



VENETIA.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

“VIVIAN GREY” AND “HENRIETTA TEMPLE.”

“Is thy face like thy mother’s, my fair child?”

“The child of love, though born in bitterness,
And nurtured in convulsion.”

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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V E N E T I A .

CHAPTER I.

FIVE years had elapsed since Lord Cadurcis had quitted the seat of his fathers, nor did the fair inhabitants of Cherbury hear of his return without emotion. Although the intercourse between them during this interval had from the first been too slightly maintained, and, of late years, had entirely died off, his return was, nevertheless, an event which recalled old times and revived old associations. His visit to the hall was looked forward to with interest. His lordship did not long keep his former friends in suspense ; for, although he was not uninfluenced by some degree of embarrassment from

the consciousness of neglect on his side, rendered more keen now that he again found himself in the scene endeared by the remembrance of their kindness, he was, nevertheless, both too well bred and too warm-hearted to procrastinate the performance of a duty which the regulations of society and natural impulse alike assured him was indispensable. On the very morning, therefore, after his arrival, having sauntered awhile over the old abbey and strolled over the park, mused over his mother's tomb with emotion, not the less deep because there was no outward and visible sign of its influence, he ordered his horses, and directed his way through the accustomed woods to Cherbury.

Five years had not passed away without their effects at least upon the exterior being of Cadurcis. Although still a youth, his appearance was manly. A thoughtful air had become habitual to a countenance melancholy even in his childhood. Nor was its early promise of beauty unfulfilled; although its expression was pecu-

liar, and less pleasing than impressive. His long dark locks shaded a pale and lofty brow, that well became a cast of features delicately moulded, yet reserved and haughty, and perhaps even somewhat scornful. His figure, always slender, had set into a form of remarkable slightness and elegance, and distinguished for its symmetry. Altogether his general mien was calculated to attract attention and to excite interest.

His vacations while at Eton had been spent by Lord Cadurcis in the family of his noble guardian, one of the King's ministers. Here he had been gradually initiated in the habits and manners of luxurious and refined society. Since he had quitted Eton he had passed a season, previous to his impending residence at Cambridge, in the same sphere. The opportunities thus offered had not been lost upon a disposition which, with all its native reserve, was singularly susceptible. Cadurcis had quickly imbibed the tone and adopted the usages of the circle in

which he moved. Naturally impatient of control, he endeavoured, by his precocious manhood, to secure the respect and independence which would scarcely have been paid or permitted to his years. From an early period he never permitted himself to be treated as a boy; and his guardian, a man whose whole soul was centred in the world, humoured a bent which he approved, and from which he augured the most complete success. Attracted, indeed, by the promising talents and the premature character of his ward, he had spared more time to assist the development of his mind and the formation of his manners than might have been expected from a minister of state. His hopes, indeed, rested with confidence on his youthful relative, and he looked forward with no common emotion to the moment when he should have the honour of introducing to public life one calculated to confer so much credit on his tutor, and shed so much lustre on his party. The reader will, therefore, not be surprised if, at this then unri-

valled period of political excitement, when the existence of our colonial empire was at stake, Cadurcis, with his impetuous feelings, had imbibed to their very fullest extent all the plans, prejudices, and passions of his political connexions. He was, indeed, what the circumstances of the times and his extreme youth might well excuse, if not justify, a most violent partisan. Bold, sanguine, resolute, and intolerant, it was difficult to persuade him that any opinions could be just which were opposed to those of the circle in which he lived; and out of that pale, it must be owned, he was as little inclined to recognise the existence of ability as of truth.

As Lord Cadurcis slowly directed his way through the woods and park of Cherbury, past years recurred to him like a faint, yet pleasing, dream. Among these meads and bowers had glided away the only happy years of his boyhood — the only period of his early life to which he could look back without disgust.

He recalled the secret exultation with which, in company with his poor mother, he had first repaired to Cadurcis, about to take possession of what, to his inexperienced imagination, then appeared a vast and noble inheritance, and, for the first time in his life, to occupy a position not unworthy of his rank. For how many domestic mortifications did the first sight of that old abbey compensate! How often, in pacing its venerable galleries and solemn cloisters, and musing over the memory of an ancient and illustrious ancestry, had he forgotten those bitter passages of daily existence, so humbling to his vanity, and so harassing to his heart! He had beheld that morn, after an interval of many years, the tomb of his mother. That simple and solitary monument had revived and impressed upon him a conviction that too easily escaped in the various life and busy scenes in which he had since moved—the conviction of his worldly desolation and utter loneliness. He had no parents, no relations;

now that he was for a moment free from the artificial life in which he had of late mingled, he felt that he had no friends. The image of his mother came back to him, softened by the magical tint of years; after all, she was his mother, and a deep sharer in all his joys and woes. Transported to the old haunts of his innocent and warm-hearted childhood, he sighed for a finer and a sweeter sympathy than was ever yielded by the roof which he had lately quitted—a habitation, but not a home. He conjured up the picture of his guardian, existing in a whirl of official bustle and social excitement. A dreamy reminiscence of finer impulses stole over the heart of Cadurcis. The dazzling pageant of metropolitan splendour faded away before the bright scene of nature that surrounded him. He felt the freshness of the fragrant breeze; he gazed with admiration on the still and ancient woods; and his pure and lively blood bubbled beneath the influence of the golden sunbeams. Before him rose the halls of Cherbury, that

roof where he had been so happy, that roof to which he had appeared so ungrateful. The memory of a thousand acts of kindness, of a thousand soft and soothing traits of affection, recurred to him with a freshness which startled as much as it pleased him. Not to him only, but to his mother—that mother whose loss he had lived to deplore—had the inmates of Cherbury been ministering angels of peace and joy. Oh! that, indeed, had been a home; there, indeed, had been days of happiness; there, indeed, he had found sympathy, and solace, and succour! And now he was returning to them a stranger, to fulfil one of the formal duties of society, in paying them his cold respects—an attention which he could scarcely have avoided offering, had he been to them the merest acquaintance, instead of having found within those walls a home not merely in words, but friendship the most delicate, and love the most pure, a second parent, and the only being whom he had ever styled sister!

The sight of Cadurcis became dim with emotion as the associations of old scenes and his impending interview with Venetia brought back the past with a power which he had rarely experienced in the playing-fields of Eton, or the saloons of London. Five years! It was an awful chasm in their acquaintance.

He despaired of reviving the kindness which had been broken by such a dreary interval, and broken on his side so wilfully; and yet he began to feel that unless met with that kindness he should be very miserable. Sooth to say, he was not a little embarrassed, and scarcely knew which contingency he most desired, to meet, or to escape from her. He almost repented his return to Cadurcis; and yet to see Venetia again he felt must be exquisite pleasure. Influenced by these feelings he arrived at the hall steps, and so dismounting, and giving his horse to his groom, Cadurcis, with a palpitating heart and faltering hand, formally rang the bell of that

hall, which in old days he entered at all seasons without ceremony.

Never, perhaps, did a man feel more nervous ; he grew pale, paler even than usual, and his whole frame trembled as the approaching footstep of the servant assured him the door was about to open. He longed now that the family might not be at home ; that he might at least gain four-and-twenty hours to prepare himself. But the family were at home, and he was obliged to enter. He stopped for a moment in the hall, under the pretence of examining the old familiar scene, but it was merely to collect himself, for his sight was clouded ; spoke to the old servant, to reassure himself by the sound of his own voice, but the husky words seemed to stick in his throat ; ascended the staircase with tottering steps, and leant against the banister as he heard his name announced. The effort, however, must be made ; it was too late to recede ; and Lord Cadurcis, entering the terrace

room, extended his hand to Lady Annabel Herbert. She was not in the least changed, but looked as beautiful and serene as usual. Her salutation, though far from deficient in warmth, was perhaps a little more dignified than that which Plantagenet remembered; but still her presence reassured him; and, while he pressed her hand with earnestness, he contrived to murmur forth with pleasing emotion his delight at again meeting her. Strange to say, in the absorbing agitation of the moment, all thought of Venetia had vanished; and it was when he had turned, and beheld a young lady of the most exquisite beauty that his vision had ever lighted on, who had just risen from her seat, and was at the moment saluting him, that he entirely lost his presence of mind; he turned scarlet, was quite silent, made an awkward bow, and then stood perfectly fixed.

“My daughter,” said Lady Annabel, slightly pointing to Venetia; “will not your lordship be seated?”

Cadurcis fell into a chair in absolute confusion. The rare and surpassing beauty of Venetia, his own stupidity, his admiration of her, his contempt for himself, the sight of the old chamber, the recollection of the past, the minutest incidents of which seemed all suddenly to crowd upon his memory, the painful consciousness of the revolution which had occurred in his position in the family, proved by his first being obliged to be introduced to Venetia, and then being addressed so formally by his title by her mother; all these impressions united overcame him—he could not speak, he sat silent and confounded; and, had it not been for the imperturbable self-composure and delicate and amiable consideration of Lady Annabel, it would have been impossible for him to have remained in a room where he experienced the most agonising embarrassment.

Under cover, however, of a discharge of discreet inquiries as to when he arrived, how long he meant to stay, whether he found Cadurcis

altered, and similar interrogations which required no extraordinary exertion of his lordship's intellect to answer, but to which he nevertheless contrived to give the most inconsistent and contradictory responses, Cadurcis in time recovered himself sufficiently to maintain a fair, though not very brilliant, conversation, and even ventured occasionally to address an observation to Venetia, who was seated at her work perfectly composed, but who replied to all his remarks with the same sweet voice and artless simplicity which had characterised her childhood, though time and thought had, by their blended influence, perhaps somewhat deprived her of that wild grace and sparkling gaiety for which she was once so eminent.

These great disenchanters of humanity, if indeed they had stolen away some of the fascinating qualities of infancy, had amply recompensed Venetia Herbert for the loss by the additional and commanding charms which they had conferred

on her. From a beautiful child, she had expanded into a most beautiful woman. She had now entirely recovered from her illness, of which the only visible effect was the addition that it had made to her stature, already slightly above the middle height, but of the most exquisite symmetry. Like her mother, she did not wear powder, then usual in society; but her auburn hair, which was of the finest texture, descended in long and luxuriant tresses far over her shoulders, braided with ribands, perfectly exposing her pellucid brow, here and there tinted with an undulating vein, for she had retained, if possible with increased lustre, the dazzling complexion of her infancy. If the rose upon the cheek were less vivid than of yore, the dimples were certainly more developed; the clear grey eye was shadowed by long dark lashes; and every smile and movement of those ruby lips revealed teeth exquisitely small and regular, and fresh and brilliant as pearls just plucked by a diver.

Conversation proceeded and improved. Cadurcis became more easy and more fluent. His memory, which seemed suddenly to have returned to him with unusual vigour, wonderfully served him. There was scarcely an individual of whom he did not contrive to inquire, from Dr. Masham to Mistress Pauncefort; he was resolved to show that, if he had neglected, he had at least not forgotten them. Nor did he exhibit the slightest indication of terminating his visit; so that Lady Annabel, aware that he was alone at the abbey, and that he could have no engagement in the neighbourhood, could not refrain from inviting him to remain and dine with them. The invitation was accepted without hesitation. In due course of time Cadurcis attended the ladies in their walk; it was a delightful stroll in the park; though he felt some slight emotion when he found himself addressing Venetia by the title of "Miss Herbert." When he had exhausted all the topics of local interest, he had a great deal to say about himself, in answer to the

inquiries of Lady Annabel. He spoke with so much feeling and simplicity of his first days at Eton, and the misery he experienced on first quitting Cherbury, that his details could not fail of being agreeable to those whose natural self-esteem they so agreeably flattered. Then he dwelt upon his casual acquaintance with London society, and Lady Annabel was gratified to observe, from many incidental observations, that his principles were, in every respect, of the right tone ; and that he had zealously enlisted himself in the ranks of that national party who opposed themselves to the disorganising opinions then afloat. He spoke of his impending residence at the university with the affectionate anticipations which might have been expected from a devoted child of the ancient and orthodox institutions of his country, and seemed perfectly impressed with the responsible duties for which he was destined, as an hereditary legislator of England. On the whole, his carriage and conversation afforded a delightful evidence of a pure, and earnest, and

frank, and gifted mind, that had acquired, at a very early age, much of the mature and fixed character of manhood, without losing anything of that boyish sincerity and simplicity that are too often the penalty of experience.

The dinner passed in pleasant conversation, and, if they were no longer familiar, they were at least cordial. Cadurcis spoke of Dr. Masham with affectionate respect, and mentioned his intention of visiting Marringhurst on the following day. He ventured to hope that he might accompany Lady Annabel and Miss Herbert, and it was arranged that his wish should be gratified. The evening drew on apace, and Lady Annabel was greatly pleased when Lord Cadurcis expressed his wish to remain for their evening prayers. He was, indeed, sincerely religious; and as he knelt in the old chapel, that had been the hallowed scene of his boyish devotions, he offered his ardent thanksgivings to his Creator, who had mercifully kept his soul pure and true, and allowed him, after so long an estrangement

from the sweet spot of his childhood, once more to mingle his supplications with his kind and virtuous friends.

Influenced by the solemn sounds still lingering in his ear, Cadurcis bade them farewell for the night, with an earnestness of manner and depth of feeling which he would scarcely have ventured to exhibit at their first meeting. “ Good night, dear Lady Annabel,” he said, as he pressed her hand ; “ you know not how happy, how grateful I feel, to be once more at Cherbury. Good night, Venetia ! ”

That last word lingered on his lips ; it was uttered in a tone at once mournful and sweet, and her hand was unconsciously detained for a moment in his ;—but for a moment ; and yet in that brief instant a thousand thoughts seemed to course through his brain.

Before Venetia retired to rest, she remained for a few minutes in her mother’s room. “ What do you think of him, mamma ? ” she said ; “ is he not very changed ? ”

“He is, my love,” replied Lady Annabel, “what I sometimes thought he might, what I always hoped he would be.”

“He really seemed happy to meet us again, and yet how strange that for years he should never have communicated with us !”

“Not so very strange, my love ! He was but a child when we parted, and he has felt embarrassment in resuming connexions which for a long interval had been inevitably severed. Remember what a change his life had to endure ; few, after such an interval, would have returned with feelings so kind and so pure !”

“He was always a favourite of yours, mamma !”

“I always fancied that I observed in him the seeds of great virtues and great talents ; but I was not so sanguine that they would have flourished as they appear to have done.”

In the mean time the subject of their observations strolled home on foot—for he had dismissed his horses—to the abbey. It was a brilliant night, and the white beams of the moon fell full

upon the old monastic pile, of which massy portions were in dark shade, while the light gracefully rested on the projecting ornaments of the building, and played, as it were, with the fretted and fantastic pinnacles. Behind were the savage hills, softened by the hour; and on the right extended the still and luminous lake. Cadurcis rested for a moment, and gazed upon the fair, yet solemn, scene. The dreams of ambition, that occasionally distracted him, were dead. The surrounding scene harmonized with the thoughts of purity, repose, and beauty, that filled his soul. Why should he ever leave this spot, sacred to him by the finest emotions of his nature? Why should he not at once quit that world which he had just entered, while he could quit it without remorse? If ever there existed a being who was his own master,—who might mould his destiny at his will,—it seemed to be Cadurcis. His lone, yet independent situation,—his impetuous, yet firm volition,—alike qualified him to achieve the career most grateful to his disposition. Let

him, then, achieve it here: here let him find that solitude he had ever loved, softened by that affection for which he had ever sighed, and which here only he had ever found. It seemed to him that there was only one being in the world whom he had ever loved, and that was Venetia Herbert: it seemed to him that there was only one thing in this world worth living for, and that was the enjoyment of her sweet heart. The pure-minded, the rare, the gracious creature! Why should she ever quit these immaculate bowers, wherein she had been so mystically and delicately bred? Why should she ever quit the fond roof of Cherbury, but to shed grace and love amid the cloisters of Cadurcis? Her life hitherto had been an enchanted tale; why should the spell ever break? Why should she enter that world where care, disappointment, mortification, misery, must await her? He, for a season, had left the magic circle of her life, and perhaps it was well. He was a man, and so he should know all. But he had returned, thank Heaven! he

had returned, and never again would he quit her. Fool that he had been, ever to have neglected her! And for a reason that ought to have made him doubly her friend, her solace, her protector. Oh! to think of the sneers or the taunts of the world calling for a moment the colour from that bright cheek, or dusking for an instant the radiance of that brilliant eye! His heart ached at the thought of her unhappiness, and he longed to press her to it, and cherish her like some innocent dove that had flown from the terrors of a pursuing hawk.

CHAPTER II.

“ WELL, Pauncefort,” said Lord Cadurcis, smiling, as he renewed his acquaintance with his old friend, “ I hope you have not forgotten my last words, and have taken care of your young lady.”

“ Oh ! dear my lord,” said Mistress Pauncefort, blushing and simpering. “ Well, to be sure, how your lordship has surprised us all ! I thought we were never going to see you again !”

“ You know I told you I should return ; and now I mean never to leave you again.”

“ Never is a long word, my lord,” said Mistress Pauncefort, looking very archly.

“ Ah ! but I mean to settle, regularly to settle here,” said Lord Cadurcis.

“Marry and settle, my lord,” said Mistress Pauncefort, still more arch.

“And why not?” inquired Lord Cadurcis, laughing.

“That is just what I said last night,” exclaimed Mistress Pauncefort eagerly. “And why not? for I said, says I, his lordship must marry sooner or later, and the sooner the better, say I; and to be sure he is very young; but what of that? for, says I, no one can say he does not look quite a man. And really, my lord, saving your presence, you are grown, indeed.”

“Pish!” said Lord Cadurcis, turning away, and laughing, “I have left off growing, Pauncefort, and all those sort of things.”

“You have not forgotten our last visit to Marringhurst?” said Lord Cadurcis to Venetia, as the comfortable mansion of the worthy Doctor appeared in sight.

“I have forgotten nothing,” replied Venetia with a faint smile; “I do not know what it is

to forget. My life has been so uneventful, that every past incident, however slight, is as fresh in my memory as if it occurred yesterday."

"Then you remember the strawberries and cream?" said Lord Cadurcis.

"And other circumstances, less agreeable," he fancied Venetia observed, but her voice was low.

"Do you know, Lady Annabel," said Lord Cadurcis, "that I was very nearly riding my pony to-day? I wish to bring back old times with the utmost possible completeness; I wish for a moment to believe that I have never quitted Cherbury."

"Let us think only of the present now," said Lady Annabel in a cheerful voice, "for it is very agreeable. I see the good Doctor; he has discovered us."

"I wonder whom he fancies Lord Cadurcis to be," said Venetia.

"Have you no occasional cavalier for whom at a distance I may be mistaken?" inquired his

lordship, in a tone of affected carelessness, though, in truth, it was an inquiry that he made not without anxiety.

“Everything remains here exactly as you left it,” replied Lady Annabel, with some quickness, yet in a lively tone.

“Happy Cherbury !” exclaimed Lord Cadurcis. “May it, indeed, never change !”

They rode briskly on ; the Doctor was standing at his gate. He saluted Lady Annabel and Venetia with his accustomed cordiality, and then stared at their companion, as if waiting for an introduction.

“You forget an old friend, my dear Doctor,” said his lordship.

“Lord Cadurcis !” exclaimed Dr. Masham. His lordship had by this time dismounted, and eagerly extended his hand to his old tutor.

Having quitted their horses, they all entered the house, nor was there naturally any want of conversation. Cadurcis had much information to give, and many questions to answer. He was

in the highest spirits and the most amiable mood, gay, amusing, and overflowing with kind-heartedness. The Doctor seldom required any inspiration to be joyous, and Lady Annabel was unusually lively. Venetia alone, though cheerful, was calmer than pleased Cadurcis. Time, he sorrowfully observed, had occasioned a greater change in her manner than he could have expected. Youthful as she still was, indeed but on the threshold of womanhood, and exempted, as it seemed she had been, from anything to disturb the clearness of her mind, that enchanting play of fancy, which had once characterised her, and which he recalled with a sigh, appeared in a great degree to have deserted her. He watched her countenance with emotion, and, supremely beautiful as it undeniably was, there was a cast of thoughtfulness or suffering impressed upon the features, which rendered him mournful he knew not why, and caused him to feel as if a cloud had stolen unexpectedly over the sun, and made him shiver.

But there was no time or opportunity for sad reflections ; he had to renew his acquaintance with all the sights and curiosities of the rectory, to sing to the canaries, and visit the gold fish, admire the stuffed fox, and wonder that, in the space of five years, the voracious otter had not yet contrived to devour its prey. Then they refreshed themselves after their ride with a stroll in the Doctor's garden ; Cadurcis persisted in attaching himself to Venetia, as in old days, and nothing would prevent him from leading her to the grotto. Lady Annabel walked behind, leaning on the Doctor's arm, narrating, with no fear of being heard, all the history of their friend's return.

“ I never was so surprised in my life,” said the Doctor ; “ he is vastly improved ; he is quite a man ; his carriage is very finished.”

“ And his principles,” said Lady Annabel. “ You have no idea, my dear Doctor, how right his opinions seem to be on every subject. He has been brought up in a good school ; he does

his guardian great credit. He is quite loyal and orthodox in all his opinions; ready to risk his life for our blessed constitution in Church and State. He requested, as a favour, that he might remain at our prayers last night. It is delightful for me to see him turn out so well!”

In the mean time Cadurcis and Venetia entered the grotto.

“The dear Doctor!” said his lordship, “five years have brought no visible change even to him; perhaps he may be a degree less agile, but I will not believe it. And Lady Annabel; it seems to me your mother is more youthful and beautiful than ever. There is a spell in our air,” continued his lordship, with a laughing eye, “for if we have changed, Venetia, ours is, at least, an alteration that bears no sign of decay. We are advancing, but they have not declined; we are all enchanted.”

“I feel changed,” said Venetia, gravely.

“I left you a child, and I find you a woman,” said Lord Cadurcis—“a change which who can regret?”

“ I would I were a child again,” said Venetia.

“ We were happy,” said Lord Cadurcis, in a thoughtful tone; and then, in an inquiring voice, he added, “ and so we are now ? ”

Venetia shook her head.

“ Can you be unhappy ? ” said Lord Cadurcis.

“ To be unhappy would be wicked,” said Venetia, “ but my mind has lost its spring.”

“ Ah ! say not so, Venetia, or you will make even me gloomy. I am happy, positively happy. There must not be a cloud upon your brow.”

“ You are joyous,” said Venetia, “ because you are excited. It is the novelty of return that animates you. It will wear off; you will grow weary, and, when you go to the university, you will think yourself happy again.”

“ I do not intend to go to the university,” said Lord Cadurcis.

“ I understood from you that you were going there immediately.”

“ My plans are changed,” said Lord Cadurcis; “ I do not intend ever to leave home again.”

