BENJAMIN DISRAELI

LOTHAIR

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Disraeli B.

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Содержание

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CHAPTER 1

"I remember him a little boy," said the duchess, "a pretty little boy, but very shy. His mother brought him to us one day. She was a dear friend of mine; you know she was one of my bridesmaids?"

"And you have never seen him since, mamma?" inquired a married daughter, who looked like the younger sister of her mother.

"Never; he was an orphan shortly after; I have often reproached myself, but it is so difficult to see boys. Then, he never went to school, but was brought up in the Highlands with a rather savage uncle; and if he and Bertram had not become friends at Christchurch, I do not well see how we ever could have known him."

These remarks were made in the morning-room of Brentham, where the mistress of the mansion sat surrounded by her daughters, all occupied with various works. One knitted a purse, another adorned a slipper a third emblazoned a page. Beautiful forms in counsel leaned over frames embroidery, while two fair sisters more remote occasionally burst into melody as they tried the passages of a new air, which had been dedicated to them in the manuscript of some devoted friend.

The duchess, one of the greatest heiresses of Britain, singularly beautify and gifted with native grace, had married in her teens one of the wealthiest and most powerful of our nobles, and scarcely order than herself. Her husband was as distinguished for his appearance and his manners as his bride, and those who speculate on race were interested in watching the development of their progeny, who in form and color, and voice, and manner, and mind, were a reproduction of their parents, who seemed only the elder brother and sister of a gifted circle. The daughters with one exception came first, and all met the same fate. After seventeen years of a delicious home they were presented, and immediately married; and all to personages of high consideration. After the first conquest, this fate seemed as regular as the order of Nature. Then came a son, who was now at Christchurch, and then several others, some at school, and some scarcely out of the nursery. There was one daughter unmarried, and she was to be presented next season. Though the family likeness was still apparent in Lady Corisande, in general expression she differed from her sisters. They were all alike with their delicate aquiline noses, bright complexions, short upper lips, and eyes of sunny light. The beauty of Lady Corisande was even more distinguished and more regular, but whether it were the effect of her dark-brown hair and darker eyes, her countenance had not the lustre of the res, and its expression was grave and perhaps pensive.

The duke, though still young, and naturally of a gay and joyous temperament, had a high sense of duty, and strong domestic feelings. He was never wanting in his public place, and he was fond of his wife and his children; still more, proud of them. Every day when he looked into the glass, and gave the last touch to his consummate toilet, he offered his grateful thanks to Providence that his family was not unworthy of him.

His grace was accustomed to say that he had only one misfortune, and it was a great one; he had no home. His family had married so many heiresses, and he, consequently, possessed so many halls and castles, at all of which, periodically, he wished, from a right feeling, to reside, that there was no sacred spot identified with his life in which his heart, in the bustle and tumult of existence, could take refuge. Brentham was the original seat of his family, and he was even passionately fond of it; but it was remarkable how very short a period of his yearly life was passed under its stately roof. So it was his custom always to repair to Brentham the moment the season was over, and he would exact from his children, that, however short might be the time, they would be his companions under those

circumstances. The daughters loved Brentham, and they loved to please their father; but the sons-in-law, though they were what is called devoted to their wives, and, unusual as it may seem, scarcely less attached to their legal parents, did not fall very easily into this arrangement. The country in August without sport was unquestionably to them a severe trial: nevertheless, they rarely omitted making their appearance, and, if they did occasionally vanish, sometimes to Cowes, sometimes to Switzerland, sometimes to Norway, they always wrote to their wives, and always alluded to their immediate or approaching return; and their letters gracefully contributed to the fund of domestic amusement.

And yet it would be difficult to find a fairer scene than Brentham offered, especially in the lustrous effulgence of a glorious English summer. It was an Italian palace of freestone; vast, ornate, and in scrupulous condition; its spacious and graceful chambers filled with treasures of art, and rising itself from statued and stately terraces. At their foot spread a gardened domain of considerable extent, bright with flowers, dim with coverts of rare shrubs, and musical with fountains. Its limit reached a park, with timber such as the midland counties only can produce. The fallow deer trooped among its ferny solitudes and gigantic oaks; but, beyond the waters of the broad and winding lake, the scene became more savage, and the eye caught the dark forms of the red deer on some jutting mount, shrinking with scorn from communion with his gentler brethren.

CHAPTER 2

Lothair was the little boy whom the duchess remembered. He was a posthumous child, and soon lost a devoted mother. His only relation was one of his two guardians, a Scotch noble—a Presbyterian and a Whig. This uncle was a widower with some children, but they were girls, and, though Lothair was attached to them, too young to be his companions. Their father was a keen, hard man, honorable and just but with no softness of heart or manner. He guarded with precise knowledge and with unceasing vigilance over Lothair's vast inheritance, which was in many counties and in more than one kingdom; but he educated him in a Highland home, and when he had reached boyhood thought fit to send him to the High School of Edinburgh. Lothair passed a monotonous, if not a dull, life; but he found occasional solace in the scenes of a wild and beautiful nature, and delight in all the sports of the field and forest, in which he was early initiated and completely indulged. Although an Englishman, he was fifteen before he re-visited his country, and then his glimpses of England were brief, and to him scarcely satisfactory. He was hurried sometimes to vast domains, which he heard were his own; and sometimes whisked to the huge metropolis, where he was shown St. Paul's and the British-Museum. These visits left a vague impression of bustle without kindness and exhaustion without excitement; and he was glad to get back to his glens, to the moor and the mountain-streams.

His father, in the selection of his guardians, had not contemplated this system of education. While he secured by the appointment of his brother-in-law, the most competent and trustworthy steward of his son's fortune, he had depended on another for that influence which should mould the character, guide the opinions, and form the tastes of his child. The other guardian was a clergyman, his father's private tutor and heart-friend; scarcely his parent's senior, but exercising over him irresistible influence, for he was a man of shining talents and abounding knowledge, brilliant and profound. But unhappily, shortly after Lothair became an orphan, this distinguished man seceded from the Anglican communion, and entered the Church of Rome. From this moment there was war between the guardians. The uncle endeavored to drive his colleague from the trust: in this he failed, for the priest would not renounce his office. The Scotch noble succeeded, however, in making it a fruitless one: he thwarted every suggestion that emanated from the obnoxious quarter; and, indeed, the secret reason of the almost constant residence of Lothair in Scotland, and of his harsh education, was the fear of his relative, that the moment he crossed the border he might, by some mysterious process, fall under the influence that his guardian so much dreaded and detested.

There was however, a limit to these severe precautions, even before Lothair should reach his majority. His father had expressed in his will that his son should be educated at the University of Oxford, and at the same college of which he had been a member. His uncle was of opinion he complied with the spirit of this instruction by sending Lothair to the University of Edinburgh, which would give the last tonic to his moral system; and then commenced a celebrated chancery-suit, instituted by the Roman Catholic guardian, in order to enforce a literal compliance with the educational condition of the will. The uncle looked upon this movement as a popish plot, and had recourse to every available allegation and argument to baffle it: but ultimately in vain. With every precaution to secure his Protestant principles, and to guard against the influence, or even personal interference of his Roman Catholic guardian, the lord-chancellor decided that Lothair should be sent to Christchurch.

Here Lothair, who had never been favored with a companion of his own age and station, soon found a congenial one in the heir of Brentham. Inseparable in pastime, not dissociated even in study, sympathizing companionship soon ripened into fervent friendship. They lived so much together that the idea of separation became not only painful but impossible; and, when vacation arrived, and Brentham was to be visited by its future lord, what more natural than that it should be arranged that Lothair should be a visitor to his domain?

CHAPTER 3

Although Lothair was the possessor of as many palaces and castles as the duke himself, it is curious that his first dinner at Brentham was almost his introduction into refined society. He had been a guest at the occasional banquets of his uncle; but these were festivals of the Picts and Scots; rude plenty and coarse splendor, with noise instead of conversation, and a tumult of obstructive defendants, who impeded, by their want of skill, the very convenience which they were purposed to facilitate. How different the surrounding scene! A table covered with flowers, bright with fanciful crystal, and porcelain that had belonged to sovereigns, who had given a name to its color or its form. As for those present, all seemed grace and gentleness, from the radiant daughters of the house to the noiseless attendants that anticipated all his wants, and sometimes seemed to suggest his wishes.

Lothair sat between two of the married daughters. They addressed him with so much sympathy that he was quite enchanted. When they asked their pretty questions and made their sparkling remarks, roses seemed to drop from their lips, and sometimes diamonds. It was a rather large party, for the Brentham family were so numerous that they themselves made a festival. There were four married daughters, the duke and two sons-in-law, a clergyman or two, and some ladies and gentlemen who were seldom absent from this circle, and who, by their useful talents and various accomplishments, alleviated the toil or cares of life from which even princes are not exempt.

When the ladies had retired to the duchess's drawing-room, all the married daughters clustered round their mother.

"Do you know, mamma, we all think him very, good-looking," said the youngest married daughter, the wife of the listless and handsome St. Aldegonde.

"And not at all shy," said Lady Montairy, "though reserved."

"I admire deep-blue eyes with dark lashes," said the duchess.

Notwithstanding the decision of Lady Montairy, Lothair was scarcely free from embarrassment when he rejoined the ladies; and was so afraid of standing alone, or talking only to men, that he was almost on the point of finding refuge in his dinner-companions, had not he instinctively felt that this would have been a social blunder. But the duchess relieved him: her gracious glance caught his at the right moment, and she rose and met him some way as he advanced. The friends had arrived so late, that Lothair had had only time to make a reverence of ceremony before dinner.

"It is not our first meeting," said her grace; "but that you cannot remember."

"Indeed I do," said Lothair, "and your grace gave me a golden heart."

"How can you remember such things," exclaimed the duchess, "which I had myself forgotten!"

"I have rather a good memory," replied Lothair; "and it is not wonderful that I should remember this, for it is the only present that ever was made me."

The evenings at Brentham were short, but they were sweet. It was a musical family, without being fanatical on the subject. There was always music, but it was not permitted that the guests should be deprived of other amusements. But music was the basis of the evening's campaigns. The duke himself sometimes took a second; the four married daughters warbled sweetly; but the great performer was Lady Corisande. When her impassioned tones sounded, there was a hushed silence in every chamber; otherwise, many things were said and done amid accompanying melodies, that animated without distracting even a whistplayer. The duke himself rather preferred a game of piquet or cart with Captain Mildmay, and sometimes retired with a troop to a distant, but still visible, apartment, where they played with billiard-balls games which were not billiards.

The ladies had retired, the duke had taken his glass of seltzer-water, and had disappeared. The gentry lingered and looked at each other, as if they were an assembly of poachers gathering for an expedition, and then Lord St. Aldegonde, tall, fair, and languid, said to Lothair, "do you smoke?"

"No!"

“I should have thought Bertram would have seduced you by this time. Then let us try. Montairy will give you one of his cigarettes, so mild that his wife never finds him out.”

CHAPTER 4

The breakfast-room at Brentham was very bright. It opened on a garden of its own, which, at this season, was so glowing, and cultured into patterns so fanciful and finished, that it had the resemblance of a vast mosaic. The walls of the chamber were covered with bright drawings and sketches of our modern masters, and frames of interesting miniatures, and the meal was served on half a dozen or more round tables, which vied with each other in grace and merriment; brilliant as a cluster of Greek or Italian republics, instead of a great metropolitan table, like a central government absorbing all the genius and resources of the society.

Every scene In this life at Brentham charmed Lothair, who, though not conscious of being of a particularly gloomy temper, often felt that he had, somehow or other, hitherto passed through life rarely with pleasure, and never with joy.

After breakfast the ladies retired to their morning-room, and the gentlemen strolled to the stables, Lord St. Aldegonde lighting a Manilla cheroot of enormous length. As Lothair was very fond of horses, this delighted him. The stables at Brentham were rather too far from the house, but they were magnificent, and the stud worthy of them. It was numerous and choice, and, above all it was useful. It could supply, a readier number of capital riding-horses than any stable in England. Brentham was a great riding family. In the summer season the duke delighted to head a numerous troop, penetrate far into the country, and scamper home to a nine-o'clock dinner. All the ladies of the house were fond and fine horse-women. The mount of one of these riding-parties was magical. The dames and damsels vaulted on their barbs, and genets, and thorough-bred hacks, with such airy majesty; they were absolutely overwhelming with their bewildering habits and their bewitching hats.

Every thing was so new in this life at Brentham to Lothair, as well as so agreeable, that the first days passed by no means rapidly; for, though it sounds strange, time moves with equal slowness whether we experience many impressions or none. In a new circle every character is a study, and every incident an adventure; and the multiplicity of the images and emotions restrains the hours. But after a few days, though Lothair was not less delighted, for he was more so, he was astonished at the rapidity of time. The life was exactly the same, but equally pleasant; the same charming companions, the same refined festivity, the same fascinating amusements; but to his dismay Lothair recollected that nearly a fortnight had elapsed since his arrival. Lord St. Aldegonde also was on the wing; he was obliged to go to Cowes to see a sick friend, though he considerately left Bertha behind him. The other son-in-law remained, for he could not tear himself away from his wife. He was so distractedly fond of Lady Montairy that he would only smoke cigarettes. Lothair felt it was time to go, and he broke the circumstance to his friend Bertram.

These two "old fellows," as they mutually described each other, could not at all agree as to the course to be pursued. Bertram looked upon Lothair's suggestion as an act of desertion from himself. At their time of life, the claims of friendship are paramount. And where could Lothair go to? And what was there to do? Nowhere, and nothing. Whereas, if he would remain a little longer, as the duke expected and also the duchess, Bertram would go with him anywhere he liked, and do any thing he chose. So Lothair remained.

In the evening, seated by Lady Montairy, Lothair observed on her sister's singing, and said, "I never heard any of our great singers, but I cannot believe there is a finer voice in existence."

"Corisande's is a fine voice," said Lady Montairy, "but I admire her expression more than her tone; for there are certainly many finer voices, and some day you will hear them."

"But I prefer expression," said Lothair very decidedly.

"Ah, yes! doubtless," said Lady Montairy, who was working a purse, "and that's what we all want, I believe; at least we married daughters, they say. My brother, Granville St. Aldegonde, says we are all too much alike, and that Bertha St. Aldegonde would be parallel if she had no sisters."

"I don't at all agree with Lord St. Aldegonde," said Lothair, with energy. "I do not think it is possible to have too many relatives like you and your sisters."

Lady Montairy looked up with a smile, but she did not meet a smiling countenance. He seemed, what is called an earnest young man, this friend of her brother Bertram.

At this moment the duke sent swift messengers for all: to come, even the duchess, to partake in a new game just arrived from Russia, some miraculous combination of billiard-balls. Some rose directly, some lingering a moment arranging their work, but all were in motion. Corisande was at the piano, and disencumbering herself of some music. Lothair went up to her rather abruptly:

"Your singing," he said, "is the finest thing I ever heard. I am so happy that I am not going to leave Brentham to-morrow. There is no place in the world that I think equal to Brentham."

"And I love it, too, and no other place," she replied; "and I should be quite happy if I never left it."

CHAPTER 5

Lord Montairy was passionately devoted to croquet. He flattered himself that he was the most accomplished male performer existing. He would have thought absolutely the most accomplished, were it not for the unrivalled feats of Lady Montairy. She was the queen of croquet. Her sisters also used the mallet with admirable skill, but not like Georgina. Lord Montairy always looked forward to his summer croquet at Brentham. It was a great croquet family, the Brentham family; even listless Lord St. Aldegonde would sometimes play, with a cigar never out of his mouth. They did not object to his smoking in the air. On the contrary, "they rather liked it." Captain Mildmay, too, was a brilliant hand, and had written a treatise on croquet—the best going.

There was a great croquet-party one morning at Brentham. Some neighbors had been invited who loved the sport. Mr. Blenkinsop a grave young gentleman, whose countenance never relaxed while he played, and who was understood, to give his mind entirely up to croquet. He was the owner of the largest estate in the county, and it was thought would have very much liked to have allied himself with one of the young ladies of the house of Brentham; but these flowers were always plucked so quickly, that his relations with the distinguished circle never grew more intimate than croquet. He drove over with some fine horses, and several cases and bags containing instruments and weapons for the fray. His sister came with him, who had forty thousand pounds, but, they said, in some mysterious manner dependent on his consent to her marriage; and it was added that Mr. Blenkinsop would not allow his sister to marry because he would miss her so much in his favorite pastime. There were some other morning visitors, and one or two young curates in cassocks.

It seemed to Lothair a game of great deliberation and of more interest than gayety, though sometimes a cordial cheer, and sometimes a ringing laugh of amiable derision, notified a signal triumph or a disastrous failure. But the scene was brilliant: a marvellous lawn, the duchess's Turkish tent with its rich hangings, and the players themselves, the prettiest of all the spectacle, with their coquettish hats, and their half-veiled and half-revealed under-raiment scarlet and silver, or blue and gold, made up a sparkling and modish scene.

Lothair, who had left the players for a while, and was regaining the lawn, met the duchess.

"Your grace is not going to leave us, I hope?" he said, rather anxiously.

"For a moment. I have long promised to visit the new dairy; and I think this a good opportunity."

"I wish I might be your companion," said Lothair; and, invited, he was by her grace's side.

They turned into a winding walk of thick and fragrant shrubs, and, after a while, they approached a dell, surrounded with, high trees that environed it with perpetual shade; in the centre of the dell was apparently a Gothic shrine, fair in design and finished in execution, and this was the duchess's new dairy. A pretty sight is a first-rate dairy, with its flooring of fanciful tiles, and its cool and shrouded chambers, its stained windows and its marble slabs, and porcelain pans of cream, and plenteous platters of fantastically-formed butter.

"Mrs. Woods and her dairy-maids look like a Dutch picture," said the duchess. "Were you ever in Holland?"

"I have never been anywhere," said Lothair.

"You should travel," said the duchess.

"I have no wish," said Lothair.

"The duke has given me some Coreean fowls," said the duchess to Mrs. Woods, when they had concluded their visit. "Do you think you could take care of them for me?"

"Well, Grace, I am sure I will do my best; but then they are very, troublesome, and I was not fortunate with my Cochin. I had rather they were sent to the aviary, Grace, if it were all the same."

"I should so like to see the aviary," said Lothair.

"Well, we will go."

And this rather extended their walk, and withdrew them more from the great amusement of the day.

"I wish your grace would do me a great favor," said Lothair, abruptly breaking a rather prolonged silence.

"And what is that?" said the duchess.

"It is a very great favor," repeated Lothair.

"If it be in my power to grant it, its magnitude would only be an additional recommendation."

"Well," said Lothair, blushing deeply, and speaking with much agitation, "I would ask your grace's permission to offer my hand to your daughter."

The duchess I looked amazed. "Corisande!" she exclaimed.

"Yes, to Lady Corisande."

"Corisande," replied the duchess, after a pause, "has absolutely not yet entered the world. Corisande is a child; and you—you, my dear friend—I am sure you will pardon me If I say, so—you are not very much older than Corisande."

"I have no wish to enter the world," said Lothair, with much decision.

"I am not an enemy to youthful marriages," said the duchess. "I married early myself, and my children married early; and I am very happy, and I hope they are; but some experience of society before we settle is most desirable, and is one of the conditions, I cannot but believe, of that felicity which we all seek."

"I hate society," said Lothair. "I would never go out of my domestic circle, if it were the circle I contemplate."

"My dear young friend," said the duchess, "you could hardly have seen enough of society to speak with so much decision."

"I have seen quite enough of it," said Lothair. "I went to an evening party last season—I came up from Christchurch on purpose for it—and if ever they catch me at another, they shall inflict any penalty they please."

"I fear it was a stupid party," said the duchess, smiling, and glad to turn, if possible, the conversation into a lighter vein.

"No, it was a very grand party, I believe, and not exactly stupid—it was not, that; but I was disgusted with all I saw and all I heard. It seemed to me a mass of affectation, falsehood, and malignity."

"Oh! dear," said the duchess, "how very dreadful! But I did not mean merely going to parties for society; I meant knowledge of the world, and that experience which enables us to form sound opinions on the affairs of life."

"Oh! as for that," said Lothair, "my, opinions are already formed on every subject; that is to say, every subject of importance; and, what is more, they will never change."

"I could not say that of Corisande," said the duchess.

"I think we agree on all the great things," said Lothair, musingly. "Her church views may be a little higher than mine, but I do not anticipate any permanent difficulty on that head. Although my uncle made me go to kirk, I always hated it and always considered myself a churchman. Then, as to churches themselves, she is in favor of building churches, and so am I; and schools—there is no quantity of schools I would not establish. My opinion is, you cannot have too much education, provided it be founded on a religious basis. I would sooner renounce the whole of my inheritance than consent to secular education."

