William Hazeldean, at your service, Doctor. But where have you seen me?"

"On the hustings at Lansmere. You were speaking on behalf of your distinguished brother, Mr. Egerton."

"Hang it!" cried the squire: "I think it must have been my liver that spoke there! for I promised the electors that that half-brother of mine would stick by the land, and I never told a bigger lie in my life!"

Here the patient, reminded of his other visitors, and afraid he was going to be bored with the enumeration of the squire's wrongs, and probably the whole history of his duel with Captain Dashmore, turned with a languid wave of his hand, and said, "Doctor, another friend of mine, the Rev. Mr. Dale, and a gentleman who is acquainted with homoeopathy."

"Dale? What, more old friends!" cried the doctor, rising; and the parson came somewhat reluctantly from the window nook, to which he had retired. The parson and the homoeopathist shook hands.

"We have met before on a very mournful occasion," said the doctor, with feeling.

The parson held his finger to his lips, and glanced towards Leonard. The doctor stared at the lad, but he did not recognize in the person before him the gaunt, care-worn boy whom he had placed with Mr. Prickett, until Leonard smiled and spoke. And the smile and the voice sufficed.

"Cott! and it is the poy!" cried Dr. Morgan; and he actually caught hold of Leonard, and gave him an affectionate Welch hug. Indeed, his agitation at these several surprises became so great that

he stopped short, drew forth a globule—"Aconite,—good against nervous shocks!" and swallowed it incontinently.

"Gad," said the squire, rather astonished, "'t is the first doctor I ever saw swallow his own medicine! There must be sornething in it."

The captain now, highly disgusted that so much attention was withdrawn from his own case, asked in a querulous voice, "And as to diet? What shall I have for dinner?"

"A friend!" said the doctor, wiping his eyes.

"Zounds!" cried the squire, retreating, "do you mean to say, that the British laws (to be sure they are very much changed of late) allow you to diet your patients upon their fellow-men? Why, Parson, this is worse than the donkey sausages."

"Sir," said Dr. Morgan, gravely, "I mean to say, that it matters little what we eat in comparison with care as to whom we eat with. It is better to exceed a little with a friend than to observe the strictest regimen, and eat alone. Talk and laughter help the digestion, and are indispensable in affections of the liver. I have no doubt, sir, that it was my patient's agreeable society that tended to restore to health his dyspeptic relative, Mr. Sharpe Currie."

The captain groaned aloud.

"And, therefore, if one of you gentlemen will stay and dine with Mr. Higginbotham, it will greatly assist the effects of his medicine."

The captain turned an imploring eye, first towards his cousin, then towards the parson.

"I 'm engaged to dine with my son—very sorry," said the squire. "But Dale, here—"

"If he will be so kind," put in the captain, "we might cheer the evening with a game at whist,—double dummy." Now, poor Mr. Dale had set his heart on dining with an old college friend, and having no stupid, prosy double dummy, in which one cannot have the pleasure of scolding one's partner, but a regular orthodox rubber, with the pleasing prospect of scolding all the three other performers. But as his quiet life forbade him to be a hero in great things, the parson had made up his mind to be a hero in small ones. Therefore, though with rather a rueful face, he accepted the captain's invitation, and promised to return at six o'clock to dine. Meanwhile he must hurry off to the other end of the town, and excuse himself from the pre-engagement he had already formed. He now gave his card, with the address of a quiet family hotel thereon, to Leonard, and not looking quite so charmed with Dr. Morgan as he was before that unwelcome prescription, he took his leave. The squire too, having to see a new churn, and execute various commissions for his Harry, went his way (not, however, till Dr. Morgan had assured him that, in a few weeks, the captain might safely remove to Hazeldean); and Leonard was about to follow, when Morgan hooked his arm in his old /protege/, and said, "But I must have some talk with you; and you have to tell me all about the little orphan girl."

Leonard could not resist the pleasure of talking about Helen; and he got into the carriage, which was waiting at the door for the homoeopathist.

"I am going in the country a few miles to see a patient," said the doctor; "so we shall have time for undisturbed consultation. I have so often wondered what had become of you. Not hearing from Prickett, I wrote to him, and received from his heir an answer as dry as a bone. Poor fellow, I found that he had neglected his globules and quitted the globe. Alas, 'pulvis et umbra sumus!' I could learn no tidings of you. Prickett's successor declared he knew nothing about you. I hoped the best; for I always fancied you were one who would fall on your legs,— bilious-nervous temperament; such are the men who succeed in their undertakings, especially if they take a spoonful of chamomilla whenever they are over-excited. So now for your history and the little girl's,— pretty little thing,— never saw a more susceptible constitution, nor one more suited to pulsatilla."