“ My lord ! ” said Dr. Masham, who just then reached them, “ when you go to Cambridge, I shall trouble you with a letter to an old friend of mine, whose acquaintance you may find valuable.”

Venetia smiled ; Lord Cadurcis bowed, expressed his thanks, and muttered something about talking over the subject with the Doctor.

After this the conversation became general, and at length they all returned to the house to partake of the Doctor’s hospitality, who promised to dine at the hall on the morrow. The ride home was agreeable and animated ; but the conversation, on the part of the ladies, was principally maintained by Lady Annabel, who seemed every moment more delighted with the society of Lord Cadurcis, and to sympathise every instant more completely with his frank exposition of his opinions on all subjects. When they returned to Cherbury, Cadurcis remained with them as a matter of course. An invitation was neither expected nor given. Not an allusion was made

to the sports of the field, to enjoy which was the original purpose of his visit to the abbey ; and he spoke of to-morrow as of a period which, as usual, was to be spent entirely in their society. He remained with them, as on the previous night, to the latest possible moment. Although reserved in society, no one could be more fluent with those with whom he was perfectly unembarrassed. He was, indeed, exceedingly entertaining, and Lady Annabel relaxed into conversation beyond her custom. As for Venetia, she did not speak often, but she listened with interest, and was evidently amused. When Cadurcis bade them good-night, Lady Annabel begged him to breakfast with them ; while Venetia, serene, though kind, neither seconded the invitation, nor seemed interested, one way or the other, in its result.

CHAPTER III.

EXCEPT returning to sleep at the abbey, Lord Cadurcis was now as much an habitual inmate of Cherbury Hall as in the days of his childhood. He was there almost with the lark, and never quitted its roof until its inmates were about to retire for the night. His guns and dogs, which had been sent down from London with so much pomp of preparation, were unused and unnoticed; and he passed his days in reading Richardson's novels, which he had brought with him from town, to the ladies, and then in riding with them about the country, for he loved to visit all his old haunts, and trace even the very green sward where he first met the gipseys, and

fancied that he had achieved his emancipation from all the coming cares and annoyances of the world. In this pleasant life several weeks had glided away: Cadurcis had entirely resumed his old footing in the family, nor did he attempt to conceal the homage he was paying to the charms of Venetia. She, indeed, seemed utterly unconscious that such projects had entered, or indeed could enter, the brain of her old play-fellow, with whom, now that she was habituated to his presence, and revived by his inspiriting society, she had resumed all her old familiar intimacy; even addressing him in his Christian name, as if he had never ceased to be her brother. But Lady Annabel was not so blind as her daughter, and, had indeed her vision been as clouded, her faithful minister, Mistress Pauncefort, would have taken care quickly to couch it; for a very short time had elapsed before that vigilant gentlewoman, resolved to convince her mistress that nothing could escape her sleepless scrutiny, and that it was equally in vain for her mistress, to

hope to possess any secrets without her participation, seized a convenient opportunity, before she bid her lady good night, just to inquire “when it might be expected to take place?” and in reply to the very evident astonishment which Lady Annabel testified at this question, and the expression of her extreme displeasure at any conversation on a circumstance for which there was not the slightest foundation, Mistress Pauncefort, after duly flouncing about with every possible symbol of pettish agitation and mortified curiosity, her cheek pale with hesitating impertinence, and her nose quivering with inquisitiveness, condescended to admit, with a sceptical sneer, that of course, no doubt, her ladyship knew more of such a subject than she could; it was not her place to know anything of such business; for her part she said nothing; it was not her place, but, if it were, she certainly must say that she could not help believing that my lord was looking remarkably sweet on Miss Venetia, and, what was more, every body in the house thought the

same, though, for her part, whenever they mentioned the circumstance to her, she said nothing, or bid them hold their tongues, for what was it to them? it was not their business, and they could know nothing; and that nothing would displease her ladyship more than chattering on such subjects, and many's the match, as good as finished, that's gone off by no worse means than the chitter-chatter of those who should hold their tongues. Therefore she should say no more; but, if her ladyship wished her to contradict it, why she could, and the sooner, perhaps, the better.

Lady Annabel observed to her that she wished no such thing; but she desired that Pauncefort would make no more observations on the subject, either to her or to any one else. And then Pauncefort bade her ladyship good night in a huff, catching up her candle with a rather impertinent jerk, and gently slamming the door, as if she had meant to close it quietly, only it had escaped out of her fingers.

Whatever might be the tone, whether of surprise or displeasure, which Lady Annabel thought fit to assume to her attendant on her noticing Lord Cadurcis's attentions to her daughter, there is no doubt that his lordship's conduct had early and long engaged her ladyship's remark, her consideration, and her approval. Without meditating indeed an immediate union between Cadurcis and Venetia, Lady Annabel pleased herself with the prospect of her daughter's eventual marriage with one whom she had known so early, and so intimately; who was by nature of a gentle, sincere, and affectionate disposition, and in whom education had carefully instilled the most sound and laudable principles and opinions; one apparently with simple tastes, moderate desires, fair talents, a mind intelligent, if not brilliant, and passions which at the worst had been rather ill-regulated than violent; attached also to Venetia from her childhood, and always visibly affected by her influence. All these moral considerations seemed

to offer a fair security for happiness; and the material ones were neither less promising, nor altogether disregarded by the mother. It was an union which would join broad lands and fair estates; which would place on the brow of her daughter one of the most ancient coronets in England; and, which indeed was the chief of these considerations, would, without exposing Venetia to that contaminating contact with the world from which Lady Annabel recoiled, establish her, without this initiatory and sorrowful experience, in a position superior to which even the blood of the Herberts, though it might flow in as fair and gifted a form as that of Venetia, need not aspire.

Lord Cadurcis had not returned to Cherbury a week before this scheme entered into the head of Lady Annabel. She had always liked him; had always given him credit for good qualities; had always believed that his early defects were the consequence of his mother's injudicious treatment; and that at heart he was

an amiable, generous, and trustworthy being, one who might be depended on, with a naturally good judgment, and substantial and sufficient talents, which only required cultivation. When she met him again after so long an interval, and found her early prognostics so fairly, so completely fulfilled, and watched his conduct and conversation, exhibiting alike a well-informed mind, an obliging temper, and, what Lady Anabel valued even above all gifts and blessings, a profound conviction of the truth of all her own opinions, moral, political, and religious, she was quite charmed; she was moved to unusual animation; she grew excited in his praise; his presence delighted her; she entertained for him the warmest affection, and reposed in him the most unbounded confidence. All her hopes became centred in the wish of seeing him her son-in-law; and she detected with the most lively satisfaction the immediate impression which Venetia had made upon his heart; for indeed it should not be forgotten, that although

Lady Annabel was still young, and although her frame and temperament were alike promising of a long life, it was natural when she reflected upon the otherwise lone condition of her daughter, that she should tremble at the thought of quitting this world without leaving her child a protector. To Doctor Masham, from whom, indeed, Lady Annabel had no secrets, she confided in time these happy but covert hopes, and he was not less anxious than herself for their fulfilment. Since the return of Cadurcis the Doctor contrived to be a more frequent visiter at the hall than usual, and he lost no opportunity of silently advancing the object of his friend.

As for Cadurcis himself, it was impossible for him not quickly to discover that no obstacle to his heart's dearest wish would arise on the part of the parent. The demeanour of the daughter somewhat more perplexed him. Venetia, indeed, had entirely fallen into her old habits of intimacy and frankness with Plantagenet; she was as affectionate and as unembarrassed as in

former days, and almost as gay ; for his presence and companionship had in a great degree insensibly removed that stillness and gravity which had gradually influenced her mind and conduct. But in that conduct there was, and he observed it with some degree of mortification, a total absence of the consciousness of being the object of the passionate admiration of another. She treated Lord Cadurcis as a brother she much loved, who had returned to his home after a long absence. She liked to listen to his conversation, to hear of his adventures, to consult over his plans. His arrival called a smile to her face ; and his departure for the night was always alleviated by some allusion to their meeting on the morrow. But many an ardent gaze on the part of Cadurcis, and many a phrase of emotion, passed unnoticed and unappreciated. His gallantry was entirely thrown away, or, if observed, only occasioned a pretty stare at the unnecessary trouble he gave himself, or the strange ceremony which she supposed an acquaintance with

society had taught him. Cadurcis attributed this reception of his veiled and delicate overtures to her ignorance of the world ; and, though he sighed for as passionate a return to his strong feelings as the sentiments which animated himself, he was on the whole not displeased, but rather interested, by these indications of a pure and unsophisticated spirit.

CHAPTER IV.

CADURCIS had proposed, and Lady Annabel had seconded the proposition with eager satisfaction, that they should seek some day at the abbey whatever hospitality it might offer; Dr. Masham was to be of the party, which was, indeed, one of those fanciful expeditions where the same companions, though they meet at all times without restraint, and with every convenience of life, seek increased amusement in the novelty of a slight change of habits. With the aid of the neighbouring town of Southport, Cadurcis had made preparations for his friends not entirely unworthy of them, though he affected to the last all the air of a conductor of a wild expedition of discovery, and laughingly

impressed upon them the necessity of steeling their minds and bodies to the experience and endurance of the roughest treatment and the most severe hardships.

The morning of this eventful day broke as beautifully as the preceding ones. Autumn had seldom been more gorgeous than this year. Although he was to play the host, Cadurcis would not deprive himself of his usual visit to the hall; and he appeared there at an early hour to accompany his guests, who were to ride over to the abbey, to husband all their energies for their long rambles through the demesne.

Cadurcis was in high spirits, and Lady Anabel scarcely less joyous. Venetia smiled, with her usual sweetness and serenity. They congratulated each other on the charming season; and Mistress Pauncefort received a formal invitation to join the party, and go a-nutting with one of her fellow-servants and his lordship's valet. The good Doctor was rather late, but he arrived, at last, on his

stout steed, in his accustomed cheerful mood. Here was a party of pleasure, which all agreed must be pleasant; no strangers to amuse, or to be amusing, but formed merely of four human beings who spent every day of their lives in each other's society, between whom there was the most complete sympathy, and the most cordial good-will.

By noon they were all mounted on their steeds; and, though the air was warmed by a meridian sun shining in a clear sky, there was a gentle breeze abroad, sweet and grateful; and, moreover, they soon entered the wood, and enjoyed the shelter of its verdant shade. The abbey looked most picturesque when they first burst upon it; the nearer and wooded hills, which formed its immediate background, just tinted by the golden pencil of autumn, while the meads of the valley were still emerald green; and the stream, now lost, now winding, glittered here and there in the sun, and gave a life and sprightliness to the landscape which ex-

ceeded even the effect of the more distant and expansive lake.

They were received at the abbey by Mistress Pauncefort, who had preceded them, and who welcomed them with a complacent smile. Cadurcis hastened to assist Lady Annabel to dismount, and was a little confused, but very pleased, when she assured him she needed no assistance, but requested him to take care of Venetia. He was just in time to receive her in his arms, where she found herself without the slightest embarrassment. The coolness of the cloisters was most grateful after their ride ; and they lingered, and looked upon the old fountain, and felt the freshness of its fall with satisfaction which all alike expressed. Lady Annabel and Venetia then retired for a while to free themselves from their riding habits ; and Cadurcis, affectionately taking the arm of Dr. Masham, led him a few paces, and then almost involuntarily exclaimed, “ My dear Doctor, I think I am the happiest fellow that ever lived ! ”

“ That I trust you may always be, my dear boy,” said Doctor Masham, “ but what has called forth this particular exclamation ? ”

“ To feel that I am once more at Cadurcis ; to feel that I am here once more with you all ; to feel that I never shall leave you again . ”

“ Not again ? ”

“ Never ! ” said Cadurcis. “ The experience of these last few weeks, which yet have seemed an age in my existence, has made me resolve never to quit a society where I am persuaded I may obtain a degree of happiness which what is called the world can never afford me . ”

“ What will your guardian say ? ”

“ What care I ? ”

“ A dutiful ward ! ”

“ Poh ! the relations between us were formed only to secure my welfare. It is secured ; it will be secured by my own resolution . ”

“ And what is that ? ” inquired Doctor Masham.

“ To marry Venetia, if she will accept me . ”

“ And that you do not doubt ! ”

“ We doubt everything, when every thing is at stake,” replied Lord Cadurcis. “ I know that her consent would ensure my happiness ; and, when I reflect, I cannot help being equally persuaded that it would secure hers. Her mother, I think, would not be adverse to our union. And you, my dear Sir, what do you think ? ”

“ I think,” said Doctor Masham, “ that whoever marries Venetia will marry the most beautiful and the most gifted of God’s creatures ; I hope you may marry her ; I wish you to marry her ; I believe you will marry her ; but not yet ; you are too young, Lord Cadurcis.”

“ Oh, no, my dear Doctor, not too young to marry Venetia. Remember I have known her all my life, at least as long as I have been able to form an opinion. How few are the men, my dear Doctor, who are so fortunate as to unite themselves with women whom they have known,

as I have known Venetia, for more than seven long years !”

“ During five of which you have never seen or heard of her.”

“ Mine was the fault ! And yet I cannot help thinking, as it may probably turn out, as you yourself believe it will turn out, that it is as well that we have been separated for this interval. It has afforded me opportunities for observation which I should never have enjoyed at Cadurcis ; and, although my lot either way could not have altered the nature of things, I might have been discontented, I might have sighed for a world which now I do not value. It is true I have not seen Venetia for five years, but I find her the same, or changed only by nature, and fulfilling all the rich promise which her childhood intimated. No, my dear Doctor, I respect your opinion more than that of any man living ; but nobody, nothing, can persuade me that I am not as intimately acquainted with Venetia’s

character, with all her rare virtues, as if we had never separated."

"I do not doubt it," said the Doctor; "high as you may pitch your estimate, you cannot over-value her."

"Then why should we not marry?"

"Because, my dear friend, although you may be perfectly acquainted with Venetia, you cannot be perfectly acquainted with yourself."

"How so?" exclaimed Lord Cadurcis, in a tone of surprise, perhaps a little indignant.

"Because it is impossible. No young man of eighteen ever possessed such precious knowledge. I esteem and admire you; I give you every credit for a good heart and a sound head; but it is impossible, at your time of life, that your character can be formed; and, until it be, you may marry Venetia, and yet be a very miserable man."

"It is formed," said his lordship, firmly; "there is not a subject important to a human being on which my opinions are not settled."

“You may live to change them all,” said the Doctor, “and that very speedily.”

“Impossible!” said Lord Cadurcis. “My dear Doctor, I cannot understand you; you say that you hope—that you wish—even that you believe that I shall marry Venetia; and yet you permit me to infer that our union will only make us miserable. What do you wish me to do?”

“Go to college for a term or two.”

“Without Venetia! I should die.”

“Well, if you be in a dying state, you can return.”

“You joke, my dear Doctor.”

“My dear boy, I am perfectly serious.”

“But she may marry somebody else?”

“I am your only rival,” said the Doctor, with a smile; “and, though even friends can scarcely be trusted under such circumstances, I promise you not to betray you.”

“Your advice is not very pleasant,” said his lordship.

“Advice seldom is,” said the Doctor.

“My dear Doctor, I have made up my mind to marry her—and marry her at once. I know her well, you admit that yourself. I do not believe that there ever was a woman like her, that there ever will be a woman like her. Nature has marked her out from other women, and her education has not been less peculiar. Her mystic breeding pleases me. It is something to marry a wife so fair, so pure, so refined, so accomplished, who is, nevertheless, perfectly ignorant of the world. I have dreamt of such things; I have paced these old cloisters when a boy, and when I was miserable at home; and I have had visions, and this was one. I have sighed to live alone, with a fair spirit for my minister. Venetia has descended from heaven for me, and for me alone. I am resolved I will pluck this fair flower with the dew upon its leaves.”

“I did not know I was reasoning with a poet,” said the Doctor with a smile. “Had I been

conscious of it, I would not have been so rash."

"I have not a grain of poetry in my composition," said his lordship, "I never could write a verse; I was notorious at Eton for begging all their old manuscripts from boys when they left school, to crib from; but I have a heart, and I can feel. I love Venetia—I have always loved her—and, if possible, I will marry her, and marry her at once."

CHAPTER V.

THE reappearance of the ladies at the end of the cloister terminated this conversation, the result of which was rather to confirm Lord Cadurcis in his resolution of instantly urging his suit, than the reverse. He ran forward to greet his friends with a smile, and took his place by the side of Venetia, whom, a little to her surprise, he congratulated in glowing phrase on her charming costume. Indeed, she looked very captivating, with a pastoral hat, then much in fashion, and a dress as simple and as sylvan, both showing to admirable advantage her long descending hair, and her agile and springy figure.

Cadurcis proposed that they should ramble

over the abbey ; he talked of projected alterations, as if he really had the power immediately to effect them, and was desirous of obtaining their opinions before any change was made. So they ascended the staircase, which many years before Venetia had mounted for the first time with her mother, and entered that series of small and ill-furnished rooms in which Mrs. Cadurcis had principally resided, and which had undergone no change. The old pictures were examined ; these, all agreed, never must move ; and the new furniture, it was settled, must be in character with the building. Lady Annabel entered into all the details with an interest and animation which rather amused Dr. Masham. Venetia listened, and suggested, and responded to the frequent appeals of Cadurcis to her judgment, with an unconscious equanimity not less diverting.

“Now here we really can do something,” said his lordship, as they entered the saloon, or rather refectory ; “here I think we may effect

wonders.—The t apestry must always remain. Is it not magnificent, Venetia? — But what hangings shall we have?—We must keep the old chairs, I think.—Do you approve of the old chairs, Venetia?—And what shall we cover them with?—Shall it be damask?—What do you think, Venetia?—Do you like damask?—And what colour shall it be?—Shall it be crimson?—Shall it be crimson damask, Lady Annabel?—Do you think Venetia would like crimson damask?—Now, Venetia, do give us the benefit of your opinion.”

Then they entered the old gallery; here was to be a great transformation. Marvels were to be effected in the old gallery; and many and multiplied were the appeals to the taste and fancy of Venetia.

“ I think,” said Lord Cadurcis, “ I shall leave the gallery to be arranged when I am settled. The rooms and the saloon shall be done at once. I shall give orders for them to begin instantly. Whom do you recommend, Lady An-

nable? Do you think there is any person at Southport who could manage to do it, superintended by our taste? Venetia, what do you think?"

Venetia was standing at the window, rather apart from her companions, looking at the old garden. Lord Cadurcis joined her. "Ah! it has been sadly neglected since my poor mother's time. We could not do much in those days, but still she loved this garden. I must depend upon you entirely to arrange my garden, Venetia. This spot is sacred to you. You have not forgotten our labours here, have you, Venetia? Ah! those were happy days, and these shall be more happy still. This is your garden; it shall always be called Venetia's garden."

"I would have taken care of it, when you were away, but—"

"But what?" inquired Lord Cadurcis anxiously.

"We hardly felt authorised," replied Venetia very calmly. "We came at first, when you left

Cadurcis, but at last it did not seem that our presence was very acceptable.”

“The brutes!” exclaimed Lord Cadurcis.

“No, no; good simple people, they were used to orders from strange masters, and they were perplexed. Besides, we had no right to interfere.”

“No right to interfere! Venetia, my little fellow-labourer, no right to interfere! Why all is yours! Fancy your having no right to interfere at Cadurcis!”

Then they proceeded to the park, and wandered to the margin of the lake. There was not a spot, not an object, which did not recall some adventure or incident of childhood. Every moment Lord Cadurcis exclaimed, “Venetia! do you remember this?”—“Venetia! have you forgotten that?”—and every time Venetia smiled, and proved how faithful was her memory, by adding some little unmentioned trait to the lively reminiscences of her companion.

“Well, after all,” said Lord Cadurcis with a sigh, “my poor mother was a strange woman,

and, God bless her! used sometimes to worry me out of my senses; but still she always loved you. No one can deny that. Cherbury was a magic name with her. She loved Lady Annabel, and she loved you, Venetia. It ran in the blood, you see. She would be happy, quite happy, if she saw us all here together, and if she knew——”

“Plantagenet,” said Lady Annabel, “you must build a lodge at this end of the park. I cannot conceive anything more effective than an entrance from the Southport road in this quarter.”

“Certainly, Lady Annabel, certainly we must build a lodge. Do not you think so, Venetia?”

“Indeed, I think it would be a great improvement,” replied Venetia; “but you must take care to have a lodge in character with the abbey.”

“You shall make a drawing for it,” said Lord Cadurcis; “it shall be built directly, and it shall be called Venetia Lodge.”

The hours flew away, loitering in the park, roaming in the woods. They met Mistress Pauncefort and her friends loaded with plunder, and they offered to Venetia a trophy of their success; but when Venetia, merely to please their kind hearts, accepted their tribute with cordiality, and declared there was nothing she liked better, Lord Cadurcis would not be satisfied unless he immediately commenced nutting, and each moment he bore to Venetia the produce of his sport, till in time she could scarcely sustain the rich and increasing burden. At length they bent their steps towards home, sufficiently wearied to look forward with welcome to rest and their repast, yet not fatigued, and exhilarated by the atmosphere, for the sun was now in its decline, though in this favoured season there were yet hours enough remaining of enchanting light.

In the refectory they found, to the surprise of all but their host, a banquet. It was just one of those occasions when nothing is expected and

everything is welcome and surprising; when, from the unpremeditated air generally assumed, all preparation startles and pleases; when even ladies are not ashamed to eat, and formality appears quite banished. Game of all kinds, teal from the lake, and piles of beautiful fruit, made the table alike tempting and picturesque. Then there were stray bottles of rare wine disinterred from venerable cellars; and, more inspiriting even than the choice wine, a host under the influence of every emotion, and swayed by every circumstance, that can make a man happy and delightful. Oh! they were very gay, and it seemed difficult to believe that care, or sorrow, or the dominion of dark or ungracious passions, could ever disturb sympathies so complete, and countenances so radiant.

At the urgent request of Cadurcis, Venetia sang to them; and, while she sang, the expression of her countenance and voice harmonizing with the arch hilarity of the subject, Plantagenet for a moment believed that he beheld the

little Venetia of his youth, that sunny child, so full of mirth and grace, the very recollection of whose lively and bright existence might enliven the gloomiest hour and lighten the heaviest heart.

Enchanted by all that surrounded him,—full of hope, and joy, and plans of future felicity,—emboldened by the kindness of the daughter,—Cadurcis now ventured to urge a request to Lady Annabel, and the request was granted,—for all seemed to feel that it was a day on which nothing was to be refused to their friend. Happy Cadurcis! The child had a holyday, and it fancied itself a man, enjoying a triumph. In compliance, therefore, with his wish, it was settled that they should all walk back to the hall; even Doctor Masham declared he was competent to the exertion, but perhaps was half entrapped into the declaration by the promise of a bed at Cherbury. This consent enchanted Cadurcis, who looked forward with exquisite pleasure to the evening walk with Venetia.

CHAPTER VI.