"I should be sorry to see any education but a religious education," remarked the duchess.

"Well, then," said Lothair, "that is our life, or a great part of it. To complete it, here is that to which I really wish to devote my existence, and in which I instinctively feel Lady Corisande would sympathize with me—the extinction of pauperism."

"That is a vast subject;" said the duchess.

"It is the terror of Europe and the disgrace of Britain," said Lothair; "and I am resolved to grapple with it. It seems to me that pauperism is not an affair so much of wages as of dwellings. If the working-classes were properly lodged, at their present rate of wages, they would be richer. They would be healthier and happier at the same cost. I am so convinced of this, that the moment I am master, I shall build two thousand cottages on any estates. I have the designs already."

"I am much in favor of improved dwellings for the poor," said the duchess; "but then you must take care that your dwellings are cottages, and not villas like my cousin's, the Duke of Luton."

"I do not think I shall make that mistake," replied Lothair. "It constantly engages my thought. I am wearied of hearing of my wealth, and I am conscious it has never brought me any happiness. I have lived a great deal alone, dearest duchess, and thought much of these things, but I feel now I should be hardly equal to the effort, unless I had a happy home to, fall back upon."

"And you will have a happy home in due time," said the duchess; "and with such good and great thoughts you deserve one. But take the advice of one who loved your mother, and who would extend to you the same affection as to her own children; before you take a step which cannot be recalled, see a little more of the world."

Lothair shook his head. "No," he said, after a pause. "My idea of perfect society is being married as I propose, and paying visits to Brentham; and when the visits to Brentham ceased, then I should like you and the duke to pay visits to us."

"But that would be a fairy-tale," said the duchess.

So they walked on in silence.

Suddenly and abruptly Lothair turned to the duchess and said, "Does your grace see objection to my speaking to your daughter?"

"Dear friend, indeed, yes. What you would say would only agitate and disturb Corisande. Her character is not yet formed, and its future is perplexing, at least to me," murmured the mother. "She has not the simple nature of her sisters. It is a deeper and more complicated mind, and I watch its development with fond, but anxious interest." Then, in a lighter tone, she added, "You do not know very much of us. Try to know more. Everybody under this roof views you with regard, and you are the brother friend of our eldest son. Wherever we are, you will always find a home; but do not touch again upon this subject, at least at present, for it distresses me." And then she took his arm, and pressed it, and by this time they had gained the croquet-ground.

CHAPTER 6

One of the least known squares in London is Hexham Square, though it is one of the oldest. Not that it is very remote from the throng of existence, but it is isolated in a dingy district of silent and decaying streets. Once it was a favored residence of opulence and power, and its architecture still indicates its former and prouder destiny. But its noble mansions are now divided and broken up into separate dwellings, or have been converted into chambers and offices. Lawyers, and architects, and agents, dwell in apartments where the richly-sculptured chimney-pieces, the carved and gilded pediments over the doors, and sometimes even the painted ceilings, tell a tale of vanished stateliness and splendor.

A considerable portion of the north side of the square is occupied by one house standing in a courtyard, with iron gates to the thoroughfare. This is Hexham House, and where Lord Hexham lived in the days of the first Georges. It is reduced in size since his time, two considerable wings, having been pulled down about sixty years ago, and their materials employed in building some residences of less pretension. But the body of the dwelling-house remains, and the court-yard, though reduced in size, has been retained.

Hexham House has an old oak entrance-hall panelled with delicacy, and which has escaped the rifling of speculators in furniture; and out of it rises a staircase of the same material, of a noble character, adorned occasionally with figures; armorial animals holding shields, and sometimes a grotesque form rising from fruits and flowers, all doubtless the work of some famous carver. The staircase led to a corridor, on which several doors open, and through one of these, at the moment of our history, a man, dressed in a dark cassock, and holding a card in his hand, was entering a spacious chamber, meagrely, but not shabbily, furnished. There was a rich cabinet and a fine picture. In the next room, not less spacious, but which had a more inhabited look, a cheerful fire, tables covered with books and papers, and two individuals busily at work with their pens; he gave the card to a gentleman who wore also the cassock, and who stood before the fire with a book in his hand, and apparently dictating to one of the writers.

“Impossible!” said the gentleman shaking his head; “I could not even go in, as Monsignore Berwick is with his eminence.”

“But what shall I do?” said the attendant; “his eminence said that when Mr. Giles called he never was to be denied.”

“The monsignore has been here a long time; you must beg Mr. Giles to wait. Make him comfortable; give him a newspaper; not the Tablet, the Times; men like Mr. Giles love reading the advertisements. Or stop, give him this, his eminence’s lecture on geology; it will show him the Church has no fear of science. Ah! there’s my bell; Mr. Giles will not have to wait long.” So saying, the gentleman put down his volume and disappeared, through an antechamber, into a farther apartment.

It was a library, of moderate dimensions, and yet its well-filled shelves contained all the weapons of learning and controversy which the deepest and the most active of ecclesiastical champions could require. It was unlike modern libraries, for it was one in which folios greatly predominated; and they stood in solemn and sometimes magnificent array, for they bore, many of them, on their ancient though costly bindings, the proofs that they had belonged to many a prince and even sovereign of the Church. Over the mantel-piece hung a portrait of his holiness Pius IX., and on the table, in the midst of many papers, was an ivory crucifix.

The master of the library had risen from his seat when the chief secretary entered, and was receiving an obeisance. Above the middle height, his stature seemed magnified by the attenuation of his form. It seemed that the soul never had so frail and fragile a tenement. He was dressed in a dark cassock with a red border, and wore scarlet stockings; and over his cassock a purple tippet, and on his breast a small golden cross. His countenance was naturally of an extreme pallor, though at

this moment slightly flushed with the animation of a deeply-interesting conference. His cheeks were hollow, and his gray eyes seemed sunk into his clear and noble brow, but they flashed with irresistible penetration. Such was Cardinal Grandison.

"All that I can do is," said his eminence, when his visitor was, ushered out, and slightly shrugging his shoulders, "is to get it postponed until I go to Rome, and even then I must not delay my visit. This crossing the Alps in winter is a trial—but we must never repine; and there is nothing which we must not encounter to prevent incalculable mischief. The publication of the Scotch hierarchy at this moment will destroy the labors of years. And yet they will not see it! I cannot conceive who is urging them, for I am sure they must have some authority from home.—You have something for me, Chidioch," he added inquiringly, for his keen eye caught the card.

"I regret to trouble your eminence when you need repose, but the bearer of this card seems to have been importunate, and to have appealed to, your name and personal orders;" and he gave the cardinal the card.

"Yes," said the cardinal, looking at the card with much interest; "this is a person I must always see."

And so, in due course, they ushered into the library a gentleman with a crimson and well-stuffed bag, of a composed yet cheerful aspect, who addressed the cardinal with respect but without embarrassment, saying, "I am ashamed to trouble your eminence with only matters of form—absolutely mere matters of form; but I obey, Sir, your own instructions."

"It is not for me to depreciate form," replied the cardinal; "and in business there are no mere matters of form."

"Merely the wood accounts," continued the visitor; "they must be approved by both the guardians or the money cannot be received by the bankers. Your eminence, you see, has sanctioned the felling, and authorized the sales, and these are the final accounts, which must be signed before we pay in."

"Give them to me," said the cardinal, stretching out both his hands as he received a mass of paper folios. His eminence resumed his chair, and hastily examined the sheets. "Ah!" he said, "no ordinary felling—it reaches, over seven counties. By-the-by, Bracewood Forest—what about the enclosure? I have heard no more of it." Then, murmuring to himself—"Grentham Wood—how well I remember Grentham Wood, with his dear father!"

"If we could sign today," said the visitor in a tone of professional cajolery; "time is important."

"And if shall not be wasted," replied the cardinal. "But I must look over the accounts. I doubt not all is quite regular, but I wish to make myself a little familiar with the scene of action; perhaps to recall the past," he added. "You shall have them to-morrow, Mr. Giles."

"Your eminence will have very different accounts to settle in a short time," said Mr. Giles, smiling. "We are hard at work; it takes three of our clerks constantly occupied."

"But you have yet got time."

"I don't know that," said Mr. Giles. "The affairs are very large. And the mines—they give us the greatest trouble. Our Mr. James Roundell was two months in Wales last year about them. It took up the whole of his vacation. And your eminence must remember that time flies. In less than eight months he will be of age."

"Very true," said the cardinal; "time indeed flies, and so much to be done! By-the-by, Mr. Giles, have you by any chance heard any thing lately of my child?"

"I have heard of him a good deal of late, for a client of ours, Lord Montairy, met him at Brentham this summer, and was a long time there with him. After that, I hear, he went deer-stalking with some of his young friends; but he is not very fond of Scotland; had rather too much of it, I suspect; but the truth is, sir, I saw him this very day."

"Indeed!"

"Some affairs have brought him up to town, and I rather doubt whether he will return to Oxford —at least, so he talks."

"Ah! I have never seen him since he was an infant, I might say," said the cardinal. "I suppose I shall see him again, if only when I resign my trust; but I know not. And yet few things would be more interesting to me than to meet him!"

Mr. Giles seemed moved, for him almost a little embarrassed; he seemed to blush, and then he cleared his throat. "It would be too great a liberty," said Mr. Giles, "I feel that very much—and yet, if your eminence would condescend, though I hardly suppose it possible, his lordship is really going to do us the honor of dining with us to-day; only a few friends, and if your eminence could make the sacrifice, and it were not an act of too great presumption, to ask your eminence to join our party."

"I never eat and I never drink," said the cardinal. "I am sorry, to say I cannot. I like dinner society very much. You see the world, and you hear things which you do not hear otherwise. For a time I presumed to accept invitations, though I sat with an empty plate, but, though the world was indulgent to me, I felt that my habits were an embarrassment to the happier feasters: it was not fair, and so I gave it up. But I tell you what, Mr. Giles: I shall be in your quarter this evening: perhaps you would permit me to drop in and pay my respects to Mrs. Giles—I have wished to do so before."

CHAPTER 7

Mr. Giles was a leading partner in the firm of Roundells, Giles, and Roundell, among the most eminent solicitors of Lincoln's Inn. He, in those days of prolonged maturity, might be described as still a young man. He had inherited from his father not only a large share in a first-rate business, but no inconsiderable fortune; and though he had, in her circles, a celebrated wife, he had no children. He was opulent and prosperous, with no cares and anxieties of his own, and loved his profession, for which he was peculiarly qualified, being a man of uncommon sagacity, very difficult to deceive, and yet one who sympathized with his clients, who were all personally attached to him, and many of whom were among the distinguished personages of the realm.

During an important professional visit to Ireland, Mr. Giles had made the acquaintance of Miss Apollonia Smylie, the niece of an Irish peer; and, though the lady was much admired and courted, had succeeded, after a time, in inducing her to become the partner of his life.

Mrs. Giles, or, as she described herself, Mrs. Putney Giles, taking advantage of a second and territorial Christian name of her husband, was a showy woman; decidedly handsome, unquestionably accomplished, and gifted with energy and enthusiasm which far exceeded even her physical advantages. Her principal mission was to destroy the papacy and to secure Italian unity. Her lesser impulses were to become acquainted with the aristocracy, and to be herself surrounded by celebrities. Having a fine house in Tyburnia, almost as showy as herself, and a husband who was never so happy as when gratifying her wishes, she did not find it difficult in a considerable degree to pursue and even accomplish her objects. The Putney Giles gave a great many dinners, and Mrs. Putney received her world frequently, if not periodically. As they entertained with profusion, her well-lighted saloons were considerably attended. These assemblies were never dull; the materials not being ordinary, often startling, sometimes even brilliant, occasionally rather heterogeneous. For, though being a violent Protestant, and of extreme conservative opinions, her antipapal antipathies and her Italian predilections frequently involved her with acquaintances not so distinguished as she deemed herself for devotion to the cause of order and orthodoxy. It was rumored that the brooding brow of Mazzini had been observed in her rooms, and there was no sort of question that she had thrown herself in ecstatic idolatry at the feet of the hero of Caprera.

On the morning of the day on which he intended to visit Cardinal Grandison, Mr. Giles, in his chambers at Lincoln's Inn, was suddenly apprised, by a clerk, that an interview with him was sought by a client no less distinguished than Lothair.

Although Mr. Giles sat opposite two rows of tin boxes, each of which was numbered, and duly inscribed with the name of Lothair and that of the particular estate to which it referred, Mr. Giles, though he had had occasional communications with his client, was personally unacquainted with him. He viewed, therefore, with no ordinary curiosity the young man who was ushered into his room; a shapely youth slightly above the middle height; of simple, but distinguished mien, with a countenance naturally pale, though somewhat bronzed by a life of air and exercise, and a profusion of dark-auburn hair.

And for what could Lothair be calling on Mr. Giles?

It seems that one of Lothair's intimate companions had got into a scrape, and under these circumstances had what is styled "made a friend" of Lothair; that is to say, confided to him his trouble, and asked his advice, with a view, when given, of its being followed by an offer of assistance.

Lothair, though inexperienced, and very ingenuous, was not devoid of a certain instinctive perception of men and, things, which rendered it difficult for him to be an easy prey. His natural disposition, and his comparatively solitary education, had made him a keen observer, and he was one who meditated over his observations. But he was naturally generous and sensible of kindness; and this was a favorite companion—next to Bertram, his most intimate.

Lothair was quite happy in the opportunity of soothing a perturbed spirit whose society had been to him a source of so much gratification.

It was not until Lothair had promised to extricate his friend from his whelming difficulties, that, upon examination, he found the act on his part was not so simple and so easy as he had assumed it to be. His guardians had apportioned to him an allowance in every sense adequate to his position; and there was no doubt, had he wished to exceed it for any legitimate purpose, not the slightest difficulty on their part would have been experienced.

Such a conjuncture had never occurred. Lothair was profuse, but he was not prodigal. He gratified all his fancies, but they were not ignoble ones; and he was not only sentimentally, but systematically, charitable. He had a great number of fine horses, and he had just paid for an expensive yacht. In a word, he spent a great deal of money, and until he called at his bankers to learn what sums were at his disposition he was not aware that he had overdrawn his account.

This was rather awkward. Lothair wanted a considerable sum, and he wanted it at once. Irrespective of the consequent delay, he shrunk from any communication with his guardians. From his uncle he had become, almost insensibly, estranged, and with his other guardian he had never had the slightest communication. Under these circumstances he recalled the name of the solicitor of the trustees, between whom and himself there had been occasional correspondence; and, being of a somewhat impetuous disposition, he rode off at once from his hotel to Lincoln's Inn.

Mr. Giles listened to the narrative with unbroken interest and unswerving patience, with his eyes fixed on his client, and occasionally giving a sympathetic nod.

"And so," concluded Lothair, "I thought I would come to you."

"We are honored," said Mr. Giles. "And, certainly, it is quite absurd that your lordship should want money, and for a worthy purpose, and not be able to command it. Why! the balance in the name of the trustees never was so great as at this moment; and this very day, or to-morrow at farthest, I shall pay no less than eight-and-thirty thousand pounds timber-money to the account."

"Well, I don't want a fifth of that," said Lothair.

"Your lordship has an objection to apply to the trustees?" inquired Mr. Giles.

"That is the point of the whole of my statement," said Lothair somewhat impatiently.

"And yet it is the right and regular thing," said Mr. Giles.

"It may be right and it may be regular, but it is out of the question."

"Then we will say no more about it. What I want to prevent," said Mr. Giles, musingly, "is any thing absurd happening. There is no doubt if your lordship went into the street and said you wanted ten thousand pounds, or a hundred thousand, fifty people would supply you immediately—but you would have to pay for it. Some enormous usury! That would be bad; but the absurdity of the thing would be greater than the mischief. Roundells, Giles, and Roundell could not help you in that manner. That is not our business. We are glad to find money for our clients at a legal rate of interest, and the most moderate rate feasible. But then there must be security, and the best security. But here we must not conceal it from ourselves, my lord, we have no security whatever. At this moment your lordship has no property. An insurance-office might do it with a policy. They might consider that they had a moral security; but still it would be absurd. There is something absurd in your lordship having to raise money. Don't you think I could see these people," said Mr. Giles, "and talk to them, and gain a little time? We only want a little time."

"No," said Lothair, in a peremptory tone. "I said I would do it, and it must be done, and at once. Sooner than there should be delay, I would rather go into the street, as you suggest, and ask the first man I met to lend me the money. My word has been given, and I do not care what I pay to fulfil my word."

"We must not think of such things," said Mr. Giles, shaking his head. "All I want your lordship to understand is the exact position. In this case we have no security. Roundells, Giles, and Roundell cannot move without security. It would be against our articles of partnership. But Mr. Giles, as a

private individual, may do what he likes. I will let your lordship have the money, and I will take no security whatever—not even a note of hand. All that I ask for is that your lordship should write me a letter, saying you have urgent need for a sum of money (mentioning amount) for an honorable purpose, in which your feelings are deeply interested—and that will do. If any thing happens to your lordship before this time next year, why, I think the trustees could hardly refuse repaying the money; and if they did, why then," added Mr. Giles, "I suppose it will be all the same a hundred years hence."

"You have conferred on me the greatest obligation," said Lothair, with much earnestness. "Language cannot express what I feel. I am not too much used to kindness, and I only hope that I may live to show my sense of yours."

"It is really no great affair, my lord," said Mr. Giles. "I did not wish to make difficulties, but it was my duty to put the matter clearly before you. What I propose I could to do is really nothing. I could do no less; I should have felt quite absurd if your lordship had gone into the money-market."

"I only hope," repeated Lothair, rising and offering Mr. Giles his hand, "that life may give me some occasion to prove my gratitude."

"Well, my lord," replied Mr. Giles, "if your lordship wish to repay me for any little interest I have shown in your affairs, you can do that, over and over again, and at once."

"How so?"

"By a very great favor, by which Mrs. Giles and myself would be deeply gratified. We have a few friends who honor us by dining with us to-day in Hyde Park Gardens. If your lordship would add the great distinction your presence—"

"I should only be too much honored," exclaimed Lothair: "I suppose about eight," and he left the room; and Mr. Giles telegraphed instantly the impending event to Apollonia.

CHAPTER 8

It was a great day for Apollonia; not only to have Lothair at her right hand at dinner, but the prospect of receiving a cardinal in the evening. But she was equal to it; though so engrossed, indeed, in the immediate gratification of her hopes and wishes, that she could scarcely dwell sufficiently on the coming scene of triumph and social excitement.

The repast was sumptuous; Lothair thought the dinner would never end, there were so many dishes, and apparently all of the highest pretension. But if his simple tastes had permitted him to take an interest in these details, which, they did not, he would have been assisted by a gorgeous menu of gold and white typography, that was by the side of each guest. The table seemed literally to groan under vases and gigantic flagons, and, in its midst, rose a mountain of silver, on which apparently all the cardinal virtues, several of the pagan deities, and Britannia herself, illustrated with many lights a glowing inscription, which described the fervent feelings of a grateful client.

There were many guests—the Dowager of Farringford, a lady of quality, Apollonia's great lady, who exercised under this roof much social tyranny; in short, was rather fine; but who, on this occasion, was somewhat cowed by the undreamt-of presence of Lothair. She had not yet met him, and probably never would have met him, had she not had the good fortune of dining at his lawyer's. However, Lady Farringford was placed a long way from Lothair, having been taken down to dinner by Mr. Giles; and so, by the end of the first course, Lady Farringford had nearly resumed her customary despotic vein, and was beginning to indulge in several kind observations, cheapening to her host and hostess, and indirectly exalting herself; upon which Mr. Giles took an early easy opportunity of apprising Lady Farringford, that she had nearly met Cardinal Grandison at dinner, and that his eminence would certainly pay his respects to Mrs. Putney Giles in the evening. As Lady Farringford was at present a high ritualist and had even been talked of as "going to Rome," this intelligence was stunning, and it was observed that her ladyship was unusually subdued during the whole of the second course.

On the right of Lothair sat the wife of a vice-chancellor, a quiet and pleasing lady, to whom Lothair, with natural good breeding, paid snatches of happy attention, when he could for a moment with propriety withdraw himself from the blaze of Apollonia's coruscating conversation. Then there was a rather fierce-looking Red Ribbon, medalled, as well as be-starred, and the Red Ribbon's wife, with a blushing daughter, in spite of, her parentage not yet accustomed to stand fire. A partner and his unusually numerous family had the pleasure also of seeing Lothair for the first time, and there were no less than four M.P.s, one of whom was even in office.

Apollonia was stating to Lothair, with perspicuity, the reasons which quite induced her to believe that the Gulf-Stream had changed its course, and the political and social consequences that might accrue.