Leonard briefly related his own struggles and success, and informed the good doctor how they had at last discovered the nobleman in whom poor Captain Digby had confided, and whose care of the orphan had justified the confidence.

Dr. Morgan opened his eyes at hearing the name of Lord L'Estrange. "I remember him very well," said he, "when I practised murder as an allopathist at Lansmere. But to think that wild boy, so full of whim and life and spirit, should become staid enough for a guardian to that dear little child, with her timid eyes and pulsatilla sensibilities. Well, wonders never cease! And he has befriended you too, you say. Ah, he knew your family."

"So he says. Do you think, sir, that he ever knew—ever saw—my mother?"

"Eh! your mother?—Nora?" exclaimed the doctor, quickly; and, as if struck by some sudden thought, his brows met, and he remained silent and musing a few moments; then, observing Leonard's eyes fixed on him earnestly, he replied to the question,

"No doubt he saw her; she was brought up at Lady Lansmere's. Did he not tell you so?"

"No." A vague suspicion here darted through Leonard's mind, but as suddenly vanished. His father! Impossible. His father must have deliberately wronged the dead mother. And was Harley L'Estrange a man capable of such wrong? And had he been Harley's son, would not Harley have guessed it at once, and so guessing, have owned and claimed him? Besides, Lord L'Estrange looked so young,—old enough to be Leonard's father!—he could not entertain the idea. He roused himself and said, falteringly,

"You told me you did not know by what name I should call my father."

"And I told you the truth, to the best of my belief."

"By your honour, sir?"

"By my honour, I do not know it."

There was now a long silence. The carriage had long left London, and was on a high road somewhat lonelier, and more free from houses than most of those which form the entrances to the huge city. Leonard gazed wistfully from the window, and the objects that met his eyes gradually seemed to appeal to his memory. Yes! it was the road by which he had first approached the metropolis, hand in hand with Helen—and hope so busy at his poet's heart. He sighed deeply. He thought he would willingly have resigned all he had won—independence, fame, all—to feel again the clasp of that tender hand, again to be the sole protector of that gentle life.

The doctor's voice broke on his revery. "I am going to see a very interesting patient,—coats to his stomach quite worn out, sir,—man of great learning, with a very inflamed cerebellum. I can't do him much good, and he does me a great deal of harm."

"How harm?" asked Leonard, with an effort at some rejoinder.

"Hits me on the heart, and makes my eyes water; very pathetic case,— grand creature, who has thrown himself away. Found him given over by the allopathists, and in a high state of delirium tremens, restored him for a time, took a great liking to him,—could not help it,—swallowed a great many globules to harden myself against him, would not do, brought him over to England with the other patients, who all pay me well (except Captain Higginbotham). But this poor fellow pays me nothing,—costs me a great deal in time and turnpikes, and board and lodging. Thank Heaven, I'm a single man, and can afford it! My poy, I would let all the other patients go to the allopathists if I could but save this poor, big, penniless, princely fellow. But what can one do with a stomach that has not a rag of its coats left? Stop" (the doctor pulled the check-string). "This is the stile. I get out here and go across the fields."

That stile, those fields—with what distinctness Leonard remembered them. Ah, where was Helen? Could she ever, ever again be, his child-angel?

"I will go with you, if you permit," said he to the good doctor. "And while you pay your visit, I will saunter by a little brook that I think must run by your way."

"The Brent—you know that brook? Ah, you should hear my poor patient talk of it, and of the hours he has spent angling in it,—you would not know whether to laugh or cry. The first day he was brought down to the place, he wanted to go out and try once more, he said, for his old deluding demon,—a one-eyed perch."

"Heavens!" exclaimed Leonard, "are you speaking of John Burley?"

"To be sure, that is his name,—John Burley."

"Oh, has it come to this? Cure him, save him, if it be in human power. For the last two years I have sought his trace everywhere, and in vain, the moment I had money of my own, a home of my own. Poor, erring, glorious Burley! Take me to him. Did you say there was no hope?"

"I did not say that," replied the doctor. "But art can only assist Nature; and though Nature is ever at work to repair the injuries we do to her, yet, when the coats of a stomach are all gone, she gets puzzled, and so do I. You must tell me another time how you came to know Burley, for here we are at the house, and I see him at the window looking out for me."