ALTHOUGH the sun had not set, it had sunk behind the hills leading to Cherbury when our friends quitted the abbey. Cadurcis, without hesitation, offered his arm to Venetia, and, whether from a secret sympathy with his wishes, or merely from some fortunate accident, Lady Annabel and Doctor Masham strolled on before without busying themselves too earnestly with their companions.

“And how do you think our expedition to Cadurcis has turned out?” inquired the young lord of Venetia. “Has it been successful?”

“It has been one of the most agreeable days I ever passed,” was the reply.

“Then it has been successful,” rejoined his lordship; “for my only wish was to amuse you.”

“I think we have all been equally amused,” said Venetia. “I never knew mamma in such good spirits. I think, ever since you returned, she has been unusually lighthearted.”

“And you—has my return lightened only her heart, Venetia?”

“Indeed it has contributed to the happiness of every one.”

“And yet, when I first returned, I heard you utter a complaint; the first that to my knowledge ever escaped your lips.”

“Ah! we cannot be always equally gay.”

“Once you were, dear Venetia.”

“I was a child then.”

“And I, I too was a child; yet I am happy, at least now that I am with you.”

“Well, we are both happy now.”

“Oh! say that again, say that again, Venetia; for, indeed, you made me miserable when you

told me that you had changed. I cannot bear that you, Venetia, should ever change."

"It is the course of nature, Plantagenet; we all change, everything changes. This day, that was so bright, is changing fast."

"The stars are as beautiful as the sun, Venetia."

"And what do you infer?"

"That Venetia, a woman, is as beautiful as Venetia, a little girl; and should be as happy."

"Is beauty happiness, Plantagenet?"

"It makes others happy, Venetia; and, when we make others happy, we should be happy ourselves."

"Few depend upon my influence, and I trust all of them are happy."

"No one depends upon your influence more than I do."

"Well, then, be happy always."

"Would that I might! Ah! Venetia, can I ever forget old days! You were the solace of my dark childhood; you were the charm that

first taught me existence was enjoyment. Before I came to Cherbury I never was happy, and since that hour—Ah! Venetia, dear, dearest Venetia, who is like to you!”

“Dear Plantagenet, you were always too kind to me. Would we were children once more!”

“Nay! my own Venetia, you tell me everything changes, and we must not murmur at the course of nature. I would not have our childhood back again, even with all its joys, for there are others yet in store for us, not less pure, not less beautiful. We loved each other then, Venetia, and we love each other now.”

“My feelings towards you have never changed, Plantagenet; I heard of you always with interest, and I met you again with heartfelt pleasure.”

“Oh! that morning! Have you forgotten that morning! Do you know, you will smile very much, but I really believe that I expected to see my Venetia still a little girl, the very same who greeted me when I first arrived with my

mother, and behaved so naughtily ! And, when I saw you, and found what you had become, and what I ought always to have known you must become, I was so confused, I entirely lost my presence of mind. You must have thought me very awkward, very stupid ? ”

“ Indeed, I was rather gratified by observing that you could not meet us again without emotion. I thought it told well for your heart, which I always believed to be most kind, at least, I am sure, to us.”

“ Kind ! O ! Venetia, that word but ill describes what my heart ever was, what it now is, to you. Venetia ! dearest, sweetest Venetia, can you doubt for a moment my feelings towards your home, and what influence must principally impel them ? Am I so dull, or you so blind, Venetia ? Can I not express, can you not discover, how much, how ardently, how fondly, how devotedly, I—I—I—love you ? ”

“ I am sure we always loved each other, Plantagenet.”

“ Yes ! but not with this love ; not as I love you now ! ”

Venetia stared.

“ I thought we could not love each other more than we did, Plantagenet, ” at length she said. “ Do you remember the jewel that you gave me ? I always wore it, until you seemed to forget us, and then I thought it looked so foolish ! You remember what is inscribed on it :— ‘ TO VENETIA, FROM HER AFFECTIONATE BROTHER, PLANTAGENET. ’ And as a brother I always loved you ; had I indeed been your sister, I could not have loved you more warmly and more truly. ”

“ I am not your brother, Venetia ; I wish not to be loved as a brother ; and yet I must be loved by you, or I shall die. ”

“ What then do you wish ? ” inquired Venetia, with great simplicity.

“ I wish you to marry me, ” replied Lord Cadurcis.

“ Marry ! ” exclaimed Venetia, with a face of

wonder. “Marry! Marry you! Marry you, Plantagenet!”

“Ay! is that so wonderful? I love you, and, if you love me, why should we not marry?”

Venetia was silent, and looked upon the ground, not from agitation, for she was quite calm, but in thought; and then she said, “I never thought of marriage in my life, Plantagenet; I have no intention, no wish to marry; I mean to live always with mamma.”

“And you shall always live with mamma, but that need not prevent you from marrying me,” he replied. “Do not we all live together now? What will it signify if you dwell at Cadurcis and Lady Annabel at Cherbury? Is it not one home? But, at any rate, this point shall not be an obstacle; for, if it please you, we will all live at Cherbury.”

“You say that we are happy now, Plantagenet; oh, let us remain as we are!”

“My own sweet girl, my sister, if you please, any title so it be one of fondness, your sweet

simplicity charms me ; but, believe me, it cannot be as you wish ; we cannot remain as we are, unless we marry."

" Why not ? "

" Because I shall be wretched, and must live elsewhere, if indeed I can live at all."

" O ! Plantagenet, indeed I thought you were my brother ; when I found you after so long a separation as kind as in old days, and kinder still, I was so glad ; I was so sure you loved me ; I thought I had the kindest brother in the world. Let us not talk of any other love. It will, indeed it will, make mamma so miserable ! "

" I am greatly mistaken," replied Lord Cadurcis, who saw no obstacles to his hopes in their conversation hitherto, " if on the contrary our union would not prove far from disagreeable to your mother, Venetia ; I will say our mother, for indeed to me she has been one."

" Plantagenet," said Venetia, in a very earnest tone, " I love you very much ; but, if you

love me, press me on this subject no more at present. You have surprised, indeed you have bewildered me. There are thoughts, there are feelings, there are considerations, that must be respected, that must influence me. Nay! do not look so sorrowful, Plantagenet. Let us be happy now. To-morrow—only to-morrow—and to-morrow we are sure to meet, we will speak further of all this; but now—now—for a moment let us forget it, if we can forget anything so strange. Nay! you shall smile!”

He did. Who could resist that mild and winning glance! And indeed Lord Cadurcis was scarcely disappointed, and not at all mortified, at the reception, or, as he esteemed it, the progress of his suit. The conduct of Venetia he attributed entirely to her unsophisticated nature, and the timidity of a virgin soul. It made him prize even more dearly the treasure that he believed awaited him. Silent, then—though for a time they both struggled to speak on indifferent subjects—silent, and almost con-

tent, Cadurcis proceeded, with the arm of Venetia locked in his, and ever and anon unconsciously pressing it to his heart. The rosy twilight had faded away, the stars were stealing forth, and the moon again glittered. With a soul softer than the tinted shades of eve, and glowing like the heavens, Cadurcis joined his companions as they entered the gardens of Cherbury. When they had arrived home, it seemed that exhaustion had suddenly succeeded all the excitement of the day. The Doctor, who was wearied, retired immediately. Lady Annabel pressed Cadurcis to remain and take tea, or, at least, to ride home; but his lordship, protesting that he was not in the slightest degree fatigued, and anticipating their speedy union on the morrow, bade her good night, and, pressing with fondness the hand of Venetia, retraced his steps to the now solitary abbey.

CHAPTER VII.

CADURCIS returned to the abbey, but not to slumber. That love of loneliness which had haunted him from his boyhood, and which ever asserted its sway when under the influence of his passions, came over him now with irresistible power. A day of enjoyment had terminated, and it left him melancholy. Hour after hour he paced the moon-lit cloisters of his abbey, where not a sound disturbed him, save the monotonous fall of the fountain, that seems by some inexplicable association always to blend with, and never to disturb, our feelings; gay when we are joyful, and sad amid our sorrow.

Yet was he sorrowful! He was gloomy, and

fell into a reverie about himself, a subject to him ever perplexing and distressing. His conversation of the morning with Doctor Masham recurred to him. What did the Doctor mean by his character not being formed, and that he might yet live to change all his opinions? Character! what was character? It must be will; and his will was violent and firm. Young as he was, he had early habituated himself to reflection, and the result of his musings had been a desire to live away from the world, with those he loved. The world, as other men viewed it, had no charms for him. Its pursuits and passions seemed to him on the whole paltry and faint. He could sympathise with great deeds, but not with bustling life. That which was common did not please him. He loved things that were rare and strange; and the spell that bound him so strongly to Venetia Herbert was her unusual life, and the singular circumstances of her destiny that were not unknown to him. True he was young; but, lord of himself, youth was associ-

ated with none of those mortifications which make the juvenile pant for manhood. Cadurcis valued his youth, and treasured it. He could not conceive love, and the romantic life that love should lead, without the circumambient charm of youth adding fresh lustre to all that was bright and fair, and a keener relish to every combination of enjoyment. The moonbeam fell upon his mother's monument—a tablet on the cloister wall that recorded the birth and death of **KATHERINE CADURCIS**. His thoughts flew to his ancestry. They had conquered in France and Palestine, and left a memorable name to the annalist of his country. Those days were past, and yet Cadurcis felt within him the desire, perhaps the power, of emulating them; but what remained? What career was open in this mechanical age to the chivalric genius of his race? Was he misplaced then in life? The applause of nations—there was something grand and exciting in such a possession. To be the marvel of mankind, what would he not hazard?

Dreams, dreams ! If his ancestors were valiant and celebrated, it remained for him to rival, to excel them, at least in one respect. Their coronet had never rested on a brow fairer than the one for which he destined it. Venetia then, independent of his passionate love, was the only apparent object worth his pursuit—the only thing in this world that had realised his dreams—dreams sacred to his own musing soul, that even she had never shared or guessed. And she, she was to be his. He could not doubt it ; but to-morrow would decide ; to-morrow would seal his triumph.

His sleep was short and restless ; he had almost outwatched the stars, and yet he rose with the early morn. His first thought was of Venetia ; he was impatient for the interview—the interview she promised, and even proposed. The fresh air was grateful to him ; he bounded along to Cherbury, and brushed the dew in his progress from the tall grass and shrubs. In sight of the hall, he for a moment paused. He

was before his accustomed hour ; and yet he was always too soon. Not to-day, though, not to-day ; suddenly he rushes forward, and springs down the green vista, for Venetia is on the terrace, and alone !

Always kind, this morning she greeted him with unusual affection. Never had she seemed to him so exquisitely beautiful. Perhaps her countenance to-day was more pale than wont. There seemed a softness in her eyes unusually so brilliant, and even dazzling ; the accents of her salutation were suppressed and tender.

“ I thought you would be here early,” she remarked, “ and therefore I rose to meet you.”

Was he to infer from this artless confession that his image had haunted her in her dreams, or only that she would not delay the conversation on which his happiness depended ? He could scarcely doubt which version to adopt when she took his arm and led him from the

terrace, to walk where they could not be disturbed.

“ Dear Plantagenet,” she said—“ for indeed you are very dear to me—I told you last night that I would speak to you to-day on your wishes, that are so kind to me, and so much intended for my happiness. I do not love suspense; but indeed, last night, I was too much surprised, too much overcome, by what occurred, that, exhausted as I naturally was by all our pleasure, I could not tell you what I wished; indeed I could not, dear Plantagenet.”

“ My own Venetia !”

“ So I hope you will always deem me; for I should be very unhappy if you did not love me, Plantagenet—more unhappy than I have even been these last two years; and I have been very unhappy, very unhappy indeed, Plantagenet.”

“ Unhappy! Venetia; my Venetia unhappy?”

“ Listen! I will not weep. I can control my feelings. I have learnt to do this; it is

very sad, and very different to what my life once was; but I can do it."

"You amaze me!"

Venetia sighed, and then resumed, but in a tone mournful and low, and yet to a degree firm.

"You have been away five years, Plantagenet."

"But you have pardoned that."

"I never blamed you; I had nothing to pardon. It was well for you to be away; and I rejoice your absence has been so profitable to you."

"But it was wicked to have been so silent."

"Oh! no, no, no. Such ideas never entered into my head, nor even mamma's. You were very young; you did as all would, as all must do. Harbour not such thoughts. Enough you have returned, and love us yet."

"Love! adore!"

"Five years are a long space of time, Planta-

genet. Events will happen in five years, even at Cherbury. I told you I was changed."

"Yes!" said Lord Cadurcis, in a voice of some anxiety, with a scrutinising eye.

"You left me a happy child; you find me a woman,—and a miserable one."

"Good God! Venetia, this suspense is awful. Be brief, I pray you. Has any one ——"

Venetia looked at him with an air of perplexity. She could not comprehend the idea that impelled his interruption.

"Go on," Lord Cadurcis added, after a short pause; "I am, indeed, all anxiety."

"You remember that Christmas which you passed at the hall, and walking at night in the gallery, and——"

"Well! Your mother—I shall never forget it."

"You found her weeping when you were once at Marringhurst. You told me of it."

"Ay! ay!"

“ There is a wing of our house shut up. We often talked of it.”

“ Often, Venetia; it was a mystery.”

“ I have penetrated it,” replied Venetia, in a solemn tone; “ and never have I known what happiness is since.”

“ Yes, yes !” said Lord Cadurcis, very pale, and speaking in a whisper.

“ Plantagenet, I have a father.”

Lord Cadurcis started, and for an instant his arm quitted Venetia's. At length he said, in a gloomy voice, “ I know it.”

“ Know it !” exclaimed Venetia with astonishment. “ Who could have told you the secret ?”

“ It is no secret,” replied Cadurcis; “ would that it were !”

“ Would that it were ! How strange you speak, how strange you look, Plantagenet ! If it be no secret that I have a father, why this concealment then ? I know that I am not the

child of shame!" she added, after a moment's pause, with an air of pride. A tear stole down the cheek of Cadurcis.

"Plantagenet! dear, good Plantagenet! my brother! my own brother!—see, I kneel to you; Venetia kneels to you! your own Venetia!—Venetia that you love! Oh! if you knew the load that is on my spirit, bearing me down to a grave which I would almost welcome, you would speak to me; you would tell me all.—I have sighed for this; I have longed for this; I have prayed for this. To meet some one who would speak to me of my father—who had heard of him, who knew him—has been for years the only thought of my being, the only object for which I existed. And now, here comes Plantagenet, my brother! my own brother! and he knows all,—and he will tell me; yes, that he will; he will tell his Venetia all—all!"

"Is there not your mother?" said Lord Cadurcis, in a broken tone.

“Forbidden, utterly forbidden. If I speak, they tell me her heart will break; and therefore mine is breaking.”

“Have you no friend?”

“Are not you my friend?”

“Dr. Masham?”

“I have applied to him; he tells me that he lives, and then he shakes his head.”

“You never saw your father; think not of him.”

“Not think of him!” exclaimed Venetia, with extraordinary energy. “Of what else? For what do I live but to think of him? What object have I in life but to see him? I have seen him—once.”

“Ah!”

“I know his form by heart, and yet it was but a shade. Oh! what a shade!—what a glorious, what an immortal shade! If gods were upon earth, they would be like my father!”

“His deeds, at least, are not godlike,” observed Lord Cadurcis dryly, and with some bitterness.

“ I deny it ! ” said Venetia, her eyes sparkling with fire, her form dilated with enthusiasm, and involuntarily withdrawing her arm from her companion. Lord Cadurcis looked exceedingly astonished.

“ You deny it ! ” he exclaimed. “ And what should you know about it ? ”

“ Nature whispers to me that nothing but what is grand and noble could be breathed by those lips, or fulfilled by that form.”

“ I am glad you have not read his works,” said Lord Cadurcis, with increased bitterness. “ As for his conduct, your mother is a living evidence of his honour, his generosity, and his virtue.”

“ My mother ! ” said Venetia, in a softened voice ; “ and yet he loved my mother ! ”

“ She was his victim, as a thousand others may have been.”

“ She is his wife ! ” replied Venetia, with some anxiety.

“ Yes, a deserted wife ; is that preferable to

being a cherished mistress? More honourable, but scarcely less humiliating.”

“She must have misunderstood him,” said Venetia. “I have perused the secret vows of his passion, I have read his praises of her beauty, I have poured over the music of his emotions when he first became a father;—yes, he has gazed on me—even though but for a moment—with love! Over me he has breathed forth the hallowed blessing of a parent! That transcendent form has pressed his lips to mine, and held me with fondness to his heart! And shall I credit aught to his dishonour? Is there a being in existence who can persuade me he is heartless or abandoned? No! I love him! I adore him! I am devoted to him with all the energies of my being! I live only on the memory that he lives, and, were he to die, I should pray to my God that I might join him, without delay, in a world where it cannot be justice to separate a child from a father.”

And this was Venetia!—the fair, the serene

Venetia ! the young, the inexperienced Venetia ! pausing, as it were, on the parting threshold of girlhood, whom, but a few hours since, he had fancied could scarcely have proved a passion ; who appeared to him barely to comprehend the meaning of his advances ; for whose calmness or whose coldness he had consoled himself by the flattering conviction of her unknowing innocence. Before him stood a beautiful and inspired Mænad, her eye flashing supernatural fire, her form elevated above her accustomed stature, defiance on her swelling brow, and passion on her quivering lip !

Gentle and sensitive as Cadurcis ever appeared to those he loved, there was in his soul a deep and unfathomed well of passions that had been never stirred, and a bitter and mocking spirit in his brain, of which he was himself unconscious. He had repaired this hopeful morn to Cherbury, to receive, as he believed, the plighted faith of a simple and affectionate, perhaps grateful, girl. That her unsophisticated and untutored spirit might not receive the advances of his heart with

an equal and corresponding ardour, he was prepared. It pleased him that he should watch the gradual development of this bud of sweet affections, waiting, with proud anxiety, her fragrant and her full-blown love. But now it appeared that her coldness, or her indifference, might be ascribed to any other cause than the one to which he had attributed it,—the innocence of an inexperienced mind. This girl was no stranger to powerful passions; she could love, and love with fervency, with devotion, with enthusiasm. This child of joy was a woman of deep and thoughtful sorrows, brooding in solitude over high resolves and passionate aspirations. Why were not the emotions of such a tumultuous soul excited by himself? To him she was calm and imperturbable; she called him brother—she treated him as a child. But a picture, a fantastic shade, could raise in her a tempestuous swell of sentiment, that transformed her whole mind, and changed the colour of all her hopes and thoughts. Deeply prejudiced against her father,

Cadurcis now hated him, and with a fell and ferocious earnestness that few bosoms but his could prove. Pale with rage, he ground his teeth, and watched her with a glance of sarcastic aversion.

“ You led me here to listen to a communication which interested me,” he at length said; “ have I heard it ? ”

His altered tone, the air of haughtiness which he assumed, were not lost upon Venetia. She endeavoured to collect herself, but she hesitated to reply.

“ I repeat my inquiry,” said Cadurcis. “ Have you brought me here only to inform me that you have a father, and that you adore him, or his picture ? ”

“ I led you here,” replied Venetia, in a subdued tone, and looking on the ground, “ to thank you for your love, and to confess to you that I love another.”

“ Love another ! ” exclaimed Cadurcis, in a tone of derision. “ Simpleton ! The best thing

your mother can do is to lock you up in the chamber with the picture that has produced such marvellous effects.”

“ I am no simpleton, Plantagenet,” rejoined Venetia, very quietly, “ but one who is acting as she thinks right ; and not only as her mind, but as her heart, prompts her.”

They had stopped in the earlier part of this conversation on a little plot of turf surrounded by shrubs ; Cadurcis walked up and down this area with angry steps, occasionally glancing at Venetia with a look of mortification and displeasure.

“ I tell you, Venetia,” he at length said, “ that you are a little fool. What do you mean by saying that you cannot marry me, because you love another ? Is not that other, by your own account, your father ? Love him as much as you like. Is that to prevent you from loving your husband also ?”

“ Plantagenet, you are rude, and unnecessarily so,” said Venetia. “ I repeat to you

again, and for the last time, that all my heart is my father's. It would be wicked in me to marry you, because I cannot love you as a husband should be loved. I can never love you as I love my father. However, it is useless to talk upon this subject. I have not even the power of marrying you if I wished, for I have dedicated myself to my father in the name of God; and I have offered a vow, to be registered in Heaven, that thenceforth I would exist only for the purpose of being restored to his heart."

"I congratulate you on your parent, Miss Herbert."

"I feel that I ought to be proud of him, though, alas! I can only feel it. But, whatever your opinion may be of my father, I beg you to remember that you are speaking to his child."

"I shall state my opinion respecting your father, madam, with the most perfect unreserve, wherever and whenever I choose; quite convinced that, however you esteem that opinion, it will not be widely different from the real sentiments

of the only parent whom you ought to respect, and whom you are bound to obey.”

“And I can tell you, Sir, that, whatever your opinion is on any subject, it will never influence mine. If, indeed, I were the mistress of my own destiny—which I am not—it would have been equally out of my power to have acted as you have so singularly proposed. I do not wish to marry, and marry I never will; but were it in my power, or in accordance with my wish, to unite my fate for ever with another’s, it should at least be with one to whom I could look up with reverence, and even with admiration. He should be at least a man, and a great man; one with whose name the world rung; perhaps, like my father, a genius and a poet.”

“A genius and a poet!” exclaimed Lord Cadurcis, in a fury, stamping with passion; “are these fit terms to use, when speaking of the most abandoned profligate of his age?—A man whose name is synonymous with infamy, and which no one dares to breathe in civilised

life;—whose very blood is pollution, as you will some day feel;—who has violated every tie, and derided every principle, by which society is maintained;—whose life is a living illustration of his own shameless doctrines; who is, at the same time, a traitor to his King and an apostate from his God!”

Curiosity, overpowering even indignation, had permitted Venetia to listen even to this tirade. Pale as her companion, but with a glance of withering scorn, she exclaimed, “Passionate and ill-mannered boy! words cannot express the disgust and the contempt with which you inspire me.” She spoke, and she disappeared. Cadurcis was neither able nor desirous to arrest her flight. He remained rooted to the ground, muttering to himself the word “boy!” Suddenly raising his arm, and looking up to the sky, he exclaimed, “The illusion is vanished! Farewell, Cherbury!—farewell, Cadurcis!—a wider theatre awaits me! I have been the slave too long of soft affections!—I root them

out of my heart for ever !” and, fitting the action to the phrase, it seemed that he hurled upon the earth all the tender emotions of his soul. “ Woman ! henceforth you shall be my sport ! I have now no feelings but for myself. When she spoke, I might have been a boy ;—I am a boy no longer. What I shall do I know not ; but this I know, the world shall ring with my name ; I will be a man, and a great man ! ”

CHAPTER VIII.