"The religious sentiment of the Southern races must be wonderfully affected by a more rigorous climate," said Apollonia. "I cannot doubt," she continued, "that a series of severe winters at Rome might put an end to Romanism."

"But is there any fear that a reciprocal influence might be exercised on the Northern nations?" inquired Lothair. "Would there be any apprehension of our Protestantism becoming proportionately relaxed?"

"Of course not," said Apollonia. "Truth cannot be affected by climate. Truth is truth, alike in Palestine and Scandinavia."

"I wonder what the cardinal would think of this," said Lothair, "who, you tell me, is coming to you this evening?"

"Yes, I am most interested to see him, though he is the most puissant of our foes. Of course he would take refuge in sophistry; and science, you know, they deny."

"Cardinal Grandison is giving some lectures on science," said the vice-chancellor's lady, quietly.

"It is remorse," said Apollonia. "Their clever men can never forget that unfortunate affair of Galileo, and think they can divert the indignation of the ninteenth century by mock zeal about red sandstone or the origin of species."

"And are you afraid of the Gulf-Stream?" inquired Lothair of his calmer neighbor.

"I think we want more evidence of a change. The vice-chancellor and myself went down to a place we have near town, on Saturday, where there is a very nice piece of water; indeed, some people call it a lake; but it was quite frozen, and my boys wanted to skate, but that I would not permit."

"You believe in the Gulf-Stream to that extent," said Lothair—"no skating."

The cardinal came, early; the ladies had not long left the dining-room. They were agitated when his name was announced; even Apollonia's heart beat; but then that might be accounted for by the inopportune recollection of an occasional correspondence with Caprera.

Nothing could exceed the simple suavity with which the cardinal appeared, approached, and greeted them. He thanked Apollonia for her permission to pay his respects to her, which he had long wished to do; and then they were all presented, and he said exactly the right thing to every one. He must have heard of them all before, or read their characters in their countenances. In a few minutes they were all listening to his eminence with enchanted ease, as, sitting on the sofa by his hostess, he described to them the ambassadors who had just arrived from Japan, and with whom he had relations of interesting affairs. The Japanese government had exhibited enlightened kindness to some of his poor people who had barely escaped martyrdom. Much might be expected from the Mikado, evidently a man of singular penetration and elevated views; and his eminence looked as if the mission of Yokohama would speedily end in an episcopal see; but he knew where he was and studiously avoided all controversial matter.

After all, the Mikado himself was not more remarkable than this prince of the Church in a Tyburnian drawing-room habited in his pink cassock and cape, and waving, as he spoke, with careless grace, his pink barrette.

The ladies thought the gentlemen rejoined them too soon, but Mr. Giles, when he was apprised of the arrival of the cardinal, thought it right to precipitate the symposium. With great tact, when the cardinal rose to greet him, Mr. Giles withdrew his eminence from those surrounding, and, after a brief interchange of whispered words, quitted him and then brought forward and presented Lothair to the cardinal, and left them.

"This is not the first time that we should have met," said the cardinal, "but my happiness is so great at this moment that, though I deplore, I will not dwell on, the past."

"I am, nevertheless, grateful to you, sir, for many services, and have more than once contemplated taking the liberty of personally assuring your a eminence of my gratitude."

"I think we might sit down," said the cardinal, looking around; and then he led Lothair into an open but interior saloon, where none were yet present, and where they seated themselves on a sofa and were soon engaged in apparently interesting converse.

In the mean time the world gradually filled the principal saloon of Apollonia, and, when it approached overflowing, occasionally some persons passed the line, and entered the room in which the cardinal and his ward were seated, and then, as if conscious of violating some sacred place, drew back. Others, on the contrary, with coarser curiosity, were induced to invade the chamber from the mere fact that the cardinal was to be seen there.

"My geographical instinct," said the cardinal to Lothair, "assures me that I can regain the staircase through these rooms, without rejoining the busy world; so I shall bid you good-night and even presume to give you my blessing;" and his eminence glided away.

When Lothair returned to the saloon it was so crowded that he was not observed; exactly what he liked; and he stood against the wall watching all that passed, not without amusement. A lively, social parasite, who had dined there, and had thanked his stars at dinner that Fortune had, decreed

he should meet Lothair, had been cruising for his prize all the time that Lothair had been conversing with the cardinal and was soon at his side.

"A strange scene this!" said the parasite.

"Is it unusual?" inquired Lothair.

"Such a medley! How can they can be got together, I marvel—priests and philosophers, legitimists, and carbonari! Wonderful woman, Mrs. Putney Giles!"

"She is very entertaining," said Lothair, "and seems to me clever."

"Remarkably so," said the parasite, who had been on the point of satirizing his hostess, but, observing the quarter of the wind, with rapidity went in for praise. "An extraordinary woman. Your lordship had a long talk with the cardinal."

"I had the honor of some conversation with Cardinal Grandison," said Lothair, drawing up.

"I wonder what the cardinal would have said if he had met Mazzini here?"

"Mazzini! Is he here?"

"Not now; but I have seen him here," said the parasite, "and our host such a Tory! That makes the thing so amusing;" and then the parasite went on making small personal observations on the surrounding scene, and every now and then telling little tales of great people with whom, it appeared, he was intimate—all concerted fire to gain the very great social fortress he was now besieging. The parasite was so full of himself, and so anxious to display himself to advantage, that with all his practice it was some time before he perceived he did not make all the way he could wish with Lothair; who was courteous, but somewhat monosyllabic and absent.

"Your lordship is struck by that face?" said the parasite.

Was Lothair struck by that face? And what was it?

He had exchanged glances with that face during the last ten minutes, and the mutual expression was not one of sympathy but curiosity blended, on the part of the face, with an expression, if not of disdain, of extreme reserve.

It was the face of a matron, apparently of not many summers, for her shapely figure was still slender, though her mien was stately. But it was the countenance that had commanded the attention of Lothair: pale, but perfectly Attic in outline, with the short upper lip and the round chin, and a profusion of dark-chestnut hair bound by a Grecian fillet, and on her brow a star.

"Yes I am struck by that face. Who is it?"

"If your lordship could only get a five-franc piece of the last French Republic, 1850, you would know. I dare say the money-changers could get you one. All the artists of Paris, painters, and sculptors, and medallists, were competing to produce a face worthy of representing 'La R publique fran aise;' nobody was satisfied, when Oudine caught a girl of not seventeen, and, with a literal reproduction of Nature, gained the prize with unanimity."

"Ah!"

"And, though years have passed, the countenance has not changed; perhaps improved."

"It is a countenance that will bear, perhaps even would require, maturity," said Lothair; "but she is no longer 'La R publique fran aise;' what is she now?"

"She is called Theodora, though married, I believe, to an Englishman, a friend of Garibaldi. Her birth unknown; some say an Italian, some a Pole; all sorts of stories. But she speaks every language, is ultra-cosmopolitan, and has invented a new religion."

"A new religion!"

"Would your lordship care to be introduced to her? I know her enough for that. Shall we go up to her?"

"I have made so many now acquaintances to-day," said, Lothair, as it were starting from a reverie, "and indeed heard so many new things, that I think I had better say good-night;" and he graciously retired.

CHAPTER 9

About the same time that Lothair had repaired to the residence of Mr. Giles, Monsignore Berwick, whose audience of the cardinal in the morning had preceded that of the legal adviser of the trustees, made his way toward one of the noblest mansions in St. James's Square, where resided Lord St. Jerome.

It was a mild winter evening; a little fog still hanging about, but vanquished by the cheerful lamps, and the voice of the muffin-bell was just heard at intervals; a genial sound that calls up visions of trim and happy hearths. If we could only so contrive our lives as to go into the country for the first note of the nightingale, and return to town for the first note of the muffin-bell, existence, it is humbly presumed, might be more enjoyable.

Monsignore Berwick was a young man, but looking younger from a countenance almost of childhood; fair, with light-blue eyes, and flaxen hair and delicate features. He was the last person you would have fixed upon as a born Roman; but Nature, in one of the freaks of race, had resolved that his old Scottish blood should be reasserted, though his: ancestors had sedulously blended it, for, many generations, with that of the princely houses of the eternal city. The monsignore was the greatest statesman of Rome, formed and favored by Antonelli and probably his successor.

The mansion of Lord St. Jerome was a real family mansion, built by his ancestors a century and a half ago, when they believed that, from its central position, its happy contiguity to the court, the senate, and the seats of government, they at last, in St. James's Square, had discovered a site which could defy the vicissitudes of fashion, and not share the fate of the river palaces, which they had been obliged in turn to relinquish. And in a considerable degree they were right in their anticipation; for, although they have somewhat unwisely, permitted the clubs to invade too successfully their territory, St. James's Square may be looked upon as our Faubourg St. Germain, and a great patrician residing there dwells in the heart of that free and noble life of which he ought to be a part.

A marble hall and a marble staircase, lofty chambers with silk or tapestried hangings, gilded cornices, and painted ceilings, gave a glimpse of almost Venetian splendor, and rare in our metropolitan houses of this age; but the first dwellers in St. James's Square had tender and inspiring recollections of the Adrian bride, had frolicked in St. Mark's, and glided in adventurous gondolas. The monsignore was ushered into a chamber bright with lights and a blazing fire, and welcomed with extreme cordiality by his hostess, who was then alone. Lady St. Jerome was still the young wife of a nobleman not old. She was the daughter of a Protestant house, but, during a residence at Rome after her marriage, she had reverted to the ancient faith, which she professed with the enthusiastic convictions of a convert. Her whole life was dedicated to the triumph of the Catholic cause; and, being a woman of considerable intelligence and of an ardent mind, she had become a recognized power in the great confederacy which has so much influenced the human race, and which has yet to play perhaps a mighty part in the fortunes of the world.

"I was in great hopes that the cardinal would have met you at dinner," said Lady St. Jerome, "but he wrote only this afternoon to say unexpected business would prevent him, but he would be here in the evening, though late."

"It must be something sudden, for I was with his eminence this morning, and he then contemplated our meeting here."

"Nothing from abroad?"

"I should think not, or it would be known to me. There is nothing new from abroad this afternoon: my time has been spent in writing, not receiving, dispatches."

"And all well, I hope?"

"This Scotch business plagues us. So far as Scotland is concerned, it is quite ripe; but the cardinal counsels delay on account of this country, and he has such a consummate knowledge of England, that—"

At this moment Lord St Jerome entered the room—a grave but gracious personage, polished but looking silent, though he immediately turned the conversation to the weather. The monsignore began denouncing English fogs; but Lord St. Jerome maintained that, on the whole, there were not more fogs in England than in any other country; "and as for the French," he added, "I like their audacity, for, when they revolutionized the calendar, they called one of their months Brumaire."

Then came in one of his lordships chaplains, who saluted the monsignore with reverence, and immediately afterward a beautiful young lady, his niece, Clare Arundel.

The family were living in a convenient suite of small rooms on the ground-floor, called the winter-rooms so dinner was announced by the doors of an adjoining chamber being thrown open, and there they saw, in the midst of a chamber hung with green silk and adorned with some fine cabinet-pictures, a small round table, bright and glowing.

It was a lively dinner. Lord St. Jerome loved conversation, though he never conversed. "There must be an audience," he would say, "and I am the audience." The partner of his life, whom he never ceased admiring, had originally fascinated him by her conversational talents; and, even if Nature had not impelled her, Lady St. Jerome was too wise a woman to relinquish the spell. The monsignore could always, when necessary, sparkle with anecdote or blaze with repartee; and all the chaplains, who abounded in this house, were men of bright abilities, not merely men of reading, but of the world, learned in the world's ways, and trained to govern mankind by versatility of their sympathies. It was a dinner where there could not be two conversations going on, and where even the silent take their share in the talk by their sympathy.

And among the silent, as silent even as Lord St. Jerome, was Miss Arundel; and yet her large violet eyes, darker even than her dark-brown hair, and gleaming with intelligence, and her rich face mantling with emotion, proved she was not insensible to the witty passages and the bright and interesting narratives that were sparkling and flowing about her.

The gentlemen left the dining-room with the ladies, in the Continental manner. Lady St. Jerome, who was leaning on the arm of the monsignore, guided him into a saloon farther than the one they had reentered, and then seating herself said, "You were telling me about Scotland, that you yourself thought it ripe."

"Unquestionably. The original plan was to have established our hierarchy when the Kirk split up; but that would have been a mistake, it was not then ripe. There would have been a fanatical reaction. There is always a tendency that way in Scotland: as it is, at this moment, the Establishment and the Free Kirk are mutually sighing for some compromise which may bring them together and, if the proprietors would give up their petty patronage, some flatter themselves it might be arranged. But we are thoroughly well informed, and have provided for all this. We sent two of our best men into Scotland some time ago, and they have invented a new church, called the United Presbyterians. John Knox himself was never more violent, or more mischievous. The United Presbyterians will do the business: they will render Scotland simply impossible to live in; and then, when the crisis arrives, the distracted and despairing millions will find refuge in the bosom of their only mother. That is why, at home, we wanted no delay in the publication of the bull and the establishment of the hierarchy."

"But the cardinal says no?"

"And must be followed. For these islands he has no equal. He wishes great reserve at present. Affairs here are progressing, gradually but surely. But it is Ireland where matters are critical, or will be soon."

"Ireland! I thought there was a sort of understanding there—at least for the present."

The monsignore shook his head. "What do you think of an American invasion of Ireland?"

"An American invasion!"

"Even so; nothing more probable, and nothing more to be deprecated by us. Now that the civil war in America is over, the Irish soldiery are resolved to employ their experience and their weapons in their own land; but they have no thought for the interest of the Holy See, or the welfare of our holy religion. Their secret organization is tampering with the people and tampering with the priests. The difficulty of Ireland is that the priests and the people will consider every thing in a purely Irish point of view. To gain some local object, they will encourage the principles of the most lawless liberalism, which naturally land them in Fenianism and atheism. And the danger is not foreseen, because the Irish political object of the moment is alone looked to."

"But surely they can be guided?"

"We want a statesman in Ireland. We have never been able to find one; we want a man like the cardinal. But the Irish will have a native for their chief. We caught Churchill young, and educated him in the Propaganda; but he has disappointed us. At first all seemed well; he was reserved and austere; and we heard with satisfaction that he was unpopular. But, now that critical times are arriving, his peasant-blood cannot resist the contagion. He proclaims the absolute equality of all religious, and of the power of the state to confiscate ecclesiastical property, and not restore it to us, but alienate it forever. For the chance of subverting the Anglican Establishment, he is favoring a policy which will subvert religion itself. In his eagerness he cannot see that the Anglicans have only a lease of our property, a lease which is rapidly expiring."

"This is sad."

"It is perilous, and difficult to deal with. But it must be dealt with. The problem is to suppress Fenianism, and not to strengthen the Protestant confederacy."

"And you left Rome for this? We understood you were coming for something else," said Lady St. Jerome, in a significant tone.

"Yes, yes, I have been there, and I have seen him."

"And have you succeeded?"

"No; and no one will—at least at present."

"Is all lost, then? Is the Malta scheme again on the carpet?"

"Our Holy Church in built upon a rock," said the monsignore, "but not upon the rock of Malta. Nothing is lost; Antonelli is calm and sanguine, though, rest assured, there is no doubt about what I tell you. France has washed her hands of us."

"Where, then, are we to look for aid?" exclaimed Lady St. Jerome, "against the assassins and atheists? Austria, the alternative ally, is no longer near you; and if she were—that I should ever live to say it—even Austria is our foe."

"Poor Austria!" said the monsignore with an unctuous sneer. "Two things made her a nation; she was German and she was Catholic, and now she is neither."

"But you alarm me, my dear lord, with your terrible news. We once thought that Spain would be our protector, but we hear bad news from Spain."

"Yes," said the monsignore, "I think it highly probable that, before a few years have elapsed, every government in Europe will be atheistical except France. Vanity will always keep France the eldest son of the Church, even if she wear a bonnet rouge. But, if the Holy Father keep Rome, these strange changes will only make the occupier of the chair of St. Peter more powerful. His subjects will be In every clime and every country, and then they will be only his subjects. We shall get rid of the difficulty of the divided allegiance, Lady St. Jerome, which plagued our poor forefathers so much."

"If we keep Rome," said Lady St. Jerome.

"And we shall. Let Christendom give us her prayers for the next few years, and Pio Nono will become the most powerful monarch In Europe, and perhaps the only one."

"I hear a sound," exclaimed Lady St. Jerome. "Yes! the cardinal has come. Let us greet him."

But as they were approaching the saloon the cardinal met them, and waved them back. "We will return," he said, "to our friends immediately, but I want to say one word to you both."

He made them sit down. “I am a little restless,” he said, and stood before the fire. “Something interesting has happened; nothing to do with public affairs. Do not pitch your expectations too high—but still of importance, and certainly of great interest—at least to me. I have seen my child—my ward.”

“Indeed an event!” said Lady St. Jerome, evidently much interested.

“And what is he like?” inquired the monsignore.

“All that one could wish. Extremely good-looking, highly bred, and most ingenuous; a considerable intelligence, and not untrained; but the most absolutely unaffected person I ever encountered.”

“Ah! if he had been trained by your eminence,” sighed Lady St. Jerome. “Is it too late?”

“‘Tis an immense position,” murmured Berwick.

“What good might he not do?” said Lady St. Jerome; “and if he be so ingenuous, it seems impossible that he can resist the truth.”

“Your ladyship is a sort of cousin of his,” said the cardinal, musingly.

“Yes; but very remote. I dare say he would not acknowledge the tie. But we are kin; we have the same blood in our veins.”

“You should make his acquaintance,” said the cardinal.

“I more than desire it. I hear he has been terribly neglected, brought up among the most dreadful people, entirely infidels and fanatics.”

“He has been nearly two years at Oxford,” said the cardinal. “That may have mitigated the evil.”

“Ah! but you, my lord cardinal, you must interfere. Now that you at last know him, you must undertake the great task; you must save him.”

“We must all pray, as I pray every morn and every night,” said the cardinal, “for the conversion of England.”

“Or the conquest,” murmured Berwick.

CHAPTER 10

As the cardinal was regaining his carriage on leaving Mrs. Giles's party, there was, about the entrance of the house, the usual gathering under such circumstances; some zealous linkboys marvellously familiar with London life, and some midnight loungers, who thus take their humble share of the social excitement, and their happy chance of becoming acquainted with some of the notables of the wondrous world of which they form the base. This little gathering, ranged at the instant into stricter order by the police to facilitate the passage of his eminence, prevented the progress of a passenger, who exclaimed in an audible, but not noisy voice, as if, he were ejaculating to himself, "A bas les pretres!"

This exclamation, unintelligible to the populace, was noticed only by the only person who understood it. The cardinal, astonished at the unusual sound—for, hitherto, he had always found the outer world of London civil; or at least indifferent—threw his penetrating glance at the passenger, and caught clearly the visage on which the lamplight fully shone. It was a square, sinewy face, closely shaven, with the exception of a small but thick mustache, brown as the well-cropped hair, and blending with the hazel eye; a calm, but determined countenance; clearly not that of an Englishman, for he wore ear-rings.

The carriage drove off, and the passenger, somewhat forcing his way through the clustering group, continued his course until he reached the cab-stand near the Marble Arch, when he engaged a vehicle and ordered to be driven to Leicester Square. That quarter of the town exhibits an animated scene toward the witching hour; many lights and much population, illuminated coffee-houses, the stir of a large theatre, bands of music in the open air, and other sounds, most of them gay, and some festive. The stranger, whose compact figure was shrouded by a long fur cape, had not the appearance of being influenced by the temptation of amusement. As he stopped in the square and looked around him, the expression of his countenance was moody, perhaps even anxious. He seemed to be making observations on the locality, and, after a few minutes, crossed the open space and turned up into a small street which opened into the square. In this street was a coffee-house of some pretension, connected indeed with an hotel, which had been formed out of two houses, and therefore possessed no inconsiderable accommodation.

The coffee-room was capacious, and adorned in a manner which intimated it was not kept by an Englishman, or much used by Englishmen. The walls were painted in frescoed arabesques. There were many guests, principally seated at small tables of marble, and on benches and chairs covered with a coarse crimson velvet. Some were sipping coffee, some were drinking wine, others were smoking or playing dominoes, or doing both; while many were engaged in reading the foreign journals which abounded.

An ever-vigilant waiter was at the side of the stranger the instant he entered, and wished to know his pleasure. The stranger was examining with his keen eye every individual in the room while this question was asked and repeated.

"What would I wish?" said the stranger, having concluded his inspection, and as it were summoning back his recollection. "I would wish to see, and at once, one Mr. Perroni, who, I believe, lives here."