The doctor opened the garden gate of the quiet cottage to which poor Burley had fled from the pure presence of Leonard's child-angel. And with heavy step, and heavy heart, Leonard mournfully followed, to behold the wrecks of him whose wit had glorified orgy, and "set the table in a roar." Alas, poor Yorick!

CHAPTER V

Audley Egerton stands on his hearth alone. During the short interval that has elapsed since we last saw him, events had occurred memorable in English history, wherewith we have nought to do in a narrative studiously avoiding all party politics even when treating of politicians. The new ministers had stated the general programme of their policy, and introduced one measure in especial that had lifted them at once to the dizzy height of popular power. But it became clear that this measure could not be carried without a fresh appeal to the people. A dissolution of parliament, as Audley's sagacious experience had foreseen, was inevitable. And Audley Egerton had no chance of return for his own seat, for the great commercial city identified with his name. Oh, sad, but not rare, instance of the mutabilities of that same popular favour now enjoyed by his successors! The great commoner, the weighty speaker, the expert man of business, the statesman who had seemed a type of the practical steady sense for which our middle class is renowned,—he who, not three years since, might have had his honoured choice of the largest popular constituencies in the kingdom,—he, Audley Egerton, knew not one single town (free from the influences of private property or interest) in which the obscurest candidate, who bawled out for the new liberal measure, would not have beaten him hollow. Where one popular hustings, on which that grave sonorous voice, that had stilled so often the roar of faction, would not be drowned amidst the hoots of the scornful mob?

True, what were called the close boroughs still existed; true, many a chief of his party would have been too proud of the honour of claiming Andley Egerton for his nominee. But the ex-minister's haughty soul shrunk from this contrast to his past position. And to fight against the popular measure, as member of one of the seats most denounced by the people,—he felt it was a post in the grand army of parties below his dignity to occupy, and foreign to his peculiar mind, which required the sense of consequence and station. And if, in a few months, those seats were swept away—were annihilated from the rolls of parliament—where was he? Moreover, Egerton, emancipated from the trammels that had bound his will while his party was in office, desired, in the turn of events, to be nominee of no man,—desired to stand at least freely and singly on the ground of his own services, be guided by his own penetration; no law for action but his strong sense and his stout English heart. Therefore he had declined all offers from those who could still bestow seats in parliament. Seats that he could purchase with hard gold were yet open to him. And the L5,000 he had borrowed from Levy were yet untouched.

To this lone public man, public life, as we have seen, was the all in all. But now more than ever it was vital to his very wants. Around him yawned ruin. He knew that it was in Levy's power at any moment to foreclose on his mortgaged lands; to pour in the bonds and the bills which lay within those rosewood receptacles that lined the fatal lair of the sleek usurer; to seize on the very house in which now moved all the pomp of a retinue that vied with the valetaille of dukes; to advertise for public auction, under execution, "the costly effects of the Right Hon. Audley Egerton." But, consummate in his knowledge of the world, Egerton felt assured that Levy would not adopt these measures against him while he could still tower in the van of political war,—while he could still see before him the full chance of restoration to power, perhaps to power still higher than before, perhaps to power the highest of all beneath the throne. That Levy, whose hate he divined, though he did not conjecture all its causes, had hitherto delayed even a visit, even a menace, seemed to him to show that Levy still thought him one "to be helped," or, at least, one too powerful to crush. To secure his position in parliament unshackled, unfallen, if but for another year,—new combinations of party might arise, new reactions take place, in public opinion! And, with his hand pressed to his heart, the stern firm man muttered, "If not, I ask but to die in my harness, and that men may not know that I am a pauper until all that I need from my country is a grave."

Scarce had these words died upon his lips ere two quick knocks in succession resounded at the street door. In another moment Harley entered, and, at the same time, the servant in attendance approached Audley, and announced Baron Levy.

"Beg the baron to wait, unless he would prefer to name his own hour to call again," answered Egerton, with the slightest possible change of colour. "You can say I am now with Lord L'Estrange."

"I had hoped you had done forever with that deluder of youth," said Harley, as soon as the groom of the chambers had withdrawn. "I remember that you saw too much of him in the gay time, ere wild oats are sown; but now surely you can never need a loan; and if so is not Harley L'Estrange by your side?"