THE agitation of Venetia on her return was not unnoticed by her mother; but Lady Annabel ascribed it to a far different cause than the real one. She was rather surprised when the breakfast passed, and Lord Cadurcis did not appear; somewhat perplexed when her daughter seized the earliest opportunity of retiring to her own chamber; but, with that self-restraint of which she was so complete a mistress, Lady Annabel uttered no remark.

Once more alone, Venetia could only repeat to herself the wild words that had burst from Plantagenet's lips in reference to her father. What could they mean? His morals might be

misrepresented, his opinions might be misunderstood ; stupidity might not comprehend his doctrines—malignity might torture them ; the purest sages have been accused of immorality,—the most pious philosophers have been denounced as blasphemous : but, “ a traitor to his King ”—that was a tangible, an intelligible proposition,—one with which all might grapple,—which could be easily disproved if false, scarcely propounded were it not true. “ False to his King ! ” How false ? Where ? When ? What mystery involved her life ? Unhappy girl ! in vain she struggled with the overwhelming burden of her sorrows. Now she regretted that she had quarrelled with Cadurcis ; it was evident that he knew everything, and would have told her all. And then she blamed him for his harsh and unfeeling demeanour, and his total want of sympathy with her cruel and perplexing situation. She had intended, she had struggled to be so kind to him ; she thought she had such a plain tale to tell, that he would have listened to it in

considerate silence, and bowed to her necessary and inevitable decision without a murmur. Amid all these harassing emotions her mind tossed about like a ship without a rudder, until, in her despair, she almost resolved to confess everything to her mother, and to request her to soothe and enlighten her agitated and confounded mind. But what hope was there of solace or information from such a quarter? Lady Annabel's was not a mind to be diverted from her purpose. Whatever might have been the conduct of her husband, it was evident that Lady Annabel had traced out a course from which she had resolved not to depart. She remembered the earnest and repeated advice of Doctor Masham, that virtuous and intelligent man, who never advised anything but for their benefit. How solemnly had he enjoined upon her never to speak to her mother upon the subject, unless she wished to produce misery and distress! And what could her mother tell her? Her father lived—he had abandoned her—he was looked upon as a criminal, and shunned

by the society whose laws and prejudices he had alike outraged. Why should she revive, amid the comparative happiness and serenity in which her mother now lived, the bitter recollection of the almost intolerable misfortune of her existence? No! Venetia was resolved to be a solitary victim. In spite of her passionate and romantic devotion to her father, she loved her mother with perfect affection,—the mother who had dedicated her life to her child, and at least hoped she had spared her any share in their common unhappiness. And this father, whose image haunted her dreams,—whose unknown voice seemed sometimes to float to her quick ear upon the wind,—could he be that abandoned being that Cadurcis had described, and that all around her, and all the circumstances of her life, would seem to indicate? Alas! it might be truth; alas! it seemed like truth: and for one so lost, so utterly irredeemable, was she to murmur against that pure and benevolent parent who had cherished her with such devotion, and snatched

her perhaps from disgrace, dishonour, and despair !

And Cadurcis,—would he return? With all his violence, the kind Cadurcis ! Never did she need a brother more than now ; and now he was absent, and she had parted with him in anger, deep, almost deadly : she, too, who had never before uttered a harsh word to a human being, who had been involved in only one quarrel in her life, and that almost unconsciously, and which had nearly broken her heart. She wept, bitterly she wept, this poor Venetia !

By one of those mental efforts which her strange lot often forced her to practise, Venetia at length composed herself, and returned to the room where she believed she would meet her mother, and hoped she should see Cadurcis. He was not there ; but Lady Annabel was seated as calm and busied as usual ; the Doctor had departed. Even his presence would have proved a relief, however slight, to Venetia, who dreaded at this moment to be alone with her mother.

She had no cause, however, for alarm ; Lord Cadurcis never appeared, and was absent even from dinner ; the day died away, and still he was wanting ; and at length Venetia bade her usual good night to Lady Annabel, and received her usual blessing and embrace, without his name having been even mentioned.

Venetia passed a disturbed night, haunted by painful dreams, in which her father and Cadurcis were both mixed up, and with images of pain, confusion, disgrace, and misery ; but the morrow, at least, did not prolong her suspense, for, just as she had joined her mother at the breakfast, Mistress Pauncefort, who had been despatched on some domestic mission by her mistress, entered, with a face of wonder, and began as usual—“ Only think, my lady ; well to be sure, who would have thought it ? I am quite confident for my own part I was quite taken aback when I heard it ; and I could not have believed my ears, if John had not told me himself, and he had it from his lordship’s own man.”

“ Well, Pauncefort, what have you to say ? ” inquired Lady Annabel, very calmly.

“ And never to send no note, my lady ; at least I have not seen one come up. That makes it so very strange.”

“ Makes what, Pauncefort ? ”

“ Why, my lady, doesn't your la'ship know his lordship left the abbey yesterday, and never said nothing to nobody ; rode off without a word, by your leave or with your leave ? To be sure, he always was the oddest young gentleman as ever I met with ; and, as I said to John ; John, says I, I hope his lordship has not gone to join the gipseys again.”

Venetia looked into a teacup, and then touched an egg, and then twirled a spoon ; but Lady Annabel seemed quite imperturbable, and only observed, “ Probably his guardian is ill, and he has been suddenly summoned to town. I wish you would bring my knitting-needles, Pauncefort.”

The autumn passed, and Lord Cadurcis never

returned to the abbey, and never wrote to any of his late companions. Lady Annabel never mentioned his name ; and, although she seemed to have no other object in life but the pleasure and happiness of her child, this strange mother never once consulted Venetia on the probable occasion of his sudden departure and his strange conduct.

END OF THE THIRD BOOK.

BOOK IV.



CHAPTER I.

PARTY feeling perhaps never ran higher in England than during the period immediately subsequent to the expulsion of the Coalition Ministry. After the indefatigable faction of the American war, and the flagrant union with Lord North, the Whig party, and especially Charles Fox, then in the full vigour of his bold and ready mind, were stung to the quick that all their remorseless efforts to obtain and preserve the government of the country should terminate in the preferment, and apparent permanent power, of a mere boy.

Next to Charles Fox, perhaps the most

eminent and influential member of the Whig party was Lady Monteagle. The daughter of one of the oldest and most powerful Peers in the kingdom, possessing very lively talents and many fascinating accomplishments, the mistress of a great establishment, very beautiful, and, although she had been married some years, still young, the celebrated wife of Lord Monteagle found herself the centre of a circle alike powerful, brilliant, and refined. She was the Muse of the Whig party, at whose shrine every man of wit and fashion was proud to offer his flattering incense ; and her house became not merely the favourite scene of their social pleasures, but the sacred temple of their political rites : here many a manœuvre was planned, and many a scheme suggested ; many a convert enrolled, and many a votary initiated.

Reclining on a couch in a boudoir, which she was assured was the exact fac-simile of that of Marie Antoinette, Lady Monteagle, with an eye sparkling with excitement, and a cheek flushed with emotion, appeared deeply interested in a

volume, from which she raised her head as her husband entered the room.

“ Gertrude, my love,” said his lordship, “ I have asked the new bishop to dine with us to-day.”

“ My dear Henry,” replied her ladyship, “ what could induce you to do any thing so strange? ”

“ I suppose I have made a mistake, as usual,” said his lordship, shrugging his shoulders, with a smile.

“ My dear Henry, you know you may ask whomever you like to your house. I never find fault with what you do. But what could induce you to ask a Tory bishop to meet a dozen of our own people? ”

“ I thought I had done wrong directly I had asked him,” rejoined his lordship; “ and yet he would not have come if I had not made such a point of it. I think I will put him off.”

“ No, my love, that would be wrong; you cannot do that.”

“ I cannot think how it came into my head.

The fact is, I lost my presence of mind. You know he was my tutor at Christchurch, when poor dear Herbert and I were such friends, and very kind he was to us both ; and so, the moment I saw him, I walked across the house, introduced myself, and asked him to dinner."

" Well, never mind," said Lady Monteagle, smiling. " It is rather ridiculous ; but I hope nothing will be said to offend him."

" Oh ! do not be alarmed about that : he is quite a man of the world, and, although he has his opinions, not at all a partisan. I assure you poor dear Herbert loved him to the last, and, to this very moment, has the greatest respect and affection for him."

" How very strange that not only your tutor, but Herbert's, should be a bishop," remarked the lady, smiling.

" It is very strange," said his lordship, " and it only shows that it is quite useless in this world to lay plans or reckon on anything. You know how it happened ? "

“ Not I, indeed ; I have never given a thought to the business ; I only remember being very vexed that that stupid old Bangerford should not have died when we were in office, and then, at any rate, we should have got another vote.”

“ Well, you know,” said his lordship, “ dear old Masham, that is his name, was at Weymouth this year ; with whom do you think, of all people in the world ? ”

“ How should I know ? Why should I think about it, Henry ? ”

“ Why, with Herbert’s wife.”

“ What, that horrid woman ! ”

“ Yes, Lady Annabel.”

“ And where was his daughter ? Was she there ? ”

“ Of course. She has grown up, and a most beautiful creature they say she is ; exactly like her father.”

“ Ah ! I shall always regret I never saw him,” said her ladyship.

“ Well, the daughter is in bad health ; and so, after keeping her shut up all her life, the mother

was obliged to take her to Weymouth; and Masham, who has a living in their neighbourhood, which, by-the-by, Herbert gave him, and is their chaplain and councillor, and friend of the family, and all that sort of thing, though I really believe he has always acted for the best, he was with them. Well, the King took the greatest fancy to these Herberts; and the Queen, too, quite singled them out; and, in short, they were always with the royal family. It ended by his Majesty making Masham his chaplain; and now he has made him a bishop."

"Very droll, indeed," said her ladyship; "and the drollest thing of all is, that he is now coming to dine here."

"Have you seen Cadurcis to-day?" said Lord Monteagle.

"Of course," said her ladyship.

"He dines here?"

"To be sure. I am reading his new poem; it will not be published till to-morrow."

"Is it good?"

“ Good ! What crude questions you do always ask, Henry ! ” exclaimed Lady Mont-eagle. “ Good ! Of course it is good. It is something better than good.”

“ But I mean is it as good as his other things ? Will it make as much noise as his last thing ? ”

“ Thing ! Now, Henry, you know very well that, if there be anything I dislike in the world, it is calling a poem a thing.”

“ Well, my dear, you know I am no judge of poetry. But, if you are pleased, I am quite content. There is a knock. Some of your friends. I am off. I say, Gertrude, be kind to old Masham, that is a dear creature ! ”

Her ladyship extended her hand, to which his lordship pressed his lips, and just effected his escape as the servant announced a visitor, in the person of Mr. Horace Pole.

“ Oh ! my dear Mr. Pole, I am quite exhausted,” said her ladyship ; “ I am reading Cadurcis’ new poem ; it will not be published

till to-morrow, and it really has destroyed my nerves. I have got people to dinner to-day, and I am sure I shall not be able to encounter them."

"Something outrageous, I suppose," said Mr. Pole, with a sneer. "I wish Cadurcis would study Pope."

"Study Pope! My dear Mr. Pole, you have no imagination."

"No, I have not, thank Heaven," drawled out Mr. Pole.

"Well do not let us have a quarrel about Cadurcis," said Lady Monteagle. "All you men are jealous of him."

"And some of you women, I think too," said Mr. Pole.

Lady Monteagle faintly smiled.

"Poor Cadurcis!" she exclaimed; "he has a very hard life of it. He complains bitterly that so many women are in love with him. But then he is such an interesting creature, what can he expect?"

“ Interesting ! ” exclaimed Mr. Pole. “ Now I hold he is the most conceited, affected fellow, that I ever met, ” he continued with unusual energy.

“ Ah ! you men do not understand him, ” said Lady Monteagle, shaking her head. “ You cannot, ” she added, with a look of pity.

“ I cannot, certainly, ” said Mr. Pole, “ or his writings either. For my part, I think the town has gone mad. ”

“ Well you must confess, ” said her ladyship, with a glance of triumph, “ that it was very lucky for us that I made him a Whig. ”

“ I cannot agree with you at all on that head, ” said Mr. Pole. “ We certainly are not very popular at this moment, and I feel convinced that a connexion with a person who attracts so much notice as Cadurcis unfortunately does at this moment, and whose opinions on morals and religion must be so offensive to the vast majority of the English public, must ultimately prove anything but advantageous to our party. ”

“ Oh ! my dear Mr. Pole, ” said her ladyship,

in a tone of affected deprecation, "think what a genius he is!"

"We have very different ideas of genius, Lady Monteagle, I suspect," said her visiter.

"You cannot deny," replied her ladyship, rising from her recumbent posture, with some animation, "that he is a poet?"

"It is difficult to decide upon our contemporaries," said Mr. Pole, dryly.

"Charles Fox thinks he is the greatest poet that ever existed," said her ladyship, as if she were determined to settle the question.

"Because he has written a lampoon on the royal family," rejoined Mr. Pole.

"You are a very provoking person," said Lady Monteagle; "but you do not provoke me; do not flatter yourself you do."

"That I feel to be an achievement alike beyond my power and my ambition," replied Mr. Pole, slightly bowing, but with a sneer.

"Well, read this," said Lady Monteagle, "and then decide upon the merits of Cadurcis."

Mr. Pole took the extended volume, but with no great willingness, and turned over a page or two, and read a passage here and there.

“Much the same as his last effusion, I think,” he observed, “as far as I can judge from so cursory a review. Exaggerated passion, bombastic language, egotism to excess, and which, perhaps, is the only portion that is genuine, mixed with common-place scepticism and impossible morals, and a sort of vague, dreamy philosophy, which, if it mean anything, means atheism, borrowed from his idol, Herbert, and which he himself evidently does not comprehend.”

“Monster!” exclaimed Lady Monteagle, with a mock assumption of indignation, “and you are going to dine with him here to-day. You do not deserve it.”

“It is a reward which is unfortunately too often obtained by me,” replied Mr. Pole. “One of the most annoying consequences of your friend’s popularity, Lady Monteagle, is that there is not a dinner party where one can escape

him. I met him yesterday at Fanshawe's. He amused himself by eating only biscuits, and calling for soda water, while we quaffed our Burgundy. How very original! What a thing it is to be a great poet!"

"Perverse, provoking mortal!" exclaimed Lady Monteagle. "And on what should a poet live! On coarse food, like you coarse mortals! Cadurcis is all spirit, and in my opinion his diet only makes him more interesting."

"I understand," said Mr. Pole, "that he cannot endure a woman to eat at all. But you are all spirit, Lady Monteagle, and therefore of course are not in the least inconvenienced. By-the-by, do you mean to give us any of those charming little suppers this season?"

"I shall not invite you," replied her ladyship; "none but admirers of Lord Cadurcis enter this house."

"Your menace effects my instant conversion," replied Mr. Pole. "I will admire him as much

as you desire, only do not insist upon my reading his works."

"I have not the slightest doubt you know them by heart," rejoined her ladyship.

Mr. Pole smiled, bowed, and disappeared; and Lady Monteagle sat down to write a billet to Lord Cadurcis, to entreat him to be with her at five o'clock, which was at least half an hour before the other guests were expected. The Monteagles were considered to dine ridiculously late.

CHAPTER II.

THE readers of this work will infer, from the preceding chapter, that a very considerable change had occurred in the lives and situations of all, and the views and opinions also of some, of those individuals in whose conduct and destiny it has hitherto been the attempt of the writer to interest them. The time, likewise, has arrived when they should perhaps be formally and particularly apprised of those passages in the early lives of the parents of our heroine involved in our preceding volume in so much mystery ; a mystery, however, which has been gradually clearing away. They should learn, therefore, that Marmion Herbert, sprung from one

of the most illustrious families in England, became at a very early age the inheritor of a great estate, to which however he did not succeed with the prejudices or opinions usually imbibed or professed by the class to which he belonged. While yet a boy, Marmion Herbert afforded many indications of possessing a mind alike visionary and inquisitive, and both—although not in an equal degree—sceptical and creative. Nature had gifted him with very precocious talents; and with a temperament essentially poetic, he was nevertheless a great student. His early reading,—originally by accident, and afterwards by an irresistible inclination,—had fallen among the works of the English free-thinkers,—with all their errors, a profound and vigorous race, and much superior to the French philosophers, who were, after all, only their pupils and their imitators. While his juvenile studies, and in some degree the predisposition of his mind, had thus prepared him to doubt, and finally to challenge, the propriety of all that

was established and received, the poetical and stronger bias of his mind enabled him quickly to supply the place of everything he would remove and destroy; and far from being the victim of those frigid and indifferent feelings which must ever be the portion of the mere doubter, Herbert, on the contrary, looked forward with ardent and sanguine enthusiasm to a glorious and ameliorating future, which should amply compensate and console a misguided and unhappy race for the miserable past and the painful and dreary present. To those therefore who could not sympathise with his views, it will be seen that Herbert, in attempting to fulfil them, became not merely passively noxious from his example, but actively mischievous from his exertions. A mere sceptic, he would have been perhaps merely pitied; a sceptic with a peculiar faith of his own, which he was resolved to promulgate, Herbert became odious. A solitary votary of obnoxious opinions, Herbert would have been looked upon only as a madman; but

the moment he attempted to make proselytes, he rose into a conspirator against society.

Young, irresistibly prepossessing in his appearance, with great eloquence, crude but considerable knowledge, an ardent imagination and a subtle mind, and a generous and passionate soul,—under any circumstances he must have obtained and exercised influence, even if his Creator had not also bestowed upon him a spirit of indomitable courage: but these great gifts of nature being combined with accidents of fortune scarcely less qualified to move mankind,—high rank, vast wealth, and a name of traditional glory,—it will not be esteemed surprising that Marmion Herbert, at a very early period, should have attracted around him many enthusiastic disciples.

At Christchurch, whither he repaired at an unusually early age, his tutor was Dr. Masham; and the profound respect and singular affection with which that able, learned, and amiable man early inspired his pupil, for a time controlled the

spirit of Herbert ; or rather confined its workings to so limited a sphere, that the results were neither dangerous to society nor himself. Perfectly comprehending and appreciating the genius of the youth intrusted to his charge, deeply interested in his spiritual as well as worldly welfare, and strongly impressed with the importance of enlisting his pupil's energies in favour of that existing order, both moral and religious, in the truth and indispensableness of which he was a sincere believer, Doctor Masham omitted no opportunity of combating the heresies of the young inquirer ; and as the tutor, equally by talent, experience, and learning, was a competent champion of the great cause to which he was devoted, his zeal and ability for a time checked the development of those opinions of which he witnessed the menacing influence over Herbert with so much fear and anxiety. The college life of Marmion Herbert therefore passed in ceaseless controversy with his tutor ; and as he possessed, among many other noble qualities, a

high and philosophic sense of justice, he did not consider himself authorised, while a doubt remained on his own mind, actively to promulgate those opinions, of the propriety and necessity of which he scarcely ever ceased to be persuaded. To this cause it must be mainly attributed that Herbert was not expelled the university; for had he pursued there the course of which his cruder career at Eton had given promise, there can be little doubt that some flagrant outrage of the opinions held sacred in that great seat of orthodoxy would have quickly removed him from the salutary sphere of their control.

Herbert quitted Oxford in his nineteenth year, yet inferior to few that he left there, even among the most eminent, in classical attainments, and, with a mind naturally profound, practised in all the arts of ratiocination. His general knowledge also was considerable, and he was a proficient in those scientific pursuits which were then rare. Notwithstanding his great fortune and position, his departure from the university

was not a signal with him for that abandonment to the world, and that unbounded self-enjoyment, naturally so tempting to youth. On the contrary, Herbert shut himself up in his magnificent castle, devoted to solitude and study. In his splendid library he consulted the sages of antiquity, and conferred with them on the nature of existence, and of the social duties; while in his laboratory or his dissecting-room he occasionally flattered himself he might discover the great secret which had perplexed generations. The consequence of a year passed in this severe discipline, and during which he scarcely allowed time even for the necessities of life, was unfortunately a complete recurrence to those opinions that he had early imbibed, and which now seemed fixed in his conviction beyond the hope or chance of again faltering. In politics a violent republican, and an advocate—certainly a disinterested one—of a complete equality of property and conditions, utterly objecting to the very foundation of our moral system, and especially

a strenuous antagonist of marriage, which he taught himself to esteem not only as a most unnatural tie, but as eminently unjust towards that softer sex, who had been so long the victims of man; discarding as a mockery the received revelation of the divine will; and, if no longer an atheist, substituting merely for such an outrageous dogma a subtle and shadowy Platonism; doctrines, however, which Herbert at least had acquired by a profound study of the works of their great founder; the pupil of Doctor Masham at length deemed himself qualified to enter that world which he was resolved to regenerate; prepared for persecution, and steeled even to martyrdom.

But while the doctrines of the philosopher had been forming, the spirit of the poet had not been inactive. Loneliness—after all, the best of Muses—had stimulated the creative faculty of his being. Wandering amid his solitary woods and glades at all hours and seasons, the wild and beautiful apparitions of nature had appealed to a

sympathetic soul. The stars and winds, the pensive sunset and the sanguine break of morn, the sweet solemnity of night, the ancient trees and the light and evanescent flowers,—all signs and sights and sounds of loveliness and power,—fell on a ready eye and a responsive ear. Gazing on the beautiful, he longed to create it. Then it was that the two passions, which seemed to share the being of Herbert, appeared simultaneously to assert their sway, and he resolved to call in his Muse to the assistance of his Philosophy.

Herbert celebrated that fond world of his imagination, which he wished to teach men to love. In stanzas glittering with the most refined images, and resonant with the most subtle symphony, he called into creation that society of immaculate purity and unbounded enjoyment, which he believed was the natural inheritance of unshackled man. In the hero he pictured a philosopher, young and gifted as himself: in the heroine, his idea of a perfect woman. Although all those peculiar doctrines of Herbert,—which,

undisguised, must have excited so much odium, —were more or less developed and inculcated in this work; nevertheless they were necessarily so veiled by the highly spiritual and metaphorical language of the poet, that it required some previous acquaintance with the system enforced, to be able to detect and recognise the esoteric spirit of his Muse. The public read only the history of an ideal world, and of creatures of exquisite beauty, told in language that alike dazzled their fancy and captivated their ear. They were lost in a delicious maze of metaphor and music, and were proud to acknowledge an addition to the glorious catalogue of their poets in a young and interesting member of their aristocracy.

In the mean while Herbert entered that great world that had long expected him, and hailed his advent with triumph. How long might have elapsed before they were roused by the conduct of Herbert to the error under which they were labouring as to his character, it is not difficult to

conjecture; but before he could commence those philanthropic exertions which apparently absorbed him, he encountered an individual who most unconsciously put his philosophy not merely to the test, but partially even to the rout; and this was Lady Annabel Sidney. Almost as new to the world as himself, and not less admired, her unrivalled beauty, her unusual accomplishments, and her pure and dignified mind,—combined, it must be confessed, with the most flattering admiration of his genius,—entirely captivated the philosophical antagonist of marriage. It is not surprising that Marmion Herbert—scarcely of age, and with a heart of extreme susceptibility—resolved, after a struggle, to be the first exception to his system, and, as he faintly flattered himself, the last victim of prejudice. He wooed and won the Lady Annabel.