"Why, 'tis the master!" exclaimed the waiter.

"Well, then, go and tell the master that I want him."

"But the master is much engaged," said the waiter, "—particularly."

"I dare say; but you will go and tell him that I particularly want to see him."

The waiter, though prepared to be impertinent to any one else, felt that one was speaking to him who must be obeyed, and, with a subdued, but hesitating manner, said, "There is a meeting to-

night up-stairs, where the master is secretary, and it is difficult to see him; but, if I could see him, what name am I to give?"

"You will go to him instantly," said the stranger, "and you will tell him that he is wanted by Captain Bruges."

The waiter was not long absent, and returning with an obsequious bow, he invited the stranger to follow him to a private room, where he was alone only for a few seconds, for the door opened and he was joined by Perroni.

"Ah! my general," exclaimed the master of the coffee-house, and he kissed the stranger's hand. "You received my telegram?"

"I am here. Now what is your business?"

"There is business, and great business, if you will do it; business for you."

"Well, I am a soldier, and soldiering is my trade, and I do not much care what I do in that way, provided it is not against the good cause. But I must tell you at once, friend Perroni, I am not a man who will take a leap in the dark. I must form my own staff, and I must have my commissariat secure."

"My general, you will be master of your own terms. The Standing Committee of the Holy Alliance of Peoples are sitting upstairs at this moment. They were unanimous in sending for you. See them; judge for yourself; and, rest assured, you will be satisfied."

"I do not much like having to do with committees," said the general. "However, let it be as you like—I will see them."

"I had better just announce your arrival," said Perroni. "And will you not take something, my general after your travel you must be wearied."

"A glass of sugar-and-water. You know, I am not easily tired. And, I agree with you, it is better to come to business at once: so prepare them."

CHAPTER 11

The Standing Committee of the Holy Alliance of Peoples all rose, although they were extreme republicans, when the general entered. Such is the magical influence of a man of action over men of the pen an the tongue. Had it been, instead of a successful military leader, an orator that had inspired Europe, or a journalist who had rights of the human race, the Standing Committee would have only seen men of their own kidney, who, having been favored with happier opportunities than themselves, had reaped a harvest which, equally favored, they might here have garnered.

"General," said Felix Drolin, the president, who was looked upon by the brotherhood as a statesman, for he had been in his time, a member of a provisional government, "this seat is for you," and he pointed to one on his right hand. "You are ever welcome; and I hope you bring good tidings, and good fortune."

"I am glad to be among my friends, and I may say," looking around, "my comrades. I hope I may bring you better fortune than my tidings."

"But now they have left Rome," said the president, "every day we expect good news."

"Ay, ay! he has left Rome, but he has not left Rome with the door open. I hope it is not on such gossip you have sent for me. You have something on hand. What is it?"

"You shall hear it from the fountain-head," said the president, "fresh from New York," and he pointed to an individual seated in the centre of the table.

"Ah! Colonel Finucane," said the general, "I have not forgotten James River. You did that well. What is the trick now?"

Whereupon a tall, lean man, with a decided brogue, but speaking through his nose, rose from his seat and informed the general that the Irish people were organized and ready to rise; that they had sent their deputies to New York; all they wanted were arms and officers; that the American brethren had agreed to supply them with both, and amply; and that considerable subscriptions were raising for other purposes. What they now required was a commander-in-chief equal to the occasion, and in whom all would have confidence; and therefore they had telegraphed for the general.

"I doubt not our friends over the water would send us plenty of rifles," said the general, "if we could only manage to land them; and, I think, I know men now in the States from whom I could form a good staff; but how about the people of Ireland? What evidence have we that they will rise, if we land?"

"The best," said the president. "We have a head-centre here, Citizen Desmond, who will give you the most recent and the most authentic intelligence on that head."

"The whole country is organized," said the head-centre; "we could put three hundred thousand men in the field at any time in a fortnight. The movement is not sectarian; it pervades all classes and all creeds. All that we want are officers and arms."

"Hem!" said the general; "and as to your other supplies? Any scheme of commissariat?"

"There will be no lack of means," replied the head-centre. "There is no country where so much money is hoarded as in Ireland. But, depend upon it, so far as the commissariat is concerned, the movement will be self-supporting."

"Well, we shall see," said, the general; "I am sorry it is an Irish affair, though, to be sure, what else could it be? I am not fond of Irish affairs: whatever may be said, and however plausible things may look, in an Irish business there is always a priest at the bottom of it. I hate priests. By-the-by, I was stopped on my way here by a cardinal getting into his carriage. I thought I had burnt all those vehicles when I was at Rome with Garibaldi in '48. A cardinal in his carriage! I had no idea you permitted that sort of cattle in London."

"London is a roost for every bird," said Felix Drolin.

"Very few of the priests favor this movement," said Desmond.

"Then you have a great power against you," said the general, in "addition to England."

"They are not exactly against; the bulk of them are too national for that; but Rome does not sanction—you understand?"

"I understand enough," said the general, "to see that we must not act with precipitation. An Irish business is a thing to be turned over several times."

"But yet," said a Pole, "what hope for humanity except from the rising of an oppressed nationality? We have offered ourselves on the altar, and in vain! Greece is too small, and Roumania —though both of them are ready to do any thing; but they would be the mere tools of Russia. Ireland alone remains, and she is at our feet."

"The peoples will never succeed until they have a fleet," said a German. "Then you could land as many rifles as you like, or any thing else. To have a fleet we rose against Denmark in my country, but we have been betrayed. Nevertheless, Germany will yet be united, and she can only be united as a republic. Then she will be the mistress of the seas."

"That is the mission of Italy," said Perroni. "Italy—with the traditions of Genoa, Venice, Pisa —Italy is plainly indicated as the future mistress of the seas."

"I beg your pardon," said the German; "the future mistress of the sees is the land of the Viking. It is the forests of the Baltic that will build the Best of the future. You have no timber in Italy."

"Timber is no longer wanted," said Perroni. "Nor do I know of what will be formed the fleets of the future. But the sovereignty of the seas depends upon seamen, and the nautical genius of the Italians—"

"Comrades," said the general, "we have discussed to-night a great subject. For my part I have travelled rather briskly, as you wished it. I should like to sleep on this affair."

"'Tis most reasonable," said the president. "Our refreshment at council is very spare," he continued, and he pointed to a vase of water and some glasses ranged round it in the middle of the table; "but we always drink one toast, general, before we separate. It is to one whom you love, and whom you have served well. Fill glasses, brethren and now 'TO MARY-ANNE.'"

If they had been inspired by the grape, nothing could be more animated and even excited than all their countenances suddenly became. The cheer might have been heard in the coffee-room, as they expressed, in the phrases of many languages, the never-failing and never-flagging enthusiasm invoked by the toast of their mistress.

CHAPTER 12

"Did you read that paragraph, mamma?" inquired Lady Corisande of the duchess, in a tone of some seriousness.

"I did."

"And what did you think of it?"

"It filled me with so much amazement that I have hardly begun to think."

"And Bertram never gave a hint of such things!"

"Let us believe they are quite untrue."

"I hope Bertram is in no danger," said his sister.

"Heaven forbid!" exclaimed the mother, with unaffected alarm.

"I know not how it is," said Lady Corisande, "but I frequently feel that some great woe is hanging over our country."

"You must dismiss such thoughts, my child; they are fanciful."

"But they will come, and when least expected—frequently in church, but also in the sunshine; and when I am riding too, when, once, every thing seemed gay. But now I often think of strife, and struggle, and war—civil war: the stir of our cavalcade seems like the tramp of cavalry."

"You indulge your imagination too much, dear Corisande. When you return to London, and enter the world, these anxious thoughts will fly."

"Is it imagination? I should rather have doubted my being of an imaginative nature. It seems to me that I am rather literal. But I cannot help hearing and reading things, and observing things, and they fill me with disquietude. All seems doubt and change, when it would appear that we require both faith and firmness."

"The duke is not alarmed about affairs," said his wife.

"And, if all did their duty like papa, there might be less, or no cause," said Corisande. "But, when I hear of young nobles, the natural leaders of the land, going over to the Roman Catholic Church, I confess I lose heart and patience. It seems so unpatriotic, so effeminate."

"It may not be true," said the duchess.

"It may not be true of him, but it is true of others," said Lady Corisande. "And why should he escape? He is very young, rather friendless, and surrounded by wily persons. I am disappointed about Bertram too. He ought to have prevented this, if it be true. Bertram seemed to me to have such excellent principles, and so completely to feel that he was born to maintain the great country which his ancestors created, that I indulged in dreams. I suppose you are right, mamma; I suppose I am imaginative without knowing it; but I have, always thought, and hoped, that when the troubles came the country might, perhaps, rally round Bertram."

"I wish to see Bertram in Parliament," said the duchess. "That will be the best thing for him. The duke has some plans."

This conversation had been occasioned by a paragraph in the Morning Post, circulating a rumor that a young noble, obviously Lothair, on the impending completion of his minority, was about to enter the Roman Church. The duchess and her daughter were sitting in a chamber of their northern castle, and speculating on their return to London, which was to take place after the Easter which had just arrived. It was an important social season for Corisande, for she was to be formally introduced into the great world, and to be presented at court.

In the mean while, was there any truth in the report about Lothair?

After their meeting at their lawyer's, a certain intimacy had occurred between the cardinal and his ward. They met again immediately and frequently, and their mutual feelings were cordial. The manners of his eminence were refined and affectionate; his conversational powers were distinguished; there was not a subject on which his mind did not teem with interesting suggestions; his easy

knowledge seemed always ready and always full; and whether it were art, or letters, or manners, or even political affairs, Lothair seemed to listen to one of the wisest, most enlightened, and most agreeable of men. There was only one subject on which his eminence seemed scrupulous never to touch, and that was religion; or so indirectly, that it was only when alone that Lothair frequently found himself musing over the happy influence on the arts, and morals, and happiness of mankind —of the Church.

In due time, not too soon, but when he was attuned to the initiation, the cardinal presented Lothair to Lady St. Jerome. The impassioned eloquence of that lady germinated the seed which the cardinal had seemed so carelessly to scatter. She was a woman to inspire crusaders. Not that she ever: condescended to vindicate her own particular faith, or spoke as if she were conscious that Lothair did not possess it. Assuming that religion was true, for otherwise man would be in a more degraded position than the beasts of the field, which are not aware of their own wretchedness, then religion should be the principal occupation of man, to which all other pursuits should be subservient. The doom of eternity, and the fortunes of life, cannot be placed in competition. Our days should be pure, and holy, and heroic—full of noble thoughts and solemn sacrifice. Providence, in its wisdom, had decreed that the world should be divided between the faithful and atheists; the latter even seemed to predominate. There was no doubt that, if they prevailed, all that elevated man would become extinct. It was a great trial; but happy was the man who was privileged even to endure the awful test. It might develop the highest qualities and the most sublime conduct. If he were equal to the occasion, and could control and even subdue these sons of Korah, he would rank with Michael the Archangel.

This was the text on which frequent discourses were delivered to Lothair, and to which he listened at first with eager, and soon with enraptured attention. The priestess was worthy of the shrine. Few persons were ever gifted with more natural eloquence: a command of language, choice without being pedantic; beautiful hands that fluttered with irresistible grace; flashing eyes and a voice of melody.

Lothair began to examine himself, and to ascertain whether he possessed the necessary qualities, and was capable of sublime conduct. His natural modesty and his strong religious feeling struggled together. He feared he was not an archangel, and yet he longed to struggle with the powers of darkness.

One day he ventured to express to Miss Arundel a somewhat hopeful view of the future, but Miss Arundel shook her head.

“I do not agree with my aunt, at least as regards this country,” said Miss Arundel; “I think our sins are too great. We left His Church, and God is now leaving us.”

Lothair looked grave, but was silent.

Weeks had passed since his introduction to the family of Lord St. Jerome, and it was remarkable how large a portion of his subsequent time had passed under that roof. At first there were few persons in town, and really of these Lothair knew none; and then the house in St. James’s Square was not only an interesting but it was an agreeable house. All Lady St. Jerome’s family connections were persons of much fashion, so there was more variety and entertainment than sometimes are to be found under a Roman Catholic roof. Lady St. Jerome was at home every evening before Easter. Few dames can venture successfully on so decided a step; but her saloons were always attended, and by “nice people.” Occasionally the cardinal stepped in, and, to a certain degree, the saloon was the rendezvous of the Catholic party; but it was also generally social and distinguished. Many bright dames and damsels, and many influential men, were there, who little deemed that deep and daring thoughts were there masked by many a gracious countenance. The social atmosphere infinitely pleased Lothair. The mixture of solemn duty and graceful diversion, high purposes and charming manners, seemed to realize some youthful dreams of elegant existence. All, too, was enhanced by the historic character of the roof and by the recollection that their mutual ancestors, as Clare Arundel more than once intimated to him, had created England. Having had so many pleasant dinners in St. James’s Square, and spent there

so many evening hours, it was not wonderful that Lothair had accepted an invitation from Lord St. Jerome to pass Easter at his country-seat.

CHAPTER 13

Vauxe, the seat of the St. Jeromes, was the finest specimen of the old English residence extant. It was the perfection of the style, which had gradually arisen after the Wars of the Roses had alike destroyed all the castles and the purpose of those stern erections. People said Vauxe looked like a college: the truth is, colleges looked like Vauxe, for, when those fair and civil buildings rose, the wise and liberal spirits who endowed them intended that they should resemble, as much as possible, the residence of a great noble.

There were two quadrangles at Vauxe of gray-stone; the outer one of larger dimensions and much covered with ivy; the inner one not so extensive, but more ornate, with a lofty tower, a hall, and a chapel. The house was full of galleries, and they were full of portraits. Indeed there was scarcely a chamber in this vast edifice of which the walls were not breathing with English history in this interesting form. Sometimes more ideal art asserted a triumphant claim—transcendental Holy Families, seraphic saints, and gorgeous scenes by Tintoret and Paul of Verona.

The furniture of the house seemed never to have been changed. It was very old, somewhat scanty, but very rich—tapestry and velvet hangings, marvellous cabinets, and crystal girandoles. Here and there a group of ancient plate; ewers and flagons and tall salt-cellars, a foot high and richly chiselled; sometimes a state bed shadowed with a huge pomp of stiff brocade and borne by silver poles.

Vauxe stood in a large park, studded with stately trees; here and there an avenue of Spanish chestnuts or a grove of oaks; sometimes a gorsy dell, and sometimes a so great spread of antlered fern, taller than the tallest man.

It was only twenty miles from town, and Lord St. Jerome drove Lothair down; the last ten miles through a pretty land, which, at the right season, would have been bright with orchards, oak-woods, and hop-gardens. Lord St. Jerome loved horses, and was an eminent whip. He had driven four-in-hand when a boy, and he went on driving four-in-hand; not because it was the fashion, but because he loved it. Toward the close of Lent, Lady St. Jerome and Clare Arundel had been at a convent in retreat, but they always passed Holy Week at home, and they were to welcome Lord St. Jerome again at Vauxe.

The day was bright, the mode of movement exhilarating, all the anticipated incidents delightful, and Lothair felt the happiness of health and youth.

"There is Vauxe," said Lord St. Jerome, in a tone of proud humility, as a turn in the road first displayed the stately pile.

"How beautiful!" said Lothair. "Ah! our ancestors understood the country."

"I used to think when I was a boy," said Lord St. Jerome, "that I lived in the prettiest village in the world; but these railroads have so changed every thing that Vauxe seems to me now only a second town-house."

The ladies were in a garden, where they were consulting with the gardener and Father Coleman about the shape of some new beds, for the critical hour of filling them was approaching. The gardener, like all head-gardeners, was opinionated. Living always at Vauxe, he had come to believe that the gardens belonged to him, and that the family were only occasional visitors; and he treated them accordingly. The lively and impetuous Lady St. Jerome had a thousand bright fancies, but her morose attendant never indulged them. She used to deplore his tyranny with piteous playfulness. "I suppose," she would say, "it is useless to resist, for I observe 'tis the same everywhere. Lady Roehampton says she never has her way with her gardens. It is no use speaking to Lord St. Jerome, for, though he is afraid of nothing else, I am sure he is afraid of Hawkins."

The only way that Lady St. Jerome could manage Hawkins was through Father Coleman. Father Coleman, who knew every thing, knew a great deal about gardens; from the days of Le Notre to those of the fine gentlemen who now travel about, and when disengaged deign to give us advice.

Father Coleman had only just entered middle-age, was imperturbable and mild in his manner. He passed his life very much at Vauxe, and imparted a great deal of knowledge to Mr. Hawkins without apparently being conscious of so doing. At the bottom of his mind, Mr. Hawkins felt assured that he had gained several distinguished prizes, mainly through the hints and guidance of Father Coleman; and thus, though on the surface, a little surly, he was ruled by Father Coleman, under the combined influence of self-interest and superior knowledge.

"You find us in a garden without flowers," said Lady St. Jerome; "but the sun, I think, alway loves these golden yews."

"These are for you, dear uncle," said Clare Arundel, as she gave him a rich cluster of violets. "Just now the woods are more fragrant than the gardens, and these are the produce of our morning walk. I could have brought you some primroses, but I do not like to mix violets with any thing."

"They say primroses make a capital salad," said Lord St. Jerome.

"Barbarian!" exclaimed Lady St. Jerome. "I see you want luncheon; it must, be ready;" and she took Lothair's arm. "I will show you a portrait of one of your ancestors," she said; "he married an Arundel."

CHAPTER 14

"Now, you know," said Lady St. Jerome to Lothair in a hushed voice, as they sat together in the evening, "you are to be quite free here; to do exactly what you like; and we shall follow our ways. If you like to have a clergyman of your own Church visit you while you are with us, pray say so without the slightest scruple. We have an excellent gentleman in this parish; he often dines here; and I am sure he would be most happy to attend you. I know that Holy Week is not wholly disregarded by some of the Anglicans."

"It is the anniversary of the greatest event of time," said Lothair; "and I should be sorry if any of my Church did not entirely regard it, though they may show that regard in a way different from your own."

"Yes, yes," murmured Lady St. Jerome; "there should be no difference between our Churches, if things were only properly understood. I would accept all who really bow to the name of Christ; they will come to the Church at last; they must. It is the atheists alone, I fear, who are now carrying every thing before them, and against whom there is no comfort, except the rock of St. Peter."

Miss Arundel crossed the room, whispered something to her aunt, and touched her forehead with her lips, and then left the apartment.

"We must soon separate, I fear," said Lady St. Jerome; "we have an office to-night of great moment; the Tenebrae commence to-night. You have, I think, nothing like it; but you have services throughout this week."

"I am sorry to say I have not attended them," said Lothair. "I did at Oxford; but I don't know how it is, but in London there seems no religion. And yet, as you sometimes say, religion is the great business of life; I sometimes begin to think the only business."

"Yes, yes," said Lady St. Jerome, with much interest, "if you believe that you are safe. I wish you had a clergyman near you while you are here. See Mr. Claughton, if you like; I would; and, if you do not, there is Father Coleman. I cannot convey to you how satisfactory conversation is with him on religious matters. He is the holiest of men, and yet he is a man of the world; he will not invite you into any controversies. He will speak with you only on points on which we agree. You know there are many points on which we agree?"

"Happily," said Lothair. "And now about the office to-night: tell me about these Tenebrae. Is there any thing in the Tenebrae why I ought not to be present?"

"No reason whatever; not a dogma which you do not believe; not a ceremony of which you cannot approve. There are Psalms, at the end of which a light on the altar is extinguished. There is the Song of Moses, the Canticle of Zachary, the Miserere—which is the 50th Psalm you read and chant regularly in your church—the Lord's Prayer in silence; and then all is darkness and distress—what the Church was when our Lord suffered, what the whole world is now except His Church."

"If you will permit me," said Lothair, "I will accompany you to the Tenebrae."

Although the chapel at Vauxe was, of course, a private chapel, it was open to the surrounding public, who eagerly availed themselves of a permission alike politic and gracious.

Nor was that remarkable. Manifold art had combined to create this exquisite temple, and to guide all its ministrations. But to-night it was not the radiant altar and the splendor of stately priests, the processions and the incense, the divine choir and the celestial harmonies resounding lingering in arched roofs, that attracted many a neighbor. The altar was desolate, the choir was dumb; and while the services proceeded in hushed tones of subdued sorrow, and sometimes even of suppressed anguish, gradually, with each psalm and canticle, a light of the altar was extinguished, till at length the Miserere was muttered, and all became darkness. A sound as of a distant and rising wind was heard, and a crash, as it were the fall of trees in a storm. The earth is covered with darkness, and the veil of the temple is rent. But just at this moment of extreme woe, when all human voices are silent,

and when it is forbidden even to breathe “Amen”—when every thing is symbolical of the confusion and despair of the Church at the loss of her expiring Lord—a priest brings forth a concealed light of silvery flame from a corner of the altar. This is the light of the world, and announced the resurrection, and then all rise up and depart in silence.