EGERTON.—"My dear Harley! doubtless he but comes to talk to me of some borough. He has much to do with those delicate negotiations."

HARLEY.—"And I have come on the same business. I claim the priority. I not only hear in the world, but I see by the papers, that Josiah Jenkins, Esq., known to fame as an orator who leaves out his h's, and young Lord Willoughby Whiggolin, who is just made a Lord of the Admiralty, because his health is too delicate for the army, are certain to come in for the city which you and your present colleague will as certainly vacate. That is true, is it not?"

EGERTON.—"My old Committee now vote for Jenkins and Whiggolin; and I suppose there will not be even a contest. Go on."

"So my father and I are agreed that you must condescend, for the sake of old friendship, to be once more member for Lansmere."

"Harley," exclaimed Egerton, changing countenance far more than he had done at the announcement of Levy's portentous visit, "Harley, no, no!"

"No! But why? Wherefore such emotion?" asked L'Estrauge, in surprise.

Audley was silent.

HARLEY.—"I suggested the idea to two or three of the late ministers; they all concur in advising you to accede. In the first place, if declining to stand for the place which tempted you from Lansmere, what more natural than that you should fall back on that earlier representation? In the second place, Lansmere is neither a rotten borough to be bought, nor a close borough, under one man's nomination. It is a tolerably large constituency. My father, it is true, has considerable interest in it, but only what is called the legitimate influence of property. At all events, it is more secure than a contest for a larger town, more dignified than a seat for a smaller. Hesitating still? Even my mother entreats me to say how she desires you to renew that connection."

"Harley," again exclaimed Egerton; and fixing upon his friend's earnest face eyes which, when softened by emotion, were strangely beautiful in their expression,—"Harley, if you could but read my heart at this moment, you would—you would—" His voice faltered, and he fairly bent his proud head upon Harley's shoulder; grasping the hand he had caught nervously, clingingly, "Oh, Harley, if I ever lose your love, your friendship, nothing else is left to me in the world."

"Audley, my dear, dear Audley, is it you who speak to me thus? You, my school friend, my life's confidant,—you?"

"I am grown very weak and foolish," said Egerton, trying to smile. "I do not know myself. I, too, whom you have so often called 'Stoic,' and likened to the Iron Man in the poem which you used to read by the riverside at Eton."

"But even then, my Audley, I knew that a warm human heart (do what you would to keep it down) beat strong under the iron ribs. And I often marvel now, to think you have gone through life so free from the wilder passions. Happier so!"

Egerton, who had turned his face from his friend's gaze, remained silent for a few moments; and he then sought to divert the conversation, and roused himself to ask Harley how he had succeeded in his views upon Beatrice, and his watch on the count.

"With regard to Peschiera," answered Harley, "I think we must have overrated the danger we apprehended, and that his wagers were but an idle boast. He has remained quiet enough, and seems devoted to play. His sister has shut her doors both on myself and my young associate during the last few days. I almost fear that in spite of very sage warnings of mine, she must have turned his poet's head, and that either he has met with some scornful rebuff to incautious admiration or that, he himself has grown aware of peril, and declines to face it; for he is very much embarrassed when I speak to him respecting her. But if the count is not formidable, why, his sister is not needed; and I hope yet to get justice for my Italian friend through the ordinary channels. I have secured an ally in a young Austrian prince, who is now in London, and who has promised to back, with all his influence, a memorial I shall transmit to Vienna.—/a propos/, my dear Audley, now that you have a little breathing-time, you must fix an hour for me to present to you my young poet, the son of her sister. At moments the expression of his face is so like hers."

"Ay, ay," answered Egerton, quickly, "I will see him as you wish, but later. I have not yet that breathing-time you speak of; but you say he has prospered; and, with your friendship, he is secure from fortune. I rejoice to think so."

"And your own /protege/, this Vandal Leslie, whom you forbid me to dislike—hard task!—what has he decided?"

"To adhere to my fate. Harley, if it please Heaven that I do not live to return to power, and provide adequately for that young man, do not forget that he clung to me in my fall."

"If he still cling to you faithfully, I will never forget it. I will forget only all that now makes me doubt him. But you talk of not living, Audley! Pooh! your frame is that of a predestined octogenarian."

"Nay," answered Audley, "I was but uttering one of those vague generalities which are common upon all mortal lips. And now farewell,— I must see this baron."

"Not yet, until you have promised to consent to my proposal, and be once more member for Lansmere. Tut! don't shake your head. I cannot be denied. I claim your promise in right of our friendship, and shall be seriously hurt if you even pause to reflect on it."