The marriage ceremony was performed by Doctor Masham, who had read his pupil's poem, and had been a little frightened by its indications; but this happy union had dissipated all

his fears. He would not believe in any other than a future career for him alike honourable and happy; and he trusted that, if any wild thoughts still lingered in Herbert's mind, that they would clear off by the same literary process; so that the utmost ill consequences of his immature opinions might be an occasional line that the wise would have liked to blot, and yet which the unlettered might scarcely be competent to comprehend. Mr. and Lady Annabel Herbert departed after the ceremony to his castle, and Doctor Masham to Marringhurst, a valuable living in another county, to which his pupil had just presented him.

Some months after this memorable event, rumours reached the ear of the good Doctor that all was not as satisfactory as he could desire in that establishment, in the welfare of which he naturally took so lively an interest. Herbert was in the habit of corresponding with the rector of Marringhurst, and his first letters were full of details as to his happy life and his perfect con-

tent ; but, gradually, these details had been considerably abridged, and the correspondence assumed chiefly a literary or philosophical character. Lady Annabel, however, was always mentioned with regard, and an intimation had been duly given to the Doctor that she was in a delicate and promising situation, and that they were both alike anxious that he should christen their child. It did not seem very surprising to the good Doctor, who was a man of the world, that a husband, six months after marriage, should not speak of the memorable event with all the fulness and fondness of the honeymoon ; and, being one of those happy tempers that always anticipate the best, he dismissed from his mind, as vain gossip and idle exaggerations, the ominous whispers that occasionally reached him.

Immediately after the Christmas ensuing his marriage, the Herberts returned to London, and the Doctor, who happened to be a short time in the metropolis, paid them a visit. His observations were far from unsatisfactory ; it was certainly

too evident that Marmion was no longer in love with Lady Annabel, but he treated her apparently with courtesy, and even cordiality. The presence of Dr. Masham tended, perhaps, a little to revive old feelings, for he was as much a favourite with the wife as with the husband; but, on the whole, the Doctor quitted them with an easy heart, and sanguine that the interesting and impending event would, in all probability, revive affection on the part of Herbert, or at least afford Lady Annabel the only substitute for a husband's heart.

In due time the Doctor heard from Herbert that his wife had gone down into the country to lie-in; but was sorry to observe that Herbert did not accompany her. Even this disagreeable impression was removed by a letter, shortly after received from Herbert, dated from the castle, and written in high spirits, informing him that Annabel had been safely delivered of the most beautiful little girl in the world. During the ensuing three months Mr. Her-

bert, though he resumed his residence in London, paid frequent visits to the castle, where Lady Annabel remained; and his occasional correspondence, though couched in a careless vein, still, on the whole, indicated a cheerful spirit; though ever and anon were sarcastic observations as to the felicity of the married state, which, he said, was an undoubted blessing, as it kept a man out of all scrapes, though unfortunately under the penalty of his total idleness and inutility in life. On the whole, however, the reader may judge of the astonishment of Doctor Masham when, in common with the world, very shortly after the receipt of this letter—Mr. Herbert having previously proceeded to London, and awaiting, as was said, the daily arrival of his wife and child—his former tutor learned that Lady Annabel, accompanied only by Pauncefort and Venetia, had sought her father's roof; declaring that circumstances had occurred which rendered it quite impossible that she could live with Mr. Herbert any longer,

and entreating his succour and parental protection.

Never was such a hubbub in the world! In vain Herbert claimed his wife, and expressed his astonishment; declaring that he had parted from her with the expression of perfect kind feeling on both sides. No answer was given to his letter, and no explanation of any kind conceded him. The world universally declared Lady Anabel an injured woman, and trusted that she would eventually have the good sense and kindness to gratify them by revealing the mystery; while Herbert, on the contrary, was universally abused and shunned,—avoided by his acquaintances, and denounced as the most depraved of men.

In this extraordinary state of affairs Herbert acted in a manner the best calculated to secure his happiness, and the very worst to preserve his character. Having ostentatiously shown himself in every public place, and courted notice and inquiry by every means in his power, to

prove that he was not anxious to conceal himself or avoid any inquiry, he left the country, free at last to pursue that career to which he had always aspired, and in which he had been checked by a blunder, from the consequences of which he little expected that he should so speedily and strangely emancipate himself. It was in a beautiful villa on the Lake of Geneva that he finally established himself, and there for many years he employed himself in the publication of a series of works, which, whether they were poetry or prose, imaginative or investigative, all tended to the same consistent purpose, namely, the fearless and unqualified promulgation of those opinions, on the adoption of which he sincerely believed the happiness of mankind depended; and the opposite principles to which, in his own case, had been productive of so much mortification and misery. His works, which were published in England, were little read, and universally decried. The critics were always hard at work, proving that he was no poet, and

demonstrating in the most logical manner that he was quite incapable of reasoning on the commonest topic. In addition to all this, his ignorance was self-evident; and, though he was very fond of quoting Greek, they doubted whether he was capable of reading the original authors. The general impression of the English public, after the lapse of some years, was, that Herbert was an abandoned being, of the most profligate habits, opposed to all the institutions of society that kept his infamy in check, and an avowed atheist; and as scarcely any one but a sympathetic spirit ever read a line he wrote—for indeed the very sight of his works was pollution—it is not very wonderful that this opinion was so generally prevalent. A calm inquirer might, perhaps, have suspected that abandoned profligacy is not very compatible with severe study, and that an author is seldom loose in his life, even if he be licentious in his writings. A calm inquirer might, perhaps, have been of opinion that a solitary sage may be the antagonist

of a priesthood, without absolutely denying the existence of a God; but there never are calm inquirers. The world, on every subject, however unequally, is divided into parties; and even in the case of Herbert and his writings, those who admired his genius, and the generosity of his soul, were not content without advocating, principally out of pique to his adversaries, his extreme opinions on every subject—moral, political, and religious.

Besides, it must be confessed, there was another circumstance which was almost as fatal to Herbert's character in England as his loose and heretical opinions. The travelling English, during their visits to Geneva, found out that their countryman solaced or enlivened his solitude by a mistress. It is a habit which very young men, who are separated from, or deserted by, their wives, occasionally have recourse to. Wrong no doubt, as most things are, but it is to be hoped, venial; at least in the case of any man who is not also an atheist. This unfor-

tunate mistress of Herbert was magnified into a seraglio ; the most extraordinary tales of the voluptuous life of one who generally at his studies outwatched the stars, were rife in English society ; and

“ Hoary Marquisses and stripling Dukes,”

who were either protecting opera dancers, or, still worse, making love to their neighbours' wives, either looked grave when the name of Herbert was mentioned in female society, or affectedly confused, as if they could a tale unfold, if they were not convinced that the sense of propriety among all present was infinitely superior to their sense of curiosity.

The only person to whom Herbert communicated in England was Doctor Masham. He wrote to him immediately on his establishment at Geneva, in a calm, yet sincere and serious tone, as if it were useless to dwell too fully on the past. Yet he declared, although now that it was all over he avowed his joy at the interposition

of his destiny, and the opportunity which he at length possessed of pursuing the career for which he was adapted, that he had to his knowledge given his wife no cause of offence which could authorise her conduct. As for his daughter, he said he should not be so cruel as to tear her from her mother's breast; though, if any thing could induce him to such behaviour, it would be the malignant and ungenerous menace of his wife's relatives, that they would oppose his preferred claim to the guardianship of his child, on the plea of his immoral life and atheistical opinions. With reference to pecuniary arrangements, as his chief seat was entailed on male heirs, he proposed that his wife should take up her abode at Cherbury, an estate which had been settled on her and her children at her marriage, and which, therefore, would descend to Venetia. Finally, he expressed his satisfaction that the neighbourhood of Marringhurst would permit his good and still

faithful friend to cultivate the society and guard over the welfare of his wife and daughter.

During the first ten years of Herbert's exile, for such indeed it might be considered, the Doctor maintained with him a rare, yet regular correspondence; but after that time a public event occurred, and a revolution took place in Herbert's life which terminated all communication between them; a termination occasioned, however, by such a simultaneous conviction of its absolute necessity, that it was not attended by any of those painful communications which are too often the harrowing forerunners of a formal disruption of ancient ties.

This event was the revolt of the American colonies; and this revolution in Herbert's career, his junction with the rebels against his native country. Doubtless it was not without a struggle, perhaps a pang, that Herbert resolved upon a line of conduct, to which it must assuredly have required the strongest throb of his cosmo-

politan sympathy, and his amplest definition of philanthropy to have impelled him. But without any vindictive feelings towards England, for he ever professed and exercised charity towards his enemies, attributing their conduct entirely to their ignorance and prejudice, upon this step he nevertheless felt it his duty to decide. There seemed in the opening prospects of America, in a world still new, which had borrowed from the old as it were only so much civilisation as was necessary to create and to maintain order ; there seemed in the circumstances of its boundless territory, and the total absence of feudal institutions and prejudices, so fair a field for the practical introduction of those regenerating principles to which Herbert had devoted all the thought and labour of his life, that he resolved, after long and perhaps painful meditation, to sacrifice every feeling and future interest to its fulfilment. All idea of ever returning to his native country, even were it only to mix his ashes with the generations of his ancestors ; all hope of

reconciliation with his wife, or of pressing to his heart that daughter, often present to his tender fancy, and to whose affections he had feelingly appealed in an out-burst of passionate poetry—all these chances, chances which, in spite of his philosophy, had yet a lingering charm, must be discarded for ever. They were discarded. Assigning his estate to his heir upon conditions, in order to prevent its forfeiture, with such resources as he could command, and which were considerable, Marmion Herbert arrived at Boston, where his rank, his wealth, his distinguished name, his great talents, and his undoubted zeal for the cause of liberty, procured him an eminent and gratifying reception. He offered to raise a regiment for the republic, and the offer was accepted; and he was enrolled among the citizens. All this occurred about the time that the Cadurcis' family first settled at the abbey, and this narrative will probably throw light upon several slight incidents which heretofore may have attracted the perplexed attention of the reader:

such as the newspaper brought by Doctor Masham at the Christmas visit ; the tears shed at a subsequent period at Marringhurst, when he related to her the last intelligence that had been received from America. For, indeed, it is impossible to express the misery and mortification which this last conduct of her husband occasioned Lady Annabel, brought up, as she had been, with feelings of romantic loyalty and unswerving patriotism. To be a traitor seemed the only blot that remained for his sullied 'scutcheon, and she had never dreamt of that. An infidel, a profligate, a deserter from his home, an apostate from his God ! one infamy alone remained, and now he had attained it ;—a traitor to his King ! Why, every peasant would despise him !

General Herbert, however, for such he speedily became, at the head of his division, soon arrested the attention, and commanded the respect, of Europe. To his exertions the successful result of the struggle was, in a great measure, attributed ; and he received the thanks of the Con-

gress, of which he became a member. His military and political reputation exercised a beneficial influence upon his literary fame. His works were reprinted in America, and translated into French, and published at Geneva and Basle, whence they were surreptitiously introduced into France. The Whigs, who had become very factious, and nearly revolutionary, during the American war, suddenly became proud of their countryman, whom a new world hailed as a deliverer, and Paris declared to be a great poet and an illustrious philosopher. His writings became fashionable, especially among the young; numerous editions of them appeared; and in time it was discovered that Herbert was now not only openly read, and enthusiastically admired, but had founded a school.

The struggle with America ceased about the time of Lord Cadurcis' last visit to Cherbury, when from his indignant lips Venetia first learnt the enormities of her father's career. Since that period some three years had elapsed until we

introduced our readers to the boudoir of Lady Monteagle. During this period, among the Whigs and their partisans the literary fame of Herbert had arisen and become established. How they have passed in regard to Lady Anabel Herbert and her daughter, on the one hand, and Lord Cadurcis himself on the other, we will endeavour to ascertain in the following chapter.

CHAPTER III.

FROM the last departure of Lord Cadurcis from Cherbury, the health of Venetia again declined. The truth is, she brooded in solitude over her strange lot, until her nerves became relaxed by intense reverie and suppressed feeling. The attention of a mother, so wrapt up in her child as Lady Annabel, was soon attracted to the increasing languor of our heroine, whose eye each day seemed to grow less bright, and her graceful form less lithe and active. No longer fond of the sun and breeze as a beautiful bird, was Venetia seen, as heretofore, glancing in the garden, or bounding over the lawns; too often might she be found reclining on the couch, in spite of

all the temptations of the spring; while her temper, once so singularly sweet, that it seemed there was not in the world a word that could ruffle it, and which required so keenly and responded so quickly to sympathy, became reserved, if not absolutely sullen, or at times even captious and fretful.

This change in the appearance and demeanour of her daughter filled Lady Annabel with anxiety and alarm. In vain she expressed to Venetia her conviction of her indisposition; but Venetia, though her altered habits confirmed the suspicion, and authorised the inquiry of her parent, persisted ever in asserting that she had no ailment. Her old medical attendant was, however, consulted, and, being perplexed with the case, he recommended change of air. Lady Annabel then consulted Dr. Masham, and he gave his opinion in favour of change of air for one reason; and that was, that it would bring with it what he had long considered Venetia to stand in need of, and that was change of life.

Dr. Masham was right; but then, to guide him in forming his judgment, he had the advantage of some psychological knowledge of the case, which, in a great degree, was a sealed book to the poor puzzled physician. We laugh very often at the errors of medical men; but if we would only, when we consult them, have strength of mind enough to extend to them something better than a half-confidence, we might be cured the sooner. How often, when the unhappy disciple of Esculapius is perplexing himself about the state of our bodies, we might throw light upon his obscure labours by simply detailing to him the state of our minds!

The result of these consultations in the Herbert family was a final resolution on the part of Lady Annabel to quit Cherbury for a while. As the sea air was especially recommended to Venetia, and as Lady Annabel shrank with a morbid apprehension from society, to which nothing could persuade her she was not an object either of odium or impertinent curiosity, she

finally resolved to visit Weymouth, then a very small and secluded watering-place, and whither she arrived and settled herself, it not being even the season when its few customary visitors were in the habit of gathering.

This residence at Weymouth quite repaid Lady Annabel for all the trouble of her new settlement, and for the change in her life, very painful to her confirmed habits, which she experienced in leaving, for the first time for such a long series of years, her old hall; for the rose soon returned to the cheek of her daughter, and the western breezes, joined with the influence of the new objects that surrounded her, and especially of that ocean, and its strange and inexhaustible variety, on which she gazed for the first time, gradually, but surely, completed the restoration of Venetia to health, and with it to much of her old vivacity.

When Lady Annabel had resided about a year at Weymouth, in the society of which she had invariably made the indisposition of

Venetia a reason for not entering, a great revolution suddenly occurred at this little quiet watering-place; for it was fixed upon as the summer residence of the English court. The celebrated name, the distinguished appearance, and the secluded habits of Lady Annabel and her daughter had rendered them the objects of very general interest. Occasionally they were met in a sea-side walk, by some fellow-wanderer over the sands, or toiler over the shingles; and romantic reports of the dignity of the mother, and the daughter's beauty, were repeated by the fortunate observers to the lounging circle of the public library or the baths.

The moment that Lady Annabel was assured that the royal family had positively fixed upon Weymouth for their residence, and were even daily expected, she resolved instantly to retire. Her stern sense of duty assured her that it was neither delicate nor loyal to obtrude before the presence of an outraged monarch the wife and daughter of a traitor; her haughty, though

wounded, spirit shrank from the revival of her husband's history, which must be the consequence of such a conjunction, and from the startling and painful remarks which might reach the shrouded ear of her daughter. With her characteristic decision, and with her usual stern volition, Lady Annabel quitted Weymouth instantly, but she was in some degree consoled for the regret and apprehensiveness which she felt at thus leaving a place that had otherwise so happily fulfilled all her hopes and wishes, and that seemed to agree so entirely with Venetia, by finding unexpectedly a marine villa, some few miles further up the coast, which was untenanted, and which offered to Lady Annabel all the accommodation she could desire.

It so happened this summer that Dr. Masham paid the Herberts a visit, and it was his habit occasionally to ride in to Weymouth to read the newspaper, or pass an hour in that easy lounging chat, which is, perhaps, one of the

principal diversions of a watering-place. A great dignitary of the church, who was about the King, and to whom Dr. Masham was known not merely by reputation, mentioned his presence to his Majesty; and the King, who was fond of the society of eminent divines, desired that Dr. Masham should be presented to him. Now, so favourable was the impression that the Rector of Marringhurst made upon his sovereign, that from that moment the King was scarcely ever content unless he was in attendance. His Majesty, who was happy in asking questions, and much too acute to be baffled when he sought information, finally elicited from the Doctor, all that, in order to please Lady Annabel, he long struggled to conceal; but when the King found that the deserted wife and daughter of Herbert were really living in the neighbourhood, and that they had quitted Weymouth on his arrival, from a feeling of delicate loyalty, nothing would satisfy the kind-hearted monarch, but personally assuring them of the

interest he took in their welfare; and, accordingly, the next day, without giving Lady Anabel even the preparation of a notice, his Majesty and his royal consort, attended only by a lord in waiting, called at the marine villa, and fairly introduced themselves.

An acquaintance, occasioned by a sentiment of generous and condescending sympathy, was established and strengthened into intimacy, by the personal qualities of those thus delicately honoured. The King and Queen were equally delighted with the wife and daughter of the terrible rebel; and although, of course, not an allusion was made to his existence, Lady Anabel felt not the less acutely the cause to which she was indebted for a notice so gratifying, but which she afterwards ensured by her own merits. How strange are the accidents of life! Venetia. Herbert, who had been bred up in unbroken solitude, and whose converse had been confined to two or three beings, suddenly found herself the guest of a King, and the visitor to a court!

She stepped at once from solitude into the most august circle of society ; yet, though she had enjoyed none of that initiatory experience which is usually held so indispensable to the votaries of fashion, her happy nature qualified her to play her part without effort and with success. Serene and graceful, she mingled in the strange and novel scene, as if it had been for ever her lot to dazzle and to charm. Ere the royal family returned to London, they extracted from Lady Annabel a compliance with their earnest wishes, that she should fix her residence, during the ensuing season, in the metropolis, and that she should herself present Venetia at St. James's. The wishes of kings are commands ; and Lady Annabel, who thus unexpectedly perceived some of the most painful anticipations of her solitude at once dissipated, and that her child, instead of being subjected, on her entrance into life, to all the mortifications she had imagined, would, on the contrary, find her first introduction under auspices the most

flattering and advantageous, bowed a dutiful assent to the condescending injunctions.

Such were the memorable consequences of this visit to Weymouth! The return of Lady Annabel to the world, and her intended residence in the metropolis, while the good Masham preceded their arrival to receive a mitre. Strange events, and yet not improbable!

In the mean time, Lord Cadurcis had repaired to the university, where his rank and his eccentric qualities quickly gathered round him a choice circle of intimates, chiefly culled from his old schoolfellows. Of these, the great majority were his seniors, for whose society the maturity of his mind qualified him. It so happened that these companions were in general influenced by those liberal opinions which had become in vogue during the American war, and from which Lord Cadurcis had hitherto been preserved by the society in which he had previously mingled in the house of his guardian. With the characteristic caprice and impetuosity

of youth, Cadurcis rapidly and ardently imbibed all these doctrines, captivated alike by their boldness and their novelty. Hitherto the child of prejudice, he flattered himself that he was now the creature of reason, and, determined to take nothing for granted, he soon learned to question everything that was received. A friend introduced him to the writings of Herbert,—that very Herbert whom he had been taught to look upon with so much terror and odium. Their perusal operated a complete revolution of his mind; and in little more than a year from his flight from Cherbury, he had become an enthusiastic votary of the great master, for his violent abuse of whom he had been banished from those happy bowers. The courage, the boldness, the eloquence, the imagination, the strange and romantic career of Herbert, carried the spirit of Cadurcis captive. The sympathetic companions studied his works, and smiled with scorn at the prejudice of which their great model had been the victim, and of

which they had been so long the dupes. As for Cadurcis, he resolved to emulate him, and he commenced his noble rivalship by a systematic neglect of all the duties and the studies of his college life. His irregular habits procured him constant reprimands, in which he gloried; he revenged himself on the authorities by writing epigrams, and by keeping a bear, which he declared should stand for a fellowship. At length, having wilfully outraged the most important regulations, he was expelled; and he made his expulsion the subject of a satire equally personal and philosophic, and which obtained applause for the great talent which it displayed, even from those who lamented its want of judgment and the misconduct of its writer. Flushed with success, Cadurcis at length found, to his astonishment, that Nature had intended him for a poet. He repaired to London, where he was received with open arms by the Whigs, whose party he immediately embraced, and where he published a poem, in which he painted his own

character as the hero, and of which—in spite of all the exaggeration and extravagance of youth—the genius was undeniable. Society sympathised with a young and a noble poet; his poem was read by all parties with enthusiasm; Cadurcis became the fashion. To use his own expression, “One morning he awoke, and found himself famous.” Young, singularly handsome, with every gift of nature and fortune, and with an inordinate vanity that raged in his soul, Cadurcis soon forgot the high philosophy that had for a moment attracted him, and delivered himself up to the absorbing egotism which had ever been latent in his passionate and ambitious mind. Gifted with energies that few have ever equalled, and fooled to the bent by the excited sympathies of society, he poured forth his creative and daring spirit with a license that conquered all obstacles, from the very audacity with which he assailed them. In a word, the young, the reserved, and unknown Cadurcis—who, but three years back, was to have lived in the domestic

solitude for which he alone felt himself fitted—filled every heart and glittered in every eye. The men envied, the women loved, all admired him. His life was a perpetual triumph; a brilliant and applauding stage, on which he ever played a dazzling and heroic part. So sudden and so startling had been his apparition, so vigorous and unceasing the efforts by which he had maintained his first overwhelming impression, and not merely by his writings, but by his unusual manners and eccentric life, that no one had yet found time to draw his breath, to observe, to inquire, and to criticise. He had risen, and still flamed, like a comet; as wild as it was beautiful, and strange as it was brilliant.

CHAPTER IV.

WE must now return to the dinner party at Lord Monteagle's. When the Bishop of —— entered the room, he found nearly all the expected guests assembled, and was immediately presented by his host to the lady of the house, who received him with all that fascinating address for which she was celebrated, expressing the extreme delight which she felt at thus becoming formally acquainted with one whom her husband had long taught her to admire and reverence. Utterly unconscious who had just joined the circle, while Lord Monteagle was introducing his newly arrived guest to many present, and to all of whom he was unknown except by reputation,

Lord Cadurcis was standing apart, apparently wrapt in his own thoughts; but the truth is, in spite of all the excitement in which he lived, he had difficulty in overcoming the natural reserve of his disposition.