As Lothair rose, Miss Arundel passed him with streaming eyes.

“There is nothing in this holy office,” said Father Coleman to Lothair, “to which every real Christian might not give his assent.”

“Nothing,” said Lothair, with great decision.

CHAPTER 15

There were Tenebrae on the following days, Maundy Thursday and Good Friday, and Lothair was present on both occasions.

"There is also a great office on Friday," said Father Coleman to Lothair, "which perhaps you would not like to attend—the mass of the pre-sanctified. We bring back the blessed sacrament to the desolate altar, and unveil the cross. It is one of our highest ceremonies, the adoration of the cross, which the Protestants persist in calling idolatry, though I presume they will give us leave to know the meaning of our own words and actions, and hope they will believe us when we tell them that our genuflexions and kissing of the cross are no more than exterior expressions of that love which we bear in our hearts to Jesus crucified; and that the words adoration and adore, as applied to the cross, only signify that respect and veneration due to things immediately relating to God and His service."

"I see no idolatry in it," said Lothair, musingly.

"No impartial person could," rejoined Father Coleman; "but unfortunately all these prejudices were imbibed when the world was not so well informed as at present. A good deal of mischief has been done, too, by the Protestant versions of the Holy Scriptures; made in a hurry, and by men imperfectly acquainted with the Eastern tongues, and quite ignorant of Eastern manners. All the accumulated research and investigation of modern times have only illustrated and justified the offices of the Church."

"That is very interesting," said Lothair.

"Now, this question of idolatry," said Father Coleman, "that is a fertile subject of misconception. The house of Israel was raised up to destroy idolatry because idolatry thou meant dark images of Moloch opening their arms by machinery, and flinging the beauteous first-born of the land into their huge forms, which were furnaces of fire; or Ashtaroth, throned in moonlit groves, and surrounded by orgies of ineffable demoralization. It required the declared will of God to redeem man from such fatal iniquity, which would have sapped the human race. But to confound such deeds with the commemoration of God's saints, who are only pictured because their lives are perpetual incentives to purity and holiness, and to declare that the Queen of Heaven and the Mother of God should be to human feeling only as a sister of charity or a gleaner in the fields, is to abuse reason and to outrage the heart."

"We live in dark times," said Lothair, with an air of distress.

"Not darker than before the deluge," exclaimed Father Coleman; "not darker than before the nativity; not darker even than when the saints became martyrs. There is a Pharos in the world, and, its light will never be extinguished, however black the clouds and wild the waves. Man is on his trial now, not the Church; but in the service of the Church his highest energies may be developed, and his noblest qualities proved."

Lothair seemed plunged in thought, and Father Coleman glided away as Lady St. Jerome entered the gallery, shawled and bonneted, accompanied by another priest, Monsignore Catesby.

Catesby was a youthful member of an ancient English house, which for many generations had without a murmur, rather in a spirit of triumph, made every worldly sacrifice for the Church and court of Rome. For that cause they had forfeited their lives, broad estates, and all the honors of a lofty station in their own land. Reginald Catesby, with considerable abilities, trained with consummate skill, inherited their determined will, and the traditionary beauty of their form and countenance. His manners were winning, and, he was as well informed in the ways of the world as he was in the works of the great casuists.

"My lord has ordered the charbanc, and is going to drive us all to Chart, where we will lunch," said Lady St. Jerome; "'tis a curious place, and was planted, only seventy years ago, by my lord's grandfather, entirely with spruce-firs, but with so much care and skill, giving each plant and tree

ample distance, that they have risen to the noblest proportions, with all their green branches far-spreading on the ground like huge fans."

It was only a drive of three or four miles entirely in the park. This was a district that had been added to the ancient enclosure—a striking scene. It was a forest of firs, but quite unlike such as might be met with in the north of Europe or of America. Every tree was perfect—huge and complete, and full of massy grace. Nothing else was permitted to grow there except juniper, of which there were abounding and wondrous groups, green and spiral; the whole contrasting with the tall brown fern, of which there were quantities about, cut for the deer.

The turf was dry and mossy, and the air pleasant. It was a balmy day. They sat down by the great trees, the servants opened the luncheon-baskets, which were a present from Balmoral. Lady St. Jerome was seldom seen to greater advantage than distributing her viands under such circumstances. Never was such gay and graceful hospitality. Lothair was quite fascinated as she playfully thrust a paper of lobster-sandwiches into his hand, and enjoined Monsignore Catesby to fill his tumbler with Chablis.

"I wish Father Coleman were here," said Lothair to Miss Arundel.

"Why?" said Miss Arundel.

"Because we were in the midst of a very interesting conversation on idolatry and on worship in groves, when Lady St. Jerome summoned us to our drive. This seems a grove where one might worship."

"Father Coleman ought to be at Rome," said Miss Arundel. "He was to have passed Holy Week there. I know not why he changed his plans."

"Are you angry with him for it?"

"No, not angry, but surprised; surprised that any one might be at Rome, and yet be absent from it."

"You like Rome?"

"I have never been there. It is the wish of my life."

"May I say to you what you said to me just now—why?"

"Naturally, because I would wish to witness the ceremonies of the Church in their most perfect form."

"But they are fulfilled in this country, I have heard, with much splendor and precision."

Miss Arundel shook her head.

"Oh! no," she said; "in this country we are only just emerging from the catacombs. If the ceremonies of the Church were adequately fulfilled in England, we should hear very little of English infidelity."

"That is saying a great deal," observed Lothair, inquiringly.

"Had I that command of wealth of which we hear so much in the present day, and with which the possessors seem to know so little what to do, I would purchase some of those squalid streets in Westminster, which are the shame of the metropolis, and clear a great space and build a real cathedral, where the worship of heaven should be perpetually conducted in the full spirit of the ordinances of the Church. I believe, were this done, even this country might be saved."

CHAPTER 16

Lothair began to meditate on two great ideas—the reconciliation of Christendom, and the influence of architecture on religion. If the differences between the Roman and Anglican Churches, and between the papacy and Protestantism generally arose, as Father Coleman assured him, and seemed to prove, in mere misconception, reconciliation, though difficult, did not seem impossible, and appeared to be one of the most efficient modes of defeating the atheists. It was a result which, of course, mainly depended on the authority of Reason; but the power of the imagination might also be enlisted in the good cause through the influence of the fine arts, of which the great mission is to excite, and at the same time elevate, the feelings of the human family. Lothair found himself frequently in a reverie over Miss Arundel's ideal fane; and, feeling that he had the power of buying up a district in forlorn Westminster, and raising there a temple to the living God, which might influence the future welfare of millions, and even effect the salvation of his country, he began to ask himself whether he could incur the responsibility of shrinking from the fulfilment of this great duty.

Lothair could not have a better adviser on the subject of the influence of architecture on religion than Monsignore Catesby. Monsignore Catesby had been a pupil of Pugin; his knowledge of ecclesiastical architecture was only equalled by his exquisite taste. To hear him expound the mysteries of symbolical art, and expatiate on the hidden revelations of its beauteous forms, reached even to ecstasy. Lothair hung upon his accents like a neophyte. Conferences with Father Coleman on those points of faith on which they did not differ, followed up by desultory remarks on those points of faith on which they ought not to differ—critical discussions with Monsignore Catesby on cathedrals, their forms, their purposes, and the instances in several countries in which those forms were most perfect and those purposes best secured—occupied a good deal of time; and yet these engaging pursuits were secondary in real emotion to his frequent conversations with Miss Arundel in whose society every day he took a strange and deeper interest.

She did not extend to him that ready sympathy which was supplied by the two priests. On the contrary, when he was apt to indulge in those speculations which they always encouraged, and rewarded by adroit applause, she was often silent, throwing on him only the scrutiny of those violet yes, whose glance was rather fascinating than apt to captivate. And yet he was irresistibly drawn to her, and, once recalling the portrait in the gallery, he ventured to murmur that they were kinsfolk.

"Oh! I have no kin, no country," said Miss Arundel. "These are not times for kin and country. I have given up all these things for my Master!"

"But are our times so trying as that?" inquired Lothair.

"They are times for new crusades," said Miss Arundel, with energy, "though it may be of a different character from the old. If I were a man, I would draw my sword for Christ. There are as great deeds to be done as the siege of Ascalon, or even as the freeing of the Holy Sepulchre."

In the midst of a profound discussion with Father Coleman on Mariolatry, Lothair, rapt in reverie, suddenly introduced the subject of Miss Arundel. "I wonder what will be her lot?" he exclaimed.

"It seems to, me to be settled," said Father Coleman. "She will be the bride of the Church."

"Indeed?" and he started, and even changed color.

"She deems it her vocation," said Father Coleman.

"And yet, with such gifts, to be immured in a convent," said Lothair.

"That would not necessarily follow," replied Father Coleman. "Miss Arundel may occupy a position in which she may exercise much influence for the great cause which absorbs her being."

"There is a divine energy about her," said Lothair, almost speaking to himself. "It could not have been given for little ends."

"If Miss Arundel could meet with a spirit as and as energetic as her own," said Father. Coleman, "Her fate might be different. She has no thoughts which are not great, and no purposes which are not sublime. But for the companion of her life she would require no less than a Godfrey de Bouillon."

Lothair began to find the time pass very rapidly at Vauxe. Easter week had nearly vanished; Vauxe had been gay during the last few days. Every day some visitors came down from London; sometimes they returned in the evening; sometimes they passed the night at Vauxe, and returned to town in the morning with large bouquets. Lothair felt it was time for him to interfere, and he broke his intention to Lady St. Jerome; but Lady St. Jerome would not hear of it. So he muttered something about business.

"Exactly," she said; "everybody has business, and I dare say you have a great deal. But Vauxe is exactly the place for persons who have business. You go up to town by an early train, and then you return exactly in time for dinner, and bring us all the news from the clubs."

Lothair was beginning to say something, but Lady St. Jerome, who, when necessary, had the rare art of not listening without offending the speaker, told him that they did not intend themselves to return to town for a week or so, and that she knew Lord St. Jerome would be greatly annoyed if Lothair did not remain.

Lothair remained; and he went up to town one or two mornings to transact business; that is to say, to see a celebrated architect and to order plans for a cathedral, in which all the purposes of those sublime and exquisite structures were to be realized. The drawings would take a considerable time to prepare, and these must be deeply considered. So Lothair became quite domiciliated at Vauxe: he went up to town in the morning, and returned, as it were, to his home; everybody delighted to welcome him, and yet he seemed not expected. His rooms were called after his name; and the household treated him as one of the family.

CHAPTER 17

A few days before Lothair's visit was to terminate, the cardinal and Monsignore Berwick arrived at Vauxe. His eminence was received with much ceremony; the marshalled household, ranged in lines, fell on their knees at his approach, and Lady St. Jerome, Miss Arundel, and some other ladies, scarcely less choice and fair, with the lowest obeisance, touched, with their honored lips, his princely hand.

The monsignore had made another visit to Paris on his intended return to Rome, but, in consequence of some secret intelligence which he had acquired in the French capital, had thought fit to return to England to consult with the cardinal. There seemed to be no doubt that the revolutionary party in Italy, assured by the withdrawal of the French troops from Rome, were again stirring. There seemed also little doubt that London was the centre of preparation, though the project and the projectors were involved in much, mystery. "They want money," said the monsignore; "that we know, and that is now our best chance. The Aspromonte expedition drained their private resources; and as for further aid, that is out of the question; the galantuomo is bankrupt. But the atheists are desperate, and we must prepare for events."

On the morning after their arrival, the cardinal invited Lothair to a stroll in the park. "There is the feeling of spring this morning," said his eminence, "though scarcely yet its vision." It was truly a day of balm, and sweetness, and quickening life; a delicate mist hung about the huge trees and the masses of more distant woods, and seemed to clothe them with that fulness of foliage which was not yet theirs. The cardinal discoursed much on forest-trees, and, happily. He recommended Lothair to read Evelyn's "Sylva." Mr. Evelyn had a most accomplished mind; indeed, a character in every respect that approached perfection. He was also a most religious man.

"I wonder," said Lothair, "how any man who is religious can think of any thing but religion."

"True," said the cardinal, and looking at him earnestly, "most true. But all things that are good and beautiful make us more religious. They tend to the development of the religious principle in us, which is our divine nature. And, my dear young friend," and here his eminence put his arm easily and affectionately into that of Lothair, "it is a most happy thing for you, that you live so much with a really religious family. It is a great boon for a young man, and a rare one."

"I feel it so," said Lothair, his face kindling.

"Ah!" said the cardinal, "when we remember that this country once consisted only of such families!" And then, with a sigh, and as if speaking to himself, "And they made it so great and so beautiful!"

"It is still great and beautiful," said Lothair, but rather in a tone of inquiry than decision.

"But the cause of its greatness and its beauty no longer exists. It became great and beautiful because it believed in God."

"But faith is not extinct?" said Lothair.

"It exists in the Church," replied the cardinal, with decision. "All without that pale is practical atheism."

"It seems to me that a sense of duty is natural to man," said Lothair, "and that there can be no satisfaction in life without attempting to fulfil it."

"Noble words, my dear young friend; noble and true. And the highest duty of man, especially in this age, is to vindicate the principles of religion, without which the world must soon become a scene of universal desolation."

"I wonder if England will ever again be a religious country?" said Lothair, musingly.

"I pray for that daily," said the cardinal; and he invited his companion to seat himself on the trunk of an oak that had been lying there since the autumn fall. A slight hectic flame played over the pale and attenuated countenance of the cardinal; he seemed for a moment in deep thought; and then, in a voice distinct yet somewhat hushed, and at first rather faltering, he said: "I know not a grander,

or a nobler career, for a young man of talents and position in this age, than to be the champion and asserter of Divine truth. It is not probable that there could be another conqueror in out time. The world is wearied of statesmen; whom democracy has degraded into politicians, and of orators who have become what they call debaters. I do not believe there could be another Dante, even another Milton. The world is devoted to physical science, because it believes these discoveries will increase its capacity of luxury and self-indulgence. But the pursuit of science leads only to the insoluble. When we arrive at that barren term, the Divine voice summons man, as it summoned Samuel; all the poetry and passion and sentiment of human nature are taking refuge in religion; and he, whose deeds and words most nobly represent Divine thoughts, will be the man of this century."

"But who could be equal to such a task?" murmured Lothair.

"Yourself," exclaimed the cardinal, and he threw his glittering eye upon his companion. "Any one with the necessary gifts, who had implicit faith in the Divine purpose."

"But the Church is perplexed; it is ambiguous, contradictory."

"No, no," said the cardinal; "not the Church of Christ; it is never perplexed, never ambiguous, never contradictory. Why should it be? How could it be? The Divine persons are ever with it, strengthening and guiding it with perpetual miracles. Perplexed churches are churches made by Act of Parliament, not by God."

Lothair seemed to start, and looked at his guardian with a scrutinizing glance. And then he said, but not without hesitation, "I experience at times great despondency."

"Naturally," replied the cardinal. "Every man must be despondent who is not a Christian."

"But I am a Christian," said Lothair.

"A Christian estranged," said the cardinal; "a Christian without the consolations of Christianity."

"There is something in that," said Lothair. "I require the consolations of Christianity, and yet I feel I have them not. Why is this?"

"Because what you call your religion is a thing apart from your life, and it ought to be your life. Religion should be the rule of life, not a casual incident of it. There is not a duty of existence, not a joy or sorrow which the services of the Church do not assert, or with which they do not sympathize. Tell me, now; you have, I was glad to hear, attended the services of the Church of late, since you have been under this admirable roof. Have you not then found some consolation?"

"Yes; without doubt I have been often solaced." And Lothair sighed.

"What the soul is to man, the Church is to the world," said the cardinal. "It is the link between us and the Divine nature. It came from heaven complete; it has never changed, and it can never alter. Its ceremonies are types of celestial truths; its services are suited to all the moods of man; they strengthen him in his wisdom and his purity, and control and save him in the hour of passion and temptation. Taken as a whole, with all its ministrations, its orders, its offices, and the divine splendor of its ritual, it secures us on earth some adumbration of that ineffable glory which awaits the faithful in heaven, where the blessed Mother of God and ten thousand saints perpetually guard over no with Divine intercession."

"I was not taught these things in my boyhood," said Lothair.

"And you might reproach me, and reasonably, as your guardian, for my neglect," said the cardinal. "But my power was very limited, and, when my duties commenced, you must remember that I was myself estranged from the Church, I was myself a Parliamentary Christian, till despondency and study and ceaseless thought and prayer, and the Divine will, brought me to light and rest. But I at least saved you from a Presbyterian university; I at least secured Oxford for you; and I can assure you, of my many struggles, that was not the least."

"It gave the turn to my mind," said Lothair, "and I am grateful to you for it. What it will all end in, God only knows."

"It will end in His glory and in yours," said the cardinal. "I have spoken, perhaps, too much and too freely, but you greatly interest me, not merely because you are my charge, and the son of my beloved friend, but because I perceive in you great qualities—qualities so great," continued the cardinal with earnestness, "that properly guided, they may considerably affect the history of this country, and perhaps even have a wider range."

Lothair shook his head.

"Well, well," continued the cardinal in a lighter tone, "we will pursue our ramble. At any rate, I am not wrong in this, that you have no objection to join in my daily prayer for the conversion of this kingdom to—religious truth," his eminence added after a pause.

"Yes religious truth," said Lothair, "we must all pray for that."

CHAPTER 18

Lothair returned to town excited and agitated. He felt that he was on the eve of some great event in his existence, but its precise character was not defined. One conclusion, however, was indubitable: life must be religion; when we consider what is at stake, and that our eternal welfare depends on our due preparation for the future, it was folly to spare a single hour from the consideration of the best means to secure our readiness. Such a subject does not admit of half measures or of halting opinions. It seemed to Lothair that nothing could interest him in life that was not symbolical of divine truths and an adumbration of the celestial hereafter.

Could truth have descended from heaven ever to be distorted, to be corrupted, misapprehended, misunderstood? Impossible! Such a belief would confound and contradict all the attributes of the All-wise and the All-mighty. There must be truth on earth now as fresh and complete is it was at Bethlehem. And how could it be preserved but by the influence of the Paraclete acting on an ordained class? On this head his tutor at Oxford had fortified him; by a conviction of the Apostolical succession of the English bishops, which no Act of Parliament could alter or affect. But Lothair was haunted by a feeling that the relations of his Communion with the Blessed Virgin were not satisfactory. They could not content either his heart or his intellect. Was it becoming that a Christian should live as regards the hallowed Mother of his God in a condition of harsh estrangement? What mediatorial influence more awfully appropriate than the consecrated agent of the mighty mystery? Nor could he, even in his early days, accept without a scruple the frigid system that would class the holy actors in the divine drama of the Redemption as mere units in the categories of vanished generations. Human beings who had been in personal relation with the Godhead must be different from other human beings. There must be some transcendent quality in their lives and careers, in their very organization, which marks them out from all secular heroes. What was Alexander the Great, or even Caius Julius, compared with that apostle whom Jesus loved?

Restless and disquieted, Lothair paced the long and lofty rooms which had been secured for him in a London hotel which rivalled the colossal convenience of Paris and the American cities. Their tawdry ornaments and their terrible new furniture would not do after the galleries and portraits of Vauxe. Lothair sighed.

Why did that visit ever end? Why did the world consist of any thing else but Tudor palaces in ferny parks, or time be other than a perpetual Holy Week? He never sighed at Vauxe. Why? He supposed it was because their religion was his life, and here—and he looked around him with a shudder. The cardinal was right: it was a most happy thing for him to be living so much with so truly a religious family.

The door opened, and servants came in bearing a large and magnificent portfolio. It was of morocco and of prelatial purple with broad bands of gold and alternate ornaments of a cross and a coronet. A servant handed to Lothair a letter, which enclosed the key that opened its lock. The portfolio contained the plans and drawings of the cathedral.

Lothair was lost in admiration of these designs and their execution. But after the first fever of investigation was over, he required sympathy and also information. In a truly religious family there would always be a Father Coleman or a Monsignore Catesby to guide and to instruct. But a Protestant, if he wants aid or advice on any matter, can only go to his solicitor. But as he proceeded in his researches he sensibly felt that the business was one above even an oratorian or a monsignore. It required a finer and a more intimate sympathy; a taste at the same time more inspired and more inspiring; some one who blended with divine convictions the graceful energy of human feeling, and who would not only animate him to effort but fascinate him to its fulfilment. The counsellor he required was Miss Arundel.