"Well, well, I know not how to refuse you, Harley; but you have not been to Lansmere yourself since—since that sad event. You must not revive the old wound,—you must not go; and—and, I own it, Harley, the remembrance of it pains even me. I would rather not go to Lansmere."

"Ah, my friend, this is an excess of sympathy, and I cannot listen to it. I begin even to blame my own weakness, and to feel that we have no right to make ourselves the soft slaves of the past."

"You do appear to me of late to have changed," cried Egerton, suddenly, and with a brightening aspect. "Do tell me that you are happy in the contemplation of your new ties,—that I shall live to see you once more restored to your former self."

"All I can answer, Audley," said L'Estrange, with a thoughtful brow, "is, that you are right in one thing,—I am changed; and I am struggling to gain strength for duty and for honour. Adieu! I shall tell my father that you accede to our wishes."

CHAPTER VI

When Harley was gone, Egerton sunk back on his chair, as if in extreme physical or mental exhaustion, all the lines of his countenance relaxed and jaded.

"To go back to that place—there—there—where—Courage, courage! what is another pang?"

He rose with an effort, and folding his arms tightly across his breast, paced slowly to and fro the large, mournful, solitary room. Gradually his countenance assumed its usual cold and austere composure,—the secret eye, the guarded lip, the haughty, collected front. The man of the world was himself once more.

"Now to gain time, and to baffle the usurer," murmured Egerton, with that low tone of easy scorn, which bespoke consciousness of superior power and the familiar mastery over hostile natures. He rang the bell: the servant entered.

"Is Baron Levy still waiting?"

"Yes, sir."

"Admit him." Levy entered.

"I beg your pardon, Levy," said the ex-minister, "for having so long detained you. I am now at your commands."

"My dear fellow," returned the baron, "no apologies between friends so old as we are; and I fear that my business is not so agreeable as to make you impatient to discuss it."

EGERTON (with perfect composure).—"I am to conclude, then, that you wish to bring our accounts to a close. Whenever you will, Levy."

THE BARON (disconcerted and surprised).—"Peste! /mon cher/, you take things coolly. But if our accounts are closed, I fear you will have but little to live upon."

EGERTON.—"I can continue to live on the salary of a Cabinet Minister."

BARON.—"Possibly; but you are no longer a Cabinet Minister."

EGERTON.—"You have never found me deceived—in a political prediction. Within twelve months (should life be spared to me) I shall be in office again. If the same to you, I would rather wait till then formally and amicably to resign to you my lands and this house. If you grant that reprieve, our connection can thus close without the eclat and noise which may be invidious to you, as it would be disagreeable to me. But if that delay be inconvenient, I will appoint a lawyer to examine your accounts, and adjust my liabilities."

THE BARON (soliloquizing).—"I don't like this. A lawyer! That may be awkward."

EGERTON (observing the baron, with a curl on his lip). "Well, Levy, how shall it be?"

THE BARON.—"You know, my dear fellow, it is not my character to be hard on any one, least of all upon an old friend. And if you really think there is a chance of your return to office, which you apprehend that an /esclandre/ as to your affairs at present might damage, why, let us see if we can conciliate matters. But, first, /mon cher/, in order to become a minister, you must at least have a seat in parliament; and pardon me the question, how the deuce are you to find one?"

EGERTON.—"It is found."

THE BARON.—"Ah, I forgot the L5,000 you last borrowed."

EGERTON.—"NO; I reserve that sum for another purpose."

THE BARON (with a forced laugh).—"Perhaps to defend yourself against the actions you apprehend from me?"

EGERTON.—"You are mistaken. But to soothe your suspicions I will tell you plainly, that finding any sum I might have insured on my life would be liable to debts preincurred, and (as you will be my sole creditor) might thus at my death pass back to you; and doubting whether, indeed, any office would accept my insurance, I appropriate that sum to the relief of my conscience. I intend to bestow it, while yet in life, upon my late wife's kinsman, Randal Leslie. And it is solely the wish to

do what I consider an act of justice, that has prevailed with me to accept a favour from the hands of Harley L'Estrange, and to become again the member for Lansmere."

THE BARON.—"Ha!—Lansmere! You will stand for Lansmere?"

EGERTON (wincing).—"I propose to do so."

THE BARON.—"I believe you will be opposed, subjected to even a sharp contest. Perhaps you may lose your election."