“ Watch Cadurcis,” said Mr. Horace Pole to a very fine lady. “ Does not he look sublime ? ”

“ Show me him,” said the lady, very eagerly; “ I have never seen him yet; I am actually dying to know him. You know we have just come to town ? ”

“ And have caught the raging epidemic, I see,” said Mr. Pole, with a sneer. “ However, there is the marvellous young gentleman ! ‘ Alone in a crowd,’ as he says in his last poem. Very interesting ! ”

“ Wonderful creature ! ” exclaimed the dame.

“ Charming ! ” said Mr. Pole. “ If you ask Lady Monteagle, she will introduce him to you, and then, perhaps, you will be fortunate enough to be handed to dinner by him.”

“ Oh ! how I should like it ! ”

“You must take care, however, not to eat; he cannot endure a woman who eats.”

“I never do,” said the lady, very simply; “at least at dinner.”

“Ah! then you will quite suit him; I dare say he will write a sonnet to you, and call you Thyrsa.”

“I wish I could get him to write some lines in my book,” said the lady; “Charles Fox has written some; he was staying with us in the autumn, and he has written an ode to my little dog.”

“How very amiable!” said Mr. Pole; “I dare say they are as good as his elegy on Mrs. Crewe’s cat. But you must not talk of cats and dogs to Cadurcis. He is too exalted to commemorate any animal less sublime than a tiger or a barb.”

“You forget his beautiful lines on his Newfoundland,” said the lady.

“Very complimentary to us all,” said Mr. Horace Pole. “The interesting misanthrope!”

“ He looks very unhappy.”

“ Very,” said Mr. Pole. “ Evidently something on his conscience.”

“ They do whisper very odd things,” said the lady, with great curiosity. “ Do you think there is any thing in them ?”

“ Oh ! no doubt,” said Mr. Pole ; “ look at him ; you can detect crime in every glance.”

“ Dear me, how shocking ! I think he must be the most interesting person that ever lived. I should so like to know him ! They say he is so very odd.”

“ Very,” said Mr. Pole. “ He must be a man of genius ; he is so unlike every body ; the very tie of his cravat proves it. And his hair, so savage and dishevelled ; none but a man of genius would not wear powder. Watch him to-day, and you will observe that he will not condescend to perform the slightest act like an ordinary mortal. I met him at dinner yesterday, at Fanshawe’s, and he touched nothing but biscuits and soda-water. Fanshawe, you know,

is famous for his cook. Very complimentary and gratifying, was it not?"

"Dear me!" said the lady, "I am delighted to see him; and yet I hope I shall not sit by him at dinner. I am quite afraid of him."

"He is really very awful!" said Mr. Pole.

In the mean time, the subject of these observations slowly withdrew to the further end of the saloon, apart from every one, and threw himself upon a couch, with a somewhat discontented air. Lady Monteagle, whose eye had never left him for a moment, although her attentions had been necessarily commanded by her guests, and who dreaded the silent rages in which Cadurcis constantly indulged, and which, when once assumed for the day, were with great difficulty dissipated, seized the first opportunity to join and soothe him.

"Dear Cadurcis," she said, "why do you sit here! You know I am obliged to speak to all these odious people, and it is very cruel of you."

“ You seemed to me to be extremely happy,” replied his lordship, in a sarcastic tone.

“ Now, Cadurcis, for Heaven’s sake, do not play with my feelings,” exclaimed Lady Mont-eagle, in a deprecating tone. “ Pray be amiable. If I think you are in one of your dark humours, it is quite impossible for me to attend to these people; and you know it is the only point on which Monteagle ever has an opinion; he insists upon my attending to his guests.”

“ If you prefer his guests to me, attend to them.”

“ Now, Cadurcis! I ask you as a favor, a favor to me, only for to-day. Be kind, be amiable, you can if you like; no person can be more amiable; now, do!”

“ I am very amiable,” said his lordship; “ I am perfectly satisfied, if you are. You made me dine here.”

“ Now, Cadurcis !”

“ Have I not dined here to satisfy you ?”

“ Yes ! It was very kind.”

“ But, really, that I should be wearied with all the common-places of these creatures who come to eat your husband’s cutlets, is too much,” said his lordship. “ And you, Gertrude, what necessity can there be in your troubling yourself to amuse people whom you meet every day of your life, and who, from the vulgar perversity of society, value you in exact proportion as you neglect them ?”

“ Yes, but to-day I must be attentive; for Henry, with his usual thoughtlessness, has asked this new bishop to dine with us.”

“ The Bishop of —— ?” inquired Lord Cadurcis eagerly. “ Is he coming ?”

“ He has been in the room this quarter of an hour.”

“ What, Masham ! Doctor Masham !” continued Lord Cadurcis.

“ Assuredly.”

Lord Cadurcis changed colour, and even sighed. He rose rather quickly, and said, “ I must go and speak to him.”

So, quitting Lady Monteagle, he crossed the room, and with all the simplicity of old days, which instantly returned on him, those melancholy eyes sparkling with animation, and that languid form quick with excitement, he caught the Doctor's glance, and shook his extended hand with a heartiness which astonished the surrounding spectators, accustomed to the elaborate listlessness of his usual manner.

“ My dear Doctor ! my dear Lord ! I am glad to say,” said Cadurcis, “ this is the greatest and the most unexpected pleasure I ever received. Of all persons in the world, you are the one whom I was most anxious to meet.”

The good Bishop appeared not less gratified with the rencounter than Cadurcis himself ; but, in the midst of their mutual congratulations, dinner was announced and served ; and, in due order, Lord Cadurcis found himself attending that very fine lady whom Mr. Horace Pole had, in jest, suggested should be the object of his services ; while Mr. Pole himself was seated opposite to him at table.

The lady, remembering all Mr. Pole's intimations, was really very much frightened; she at first could scarcely reply to the casual observations of her neighbour, and quite resolved not to eat any thing. But his lively and voluble conversation, his perfectly unaffected manner, and the nonchalance with which he helped himself to every dish that was offered him, soon reassured her. Her voice became a little firmer, her manner less embarrassed, and she even began meditating a delicate assault upon a fricassee.

“Are you going to Ranelagh to-night?” inquired Lord Cadurcis; “I think I shall take a round. There is nothing like amusement; it is the only thing worth living for; and I thank my destiny I am easily amused. We must persuade Lady Monteagle to go with us. Let us make a party, and return and sup. I like a supper; nothing in the world more charming than a supper—

“A lobster salad, and champaign and chat.”

That is life, and very delightful. Why, really, my dear madam, you eat nothing. You will never be able to endure the fatigues of a Ranelagh campaign on the sustenance of a pâté. Pole, my good fellow, will you take a glass of wine? We had a pleasant party, yesterday, at Fanshawe's, and apparently a capital dinner. I was sorry that I could not play my part; but I have led rather a raking life lately. We must go and dine with him again; I long to sweat his Burgundy."

Lord Cadurcis' neighbour and Mr. Pole exchanged looks; and the lady, emboldened by the unexpected conduct of her cavalier, and the exceeding good friends which he seemed resolved to be with her and every one else, began to flatter herself that she might yet obtain the much-desired inscription in her volume. So, after making the usual approaches, of having a great favour to request, which, however, she could not flatter herself would be granted, and which she even was afraid to mention; encouraged by

the ready declaration of Lord Cadurcis, that he should think it would be quite impossible for any one to deny her any thing, the lady ventured to state, that Mr. Fox had written something in her book, and she should be the most honoured and happiest lady in the land if——

“ Oh ! I shall be most happy,” said Lord Cadurcis; “ I really esteem your request quite an honour : you know I am only a literary amateur, and cannot pretend to vie with your real authors. If you want them, you must go to Mrs. Montagu. I would not write a line for her, and so the blues have quite excommunicated me. Never mind ; I leave them to Miss Hannah More : but you—you are quite a different sort of person. What shall I write ? ”

“ I must leave the subject to you,” said his gratified friend.

“ Well, then,” said his lordship, “ I dare say you have got a lapdog or a broken fan ; I don't think I could soar above them. I think that is about my tether.”

This lady, though a very great person, was not a beauty, and very little of a wit, and not calculated in any respect to excite the jealousy of Lady Monteagle. In the mean time that lady was quite delighted with the unusual animation of Lord Cadurcis, who was much the most entertaining member of the party. Every one present would circulate throughout the world that it was only at the Monteagles that Lord Cadurcis condescended to be amusing. As the Bishop was seated on her right hand, Lady Monteagle seized the opportunity of making inquiries as to their acquaintance; but she only obtained from the good Masham that he had once resided in his lordship's neighbourhood, and had known him as a child, and was greatly attached to him. Her ladyship was anxious to obtain some juvenile anecdotes of her hero; but the Bishop contrived to be amusing without degenerating into gossip. She did not glean much, except that all his early friends were more astonished at his present career than the Bishop him-

self, who was about to add, that he always had some misgivings, but, recollecting where he was, he converted the word into a more gracious term. But if Lady Monteagle were not as successful as she could wish in her inquiries, she contrived still to speak on the, to her, ever-interesting subject, and consoled herself by the communications which she poured into a guarded yet not unwilling ear, respecting the present life and conduct of the Bishop's former pupil. The worthy dignitary had been prepared by public fame for much that was dazzling and eccentric; but it must be confessed he was not a little astonished by a great deal to which he listened. One thing, however, was clear,—that whatever might be the demeanour of Cadurcis to the circle in which he now moved, time, and the strange revolutions of his life, had not affected his carriage to his old friend. It gratified the Bishop when he listened to Lady Monteagle's details of the haughty, reserved, and melancholy demeanour of Cadurcis, which impressed every one with an idea that

some superior being had, as a punishment, been obliged to visit their humble globe, to recall the apparently heartfelt cordiality with which he had resumed his old acquaintance with the former Rector of Marringhurst.

And indeed, to speak truth, the amiable and unpretending behaviour of Cadurcis this day was entirely attributable to the unexpected meeting with this old friend. In the hurry of society he could scarcely dwell upon the associations which it was calculated to call up; yet more than once he found himself quite absent, dwelling on sweet recollections of that Cherbury that he had so loved. And ever and anon the tones of a familiar voice caught his ear, so that they almost made him start: they were not the less striking, because, as Masham was seated on the same side of the table as Cadurcis, his eye had not become habituated to the Bishop's presence, which sometimes he almost doubted.

He seized the first opportunity after dinner of engaging his old tutor in conversation. He took

him affectionately by the arm, and led him, as if unintentionally, to a sofa apart from the rest of the company, and seated himself by his side. Cadurcis was agitated, for he was about to inquire of some whom he could not mention without emotion.

“Is it long since you have seen our friends?” said his lordship; “if indeed I may call them mine.”

“Lady Annabel Herbert?” said the Bishop. Cadurcis bowed.

“I parted from her about two months back,” continued the Bishop.

“And Cherbury, dear Cherbury, is it unchanged?”

“They have not resided there for more than two years.”

“Indeed!”

“They have lived, of late, at Weymouth, for the benefit of the sea air.”

“I hope neither Lady Annabel nor her daughter needs it?” said Lord Cadurcis, in a tone of great feeling.

“Neither now, God be praised,” replied Masham; “but Miss Herbert has been a great invalid.”

There was a rather awkward silence. At length, Lord Cadurcis said, “We meet rather unexpectedly, my dear sir.”

“Why, you have become a great man,” said the Bishop, with a smile; “and one must expect to meet you.”

“Ah! my dear friend,” exclaimed Lord Cadurcis with a sigh, “I would willingly give a whole existence of a life like this, for one year of happiness at Cherbury.”

“Nay!” said the Bishop with a look of good-natured mockery, “this melancholy is all very well in poetry; but I always half suspected, and I am quite sure now, that Cherbury was not particularly adapted to you.”

“You mistake me,” said Cadurcis, mournfully shaking his head.

“Hitherto, I have not been so very wrong in my judgment respecting Lord Cadurcis, that I

am inclined very easily to give up my opinion," replied the Bishop.

"I have often thought of the conversation to which you allude," replied Lord Cadurcis; "nevertheless, there is one opinion I never changed, one sentiment that still reigns paramount in my heart."

"You think so," said his companion; "but, perhaps, were it more than a sentiment, it would cease to flourish."

"No," said Lord Cadurcis, firmly, "the only circumstance in the world of which I venture to feel certain is my love for Venetia."

"It raged certainly during your last visit to Cherbury," said the Bishop, "after an interval of five years: it has been revived slightly to-day, after an interval of three more, by the sight of a mutual acquaintance, who has reminded you of her. But what have been your feelings in the mean time, my Lord? Confess the truth, and admit you have very rarely spared a thought to the person to whom you fancy yourself at this moment so passionately devoted."

“You do not do me justice,” said Lord Cadurcis; “you are prejudiced against me.”

“Nay! prejudice is not my humour, my good Lord. I decide only from what I myself observe; I give my opinion to you at this moment as freely as I did when you last conversed with me at the abbey, and when I a little displeased you, by speaking what you will acknowledge has since turned out to be the truth.”

“You mean, then, to say,” said his lordship, with some excitement, “that you do not believe that I love Venetia?”

“I think you do, at this moment, very much,” replied Masham; “and I think,” he continued, smiling, “that you may probably continue very much in love with her, even during the rest of the week.”

“You mock me?”

“Nay! I am most sincerely serious.”

“What, then, do you mean?”

“I mean that your imagination, my Lord, dwelling for the moment with great power upon

the idea of Venetia, becomes inflamed, and your whole mind is filled with her image."

"A metaphysical description of being in love," said Lord Cadurcis rather dryly.

"Nay!" said Masham, "I think the heart has something to do with that."

"But the imagination acts upon the heart," rejoined his companion.

"But it is in the nature of its influence not to endure. At this moment, I repeat, your lordship may, perhaps, love Miss Herbert; you may go home and muse over her memory, and even deplore in passionate verses your misery in being separated from her; but, in the course of a few days, she will be again forgotten."

"But were she mine?" urged Lord Cadurcis, eagerly.

"Why, you would probably part from her in a year, as her father parted from Lady Annabel."

"Impossible! for my imagination could not conceive anything more exquisite than she is."

"Then it would conceive something less ex-

quisite," said the Bishop. "It is a restless quality, and is ever creative, either of good or of evil."

"Ah! my dear Doctor—excuse me for again calling you Doctor, it is so natural," said Cadurcis, in a tone of affection.

"Call me what you will, my dear Lord," said the good Bishop, whose heart was moved; "I can never forget old days."

"Believe me, then," continued Cadurcis, "that you misjudge me in respect of Venetia. I feel assured that, had we married three years ago, I should have been a much happier man."

"Why, you have every thing to make you happy," said the Bishop; "if you are not happy, who should be? You are young, and you are famous: all that is now wanted is to be wise."

Lord Cadurcis shrugged his shoulders. "I am tired of this life," he said; "I am wearied of the same hollow bustle, and the same false glitter day after day. Ah! my dear friend,

when I remember the happy hours when I used to roam through the woods of Cherbury with Venetia, and ramble in that delicious park—both young, both innocent—lit by the sunset and guided by the stars; and then remember that it has all ended in this, and that this is success, glory, fame, or whatever be the proper title to baptise the bubble, the burthen of existence is too great for me.”

“Hush, hush!” said his friend, rising from the sofa; “you will be happy if you be wise.”

“But what is wisdom?” said Lord Cadurcis.

“One quality of it, in your situation, my Lord, is to keep your head as calm as you can. Now, I must bid you good night.”

The Bishop disappeared, and Lord Cadurcis was immediately surrounded by several fine ladies, who were encouraged by the flattering bulletin that his neighbour at dinner, who was among them, had given of his Lordship’s temper. They were rather disappointed to find him sullen, sarcastic, and even morose. As for going to

Ranelagh, he declared that, if he had the power of awarding the punishment of his bitterest enemy, it would be to consign him for an hour to the barbarous infliction of a promenade in that temple of ennui; and as for the owner of the album, who, anxious about her verses, ventured to express a hope that his lordship would call upon her, the contemptuous bard gave her what he was in the habit of styling “a look,” and quitted the room, without deigning otherwise to acknowledge her hopes and her courtesy.

CHAPTER V.

WE must now return to our friends the Herberts, who, having quitted Weymouth, without even revisiting Cherbury, are now on their journey to the metropolis. It was not without considerable emotion that Lady Annabel, after an absence of nearly nineteen years, contemplated her return to the scene of some of the most extraordinary and painful occurrences of her life. As for Venetia, who knew nothing of towns and cities, save from the hasty observations she had made in travelling, the idea of London, formed only from books and her imagination, was invested with even awful attributes. Mistress Pauncefort alone looked forward to their future

residence simply with feelings of self-congratulation at her return, after so long an interval, to the theatre of former triumphs and pleasures, and where she conceived herself so eminently qualified to shine and to enjoy.

The travellers entered town towards nightfall, by Hyde Park Corner, and proceeded to an hotel in St. James's Street, where Lady Annabel's man of business had engaged them apartments. London, with its pallid parish lamps, scattered at long intervals, would have presented but a gloomy appearance to the modern eye, habituated to all the splendour of gas ; but to Venetia it seemed difficult to conceive a scene of more brilliant bustle ; and she leant back in the carriage, distracted with the lights and the confusion of the crowded streets. When they were once safely lodged in their new residence, the tumult of unpacking the carriages had subsided, and the ceaseless tongue of Pauncefort had in some degree refrained from its wearying and worrying chatter, a feeling of loneliness, after all this agi-

tation and excitement, simultaneously came over the feelings of both mother and daughter, though they alike repressed its expression. Lady Annabel was lost in many sad thoughts, and Venetia felt mournful, though she could scarcely define the cause. Both were silent, and they soon sought refuge from fatigue and melancholy in sleep.

The next morning, it being now April, was fortunately bright and clear. It certainly was a happy fortune that the fair Venetia was not greeted with a fog. She rose refreshed and cheerful, and joined her mother, who was, however, not a little agitated by an impending visit, of which Venetia had been long apprised. This was from Lady Annabel's brother, the former ambassador, who had of late returned to his native country. The brother and sister had been warmly attached in youth, but the awful interval of time that had elapsed since they parted, filled Venetia's mother with many sad and serious reflections. The Earl and

his family had been duly informed of Lady Annabel's visit to the metropolis, and had hastened to offer her the hospitality of their home; but the offer had been declined, with feelings, however, not a little gratified by the earnestness with which it had been proffered.

Venetia was now, for the first time in her life, to see a relative. The anticipated meeting excited in her mind rather curiosity than sentiment. She could not share the agitation of her mother, and yet she looked forward to the arrival of her uncle with extreme inquisitiveness. She was not long kept in suspense. Their breakfast was scarcely finished, when he was announced. Lady Annabel turned very pale; and Venetia, who felt herself as it were a stranger to her blood, would have retired, had not her mother requested her to remain; so she only withdrew to the background of the apartment.

Her uncle was ten years the senior of his sister, but not unlike her. Tall, graceful, with those bland and sympathizing manners that

easily win hearts, he entered the room with a smile of affection, yet with a composure of deportment that expressed at the same time how sincerely delighted he was at the meeting, and how considerately determined at the same time not to indulge in a scene. He embraced his sister with tenderness, assured her that she looked as young as ever, softly chided her for not making his house her home, and hoped that they should never part again; and he then turned to his niece. A fine observer, one less interested in the scene than the only witnesses, might have detected in the Earl, notwithstanding his experienced breeding, no ordinary surprise and gratification at the sight of the individual whose relationship he was now to claim for the first time.

“I must claim an uncle’s privilege,” he said, in a tone of great sweetness and some emotion, as he pressed with his own the beautiful lips of Venetia. “I ought to be proud of my niece. Why! Annabel, if only for the

honour of our family, you should not have kept this jewel so long enshrined in the casket of Cherbury."

The Earl remained with them some hours ; and his visit was really prolonged by the unexpected pleasure which he found in the society of his relations. He would not leave them until they promised to dine with him that day, and mentioned that he had prevented his wife from calling with him that morning, because he thought, after so long a separation, it might be better to meet thus quietly. Then they parted with affectionate cordiality on both sides ; the Earl enchanted to find delightful companions where he was half afraid he might only meet tiresome relatives ; Lady Annabel proud of her brother, and gratified by his kindness ; and Venetia anxious to ascertain whether all her relations were as charming as her uncle.

CHAPTER VI.

WHEN Lady Annabel and her daughter returned from their morning drive, they found the visiting ticket of the Countess on the table, who had also left a note, with which she had provided herself in case she was not so fortunate as to meet her relations. The note was very affectionate, and expressed the great delight of the writer at again meeting her dear sister and forming an acquaintance with her charming niece.

“More relations!” said Venetia, with a somewhat droll expression of countenance.

At this moment the Bishop of —, who had already called twice upon them unsuccessfully,

entered the room. The sight of this old and dear friend gave great joy. He came to engage them to dine with him the next day, having already ineffectually endeavoured to obtain them for permanent guests. They sat chatting so long with him, that they were obliged at last to bid him an abrupt adieu, and hasten and make their toilettes for their dinner.

Their hostess received her relations with a warmth which her husband's praises of her sister-in-law and niece had originally prompted, but which their appearance and manners instantly confirmed. As all the Earl's children were married, their party consisted to-day only of themselves; but it was a very happy and agreeable meeting, for every one was desirous of being amiable. To be sure they had not many recollections or associations in common, and no one recurred to the past; but London, and the history of its fleeting hours, was an inexhaustible source of amusing conversation; and the Countess seemed resolved that Venetia should

have a very brilliant season ; that she should be very much amused and very much admired. Lady Annabel, however, put in a plea for moderation, at least until Venetia was presented ; but that the Countess declared must be at the next drawing-room, which was early in the ensuing week. Venetia listened to glittering narratives of balls and routs, operas and theatres, breakfasts and masquerades, Ranelagh and the Pantheon, with the same smiling composure as if she had been accustomed to them all her life, instead of having been shut up in a garden, with no livelier or brighter companions than birds and flowers.

After dinner, as her aunt and uncle and Lady Annabel sat round the fire, talking of her maternal grandfather, a subject which did not at all interest her, Venetia stole from her chair to a table in a distant part of the room, and turned over some books and music that were lying upon it. Among these was a literary journal, which she touched almost by accident,

and which opened, with the name of Lord Cadurcis on the top of its page. This, of course, instantly attracted her attention. Her eye passed hastily over some sentences which greatly astonished her, and, extending her arm for a chair without quitting the book, she was soon deeply absorbed by the marvels which rapidly unfolded themselves to her. The article in question was an elaborate criticism as well of the career as the works of the noble poet ; for, indeed, as Venetia now learnt, they were inseparably blended. She gathered from these pages a faint and hasty, yet not altogether unfaithful, conception of the strange revolution that had occurred in the character, pursuits, and position of her former companion. In that mighty metropolis, whose wealth and luxury and power had that morning so vividly impressed themselves upon her consciousness, and to the history of whose pleasures, and brilliant and fantastic dissipation she had recently been listening with a lively and diverted ear, it seemed that, by

some rapid and magical vicissitude, her little Plantagenet, the faithful and affectionate companion of her childhood, whose sorrows she had so often soothed, and who in her pure and devoted love had always found consolation and happiness, had become "the observed of all observers,"—the most remarkable where all was striking, and dazzling where all were brilliant!