Lothair had quitted Vauxe one week, and it seemed to him a year. During the first four-and-twenty hours he felt like a child who had returned to school, and, the day after, like a man on a desert island. Various other forms of misery and misfortune were suggested by his succeeding experience. Town brought no distractions to him; he knew very few people, and these be had not yet encountered; he had once ventured to White's, but found only a group of gray-beaded men, who evidently did not know him, and who seemed to scan him with cynical nonchalance. These were not the golden youth whom he had been assured by Bertram would greet him; so, after reading a newspaper for a moment upside downward, he got away. But he had no harbor of refuge, and was obliged to ride down to Richmond and dine alone, and meditate on symbols and celestial adumbrations. Every day he felt how inferior was this existence to that of a life in a truly religious family.

But, of all the members of the family to which his memory recurred with such unflagging interest, none more frequently engaged his thoughts than Miss Arundel. Her conversation, which stimulated his intelligence while it rather piqued his self-love, exercised a great influence over him, and he had omitted no opportunity of enjoying her society. That society and its animating power he sadly missed; and now that he had before him the very drawings about which they had frequently talked, and she was not by his side to suggest and sympathize and criticism and praise, he felt unusually depressed.

Lothair corresponded with Lady St. Jerome, and was aware of her intended movements. But the return the family to London had been somewhat delayed. When this disappointment was first made known to him, his impulse was to ride down to Vauxe; but the tact in which he was not deficient assured him that he ought not to reappear on a stage where he had already figured for perhaps too considerable a time, and so another week had to be passed, softened, however, by visits from the father of the oratory and the chamberlain of his holiness, who came to look after Lothair with much friendliness, and with whom it was consolatory and even delightful for him to converse on sacred art, still holier things, and also Miss Arundel.

At length, though it seemed impossible, this second week elapsed, and to-morrow Lothair was to lunch with Lady St. Jerome in St. James's Square, and to meet all his friends. He thought of it all day, and he passed a restless night. He took an early canter to rally his energies, and his fancy was active in the splendor of the spring. The chestnuts were in silver bloom, and the pink May had flushed the thorns, and banks of sloping turf were radiant with plots of gorgeous flowers. The waters glittered in the sun, and the air was fragrant with that spell which only can be found in metropolitan mignonette. It was the hour and the season when heroic youth comes to great decisions, achieves exploits, or perpetrates scrapes.

Nothing could be more cordial, nothing more winning, than the reception of Lothair by Lady St. Jerome. She did not conceal her joy at their being again together. Even Miss Arundel, though still calm, even a little demure, seemed glad to see him: her eyes looked kind and pleased, and she gave him her hand with graceful heartiness. It was the sacred hour of two when Lothair arrived, and they were summoned to luncheon almost immediately. Then they were not alone; Lord St. Jerome was not there, but the priests were present and some others. Lothair, however, sat next to Miss Arundel.

"I have been thinking of you very often since I left Vauxe," said Lothair to his neighbor.

"Charitably, I am sure."

"I have been thinking of you every day," he continued, "for I wanted your advice."

"Ah! but that is not a popular thing to give."

"But it is precious—at least, yours is to me—and I want it now very much."

"Father Coleman told me you had got the plans for the cathedral," said Miss Arundel.

"And I want to show them to you."

"I fear I am only a critic," said Miss Arundel, "and I do not admire mere critics. I was very free in my comments to you on several subjects at Vauxe; and I must now say I thought you bore it very kindly."

"I was enchanted," said Lothair, "and desire nothing but to be ever subject to such remarks. But this affair of the cathedral, it is your own thought—I would fain hope your own wish, for unless it were your own wish I do not think I ever should be able to accomplish it."

"And when the cathedral is built," said Miss Arundel "what then?"

"Do you not remember telling me at Vauxe that all sacred buildings should be respected, for that in the long-run they generally fell to the professors of the true faith?"

"But when they built St. Peter's, they dedicated it to a saint in heaven," said Miss Arundel. "To whom is yours to be inscribed?"

"To a saint in heaven and in earth," said Lothair, blushing; "to St. Clare."

But Lady St. Jerome and her guests rose at this moment, and it is impossible to say with precision whether this last remark of Lothair absolutely reached the ear of Miss Arundel. She looked as if it had not. The priests and the other guests dispersed. Lothair accompanied the ladies to the drawing-room; he lingered, and he was meditating if the occasion served to say more.

Lady St. Jerome was writing a note, Mss Arundel was arranging some work, Lothair was affecting an interest in her employment in order that he might be seated by her and ask her questions, when the groom of the chambers entered and inquired whether her ladyship was at home, and being answered in the affirmative, retired, and announced and ushered in the duchess and Lady Corisande.

CHAPTER 19

It seemed that the duchess and Lady St. Jerome were intimate, for they called each other by their Christian names, and kissed each other. The young ladies also were cordial. Her grace greeted Lothair with heartiness; Lady Corisande with some reserve. Lothair thought she looked very radiant and very proud.

It was some time since they had all met—not since the end of the last season—so there was a great deal to talk about. There had been deaths and births and marriages which required a flying comment—all important events; deaths which solved many difficulties, heirs to estates which were not expected, and weddings which surprised everybody.

"And have you seen Selina?" inquired Lady St. Jerome.

"Not yet; except mamma, this is our first visit," replied the duchess.

"Ah! that is real friendship. She came down to Vauxe the other day, but I did not think she was looking well. She frets herself too much about her boys; she does not know what to do with them. They will not go into the Church, and they have no fortune for the Guards."

"I understood that Lord Plantagenet was to be a civil engineer," said Lady Corisande.

"And Lord Albert Victor to have a sheep-walk in Australia," continued Lady St. Jerome.

"They say that a lord must not go to the bar," said Miss Arundel. "It seems to me very unjust."

"Alfred Beaufort went the circuit," said Lady Corisande, "but I believe they drove him into Parliament."

"You will miss your friend Bertram at Oxford," said the duchess, addressing Lothair.

"Indeed," said Lothair, rather confused, for he was himself a defaulter in collegiate attendance. "I was just going to write to him to see whether one could not keep half a term."

"Oh! nothing will prevent his taking his degree," said the duchess, "but I fear there must be some delay. There is a vacancy for our county—Mr. Sandstone is dead, and they insist upon returning Bertram. I hope he will be of age before the nomination. The duke is much opposed to it; he wishes him to wait; but in these days it is not so easy for young men to get into Parliament. It is not as it used to be; we cannot choose."

"This is an important event," said Lothair to Lady Corisande.

"I think it is; nor do I believe Bertram is too young for public life. These are not times to be laggard."

"There is no doubt they are very serious times," said Lothair.

"I have every confidence in Bertram—in his ability and his principles."

The ladies began to talk about the approaching drawing-room and Lady Corisande's presentation, and Lothair thought it right to make his obeisance and withdraw. He met in the hall Father Coleman, who was in fact looking after him, and would have induced him to repair to the father's room and hold some interesting conversation, but Lothair was not so congenial as usual. He was even abrupt, and the father, who never pressed any thing, assuming that Lothair had some engagement, relinquished with a serene brow, but not without chagrin, what he had deemed might have proved a golden opportunity.

And yet Lothair had no engagement, and did not know where to go or what to do with himself. But he wanted to be alone, and of all persons in the world at that moment, he had a sort of instinct that the one he wished least to converse with was Father Coleman.

"She has every confidence in his principles," said Lothair to himself as he mounted his horse, "and his principles were mine six months ago, when I was at Brentham. Delicious Brentham! It seems like a dream; but every thing seems like a dream; I hardly know whether life is agony or bliss."

CHAPTER 20

The duke was one of the few gentlemen in, London who lived in a palace. One of the half-dozen of those stately structures that our capital boasts had fallen to his lot.

An heir-apparent to the throne, in the earlier days of the present dynasty, had resolved to be lodged as became a prince, and had raised, amid gardens which he had diverted from one of the royal parks, an edifice not unworthy of Vicenza in its best days, though on a far more extensive scale than any pile that favored city boasts. Before the palace was finished, the prince died, and irretrievably in debt. His executors were glad to sell to the trustees of the ancestors of the chief of the house of Brentham the incomplete palace, which ought never to have been commenced. The ancestor of the duke was by no means so strong a man as the duke himself, and prudent people rather murmured at the exploit. But it was what is called a lucky family—that is to say, a family with a charm that always attracted and absorbed heiresses; and perhaps the splendor of CRECY HOUSE—for it always retained its original title—might have in some degree contributed to fascinate the taste or imagination of the beautiful women who, generation after generation, brought their bright castles and their broad manors to swell the state and rent-rolls of the family who were so kind to Lothair.

The centre of Crecy House consisted of a hall of vast proportion, and reaching to the roof. Its walls commemorated, in paintings by the most celebrated artists of the age, the exploits of the Black Prince; and its coved ceiling, in panels resplendent with Venetian gold, contained the forms and portraits of English heroes. A corridor round this hall contained the most celebrated private collection of pictures in England and opened into a series of sumptuous saloons.

It was a rather early hour when Lothair, the morning after his meeting the duchess at Lady St. Jerome's, called at Crecy House; but it was only to leave his card. He would not delay for a moment paying his respects there, and yet he shrank from thrusting himself immediately into the circle. The duke's brougham was in the court-yard. Lothair was holding his groom's horse, who had dismounted, when the hall-door opened, and his grace and Bertram came forth.

"Halloa, old fellow!" exclaimed Bertram, "only think of your being here. It seems an age since we met. The duchess was telling us about you at breakfast."

"Go in and see them," said the duke, "there is a large party at luncheon; Augusta Montairy is there. Bertram and I are obliged to go to Lincoln's Inn, something about his election."

But Lothair murmured thanks and declined.

"What are you going to do with yourself to-day?" said the duke. And Lothair hesitating, his grace continued: "Well, then, come and dine with us."

"Of course you will come, old fellow. I have not seen you since you left Oxford at the beginning of the year. And then we can settle about your term." And Lothair assenting, they drove away.

It was nine o'clock before they dined. The days were getting very long, and soft, and sweet; the riding-parties lingered amid the pink May and the tender twilight breeze. The Montairys dined to-day at Crecy House, and a charming married daughter without her husband, and Lord and Lady Clanmorne, who were near kin to the duchess, and themselves so good-looking and agreeable that they were as good at a dinner-party as a couple of first-rate entr es. There was also Lord Carisbrooke, a young man of distinguished air and appearance; his own master, with a large estate, and three years or so older than Lothair.

They dined in the Chinese saloon, which was of moderate dimensions, but bright with fantastic forms and colors, brilliantly lit up. It was the privilege of Lothair to hand the duchess to her seat. He observed that Lord Carisbrooke was placed next to Lady Corisande, though he had not taken her out.

"This dinner reminds me of my visit to Brentham," said Lothair.

"Almost the same party," said the duchess.

"The visit to Brentham was the happiest time of my life," said Lothair, moodily.

"But you have seen a great deal since," said the duchess.

"I am not a sure it is of any use seeing things," said Lothair.

When the ladies retired, there was some talk about horses. Lord Carisbrooke was breeding; Lothair thought it was a duty to breed, but not to go on the turf. Lord Carisbrooke thought there could be no good breeding without racing; Lothair was of opinion that races might be confined to one's own parks, with no legs admitted, and immense prizes, which must cause emulation. Then they joined the ladies, and then, in a short time, there was music. Lothair hovered about Lady Corisande, and at last seized a happy opportunity of addressing her.

"I shall never forget your singing at Brentham," he said; "at first I thought it might be as Lady Montairy said, because I was not used to fine singing; but I heard the Venusina the other day, and I prefer your voice and style."

"Have you heard the Venusina?" said Lady Corisande, with animation; "I know nothing that I look forward to with more interest. But I was told she was not to open her mouth until she appeared at the opera. Where did you hear her?"

"Oh, I heard her," said Lothair, "at the Roman Catholic cathedral."

"I am sure I shall never hear her there," said Lady Corisande, looking very grave.

"Do not you think music a powerful accessory to religion?" said Lothair, but a little embarrassed.

"Within certain limits," said Lady Corisande—"the limits I am used to; but I should prefer to hear opera-singers at the opera."

"Ah! if all amateurs could sing like you," said Lothair, "that would be unnecessary. But a fine mass by Mozart—it requires great skill as well as power to render it. I admire no one so much as Mozart, and especially his masses. I have been hearing a great many of them lately."

"So we understood," said Lady Corisande, rather dryly, and looking about her as if she were not much interested, or at any rate not much gratified by the conversation.

Lothair felt he was not getting on, and he wished to get on, but he was socially inexperienced, and his resources not much in hand. There was a pause—it seemed to him an awkward pause; and then Lady Corisande walked away and addressed Lady Clanmorne.

Some very fine singing began at this moment; the room was hushed, no one moved, and Lothair, undisturbed, had the opportunity of watching his late companion. There was something in Lady Corisande that to him was irresistibly captivating; and as he was always thinking and analyzing, he employed himself in discovering the cause. "She is not particularly gracious," he said to himself, "at least not to me; she is beautiful, but so are others; and others, like her, are clever—perhaps more clever. But there is something in her brow, her glance, her carriage, which intimate what they call character, which interests me. Six months ago I was in love with her, because I thought she was like her sisters. I love her sisters, but she is not the least like them."

The music ceased; Lothair moved away, and he approached the duke.

"I have a favor to ask your grace," he said. "I have made up my mind that I shall not go back to Oxford this term; would your grace do me the great favor of presenting me at the next lev e?"

CHAPTER 21

One's life changes in a moment. Half a month ago, Lothair, without an acquaintance, was meditating his return to Oxford. Now he seemed to know everybody who was anybody. His table was overflowing with invitations to all the fine houses in town. First came the routs and the balls; then, when he had been presented to the husbands, came the dinners. His kind friends the Duchess and Lady St. Jerome were the fairies who had worked this sudden scene of enchantment. A single word from them, and London was at Lothair's feet.

He liked it amazingly. He quite forgot the conclusion at which he had arrived respecting society a year ago, drawn from his vast experience of the single party which he had then attended. Feelings are different when you know a great many persons, and every person is trying to please you; above all, when there are individuals whom you want to meet, and whom, if you do not meet, you become restless.

Town was beginning to blaze. Broughams whirled and bright barouches glanced, troops of social cavalry cantered and caracolled in morning rides, and the bells of prancing ponies, lashed by delicate hands, gingled in the laughing air. There were stoppages in Bond Street, which seems to cap the climax of civilisation, after crowded clubs and swarming parks.

But the great event of the season was the presentation of Lady Corisande. Truly our bright maiden of Brenthani woke and found herself famous. There are families whom everybody praises, and families who are treated in a different way. Either will do; all the sons and daughters of the first succeed, all the sons and daughters of the last are encouraged in perverseness by the prophetic determination of society. Half a dozen married sisters, who were the delight and ornament of their circles, in the case of Lady Corisande were good precursors of popularity; but the world would not be content with that: they credited her with all their charms and winning qualities, but also with something grander and beyond comparison; and from the moment her fair cheek was sealed by the gracious approbation of Majesty, all the critics of the Court at once recognised her as the cynosure of the Empyrean.

Monsignore Catesby, who looked after Lothair, and was always breakfasting with him without the necessity of an invitation (a fascinating man, and who talked upon all subjects except High Mass), knew everything that took place at Court without being present there himself. He led the conversation to the majestic theme, and while he seemed to be busied in breaking an egg with delicate precision, and hardly listening to the frank expression of opinions which he carelessly encouraged, obtained a not insufficient share of Lothair's views and impressions of human beings and affairs in general during the last few days, which had witnessed a LevÃ©e and a Drawing-room.

'Ah! then you were so fortunate as to know the beauty before her dÃ©but,' said the Monsignore.

'Intimately; her brother is my friend. I was at Brentham last summer. Delicious place! and the most agreeable visit I ever made in my life, at least, one of the most agreeable.'

'Ah! ah!' said the Monsignore. 'Let me ring for some toast.'

On the night of the Drawing-room, a great ball was given at Crecy House to celebrate the entrance of Corisande into the world. It was a sumptuous festival. The palace, resonant with fantastic music, blazed amid illumined gardens rich with summer warmth.

A prince of the blood was dancing with Lady Corisande. Lothair was there, vis-Ã -vis with Miss Arundel.

'I delight in this hall,' she said to Lothair; 'but how superior the pictured scene to the reality!'

'What! would you like, then, to be in a battle?'

'I should like to be with heroes, wherever they might be. What a fine character was the Black Prince! And they call those days the days of superstition!'

The silver horns sounded a brave flourish. Lothair had to advance and meet Lady Corisande. Her approaching mien was full of grace and majesty, but Lothair thought there was a kind expression in her glance, which seemed to remember Brentham, and that he was her brother's Mend.

A little later in the evening he was her partner. He could not refrain from congratulating her on the beauty and the success of the festival.

'I am glad you are pleased, and I am glad you think it successful; but, you know, I am no judge, for this is my first ball!'

'Ah! to be sure; and yet it seems impossible,' he continued, in a tone of murmuring admiration.

'Oh! I have been at little dances at my sisters;' half behind the door,' she added, with a slight smile. 'But to-night I am present at a scene of which I have only read.'

'And how do you like balls?' said Lothair.

'I think I shall like them very much,' said Lady Corisande; 'but to-night, I will confess, I am a little nervous.'

'You do not look so.'

'I am glad of that.'

'Why?'

'Is it not a sign of weakness?'

'Can feeling be weakness?'

'Feeling without sufficient cause is, I should think.' And then, and in a tone of some archness, she said, 'And how do you like balls?'

'Well, I like them amazingly,' said Lothair. 'They seem to me to have every quality which can render an entertainment agreeable: music, light, flowers, beautiful faces, graceful forms, and occasionally charming conversation.'

'Yes; and that never lingers,' said Lady Corisande, 'for see, I am wanted.'

When they were again undisturbed, Lothair regretted the absence of Bertram, who was kept at the House.

'It is a great disappointment,' said Lady Corisande; 'but he will yet arrive, though late. I should be most unhappy though, if he were absent from his post on such an occasion I am sure if he were here I could not dance.'

'You are a most ardent politician,' said Lothair.

'Oh! I do not care in the least about common politics, parties and office and all that; I neither regard nor understand them,' replied Lady Corisande. 'But when wicked men try to destroy the country, then I like my family to be in the front.'

As the destruction of the country meditated this night by wicked men was some change in the status of the Church of England, which Monsignore Catesby in the morning had suggested to Lothair as both just and expedient and highly conciliatory, Lothair did not pursue the theme, for he had a greater degree of tact than usually falls to the lot of the ingenuous.

The bright moments flew on. Suddenly there was a mysterious silence in the hall, followed by a kind of suppressed stir. Everyone seemed to be speaking with bated breath, or, if moving, walking on tiptoe. It was the supper hour?

Soft hour which wakes the wish and melts the heart.

Royalty, followed, by the imperial presence of ambassadors, and escorted by a group of dazzling duchesses and paladins of high degree, was ushered with courteous pomp by the host and hostess into a choice saloon, hung with rose-coloured tapestry and illumined by chandeliers of crystal, where they were served from gold plate. But the thousand less favoured were not badly off, when they found themselves in the more capacious chambers, into which they rushed with an eagerness hardly in keeping with the splendid nonchalance of the preceding hours.

‘What a perfect family,’ exclaimed Hugo Bohun, as he extracted a couple of fat little birds from their bed of aspic jelly; ‘everything they do in such perfect taste. How safe you were here to have ortolans for supper!’

All the little round tables, though their number was infinite, were full. Male groups hung about; some in attendance on fair dames, some foraging for themselves, some thoughtful and more patient and awaiting a satisfactory future. Never was such an elegant clatter.

‘I wonder where Carisbrooke is,’ said Hugo Bohun. ‘They say he is wonderfully taken with the beauteous daughter of the house.’

‘I will back the Duke of Brecon against him,’ said one of his companions. ‘He raved about her at White’s yesterday.’

‘Hem!’

‘The end is not so near as all that,’ said a third wassailer.

‘I do not know that,’ said Hugo Bohun. ‘It is a family that marries off quickly. If a fellow is obliged to marry, he always likes to marry one of them.’

‘What of this new star?’ said his friend, and he mentioned Lothair.

‘Oh! he is too young; not launched. Besides he is going to turn Catholic, and I doubt whether that would do in that quarter.’

‘But he has a greater fortune than any of them.’

‘Immense! A man I know, who knows another man–’ and then he began a long statistical story about Lothair’s resources.

‘Have you got any room here, Hugo?’ drawled out Lord St. Aldegonde.

‘Plenty, and here is my chair.’

‘On no account; half of it and some soup will satisfy me.’

‘I should have thought you would have been with the swells,’ said Hugo Bohun.