EGERTON.—"If so, I resign myself, and you can foreclose on my estates."

THE BARON (his brow clearing).—"Look you, Egerton, I shall be too happy to do you a favour."

EGERTON (with stateliness).—"Favour! No, Baron Levy, I ask from you no favour. Dismiss all thought of rendering me one. It is but a consideration of business on both sides. If you think it better that we shall at once settle our accounts, my lawyer shall investigate them. If you agree to the delay I request, my lawyer shall give you no trouble; and all that I have, except hope and character, pass to your hands without a struggle."

THE BARON.—"Inflexible and ungracious, favour or not—put it as you will—I accede, provided, first, that you allow me to draw up a fresh deed, which will accomplish your part of the compact; and secondly, that we saddle the proposed delay with the condition that you do not lose your election."

EGERTON.—"Agreed. Have you anything further to say?"

THE BARON.—"Nothing, except that, if you require more money, I am still at your service."

EGERTON.—"I thank you. No; I shall take the occasion of my retirement from office to reduce my establishment. I have calculated already, and provided for the expenditure I need, up to the date I have specified, and I shall have no occasion to touch the L5,000 that I still retain."

"Your young friend, Mr. Leslie, ought to be very grateful to you," said the baron, rising. "I have met him in the world,—a lad of much promise and talent. You should try and get him also into parliament."

EGERTON (thoughtfully).—"You are a good judge of the practical abilities and merits of men, as regards worldly success. Do you really think Randal Leslie calculated for public life—for a parliamentary career?"

THE BARON.—"Indeed I do."

EGERTON (speaking more to himself than Levy).—-"Parliament without fortune,—'t is a sharp trial; still he is prudent, abstemious, energetic, persevering; and at the onset, under my auspices and advice, he might establish a position beyond his years."

THE BARON. "It strikes me that we might possibly get him into the next parliament; or, as that is not likely to last long, at all events, into the parliament to follow,—not for one of the boroughs which will be swept away, but for a permanent seat, and without expense."

EGERTON.—"Ay,—and how?"

THE BARON.—-"Give me a few days to consider. An idea has occurred to me. I will call again if I find it practicable. Good-day to you, Egerton, and success to your election for Lansmere."

CHAPTER VII

Peschiera had not been so inactive as he had appeared to Harley and the reader. On the contrary, he had prepared the way for his ultimate design, with all the craft and the unscrupulous resolution which belonged to his nature. His object was to compel Riccabocca into assenting to the count's marriage with Violante, or, failing that, to ruin all chance of his kinsman's restoration. Quietly and secretly he had sought out, amongst the most needy and unprincipled of his own countrymen, those whom he could suborn to depose to Riccabocca's participation in plots and conspiracies against the Austrian dominion. These his former connection with the Carbonari enabled him to track to their refuge in London; and his knowledge of the characters he had to deal with fitted him well for the villanous task he undertook. He had, therefore, already selected out of these desperadoes a sufficient number either to serve as witnesses against his kinsman, or to aid him in any more audacious scheme which circumstance might suggest to his adoption. Meanwhile, he had (as Harley had suspected he would) set spies upon Randal's movements; and the day before that young traitor confided to him Violante's retreat, he had at least got scent of her father's.

The discovery that Violante was under a roof so honoured, and seemingly so safe, as Lord Lansmere's, did not discourage this bold and desperate adventurer. We have seen him set forth to reconnoitre the house at Knightsbridge. He had examined it well, and discovered the quarter which he judged favourable to a coup-de-main, should that become necessary.

Lord Lansmere's house and grounds were surrounded by a wall, the entrance being to the high-road, and by a porter's lodge. At the rear there lay fields crossed by a lane or byroad. To these fields a small door in the wall, which was used by the gardeners in passing to and from their work, gave communication. This door was usually kept locked; but the lock was of the rude and simple description common to such entrances, and easily opened by a skeleton key. So far there was no obstacle which Peschiera's experience in conspiracy and gallantry did not disdain as trivial. But the count was not disposed to abrupt and violent means in the first instance. He had a confidence in his personal gifts, in his address, in his previous triumphs over the sex, which made him naturally desire to hazard the effect of a personal interview; and on this he resolved with his wonted audacity. Randal's description of Violante's personal appearance, and such suggestions as to her character and the motives most likely to influence her actions as that young lynx-eyed observer could bestow, were all that the count required of present aid from his accomplice.

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