His last visit to Cherbury, and its strange consequences, then occurred to her; his passionate addresses, and their bitter parting. Here was surely matter enough for a maiden's reverie, and into a reverie Venetia certainly fell, from which she was roused by the voice of her uncle, who could not conceive what book his charming niece could find so interesting, and led her to feel what a very ill compliment she was paying to all present. Venetia hastily closed the volume, and rose rather confused from her seat; her radiant smile was the best apology to her uncle; and she compensated for her previous inattention, by playing to him on the harpsi-

chord. All the time, however, the image of Cadurcis flitted across her vision, and she was glad when her mother moved to retire, that she might enjoy the opportunity of pondering in silence and unobserved over the strange history that she had read.

London is a wonderful place ! Four-and-twenty hours back, with a feeling of loneliness and depression amounting to pain, Venetia had fled to sleep as her only refuge ; now only a day had past, and she had both seen and heard many things that had alike startled and pleased her ; had found powerful and charming friends ; and laid her head upon her pillow in a tumult of emotion that long banished slumber from her beautiful eyes.

CHAPTER VII.

VENETIA soon found that she must bid adieu for ever, in London, to her old habits of solitude. She soon discovered that she was never to be alone. Her aunt called upon them very early in the morning, and said that the whole day must be devoted to their court dresses; and, in a few minutes, they were all whirled off to a celebrated milliner's. After innumerable consultations and experiments, the dress of Venetia was decided on; her aunt and Lady Annabel were both assured that it would exceed in splendour and propriety any dress at the drawing-room. Indeed, as the great artist added, with such a model to work from it would reflect but

little credit on the establishment, if any approached Miss Herbert in the effect she must inevitably produce.

While her mother was undergoing some of those attentions to which Venetia had recently submitted, and had retired for a few minutes into an adjoining apartment, our little lady of Cherbury strolled about the saloon in which she had been left, until her attention was attracted by a portrait of a young man, in an oriental dress, standing very sublimely amid the ruins of some desert city; a palm-tree in the distance, and by his side a crouching camel, and some recumbent followers slumbering amid the fallen columns.

“That is Lord Cadurcis, my love,” said her aunt, who at the moment joined her, “the famous poet. All the young ladies are in love with him. I dare say you know his works by heart.”

“No, indeed, aunt,” said Venetia; “I never even read them; but I should like very much.”

“Not read Lord Cadurcis’ poems! Oh! we must go and get them directly for you. Everybody reads them. You will be looked upon quite as a little barbarian. We will stop the carriage at Stockdale’s, and get them for you.”

At this moment Lady Annabel rejoined them; and, having made all their arrangements, they re-entered the countess’s carriage.

“Stop at Stockdale’s,” said her ladyship to the servant; “I must get Cadurcis’ last poem, for Venetia. She will be quite back in her learning, Annabel.”

“Cadurcis’ last poem!” said Lady Annabel; “do you mean Lord Cadurcis? Is he a poet?”

“To be sure! Well, you are countryfied not to know Lord Cadurcis!”

“I know him very well,” said Lady Annabel, gravely; “but I did not know he was a poet.”

The Countess laughed, the carriage stopped, the book was brought; Lady Annabel looked

very uneasy, and tried to catch her daughter's countenance, but, strange to say, for the first time in her life was quite unsuccessful. The Countess took the book, and immediately gave it Venetia. "There, my dear," said her aunt, "there never was any thing so charming. I am so provoked that Cadurcis is a Whig."

"A Whig!" said Lady Annabel, "he was not a Whig when I knew him."

"Oh! my dear, I am afraid he is worse than a Whig. He is almost a rebel! But then he is such a genius! Every thing is allowed, you know, to a genius!" said the thoughtless Countess.

Lady Annabel was silent; but the stillness of her emotion must not be judged from the stillness of her tongue. Her astonishment at all she had heard was only equalled by what we may justly term her horror. It was impossible that she could have listened to any communication at the same time so astounding, and to her so fearful.

"We knew Lord Cadurcis when he was very

young, aunt," said Venetia, in a very quiet tone. "He lived near Mamma, in the country."

"Oh! my dear Annabel, if you see him in town, bring him to me," said the Countess; "he is the most difficult person in the world to get to one's house, and I would give any thing if he would come and dine with me."

The Countess at last set her relations down at their hotel. When Lady Annabel was once more alone with her daughter, she said—"Venetia, dearest, give me that book your aunt lent you."

Venetia immediately handed it to her, but her mother did not open it; but saying—"The Bishop dines at four, darling, I think it is time for us to dress," Lady Annabel left the room.

To say the truth, Venetia was less surprised than disappointed by this conduct of her mother's; but she was not apt to murmur, and she tried to dismiss the subject from her thoughts.

It was with unfeigned delight that the kind-hearted Masham welcomed under his own roof

his two best and dearest friends. He had asked nobody to meet them ; it was settled that they were to be quite alone, and to talk of nothing but Cherbury and Marringhurst. When they were seated at table, the Bishop, who had been detained at the House of Lords, and had been rather hurried to be in time to receive his guests, turned to his servant, and inquired whether any one had called.

“Yes, my Lord, Lord Cadurcis,” was the reply.

“Our old companion,” said the Bishop to Lady Annabel, with a smile. “He has called upon me twice, and I have on both occasions unfortunately been absent.”

Lady Annabel merely bowed an assent to the Bishop’s remark. Venetia longed to speak, but found it impossible. “What is it that represses me?” she asked herself. “Is there to be another forbidden subject insensibly to arise between us? I must struggle against this in-

definable despotism that seems to pervade my life."

"Have you met Lord Cadurcis, Sir?" at length asked Venetia.

"Once; we resumed our acquaintance at a dinner party one day; but I shall soon see a great deal of him, for he has just taken his seat. He is of age, you know."

"I hope he has come to years of discretion in every sense," said Lady Annabel, "but I fear not."

"Oh! my dear Lady," said the Bishop, "he has become a great man; he is our star. I assure you there is nobody in London talked of but Lord Cadurcis. He asked me a great deal after you and Cherbury. He will be delighted to see you."

"I cannot say," replied Lady Annabel, "that the desire of meeting is at all mutual. From all I hear, our connections and opinions are very different, and I dare say our habits likewise."

“ My aunt lent us his new poem to-day,” said Venetia, very boldly.

“ Have you read it ? ” asked the Bishop.

“ I am no admirer of modern poetry,” said Lady Annabel, somewhat tartly.

“ Poetry of any kind is not much in my way,” said the Bishop, “ but if you like to read his poems, I will lend them to you, for he gave me a copy ; esteemed a great honor, I assure you.”

“ Thank you, my Lord,” said Lady Annabel, “ both Venetia and myself are very much engaged now ; and I do not wish her to read while she is in London. When we return to Cherbury she will have abundance of time, if desirable.”

Both Venetia and her worthy host felt that the present subject of conversation was not very agreeable to Lady Annabel, and it was immediately changed. They fell upon more gracious topics, and, in spite of this somewhat sullen commencement, the meeting was quite as de-

lightful as they anticipated. Lady Annabel particularly exerted herself to please, and, as was invariably the case under such circumstances with this lady, she was eminently successful; she apparently endeavoured, by her remarkable kindness to her daughter, to atone for any unpleasant feeling which her previous manner might for an instant have occasioned. Venetia watched her beautiful and affectionate parent as Lady Annabel now dwelt with delight upon the remembrance of their happy home, and now recurred to the anxiety she naturally felt about her daughter's approaching presentation, with feelings of love and admiration, which made her accuse herself for the recent rebellion of her heart. She thought only of her mother's sorrows, and her devotion to her child; and, grateful for the unexpected course of circumstances which seemed to be leading every member of their former little society to honour and happiness, she resolved to persist in that career of duty and devotion to her mother, from

which it seemed to her she had never deviated for a moment, but to experience sorrow, misfortune, and remorse. Never did Venetia receive her mother's accustomed embrace and blessing with more responsive tenderness and gratitude than this night. She banished Cadurcis and his poems from her thoughts, confident that, as long as her mother approved neither of her continuing his acquaintance nor perusing his writings, it was well that the one should be a forgotten tie, and the other a sealed book.

CHAPTER VIII.

AMONG the most intimate acquaintances of Lady Annabel's brother was the nobleman, who had been a minister during the American war, and who had also been the guardian of Lord Cadurcis, of whom, indeed, he was likewise a distant relative. He had called with his lady on Lady Annabel, after meeting her and her daughter at her brother's, and had cultivated her acquaintance with great kindness and assiduity, so that Lady Annabel had found it impossible to refuse his invitation to dinner.

This dinner occurred a few days after the visit of the Herberts to the Bishop, and that excellent personage, her own family, and some

others equally distinguished, but all of the ministerial party, were invited to meet her. Lady Annabel found herself placed at table between a very pompous courtier, who, being a gourmand, was not very prompt to disturb his enjoyment by conversation, and a young man, whom she found very agreeable, and who at first, indeed, attracted her attention by his resemblance to some face with which she felt she was familiar, and yet which she was not successful in recalling. His manners were remarkably frank and ingenuous, yet soft and refined. Without having any peculiar brilliancy of expression, he was apt and fluent, and his whole demeanour characterised by a gentle modesty that was highly engaging. Apparently he had travelled a great deal, for he more than once alluded to his experience of foreign countries, but this was afterwards explained by Lady Annabel discovering, from an observation he let fall, that he was a sailor. A passing question from an opposite guest also told her

that he was a member of parliament. While she was rather anxiously wishing to know who he might be, and congratulating herself that one in whose favour she was so much prepossessed should be on the right side, their host saluted him from the top of the table, and said, "Captain Cadurcis, a glass of wine."

The countenance was now explained. It was, indeed, Lord Cadurcis whom he resembled, though his eyes were dark blue, and his hair light brown. This then was that cousin who had been sent to sea to make his fortune, and whom Lady Annabel had a faint recollection of poor Mrs. Cadurcis once mentioning. George Cadurcis had not exactly made his fortune, but he had distinguished himself in his profession, and especially in Rodney's victory, and had fought his way up to the command of a frigate. The frigate had recently been paid off, and he had called to pay his respects to his noble relative with the hope of obtaining his interest for a new command. The guardian of his

cousin, very much mortified with the conduct of his hopeful ward, was not very favourably impressed towards any one who bore the name of Cadurcis, yet George, with no pretence, had a winning honest manner that made friends; his lordship took a fancy to him, and, as he could not at the moment obtain him a ship, he did the next best thing for him in his power; a borough was vacant, and he put him into parliament.

“Do you know,” said Lady Annabel to her neighbour, “I have been fancying all dinner time, that we had met before; but I find it is that you only resemble one with whom I was once acquainted.”

“My cousin!” said the Captain, “he will be very mortified when I go home, if I tell him your ladyship speaks of his acquaintance as one that is past.”

“It is some years since we met,” said Lady Annabel, in a more reserved tone.

“Plantagenet can never forget what he owes to you,” said Captain Cadurcis. “How often

has he spoken to me of you and Miss Herbert ! It was only the other night—yes ! not a week ago—that he made me sit up with him all night, while he was telling stories of Cherbury ; you see I am quite familiar with the spot,” he added, smiling.

“You are very intimate with your cousin, I see,” said Lady Annabel.

“I live a great deal with him,” said George Cadurcis. “You know we had never met or communicated ; and it was not Plantagenet’s fault, I am sure ; for of all the generous, amiable, loveable beings, Cadurcis is the best I ever met with in this world. Ever since we knew each other, he has been a brother to me ; and, though our politics and opinions are so opposed, and we naturally live in such a different circle, he would have insisted even upon my having apartments in his house, nor is it possible for me to give you the slightest idea of the delicate and unceasing kindness I experience from him. If we had lived together all our lives, it would be impossible to be more united.”

This eulogium rather softened Lady Annabel's heart; she even observed, "I always thought Lord Cadurcis naturally well disposed; I always hoped he would turn out well; but I was afraid, from what I heard, he was very much changed. He shows, however, his sense and good feeling in selecting you for his friend; for you are his natural one," she added, after a momentary pause.

"And then, you know," he continued, "it is so purely kind of him; for of course I am not fit to be a companion for Cadurcis, and perhaps, as far as that, no one is. Of course we have not a thought in common. I know nothing but what I have picked up in a rough life; and he, you know, is the cleverest person that ever lived—at least I think so."

Lady Annabel smiled.

"Well, he is very young," she observed, "much your junior, Captain Cadurcis; and I hope he will yet prove a faithful steward of the great gifts that God has given him."

“I would stake all I hold dear,” said the Captain, with great animation, “that Cadurcis turns out well. He has such a good heart. Ah! Lady Annabel, if he be now and then a little irregular, only think of the temptations that assail him. Only one-and-twenty—his own master—and all London at his feet. It is too much for any one’s head. But say or think what the world may, I know him better than they do; and I know there is not a finer creature in existence. I hope his old friends will not desert him,” added Captain Cadurcis, with a smile which seemed to deprecate the severity of Lady Annabel, “for, in spite of all his fame and prosperity, perhaps, after all, this is the time when he most needs them.”

“Very possibly,” said her ladyship rather dryly.

While the mother was engaged in this conversation with her neighbour respecting her former interesting acquaintance, such was the fame of Lord Cadurcis then in the metropolis

that he also formed the topic of conversation at another part of the table, to which the daughter was an attentive listener. The tone in which he was spoken of, however, was of a very different character. While no one disputed his genius; his principles, temper, and habits of life were submitted to the severest scrutiny; and it was with blended feelings of interest and astonishment that Venetia listened to the detail of wild opinions, capricious conduct, and extravagant and eccentric behaviour ascribed to the companion of her childhood, who had now become the spoiled child of society. A very shrewd gentleman, who had taken an extremely active part in this discussion, inquired of Venetia, next to whom he was seated, whether she had read his lordship's last poem. He was extremely surprised when Venetia answered in the negative; but he seized the opportunity of giving her an elaborate criticism on the poetical genius of Cadurcis. "As for his style," said the critic, "no one can deny that is his own, and he will

last by his style ; as for his philosophy, and all these wild opinions of his, they will pass away, because they are not genuine, they are not his own, they are borrowed. He will outwrite them ; depend upon it, he will. The fact is, as a friend of mine observed the other day, Herbert's writings have turned his head. Of course you know nothing about them, but there are wonderful things in them, I can tell you that."

"I believe it most sincerely," said Venetia.

The critic stared at his neighbour. "Hush!" said he, "his wife and daughter are here. We must not talk of these things. You know Lady Annabel Herbert? There she is ; a very fine woman too. And that is his daughter there, I believe, that dark girl with a turned-up nose. I cannot say she warrants the poetical address to her :—

' My precious pearl the false and glittering world
Has ne'er polluted with its garish light !'

She does not look much like a pearl, does she ?
She should keep in solitude, eh ? ”

The ladies rose and relieved Venetia from her embarrassment.

After dinner Lady Annabel introduced George Cadurcis to her daughter; and, seated by them both, he contrived without effort and without the slightest consciousness of success, to confirm the pleasing impression in his favour, which he had already made, and when they parted, it was even with a mutual wish that they might meet again.

CHAPTER IX.

It was the night after the drawing-room. Lord Cadurcis was at Brookes' dining at midnight, having risen since only a few hours. Being a mal-content, he had ceased to attend the Court, where his original reception had been most gracious, which he had returned by some very factious votes, and a very caustic lampoon.

A party of young men entered from the Court Ball; which in those days always terminated at midnight, whence the guests generally proceeded to Ranelagh; one or two of them seated themselves at the table at which Cadurcis was sitting. They were full of a new beauty who had been presented. Their violent and even extravagant

encomiums excited his curiosity. Such a creature had never been seen, she was peerless, the most radiant of acknowledged charms had been dimmed before her. Their Majesties had accorded to her the most marked reception. A Prince of the blood had honoured her with his hand. Then they began to expatiate with fresh enthusiasm on her unparalleled loveliness.

“Oh! Cadurcis,” said a young noble, who was one of his extreme admirers, “she is the only creature I ever beheld worthy of being one of your heroines.”

“Who are you talking about?” asked Cadurcis in a rather listless tone.

“The new beauty, of course.”

“And who may she be?”

“Miss Herbert, to be sure. Who speaks or thinks of any one else?”

“What, Ve——, I mean Miss Herbert?” exclaimed Cadurcis, with no little energy.

“Yes. Do you know her?”

“Do you mean to say——” and Cadurcis

stopped and rose from the table, and joined the party round the fire. "What Miss Herbert is it?" he added after a short pause.

"Why *the* Miss Herbert; Herbert's daughter, to be sure. She was presented to-day by her mother."

"Lady Annabel?"

"The same."

"Presented to-day!" said Cadurcis audibly, yet speaking as it were to himself. "Presented to-day! Presented! How strange!"

"So every one thinks; one of the strangest things that ever happened," remarked a bystander.

"And I did not even know they were in town," continued Cadurcis, for, from his irregular hours, he had not seen his cousin since the party of yesterday. He began walking up and down the room, muttering, "Masham, Weymouth, London, presented at Court, and I know nothing. How life changes! Venetia at Court, my Venetia!" Then turning round and addressing the

young nobleman who had first spoken to him, he asked "if the ball were over."

"Yes; all the world are going to Ranelagh. Are you inclined to take a round?"

"I have a strange fancy," said Cadurci, "and if you will go with me, I will take you in my vis-a-vis. It is here."

This was an irresistible invitation, and in a few minutes the companions were on their way. Cadurcis, apparently with no peculiar interest in the subject, leading the conversation very artfully to the presentation of Miss Herbert. His friend was heartily inclined to gratify his curiosity. He gave him the most ample details of Miss Herbert's person. Even her costume, and the sensation both produced; how she was presented by her mother, who, after so long an estrangement from the world, scarcely excited less impression, and the remarkable cordiality with which both mother and daughter were greeted by the sovereign and his royal consort.

The two young noblemen found Ranelagh

very crowded, but the presence of Lord Cadurcis occasioned a great sensation the moment he was recognised. Everywhere the whisper went round, and many parties crowded near to catch a glimpse of the hero of the day. "Which is he? That fair, tall young man? No, the other to be sure. Is it really he? How very distinguished! How very melancholy! Quite the poet. Do you think he is really as unhappy as he looks? I would sooner see him than the King and Queen. He seems very young, but then he has seen so much of the world! Fine eyes, beautiful hair! I wonder who is his friend? How proud he must be! Who is that lady he bowed to? That is the Duke of —— speaking to him." Such were the remarks that might be caught in the vicinity of Lord Cadurcis as he took his round, gazed at by the assembled crowd, of whom many knew him only by fame, for the charm of Ranelagh was that it was rather a popular than a mere fashionable assembly. Society at large blended with the

Court, which maintained and renewed its influence by being witnessed under the most graceful auspices. The personal authority of the aristocracy has decreased with the disappearance of Ranelagh and similar places of amusement, where rank was not exclusive, and luxury by the gratification it occasioned others seemed robbed of half its selfism.

In his second round, Lord Cadurcis recognised the approach of the Herberts. They formed a portion of a very large party. Lady Annabel was leaning on her brother, whom Cadurcis knew by sight; Venetia was at the side of her aunt, and several gentlemen were hovering about them; among them, to his surprise, his cousin, George Cadurcis, in his uniform, for he had been to Court and to the Court Ball. Venetia was talking with animation. She was in her Court dress and in powder. Her appearance was strange to him. He could scarcely recognise the friend of his childhood; but without any doubt in all that assembly, unrivalled in the whole world for beauty, grace, and splendour, she

was without a parallel : a cynosure on which all eyes were fixed.

So occupied were the ladies of the Herbert party by the conversation of their numerous and brilliant attendants, that the approach of any one else but Lord Cadurcis might have been unnoticed by them, but a hundred tongues before he drew nigh, had prepared Venetia for his appearance. She was indeed most anxious to behold him, and though she was aware that her heart fluttered not slightly as the moment was at hand, she commanded her gaze, and her eyes met his although she was very doubtful whether he might choose or care to recognise her. He bowed almost to the ground ; and when Venetia had raised her responsive head he had passed by.

“ Why, Cadurcis, you know Miss Herbert ? ” said his friend in a tone of some astonishment.

“ Well ; but it is a long time since I have seen her.”

“ Is she not beautiful ? ”

“ I never doubted on that subject ; I tell you.”

Scrops, we must contrive to join her party. I wish we had some of our friends among them. Here comes the Monteagle; aid me to escape her."

The most fascinating smile failed in arresting the progress of Cadurcis; fortunately, the lady was the centre of a most brilliant band;—all that he had to do, therefore, was boldly to proceed.

"Do you think my cousin is altered since you knew him?" inquired George Cadurcis of Venetia.

"I scarcely had time to observe him," she replied.

"I wish you would let me bring him to you. He did not know until this moment you were in town. I have not seen him since we met yesterday."

"Oh, no," said Venetia. "Do not disturb him."

In time, however, Lord Cadurcis was again in sight; and now, without any hesitation, he stopped,

and falling into the line by Miss Herbert, he addressed her: "I am proud of being remembered by Miss Herbert," he said.

"I am most happy to meet you," replied Venetia, with unaffected sincerity.

"And Lady Annabel, I have not been able to catch her eye—is she quite well? I was ignorant that you were in London until I heard of your triumph this night."

The Countess whispered her niece, and Venetia accordingly presented Lord Cadurcis to her aunt. This was a most gratifying circumstance to him. He was anxious, by some means or other, to effect his entrance into her circle; and he had an irresistible suspicion that Lady Annabel no longer looked upon him with eyes of favour. So he resolved to enlist the aunt as his friend. Few persons could be more winning than Cadurcis, when he willed it; and every attempt to please from one whom all emulated to gratify and honour, was sure to be successful. The Countess, who, in spite of politics, was a

secret votary of his, was quite prepared to be enchanted. She congratulated herself on forming, as she had long wished, an acquaintance with one so celebrated. She longed to pass Lady Monteagle in triumph. Cadurcis improved his opportunity to the utmost. It was impossible for any one to be more engaging; lively, yet at the same time gentle, and deferential with all his originality. He spoke, indeed, more to the aunt than to Venetia; but when he addressed the latter, there was a melting, almost a mournful, tenderness in his tones, that alike affected her heart and charmed her imagination. Nor could she be insensible to the gratification she experienced as she witnessed, every instant, the emotion his presence excited among the passers by, and of which Cadurcis himself seemed so properly and so utterly unconscious. And this was Plantagenet!