‘That does not exactly suit me,’ said St. Aldegonde. ‘I was ticketed to the Duchess of Salop, but I got a first-rate substitute with the charm of novelty for her Grace, and sent her in with Lothair.’

St. Aldegonde was the heir apparent of the wealthiest, if not the most ancient, dukedom in the United Kingdom. He was spoiled, but he knew it. Had he been an ordinary being, he would have merely subsided into selfishness and caprice, but having good abilities and a good disposition, he was eccentric, adventurous, and sentimental. Notwithstanding the apathy which had been engendered by premature experience, St. Aldegonde held extreme opinions, especially on political affairs, being a republican of the reddest dye. He was opposed to all privilege, and indeed to all orders of men, except dukes, who were a necessity. He was also strongly in favour of the equal division of all property, except land. Liberty depended on land, and the greater the landowners, the greater the liberty of a country. He would hold forth on this topic even with energy, amazed at anyone differing from him; ‘as if a fellow could have too much land,’ he would urge with a voice and glance which defied contradiction. St. Aldegonde had married for love, and he loved his wife, but he was strongly in favour of woman’s rights and their extremest consequences. It was thought that he had originally adopted these latter views with the amiable intention of piquing Lady St. Aldegonde; but if so, he had not succeeded. Beaming with brightness, with the voice and airiness of a bird, and a cloudless temper, Albertha St. Aldegonde had, from the first hour of her marriage, concentrated her intelligence, which was not mean, on one object; and that was never to cross her husband on any conceivable topic. They had been married several years, and she treated him as a darling spoiled child. When he cried for the moon, it was promised him immediately; however irrational his proposition, she always assented to it, though generally by tact and vigilance she guided him in the right direction. Nevertheless, St. Aldegonde was sometimes in scrapes; but then he always went and told his best friend, whose greatest delight was to extricate him from his perplexities and embarrassments.

CHAPTER 22

Although Lothair was not in the slightest degree shaken in his conviction that life should be entirely religious, he was perplexed by the inevitable obstacles which seemed perpetually to oppose themselves to the practice of his opinions. It was not merely pleasure in its multiform appearances that he had to contend against, but business began imperiously to solicit his attention. Every month brought him nearer to his majority, and the frequent letters from Mr. Putney Giles now began to assume the pressing shape of solicitations for personal interviews. He had a long conversation one morning with Father Coleman on this subject, who greatly relieved him by the assurance that a perfectly religious life was one of which the sovereign purpose was to uphold the interests of the Church of Christ, the father added after a momentary pause. Business, and even amusement, were, not only compatible with such a purpose, but might even be conducive to its fulfilment.

Mr. Putney Giles reminded Lothair that the attainment of his majority must be celebrated, and in a becoming manner. Preparation, and even considerable preparation, was necessary. There were several scenes of action—some very distant. It was not too early to contemplate arrangements. Lothair really must confer with his guardians. They were both now in town, the Scotch uncle having come up to attend Parliament. Could they be brought together? Was it indeed impossible? If so, who was to give the necessary instructions?

It was much more than a year since Lothair had met his uncle, and he did not anticipate much satisfaction from the renewal of their intimacy; but every feeling of propriety demanded that it should be recognized, and to a certain degree revived. Lord Culloden was a black Scotchman, tall and lean, with good features, a hard red face and iron-gray hair. He was a man who shrank from scenes, and he greeted Lothair as if they had only parted yesterday. Looking at him with his keen, unsentimental, but not unkind, eye, he said: “Well, sir, I thought you would have been at Oxford.”

“Yes, my dear uncle; but circumstances—”

“Well, well, I don’t want to hear the cause. I am very glad you are not there; I believe you might as well be at Rome.”

And then in due course, and after some talk of the past and old times, Lothair referred to the suggestions of Mr. Giles, and hinted at a meeting of his guardians to confer and advise together.

“No, no,” said the Scotch peer, shaking his head; “I will have nothing to do with the Scarlet Lady. Mr. Giles is an able and worthy man; he may well be trusted to draw up a programme for our consideration, and indeed it is an affair in which yourself should be most consulted. Let all be done liberally, for you have a great inheritance, and I would be no curmudgeon in these matters.”

“Well, my dear uncle, whatever is arranged, I hope you and my cousins will honor and gratify me with your presence throughout the proceedings.”

“Well, well, it is not much in my way. You will be having balls and fine ladies. There is no fool like an old fool, they say; but I think, from what I hear, the young fools will beat us in the present day. Only think of young persons going over to the Church of Rome. Why, they are just naturals!”

The organizing genius of Mr. Putney Giles had rarely encountered a more fitting theme than the celebration of the impending majority. There was place for all his energy and talent and resources; a great central inauguration; sympathetical festivals and gatherings in half a dozen other counties; the troth, as it were, of a sister kingdom to be pledged; a vista of balls and banquets, and illuminations and addresses, of ceaseless sports and speeches, and processions alike endless.

“What I wish to effect,” said Mr. Giles, as he was giving his multifarious orders, “is to produce among all classes an impression adequate to the occasion. I wish the lord and the tenantry alike to feel they have a duty to perform.”

In the mean time, Monsignore Catesby was pressing Lothair to become one of the patrons of a Roman Catholic Bazaar, where Lady St. Jerome and Miss Arundel were to preside over a stall. It was of importance to show that charity was not the privilege of any particular creed.

Between his lawyers, and his monsignores, and his architects, Lothair began to get a little harassed. He was disturbed in his own mind, too, on greater matters, and seemed to feel every day that it was more necessary to take a decided step, and more impossible to decide upon what it should be. He frequently saw the cardinal, who was very kind to him, but who had become more reserved on religious subjects. He had dined more than once with his eminence, and had met some distinguished prelates and some of his fellow-nobles who had been weaned from the errors of their cradle. The cardinal, perhaps, thought that the presence of these eminent converts would facilitate the progress, perhaps the decision, of his ward; but something seemed always to happen to divert Lothair in his course. It might-be sometimes apparently a very slight cause, but yet for the time sufficient; a phrase of Lady Corisande for example, who, though she never directly addressed him on the subject, was nevertheless deeply interested in his spiritual condition.

"You ought to speak to him, Bertram," she said one day to her brother very indignantly, as she read a fresh paragraph alluding to an impending conversion. "You are his friend. What is the use of friendship if not in such a crisis as this?"

"I see no use in speaking to a man about love or religion," said Bertram; "they are both stronger than friendship. If there be any foundation for the paragraph, my interference would be of no avail; if there be none, I should only make myself ridiculous."

Nevertheless, Bertram looked a little more after his friend, and disturbing the monsignore, who was at breakfast with Lothair one morning, Bertram obstinately outstayed the priest, and then said: "I tell you what, old fellow, you are rather hippish; I wish you were in the House of Commons."

"So do I," said Lothair, with a sigh; "but I have come into every thing ready-made. I begin to think it very unfortunate."

"What are you going to do with yourself to-day? If you be disengaged, I vote we dine together at White's, and then we will go down to the House. I will take you to the smoking-room and introduce you to Bright, and we will trot him out on primogeniture."

At this moment the servant brought Lothair two letters: one was an epistle from Father Coleman, meeting Lothair's objections to becoming a patron of the Roman Catholic Bazaar, in a very unctuous and exhaustive manner; and the other from his stud-groom at Oxford, detailing some of those disagreeable things which will happen with absent masters who will not answer letters. Lothair loved his stable, and felt particularly anxious to avoid the threatened visit of Father Coleman on the morrow. His decision was rapid. "I must go down, this afternoon to Oxford, my dear fellow. My stable is in confusion. I shall positively return to-morrow, and I will dine with you at White's, and we will go to the House of Commons together, or go to the play."

CHAPTER 23

Lothair's stables were about three miles from Oxford. They were a rather considerable establishment, in which he had taken much interest, and, having always intended to return to Oxford in the early part of the year, although he had occasionally sent for a hack or two to London, his stud had been generally maintained.

The morning after his arrival, he rode over to the stables, where he had ordered his drag to be ready. About a quarter of a mile before he reached his place of destination, he observed at some little distance a crowd in the road, and, hastening on, perceived as he drew nearer a number of men clustered round a dismantled vehicle, and vainly endeavoring to extricate and raise a fallen horse; its companion, panting and foaming, with broken harness but apparently uninjured, standing aside and held by a boy. Somewhat apart stood a lady alone. Lothair immediately dismounted and approached her, saying, "I fear you are in trouble, madam. Perhaps I may be of service?"

The lady was rather tall, and of a singularly distinguished presence. Her air and her costume alike intimated high breeding and fashion. She seemed quite serene amid the tumult and confusion, and apparently the recent danger. As Lothair spoke, she turned her head to him, which had been at first a little averted, and he beheld a striking countenance, but one which he instantly felt he did not see for the first time.

She bowed with dignity to Lothair, and said in a low but distinct voice: "You are most courteous, sir. We have had a sad: accident, but a great escape. Our horses ran away with us, and, had it not been for that heap of stones, I do not see how we could have been saved."

"Fortunately my stables are at hand," said Lothair, "and I have a carriage waiting for me at this moment, not a quarter of a mile away. It is at your service, and I will send for it," and his groom, to whom he gave directions, galloped off.

There was a shout as the fallen horse was on his legs again, much cut, and the carriage shattered and useless. A gentleman came from the crowd and approached the lady. He was tall and fair, and not ill-favored, with fine dark eyes and high cheekbones, and still young, though an enormous beard at the first glance gave him an impression of years, the burden of which he really did not bear. His dress, though not vulgar, was richer and more showy than is usual in this country, and altogether there was something in his manner which, though calm and full of self-respect, was different from the conventional refinement of England. Yet he was apparently an Englishman, as he said to the lady, "It is a bad business, but we must be thankful it is no worse. What troubles me is how you are to get back. It will be a terrible walk over these stony roads, and I can hear of no conveyance."

"My husband," said the lady, as with dignity she presented the person to Lothair. "This gentleman," she continued, "has most kindly offered us the use of his carriage, which is almost at hand."

"Sir, you are a friend," said the gentleman. "I thought there were no horses that I could not master, but it seems I am mistaken. I bought these only yesterday; took a fancy to them as we were driving about, and bought them of a dealer in the road."

"That seems a clever animal," said Lothair, pointing to the one uninjured.

"Ah! you like horses?" said the gentleman.

"Well, I have some taste that way."

"We are visitors to Oxford," said the lady. "Colonel Campian, like all Americans, is very interested in the ancient parts of England."

"To-day we were going to Blenheim," said the colonel, "but I thought I would try these new tits a bit on a by-road first."

"All's well that ends well," said Lothair; "and there is no reason why you should not fulfil your intention of going to Blenheim, for here is my carriage, and it is entirely at your service for the whole day, and, indeed, as long as you stay at Oxford."

"Sir, there requires no coronet on Your carriage to tell me you are a nobleman," said the colonel. "I like frank manners, and I like your team. I know few things that would please me more than to try them."

They were four roans, highly bred, with black manes and tails. They had the Arab eye, with arched neck and seemed proud of themselves and their master.

"I do not see why we should not go to Blenheim," said the colonel.

"Well, not to-day," said the lady, "I think. We have had an escape, but one feels these things a little more afterward than at the time. I would rather go back to Oxford and be quiet; and there is more than one college which you have not yet seen."

"My team is entirely at your service wherever you go," said Lothair; "but I cannot venture to drive you to Oxford, for I am there in statu pupillari and a proctor might arrest us all. But perhaps," and he approached the lady, "you will permit me to call on you to-morrow, when I hope I may find you have not suffered by this misadventure."

"We have got a professor dining with us to-day at seven o'clock," said the colonel, "at our hotel, and if you be disengaged and would join the party you would add to the favors which you know so well how to confer."

Lothair handed the lady into the carriage, the colonel mounted the box and took the ribbons like a master, and the four roans trotted away with their precious charge and their two grooms behind with folded arms and imperturbable countenances.

Lothair watched the equipage until it vanished in the distance.

"It is impossible to forget that countenance," he said; "and I fancy I did hear at the time that she had married an American. Well, I shall meet her at dinner—that is something." And he sprang into his saddle.

CHAPTER 24

The Oxford professor, who was the guest of the American colonel, was quite a young man, of advanced opinions on all subjects, religious, social, and political. He was clever, extremely well-informed, so far as books can make a man knowing, but unable to profit even by his limited experience of life from a restless vanity and overflowing conceit, which prevented him from ever observing or thinking of any thing but himself. He was gifted with a great command of words, which took the form of endless exposition, varied by sarcasm and passages of ornate jargon. He was the last person one would have expected to recognize in an Oxford professor; but we live in times of transition.

A Parisian man of science, who had passed his life in alternately fighting at barricades and discovering planets, had given Colonel Campian, who had lived much in the French capital, a letter of introduction to the professor, whose invectives against the principles of English society were hailed by foreigners as representative of the sentiments of venerable Oxford. The professor, who was not satisfied with his home career, and, like many men of his order of mind, had dreams of wild vanity which the New World, they think, can alone realize, was very glad to make the colonel's acquaintance, which might facilitate his future movements. So he had lionized the distinguished visitors during the last few days over the university, and had availed himself of plenteous opportunities for exhibiting to them his celebrated powers of exposition, his talent for sarcasm, which he deemed peerless, and several highly-finished, picturesque passages, which were introduced with contemporary art.

The professor was very much surprised when he saw Lothair enter the saloon at the hotel. He was the last person in Oxford whom he expected to encounter. Like sedentary men of extreme opinions, he was a social parasite, and instead of indulging in his usual invectives against peers and princes, finding himself unexpectedly about to dine with one of that class, he was content only to dazzle and amuse him.

Mrs. Campian only entered the room when dinner was announced. She greeted Lothair with calmness but amenity, and took his offered arm.

"You have not suffered, I hope?" said Lothair.

"Very little, and through your kindness."

It was a peculiar voice, low and musical, too subdued to call thrilling, but a penetrating voice, so that, however ordinary the observation, it attracted and impressed attention. But it was in harmony with all her appearance and manner. Lothair thought he had never seen any one or any thing so serene; the serenity, however, not of humbleness, nor of merely conscious innocence; it was not devoid of a degree of majesty; what one pictures of Olympian repose. And the countenance was Olympian: a Phidian face, with large gray eyes and dark lashes; wonderful hair, abounding without art, and gathered together by Grecian fillets.

The talk was of Oxford, and was at first chiefly maintained by the colonel and the professor.

"And do you share Colonel Campian's feeling about Old England?" inquired Lothair of his hostess.

"The present interests me more than the past," said the lady, "and the future more than the present."

"The present seems to me as unintelligible as the future," said Lothair.

"I think it is intelligible," said the lady, with a faint smile. "It has many faults but, not, I think, the want of clearness."

"I am not a destructive," said the professor, addressing the colonel, but speaking loudly; "I would maintain Oxford, under any circumstances, with the necessary changes."

"And what are those might I ask?" inquired Lothair.

"In reality, not much. I would get rid of the religion."

"Get rid of the religion!" said Lothair.

"You have got rid of it once," said the professor.

"You have altered, you have what people call reformed it," said Lothair; "but you have not abolished or banished it from the university."

"The shock would not be greater, nor so great, as the change from the papal to the Reformed faith. Besides, universities have nothing to do with religion."

"I thought universities were universal," said Lothair, "and had something to do with every thing."

"I cannot conceive any society of any kind without religion," said the lady.

Lothair glanced at her beautiful brow with devotion as she uttered these words.

Colonel Campian began to talk about horses. After that the professor proved to him that he was related to Edmund Campian, the Jesuit; and then he got to the Gunpowder Plot, which, he was not sure, if successful, might not have beneficially influenced the course of our history. Probably the Irish difficulty would not then have existed.

"I dislike plots," said the lady; "they always fail."

"And, whatever their object, are they not essentially immoral?" said Lothair.

"I have more faith in ideas than in persons," said the lady. "When a truth is uttered, it will, sooner or later, be recognized. It is only an affair of time. It is better that it should mature and naturally germinate than be forced."

"You would reduce us to lotus-eaters," exclaimed the professor. "Action is natural to man. And what, after all, are conspiracies and revolutions but great principles in violent action?"

"I think you must be an admirer of repose," said Lothair to the lady, in a low voice.

"Because I have seen something of action in my life;" said the lady, "and it is an experience of wasted energies and baffled thoughts."

When they returned to the saloon, the colonel and the professor became interested in the constitution and discipline of the American universities. Lothair hung about the lady, who was examining some views of Oxford, and who was ascertaining what she had seen and what she had omitted to visit. They were thinking of returning home on the morrow.

"Without seeing Blenheim?" said Lothair.

"Without seeing Blenheim," said the lady; "I confess to a pang; but I shall always associate with that name your great kindness to us."

"But cannot we for once enter into a conspiracy together," said Lothair, "and join in a happy plot and contrive to go? Besides, I could take you to the private gardens, for the duke has given me a perpetual order, and they are really exquisite."

The lady seemed to smile.

"Theodora," said the colonel, speaking from the end of the room, "what have you settled about your train to-morrow?"

"We want, to stay another day here," said Theodora, "and go to Blenheim."

CHAPTER 25

They were in the private gardens at Blenheim. The sun was brilliant over the ornate and yet picturesque scene.

"Beautiful, is it not?" exclaimed Lothair.

"Yes, certainly beautiful," said Theodora. "But, do you know, I do not feel altogether content in these fine gardens? The principle of exclusion on which they are all founded is to me depressing. I require in all things sympathy. You would not agree with me in this. The manners of your country are founded on exclusion."

"But, surely, there are times and places when one would like to be alone."

"Without doubt," said the lady; "only I do not like artificial loneliness. Even your parks, which all the world praises, do not quite satisfy me. I prefer a forest where all may go—even the wild beasts."

"But forests are not at command," said Lothair.

"So you make a solitude and call it peace," said the lady, with a slight smile. "For my part, my perfect life would be a large and beautiful village. I admire Nature, but I require the presence of humanity. Life in great cities is too exhausting; but in my village there should be air, streams, and beautiful trees, a picturesque scene, but enough of my fellow-creatures to insure constant duty."

"But the fulfilment of duty and society, founded on what you call the principle of exclusion, are not incompatible," said Lothair.

"No, but difficult. What should be natural becomes an art; and in every art it is only the few who can be first rate."

"I have an ambition to be a first-rate artist in that respect," said Lothair, thoughtfully.

"That does you much honor," she replied, "for you necessarily embark in a most painful enterprise. The toiling multitude have their sorrows, which, I believe, will some day be softened, and obstacles hard to overcome; but I have always thought that the feeling of satiety, almost inseparable from large possessions, is a surer cause of misery than ungratified desires."

"It seems to me that there is a great deal to do," said Lothair.

"I think so," said the lady.

"Theodora," said the colonel, who was a little in advance with the professor, and turning round his head, "this reminds me of Mirabel," and he pointed to the undulating banks covered with rare shrubs, and touching the waters of the lake.

"And where is Mirabel?" said Lothair.

"It was a green island in the Adriatic," said the lady, "which belonged to Colonel Campian; we lost it in the troubles. Colonel Campian was very fond of it. I try to persuade him that our home was of volcanic origin, and has only vanished and subsided into its native bed."

"And were not you fond of it?"

"I never think of the past," said the lady.

"Oxford is not the first place where I had the pleasure of meeting you," Lothair ventured at length to observe.

"Yes, we have met before, in Hyde Park Gardens. Our hostess is a clever woman, and has been very kind to some friends of mine."

"And have you seen her lately?"

"She comes to see us sometimes. We do not live in London, but in the vicinity. We only go to London for the opera, of which we are devotees. We do not at all enter general society; Colonel Campian only likes people who interest or amuse him, and he is fortunate in having rather a numerous acquaintance of that kind."

"Rare fortune!" said Lothair.

"Colonel Campian lived a great deal at Paris before we marred," said the lady, "and in a circle of considerable culture and excitement. He is social, but not conventional."

"And you—are you conventional?"

"Well, I live only for climate and the affections," said the lady "I am fond of society that pleases me, that is, accomplished and natural and ingenious; otherwise I prefer being alone. As for atmosphere, as I look upon it as the main source of felicity, you may be surprised that I should reside in your country. I should myself like to go to America, but that would not suit Colonel Campian; and, if we are to live in Europe, we must live in England. It is not pleasant to reside in a country where, if you happen to shelter or succor a friend, you may be subject to a domiciliary visit."

The professor stopped to deliver a lecture or address on the villa of Hadrian. Nothing could be more minute or picturesque than his description of that celebrated pleasaunce. It was varied by portraits of the emperor and some of his companions, and, after a rapid glance at the fortunes of the imperial patriciate, wound up with some conclusions favorable to communism. It was really very clever, and would have made the fortune of a literary society.

"I wonder if they had gravel-walks in the villa of Hadrian?" said the colonel. "What I admire most in your country, my lord, are your gravel-walks, though that lady would not agree with me that matter."

"You are against gravel-walks," said Lothair.

"Well, I cannot bring myself to believe that they had gravel-walks in the garden of Eden," said the lady.

They had a repast at Woodstock, too late for luncheon, too early for dinner, but which it was agreed should serve as the latter meal.

"That suits me exactly," said the lady; "I am a great foe to dinners, and indeed to all meals. I think when the good time comes we shall give up eating in public, except perhaps fruit on a green bank with music."

It was a rich twilight as they drove home, the lady leaning back in the carriage silent. Lothair sat opposite to her, and gazed upon a countenance on which the moon began to glisten, and which seemed unconscious of all human observation.

He had read of such countenances in Grecian dreams; in Corinthian temples, in fanes of Ephesus, in the radiant shadow of divine groves.

CHAPTER 26

When they had arrived at the hotel, Colonel Campian proposed that they should come in and have some coffee; but Theodora did not enforce this suggestion; and Lothair, feeling that she might be wearied, gracefully though unwillingly waived the proposal. Remembering that on the noon of the morrow they were to depart, with a happy inspiration, as he said farewell, he asked permission to accompany them to the station.

Lothair walked away with the professor, who seemed in a conservative vein, and graciously disposed to make several concessions to the customs of an ancient country. Though opposed to the land laws, he would operate gradually, and gave Lothair more than one receipt how to save the aristocracy. Lothair would have preferred talking about the lady they had just quitted, but, as he soon found the professor could really give him no information about her, he let the subject drop.

But not out of his own mind. He was glad to be alone and brood over the last two days. They were among the most interesting of his life. He had encountered a character different from any he had yet met, had listened to new views, and his intelligence had been stimulated by remarks made casually, in easy conversation, and yet to him pregnant with novel and sometimes serious meaning. The voice, too, lingered in his ear, so hushed and deep, and yet so clear and sweet. He leaned over his mantel-piece in teeming reverie.

"And she is profoundly religious," he said to himself; "she can conceive no kind of society without religion. She has arrived at the same conclusion as myself. What a privilege it would be to speak to her on such subjects!"

After a restless night the morrow came. About eleven o'clock Lothair ventured to call on his new friends. The lady was alone; she was standing by the window, reading an Italian newspaper, which she folded up and placed aside when Lothair was announced.

"We propose to walk to the station," said Theodora; "the servants have gone on. Colonel Campian has a particular aversion to moving with any luggage. He restricts me to this," she said, pointing to her satchel, in which she had placed the foreign newspaper, "and for that he will not be responsible."

"It was most kind of you to permit me to accompany you this morning," said Lothair; "I should have been grieved to have parted abruptly last night."

"I could not refuse such a request," said the lady; "but do you know, I never like to say farewell, even for four-and-twenty hours? One should vanish like a spirit."

"Then I have erred," said Lothair, "against your rules and principles."

"Say my fancies," said the lady, "my humors, my whims. Besides, this is not a farewell. You will come and see us. Colonel Campian tells me you have promised to give us that pleasure."

"It will be the greatest pleasure to me," said Lothair; "I can conceive nothing greater." And then hesitating a little, and a little blushing, he added, "When do you think I might come?"

"Whenever you like," said the lady; "you will always find me at home. My life is this: I ride every day very early, and far into the country, so I return tamed some two or three hours after noon, and devote myself to my friends. We are at home every evening, except opera nights; and let me tell you, because it is not the custom generally among your compatriots, we are always at home on Sundays."

Colonel Campian entered the room; the moment of departure was at hand. Lothair felt the consolation of being their companion to the station. He had once hoped it might be possible to be their companion in the train; but he was not encouraged.

"Railways have elevated and softened the lot of man," said Theodora, "and Colonel Campian views them with almost a religious sentiment. But I cannot read in a railroad, and the human voice is distressing to me amid the whirl and the whistling, and the wild panting of the loosened megatheria

who drag us. And then those terrible grottos—it is quite a descent of Proserpine; so I have no resources but my thoughts."

"And surely that is sufficient," murmured Lothair.

"Not when the past is expelled," said the lady.

"But the future," said Lothair.

"Yes, that is ever interesting, but so vague that it sometimes induces slumber."

The bell sounded; Lothair handed the lady to her compartment.

"Our Oxford visit," she said, "has been a great success, and mainly through you."

The colonel was profuse in his cordial farewells, and it seemed they would never have ended had not the train moved.

Lothair remained upon the platform until it was out of sight, and then exclaimed, "Is it a dream, or shall I ever see her again?"

CHAPTER 27

Lothair reached London late in the afternoon. Among the notes and cards and letters on his table was a long and pressing dispatch from Mr. Putney Giles awaiting his judgment and decision on many points.

"The central inauguration, if I may use the term," said Mr. Putney Giles, "is comparatively easy. It is an affair of expense and of labor—great labor; I may say unremitting labor. But your lordship will observe the other points are not mere points of expense and labor. We have to consult the feelings of several counties where your lordship cannot be present, at least certainly not on this occasion, and yet where an adequate recognition of those sentiments which ought to exist between the proprietor and all classes connected with him ought to be secured. Then Scotland: Scotland is a very difficult business to manage. It is astonishing how the sentiment lingers in that country connected with its old independence. I really am quite surprised at it. One of your lordship's most important tenants wrote to me only a few days back that great dissatisfaction would prevail among your lordship's friends and tenantry in Scotland, if that country on this occasion were placed on the same level as a mere English county. It must be recognized as a kingdom. I almost think it would be better if we could persuade Lord Culloden, not to attend the English inauguration, but remain in the kingdom of Scotland, and take the chair and the lead throughout the festal ceremonies. A peer of the realm, and your lordship's guardian, would impart something of national character to the proceedings, and this, with a judicious emblazoning on some of the banners of the royal arms of Scotland, might have a conciliatory effect. One should always conciliate. But your lordship, upon all these points, and especially with reference to Lord Culloden, must be a much better judge than I am."

Lothair nearly gave a groan. "I almost wish," he thought, "my minority would never end. I am quite satisfied with things as they are. What is the kingdom of Scotland to me and all these counties? I almost begin to feel that satiety which she said was inseparable from vast possessions."

A letter from Bertram, reminding him that he had not dined at White's as he had promised, and suggesting some new arrangement, and another from Monsignore Catesby, earnestly urging him to attend a most peculiar and solemn function of the Church next Sunday evening, where the cardinal would officiate and preach, and in which Lady St. Jerome and Miss Arundel were particularly interested, did not restore his equanimity.

A dinner at White's! He did not think he could stand a dinner at White's. Indeed, he was not sure that he could stand any dinner anywhere, especially in this hot weather. There was a good deal in what she said: "One ought to eat alone."

The ecclesiastical function was a graver matter. It had been long contemplated, often talked about, and on occasions looked forward to by him even with a certain degree of eagerness. He wished he had had an opportunity of speaking with her on these matters. She was eminently religious; that she had voluntarily avowed. And he felt persuaded that no light or thoughtless remark could fall from those lips. He wondered to what Church she belonged? Protestant or papal? Her husband, being an American, was probably a Protestant, but he was a gentleman of the South, and with nothing puritanical about him. She was a European, and probably of a Latin race. In all likelihood she was a Roman Catholic.

It was Wednesday evening, and his valet reminded him that he was engaged to dine with Lord and Lady Montairy.

Lothair sighed. He was so absorbed by his new feelings that he shrunk from society with a certain degree of aversion. He felt it quite out of his power to fulfil his engagement. He sent an excuse. It was Lothair's first excuse. In short, he "threw over" the Montairys, to whom he was so much attached, whom he so much admired, and whose society he had hitherto so highly prized.

To “throw over” a host is the most heinous of social crimes. It ought never to be pardoned. It disjoints a party, often defeats the combinations which might affect the results of a season, and generally renders the society incoherent and unsatisfactory. If the outrage could ever be condoned, it might be in the instance of a young man very inexperienced, the victim of some unexpected condition of nervous feelings over which the defaulter has really no control.

It was evening, and the restless Lothair walked forth without a purpose, and in a direction which he rarely visited. “It is a wonderful place,” said he, “this London; a nation, not a city; with a population greater than some kingdoms, and districts as different as if they were under different governments and spoke different languages. And what do I know of it? I have been living here six months, and my life has been passed in a park, two or three squares, and half a dozen streets!”

So he walked on and soon crossed Oxford Street, like the Rhine a natural boundary, and then got into Portland Place, and then found himself in the New Road, and then he hailed a cruising Hansom, which he had previously observed was well horsed.

“‘Tis the gondola of London,” said Lothair as he sprang in.

“Drive on till I tell you to stop.”

And the Hansom drove on, through, endless boulevards, some bustling, some dingy, some tawdry and flaring, some melancholy and mean; rows of garden gods, planted on the walls of yards full of vases and divinities of concrete, huge railway halls, monster hotels, dissenting chapels in the form of Gothic churches, quaint ancient almshouses that were once built in the fields, and tea-gardens and stingo-houses and knackers’ yards. They were in a district far beyond the experience of Lothair, which indeed had been exhausted when he had passed Eustonia, and from that he had been long separated. The way was broad but ill-lit, with houses of irregular size but generally of low elevation, and sometimes detached in smoke-dried gardens. The road was becoming a bridge which crossed a canal, with barges and wharves and timber-yards, when their progress was arrested by a crowd. It seemed a sort of procession; there was a banner, and the lamp-light fell upon a religious emblem. Lothair was interested, and desired the driver not to endeavor to advance. The procession was crossing the road and entering a building.

“It’s a Roman Catholic chapel,” said a bystander in answer to Lothair. “I believe it is a meeting about one of their schools. They always have banners.”

“I think I will get out,” said Lothair to his driver. “This, I suppose, will pay your fare.”

The man stared with delight at the sovereign in his astonished palm, and in gratitude suggested that he should remain and wait for the gentleman, but the restless Lothair declined the proposal.

“Sir, sir,” said the man, leaning down his head as low as possible from his elevated seat, and speaking in a hushed voice, “you are a real gentleman. Do you know what all this is?”

“Yes, yes; some meeting about a Roman Catholic school.”

The man shook his head. “You are a real gentleman, and I will tell you the truth. They meet about the schools of the order of St. Joseph—over the left—it is a Fenian meeting.”

“A Fenian meeting?”

“Ay, ay, and you cannot enter that place without a ticket. Just you try! However, if a gentleman like you wants to go, you shall have my ticket,” said the cab-driver; “and here it is. And may I drive to-morrows as true a gentleman as I have driven to-day!”

So saying, he took a packet from his breast-pocket, and opening it offered to Lothair a green slip of paper, which was willingly accepted. “I should like above all things to go,” he said, and he blended with the rear of those who were entering the building. The collector of the tickets stared at Lothair and scrutinized his pass, but all was in order, and Lothair was admitted.

He passed through a house and a yard, at the bottom of which was a rather spacious building. When he entered it, he saw in an instant it was not a chapel. It was what is called a temperance-hall, a room to be hired for public assemblies, with a raised platform at the end, on which were half a dozen men. The hall was tolerably full, and Lothair came in among the last. There were some children

sitting on a form placed against the wall of the room, each with a bun which kept them quiet; the banner belonged to this school, and was the banner of St. Joseph.

A man dressed like a pries and known as Father O'Molloy, came forward. He was received with signs of much sympathy, succeeded by complete silence. He addressed them in a popular and animated style on the advantages of education. They knew what that was, and then they cheered.. Education taught them to know their rights. But what was the use of knowing their rights unless they enforced them? That was not to be done by prayer-books, but by something else, and something else wanted a subscription.

This was the object of the meeting and the burden of all the speeches which followed, and which were progressively more outspoken than the adroit introductory discourse. The Saxon was denounced, sometimes with coarseness, but sometimes in terms of picturesque passion; the vast and extending organization of the brotherhood was enlarged on, the great results at hand intimated; the necessity of immediate exertion on the part of every individual pressed with emphasis. All these views and remarks received from the audience an encouraging response; and when Lothair observed men going round with boxes, and heard the clink of coin, he felt very embarrassed as to what he should do when asked to contribute to a fund raised to stimulate and support rebellion against his sovereign. He regretted the rash restlessness which had involved him in such a position.

The collectors approached Lothair, who was standing at the end of the room opposite to the platform, where the space was not crowded.

"I should like to speak to Father O'Molloy," said Lothair; "he is a priest, and will understand my views."

"He is a priest here," said one of the collectors with a sardonic laugh, "but I am glad to say you will not find his name in the directory. Father O'Molloy is on the platform and engaged."

"If you want to speak to the father, speak from where you are," said the other collector. "Here, silence! a gentleman wants to address the meeting."

And there was silence, and Lothair felt extremely embarrassed, but he was not wanting, though it was the first time in his life that he had addressed a public meeting.

"Gentlemen," said Lothair, "I really had no wish to intrude upon you; all I desired was to speak to Father O'Molloy. I wished to tell him that it would have given me pleasure to subscribe to these schools. I am not a Roman Catholic, but I respect the Roman Catholic religion. But I can do nothing that will imply the slightest sanction of the opinions I have heard expressed this evening. For your own sakes—" but here a yell arose which forever drowned his voice.

"A spy, a spy!" was the general exclamation. "We are betrayed! Seize him! Knock him over!" and the whole meeting seemed to have turned their backs on the platform and to be advancing on the unfortunate Lothair. Two of the leaders on the platform at the same time leaped down from it, to direct as it were the enraged populace.

But at this moment a man who had been in the lower part of the hall, in the vicinity of Lothair and standing alone, pushed forward, and by his gestures and general mien arrested somewhat the crowd, so that the two leaders who leaped from the platform and bustled through the crowd came in contact with him.

The stranger was evidently not of the class or country of the rest assembled. He had a military appearance, and spoke with a foreign accent when he said, "This is no spy. Keep your people off."

"And who are you?" inquired the leader thus addressed.

"One accustomed to be obeyed," said the stranger.

"You may be a spy yourself," said the leader.

"I will not undertake to say that there are no spies in this room," said the stranger, "but this person is not one, and anybody who touches this person will touch this person at his peril. Stand off, men!" And they stood off. The wave retreated backward, leaving the two leaders in front. A couple

of hundred men, a moment before apparently full of furious passion and ready to take refuge in the violence of fear, were cowed by a single human being.

"Why, you are not afraid of one man?" said the leaders, ashamed of their following. "Whatever betides, no one unknown shall leave this room, or it will be Bow Street to-morrow morning."

"Nevertheless," said the stranger, "two unknown men will leave this room and with general assent. If any one touches this person or myself I will shoot him dead," and he drew out his revolver, "and as for the rest, look at that," he added, giving a paper to the leader of the Fenian Lodge, "and then give it me back again."

The leader of the Fenian Lodge glanced at the paper; he grew pale, then scarlet, folded the paper with great care and returned it reverentially to the stranger, then looking round to the assembly and waving his hand he said, "All right, the gentlemen are to go."

"Well, you have got out of a scrape, young air," said the stranger to Lothair when they had escaped from the hall.

"And how can I express my gratitude to you?" Lothair replied.

"Poh!" said the stranger, "a mere affair of common duty. But what surprises me is how you got your pass-ticket."

Lothair told him all.

"They manage their affairs in general wonderfully close," said the stranger, "but I have no opinion of them. I have just returned from Ireland, where I thought I would go and see what they really are after. No real business in them. Their treason is a fairy tale, and their sedition a child talking in its sleep."

They walked together about half a mile, and then the stranger said, "At the end of this we shall get into the City Road, and the land again of omnibus and public conveyances, and I shall wish you good night."

"But it is distressing to me to part thus," said Lothair. "Pray let me call and pay my respects to my benefactor."

"No claim to any such title," said the stranger; "I am always glad to be of use. I will not trouble you to call on me, for, frankly, I have no wish to increase the circle of my acquaintance. So, good-night; and, as you seem to be fond of a little life, take my advice, and never go about unarmed."

CHAPTER 28

The Fenian adventure furnished the distraction which Lothair required It broke that absorbing spell of sentiment which is the delicious but enervating privilege of the youthful heart; yet, when Lothair woke in the morning from his well-earned slumbers, the charm returned, and he fell at once into a reverie of Belmont, and a speculation when he might really pay his first visit there. Not to-day —that was clearly out of the question. They had separated only yesterday, and yet it seemed an age, and the adventure of another world. There are moods of feeling which defy alike time and space.

But on the morrow, Friday, he might venture to go. But, then, would to-morrow ever come? It seemed impossible. How were the intervening hours to pass? The world, however, was not so devoid of resources as himself, and had already appropriated his whole day. And, first, Monsignore Catesby came to breakfast with him, talking of every thing that was agreeable or interesting, but in reality bent on securing his presence at the impending ecclesiastical ceremony of high import, where his guardian was to officiate, and where the foundation was to be laid of the reconciliation of all churches in the bosom of the true one. Then, in the afternoon, Lothair had been long engaged to a match of pigeon-shooting, in which pastime Bertram excelled. It seemed there was to be a most exciting sweepstakes to-day, in which the flower of England were to compete; Lothair among them, and for the first time.

This great exploit of arms was to be accomplished at the Castle in the Air, a fantastic villa near the banks of the Thames, belonging to the Duke of Brecon. His grace had been offended by the conduct or the comments of the outer world, which in his pastime had thwarted or displeased him in the free life of Battersea. The Duke of Brecon was a gentleman easily offended, but not one of those who ever confined their sense of injury to mere words. He prided himself on “putting down” any individual or body of men who chose to come into collision with him. And so in the present instance he formed a club of pigeon-shooters, and lent them his villa for their rendezvous and enjoyment. The society was exquisite, exclusive, and greatly sought after. And the fine ladies, tempted, of course, by the beauty of the scene, honored and inspired the competing confederates by their presence.

The Castle in the Air was a colossal thatched cottage, built by a favorite of, King George IV. It was full of mandarins and pagodas and green dragons, and papered with birds of many colors and with vast tails. The gardens were pretty, and the grounds park-like, with some noble cedars and some huge walnut-trees.

The Duke of Brecon was rather below the middle size, but he had a singularly athletic frame not devoid of symmetry. His head was well placed on his broad shoulders, and his mien was commanding. He was narrow-minded and prejudiced, but acute, and endowed with an unbending will. He was an eminent sportsman, and brave even to brutality. His boast was that he had succeeded in every thing he had attempted, and he would not admit the possibility of future failure. Though still a very young man, he had won the Derby, training his own horse; and he successfully managed a fine stud in defiance of the ring, whom it was one of the secret objects of his life to extirpate. Though his manner to men was peremptory, cold, and hard, he might be described as popular, for there existed a superstitious belief in his judgment, and it was known that in some instances, when he had been consulted, he had given more than advice. It could not be said that he was beloved, but he was feared and highly considered. Parasites were necessary to him, though he despised them.

The Duke of Brecon was an avowed admirer, of Lady Corisande, and was intimate with her family. The duchess liked him much, and was often seen at ball or assembly on his arm. He had such excellent principles, she said; was so straight-forward, so true and firm. It was whispered that even Lady Corisande had remarked that the Duke of Brecon was the only young man of the time who had “character.” The truth is, the duke, though absolute and hard to men, could be soft and deferential to women, and such an exception to a general disposition has a charm. It was said, also, that he had, when requisite, a bewitching smile.

If there were any thing or any person in the world that St. Aldegonde hated more than another, it was the Duke of Brecon. Why St. Aldegonde hated him was not very clear, for they had never crossed each other, nor were the reasons for his detestation, which he occasionally gave, entirely satisfactory: sometimes it was because the duke drove piebalds; sometimes because he had a large sum in the funds, which St. Aldegonde thought disgraceful for a duke; sometimes because he wore a particular hat, though, with respect to this last allegation, it does not follow that St. Aldegonde was justified in his criticism, for in all these matters St. Aldegonde was himself very deficient, and had once strolled up St. James's Street with his dishevelled looks crowned with a wide-awake. Whatever might be the cause, St. Aldegonde generally wound up—"I tell you what, Bertha, if Corisande marries that follow, I have made up my mind to go to the Indian Ocean. It is a country I never have seen, and Pinto tells me you cannot do it well under five years."

"I hope you will take me, Grenville, with you," said Lady St. Aldegonde, "because it is highly probable Corisande will marry the duke; mamma, you know, likes him so much."

"Why cannot Corisande marry Carisbrooke?" said St. Aldegonde, pouting; "he is a really good fellow, much better-looking, and so far as land is concerned, which after all is the only thing, has as large an estate as the duke."

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.