Lord Cadurcis spoke of his cousin, who, on his joining the party, had assisted the arrangement by moving to the other side; and he spoke

of him with a regard which pleased Venetia, though his lordship envied him his good fortune in having the advantage of a prior acquaintance with Miss Herbert in town ; “ but then we are old acquaintances in the country,” he added, half in a playful, half in a melancholy tone, “ are we not ? ”

“ It is a long time that we have known each other, and it is a long time since we have met,” replied Venetia.

“ A delicate reproach,” said his lordship ; “ but perhaps rather my misfortune than my fault. My thoughts have been often, I might say ever, at Cherbury.”

“ And the abbey ; have you forgotten the abbey ? ”

“ I have never been near it since a morning you perhaps remember,” said his lordship in a low voice. “ Ah ! Miss Herbert,” he continued, with a sigh, “ I was young then ; I have lived to change many opinions, and some of which you then disapproved.”

The party stopped at a box just vacant, and in which the ladies seated themselves while their carriages were inquired for. Lord Cadurcis, with a rather faltering heart, went up to pay his respects to Venetia's mother. Lady Annabel received him with a courtesy, that however was scarcely cordial, but the Countess instantly presented him to her husband with an unction which a little astonished her sister-in-law. Then a whisper, but unobserved, passed between the Earl and his lady, and in a minute Lord Cadurcis had been invited to dine with them on the next day, and meet his old friends from the country. Cadurcis was previously engaged, but hesitated not a moment in accepting the invitation. The Monteagle party now passed by; the lady looked a little surprised at the company in which she found her favourite, and not a little mortified by his neglect. What business had Cadurcis to be speaking to that Miss Herbert? Was it not enough that the whole day not another name had scarcely crossed her ear, but the

night must even witness the conquest of Lord Cadurcis by the new beauty? It was such bad ton, it was so unlike him, it was so underbred, for a person of his position immediately to bow before the new idol of the hour—and a Tory girl too! It was the last thing she could have expected from him. She should, on the contrary, have thought that the very universal admiration which this Miss Herbert commanded would have been exactly the reason why a man like Cadurcis would have seemed almost unconscious of her existence. She determined to remonstrate with him; and she was sure of a speedy opportunity, for he was to dine with her on the morrow.

CHAPTER X.

NOTWITHSTANDING Lady Annabel's reserved demeanour, Lord Cadurcis, supported by the presence of his cousin, who he had discovered to be a favourite of that lady, ventured to call upon her the next day, but she was out. They were to meet, however, at dinner, where Cadurcis determined to omit no opportunity to propitiate her. The Countess had a great deal of tact, and she contrived to make up a party to receive him in which there were several of his friends, among them his cousin and the Bishop of ——, and no strangers who were not, like herself, his great admirers; but if she had known more, she need not have given herself this trou-

ble, for there was a charm among her guests of which she was ignorant, and Cadurcis went determined to please and to be pleased.

At dinner he was seated next to Lady Annabel, and it was impossible for any person to be more deferential, soft, and insinuating. He spoke of old days with emotion which he did not attempt to suppress ; he alluded to the present with infinite delicacy. But it was very difficult to make way. Lady Annabel was courteous, but she was reserved. His lively reminiscences elicited from her no corresponding sentiment ; and no art would induce her to dwell upon the present. If she only would have condescended to compliment him, it would have given him an opportunity of expressing his distaste of the life which he now led, and a description of the only life which he wished to lead ; but Lady Annabel studiously avoided affording him any opening of the kind. She treated him like a stranger. She impressed upon him without effort that she would only consider

him an acquaintance. How Cadurcis, satiated with the incense of the whole world, sighed for one single congratulation from Lady Annabel! Nothing could move her.

“ I was so surprised to meet you last night,” at length he again observed. “ I have made so many inquiries after you. Our dear friend, the Bishop, was, I fear, almost wearied with my inquiries after Cherbury. I know not how it was, I felt quite a pang when I heard that you had left it, and that all these years, when I have been conjuring up so many visions of what was passing under that dear roof, you were at Weymouth.”

“ Yes. We were at Weymouth some time.”

“ But do not you long to see Cherbury again? I cannot tell you how I pant for it. For my part, I have seen the world, and I have seen enough of it. After all, the end of all our exertions is to be happy at home; that is the end of every thing; don't you think so?”

“ A happy home is certainly a great bless-

ing, replied Lady Annabel; "and a very rare one."

"But why should it be so rare?" inquired Lord Cadurcis.

"It is our own fault," said Lady Annabel; "our vanity drives us from our hearths."

"But we soon return again, and calm and cooled. For my part, I have no object in life but to settle down at the old abbey, and never to quit again our woods. But I shall lead a dull life without my neighbours," he added, with a smile, and in a tone half coaxing.

"I suppose you never see Lord * * * * * now?" said Lady Annabel, mentioning his late guardian. There was, as Cadurcis fancied, some sarcasm in the question, though not in the tone in which it was asked.

"No, I never see him," his lordship answered, firmly; "we differ in our opinions, and I differ from him with regret; but I differ from a sense of duty, and therefore I have no alternative."

“The claims of duty are of course paramount,” observed Lady Annabel.

“You know my cousin?” said Lord Cadurcis, to turn the conversation.

“Yes, and I like him very much; he appears to be a sensible, amiable person, of excellent principles.”

“I am not bound to admire George’s principles,” said Lord Cadurcis, gaily; “but I respect them, because I know that they are conscientious. I love George; he is my only relation, and he is my friend.”

“I trust he will always be your friend, for I think you will then, at least, know one person on whom you can depend.”

“I believe it. The friendships of the world are wind.”

“I am surprised to hear you say so,” said Lady Annabel.

“Why, Lady Annabel?”

“You have so many friends.”

Lord Cadurcis smiled. “I wish,” he said,

after a little hesitation, "if only for 'Auld lang syne,' I might include Lady Annabel Herbert among them."

"I do not think there is any basis for friendship between us, my lord," she said, very dryly.

"The past must ever be with me," said Lord Cadurcis, "and I should have thought a sure and solid one."

"Our opinions on all subjects are so adverse, that I must believe that there could be no great sympathy in our feelings."

"My feelings are beyond my controul," he replied; "they are, and must ever be, totally independent of my opinions."

Lady Annabel did not reply. His lordship felt baffled, but he was resolved to make one more effort.

"Do you know," he said, "I can scarcely believe myself in London to-day? To be sitting next to you, to see Miss Herbert, to hear Doctor Masham's voice—oh! does it not recal

Cherbury, or Marringhurst, or that day at Cadurcis, when you were so good as to smile over my rough repast. Ah! Lady Annabel, those days were happy! those were feelings that can never die! All the glitter and hubbub of the world can never make me forget them, —can never make you, I hope, Lady Annabel, quite recal them with an effort. We were friends then: let us be friends now.”

“I am too old to cultivate new friendships,” said her ladyship; “and if we are to be friends, Lord Cadurcis, I am sorry to say that, after the interval that has occurred since we last parted, we should have to begin again.”

“It is a long time,” said his lordship, mournfully, “a very long time, and one—in spite of what the world may think—to which I cannot look back with any self-congratulation. I wished three years ago never to leave Cadurcis again. Indeed I did; and indeed it was not my fault that I quitted it.”

“It was no one’s fault, I hope, my lord.

Whatever the cause may have been, I have ever remained quite ignorant of it ; I wished, and wish, to remain ignorant of it. I, for one, have ever considered it the wise dispensation of a merciful Providence.”

Cadurcis ground his teeth ; a dark look came over him which, when once it rose on his brow, was with difficulty dispelled ; and for the remainder of the dinner he continued silent and gloomy.

He was, however, not unobserved by Venetia. She had watched his evident attempts to conciliate her mother, with lively interest ; she had witnessed their failure with sincere sorrow. In spite of that stormy interview, the results of which—in his hasty departure, and the severance of their acquaintance—she had often regretted, she had always retained for him the greatest affection. During these three years he had still, in her inmost heart, remained her own Plantagenet—her adopted brother, whom she loved, and in whose welfare her feelings were deeply

involved. The mysterious circumstances of her birth, and the discoveries to which they had led, had filled her mind with a fanciful picture of human nature, over which she had long brooded. A great poet had become her ideal of man. Sometimes she had sighed—when musing over her father and Plantagenet on the solitary sea-shore at Weymouth—that Cadurcis, instead of being the merely amiable, and somewhat narrow-minded being, that she supposed, had not been invested with those brilliant and commanding qualities which she felt could alone master her esteem. Often had she, in those abstracted hours, played with her imagination in combining the genius of her father with the soft heart of that friend to whom she was so deeply attached. She had wished, in her reveries, that Cadurcis might have been a great man ; that he might have existed in an atmosphere of glory, amid the plaudits and admiration of his race ; and that then he might have turned from all that fame, so dear to them both, to the heart

which could alone sympathise with the native simplicity of his childhood.

The ladies withdrew. The Bishop and another of the guests joined them after a short interval. The rest remained below, and drank their wine with the freedom not unusual in those days, Lord Cadurcis among them, although it was not his habit. But he was not convivial, though he never passed the bottle untouched. He was in one of those dark humours of which there was a latent spring in his nature, but which, in old days, had been kept in check by his simple life, his inexperienced mind, and the general kindness that greeted him, and which nothing but the caprice and perversity of his mother could occasionally develope. But since the great revolution in his position, since circumstances had made him alike acquainted with his nature, and had brought all society to acknowledge its superiority; since he had gained and felt his irresistible power, and had found all the world, and all the glory of it, at his feet, these moods had

become more frequent. The slightest re-action in the self-complacency that was almost unceasingly stimulated by the applause of applauded men, and the love of the loveliest women, instantly took the shape and found refuge in the immediate form of the darkest spleen, generally indeed brooding in silence, and, if speaking, expressing itself only in sarcasm. Cadurcis was, indeed,—as we have already described him,—the spoiled child of society; a froward and petted darling, not always to be conciliated by kindness, but furious when neglected or controlled. He was habituated to triumph; it had been his lot to come, to see, and to conquer; even the procrastination of certain success was intolerable to him; his energetic volition could not endure a check. To Lady Annabel Herbert, indeed, he was not exactly what he was to others; there was a spell in old associations from which he unconsciously could not emancipate himself, and from which it was his opinion he honoured her, in not desiring to be free. He had his reasons

for wishing to regain his old, his natural influence, over her heart; he did not doubt for an instant that, if Cadurcis sued, success must follow the condescending effort. He had sued, and he had been met with coldness, almost with disdain. He had addressed her in those tones of tenderness which experience had led him to believe were irresistible, yet to which he seldom had recourse, for hitherto he had not been under the degrading necessity of courting. He had dwelt with fondness on the insignificant past, because it was connected with her; he had regretted, or affected even to despise, the glorious present, because it seemed, for some indefinite cause, to have estranged him from her hearth. Yes! he had humbled himself before her; he had thrown with disdain at her feet all that dazzling fame and expanding glory which seemed his peculiar and increasing privilege. He had delicately conveyed to her that even these would be sacrificed, not only without a sigh, but with cheerful delight, to find himself

once more living, as of old, in the limited world of her social affections. Three years ago he had been rejected by the daughter, because he was an undistinguished youth. Now the mother recoiled from his fame. And who was this woman? The same cold, stern heart, that had alienated the gifted Herbert; the same narrow, rigid mind, that had repudiated ties that every other woman in the world would have gloried to cherish and acknowledge. And with her he had passed his prejudiced youth, and fancied, like an idiot, that he had found sympathy! Yes, as long as he was a slave, a mechanical, submissive slave, bowing his mind to all the traditionary bigotry which she adored, never daring to form an opinion for himself, worshipping her idol custom, and labouring by habitual hypocrisy to perpetuate the delusions of all around her!

In the mean time, while Lord Cadurcis was chewing the cud of these bitter feelings, we will take the opportunity of explaining the immediate cause of Lady Annabel's frigid reception

of his friendly advances. All that she had heard of Cadurcis, all the information she had within these few days so rapidly acquired of his character and conduct, were indeed not calculated to dispose her to witness the renewal of their intimacy with feelings of remarkable satisfaction. But this morning she had read his poem, the poem that all London was talking of, and she had read it with horror. She looked upon Cadurcis as a lost man. With her, indeed, since her marriage, an imaginative mind had become an object of terror; but there were some peculiarities in the tone of Cadurcis' genius, which magnified to excess her general apprehension on this head. She traced, in every line, the evidences of a raging vanity, which she was convinced must prompt its owner to sacrifice, on all occasions, every feeling of duty to its gratification. Amid all the fervour of rebellious passions, and the violence of a wayward mind, a sentiment of profound egotism appeared to her impressed on every page she perused. Great as

might have been the original errors of Herbert, —awful as in her estimation were the crimes to which they had led him, they might in the first instance be traced rather to a perverted view of society than of himself. But self was the idol of Cadurcis ; self distorted into a phantom that seemed to Lady Annabel pregnant not only with terrible crimes, but with the basest and most humiliating vices. The certain degradation which in the instance of her husband had been the consequence of a bad system, would, in her opinion, in the case of Cadurcis, be the result of a bad nature ; and when she called to mind that there had once been a probability that this individual might have become the husband of her Venetia, her child whom it had been the sole purpose of her life to save from the misery of which she herself had been the victim ; that she had even dwelt on the idea with complacency, encouraged its progress, regretted its abrupt termination, but consoled herself by the flattering hope that time, with even more favourable

auspices, would mature it into fulfilment; she trembled, and turned pale.

It was to the Bishop that, after dinner, Lady Annabel expressed some of the feelings which the re-appearance of Cadurcis had occasioned her.

“I see nothing but misery for his future,” she exclaimed; “I tremble for him when he addresses me. In spite of the glittering surface on which he now floats, I foresee only a career of violence, degradation, and remorse.”

“He is a problem difficult to solve,” replied Masham, “but there are elements not only in his character, but his career, so different from those of the person of whom we were speaking, that I am not inclined at once to admit, that the result must necessarily be the same.”

“I see none,” replied Lady Annabel; “at least, none of sufficient influence to work any material change.”

“What think you of his success?” replied Masham. “Cadurcis is evidently proud of it.

With all his affected scorn of the world, he is the slave of society. He may pique the feelings of mankind, but I doubt whether he will outrage them."

"He is on such a dizzy eminence," replied Lady Annabel, "that I do not believe he is capable of calculating so finely. He does not believe, I am sure, in the possibility of resistance. His vanity will tempt him onwards."

"Not to persecution," said Masham. "Now my opinion of Cadurcis is, that his egotism, or selfism, or whatever you may style it, will ultimately preserve him from any very fatal, from any irrecoverable excesses. He is of the world—worldly. All his works, all his conduct, tend only to astonish mankind. He is not prompted by any visionary ideas of ameliorating his species. The instinct of self-preservation will serve him as ballast."

"We shall see," said Lady Annabel; "for myself, whatever may be his end, I feel assured

that great and disgraceful vicissitudes are in store for him."

"It is strange after what, in comparison with such extraordinary changes, must be esteemed so brief an interval," observed Masham, with a smile, "to witness such a revolution in his position. I often think to myself, can this indeed be our little Plantagenet?"

"It is awful!" said Lady Annabel; "much more than strange. For myself, when I recall certain indications of his feelings when he was last at Cadurcis, and think for a moment of the results to which they might have led, I shiver; I assure you, my dear lord, I tremble from head to foot. And I encouraged him! I smiled with fondness on his feelings! I thought I was securing the peaceful happiness of my child! What can we trust to in this world! It is too dreadful to dwell upon! It must have been an interposition of Providence that Venetia escaped!"

“Dear little Venetia!” exclaimed the good Bishop; “for I believe I shall call her little Venetia to the day of my death. How well she looks to-night! Her aunt is, I think, very fond of her. See!”

“Yes, it pleases me,” said Lady Annabel; “but I do wish my sister was not such an admirer of Lord Cadurcis’ poems. You cannot conceive how uneasy it makes me. I am quite annoyed that he was asked here to-day. Why ask him?”

“Oh! there is no harm,” said Masham; “you must forget the past. By all accounts, Cadurcis is not a marrying man. Indeed, as I understood, marriage with him is at present quite out of the question. And as for Venetia, she rejected him before, and she will, if necessary, reject him again. He has been a brother to her, and after that he can be no more. Girls never fall in love with those with whom they are bred up.”

“I hope—I believe there is no occasion for

apprehension," replied Lady Annabel; "indeed it has scarcely entered my head. The very charms he once admired in Venetia can have no sway over him, as I should think, now. I should believe him as little capable of appreciating Venetia now, as he was when last at Cherbury of anticipating the change in his own character."

"You mean opinions, my dear lady, for characters never change. Believe me, Cadurcis is radically the same as in old days. Circumstances have only developed his latent predisposition."

"Not changed, my dear lord; what, that innocent, sweet tempered, docile child——"

"Hush! here he comes."

The Earl and his guests entered the room; a circle was formed round Lady Annabel; some evening visitors arrived; there was singing. It had not been the intention of Lord Cadurcis to return to the drawing-room after his rebuff by Lady Annabel; he had meditated making his

peace at Monteagle House ; but when the moment of his projected departure had arrived, he could not resist the temptation of again seeing Venetia. He entered the room last, and some moments after his companions. Lady Annabel, who watched the general entrance, concluded he had gone, and her attention was now fully engaged. Lord Cadurcis remained at the end of the room alone, apparently abstracted, and looking far from amiable ; but his eye, in reality, was watching Venetia. Suddenly her aunt approached her, and invited the lady who was conversing with Miss Herbert to sing ; Lord Cadurcis immediately advanced, and took her seat. Venetia was surprised that for the first time in her life with Plantagenet she felt embarrassed. She had met his look when he approached her, and had welcomed, or, at least, intended to welcome him with a smile, but she was at a loss for words ; she was haunted with the recollection of her mother's behaviour to him at dinner, and she

looked down on the ground, far from being at ease.

“Venetia!” said Lord Cadurcis.

She started.

“We are alone,” he said; “let me call you Venetia when we are alone.”

She did not—she could not reply; she felt confused; she felt, indeed, the blood rise to her cheek.

“How changed is everything!” continued Cadurcis. “To think the day should ever arrive when I should have to beg your permission to call you Venetia!”

She looked up; she met his glance. It was mournful; nay, his eyes were suffused with tears. She saw at her side the gentle and melancholy Plantagenet of her childhood.

“I cannot speak; I am agitated at meeting you,” she said with her native frankness. “It is so long since we have been alone; and, as you say, all is so changed.”

“ But are you changed, Venetia?” he said in a voice of emotion, “ for all other change is nothing.”

“ I meet you with pleasure,” she replied; “ I hear of your fame with pride. You cannot suppose that it is possible I should cease to be interested in your welfare.”

“ Your mother does not meet me with pleasure; she hears of nothing that has occurred with pride; your mother has ceased to take an interest in my welfare; and why should you be unchanged?”

“ You mistake my mother.”

“ No, no,” replied Cadurcis, shaking his head, “ I have read her inmost soul to-day. Your mother hates me,—me, whom she once styled her son. She was a mother once to me, and you were my sister. If I have lost her heart, why have I not lost yours?”

“ My heart, if you care for it, is unchanged,” said Venetia.

“ O! Venetia, whatever you may think, I

never wanted the solace of a sister's love more than I do at this moment."

"I pledged my affection to you when we were children," replied Venetia; "you have done nothing to forfeit it, and it is yours still."

"When we were children," said Cadurcis, musingly; "when we were innocent; when we were happy. You, at least, are innocent still; are you happy, Venetia?"

"Life has brought sorrows even to me, Plantagenet."

The blood deserted his heart when she called him Plantagenet; he breathed with difficulty.

"When I last returned to Cherbury," he said, "you told me you were changed, Venetia; you revealed to me on another occasion the secret cause of your affliction. I was a boy then,—a foolish, ignorant boy. Instead of sympathising with your heartfelt anxiety, my silly vanity was offended by feelings I should have shared, and soothed, and honoured. Ah! Venetia, well had it been for one of us that I had conducted myself more kindly, more wisely."

“Nay, Plantagenet, believe me, I remember that interview only to regret it. The recollection of it has always occasioned me great grief. We were both to blame; but we were both children then. We must pardon each other's faults.”

“You will hear,—that is, if you care to listen, Venetia,—much of my conduct and opinions,” continued Lord Cadurcis, “that may induce you to believe me headstrong and capricious. Perhaps I am less of both in all things than the world imagines. But of this be certain, that my feelings towards you have never changed, whatever you may permit them to be; and if some of my boyish judgments have, as was but natural, undergone some transformation, be you, my sweet friend, in some degree consoled for the inconsistency, since I have at length learned duly to appreciate one of whom we then alike knew little, but whom a natural inspiration taught you, at least, justly to appreciate—I need not say I mean the illustrious father of your being.”

Venetia could not restrain her tears; she endeavoured to conceal her agitated countenance behind the fan with which she was fortunately provided.

“To me a forbidden subject,” said Venetia, “at least with them I could alone converse upon it, but one that my mind never deserts.”

“O! Venetia,” exclaimed Lord Cadurcis with a sigh, “would we were both with him!”

“A wild thought,” she murmured, “and one I must not dwell upon.”

“We shall meet, I hope,” said Lord Cadurcis; “we must meet—meet often. I called upon your mother to-day, fruitlessly. You must attempt to conciliate her. Why should we be parted? We, at least, are friends, and more than friends. I cannot exist unless we meet, and meet with the frankness of old days.”

“I think you mistake mamma; I think you may, indeed. Remember how lately she has met you, and after how long an interval! A little time, and she will resume her former feel-

ings, and believe that you have never forfeited yours. Besides, we have friends, mutual friends. My aunt admires you, and here I naturally must be a great deal. And the Bishop,—he still loves you; that I am sure he does: and your cousin,—mamma likes your cousin. I am sure, if you can manage only to be patient,—if you will only attempt to conciliate a little, all will be as before. Remember, too, how changed your position is,” Venetia added with a smile; “you allow me to forget you are a great man, but mamma is naturally restrained by all this wonderful revolution. When she finds that you really are the Lord Cadurcis whom she knew such a very little boy,—the Lord Cadurcis who, without her aid, would never have been able even to write his fine poems,—oh! she must love you again! How can she help it?”

Cadurcis smiled. “We shall see,” he said. “In the mean time do not you desert me, Venetia.”

“That is impossible,” she replied; “the hap-

piest of my days have been past with you. You remember the inscription on the jewel? I shall keep to my vows."

"That was a very good inscription as far as it went," said Cadurcis; and then, as if a little alarmed at his temerity, he changed the subject.

"Do you know," said Venetia, after a pause, "I am treating you all this time as a poet, merely in deference to public opinion. Not a line have I been permitted to read; but I am resolved to rebel, and you must arrange it all."

"Ah!" said the enraptured Cadurcis, "this is fame!"

At this moment the Countess approached them, and told Venetia that her mother wished to speak to her. Lady Annabel had discovered the tête-à-tête, and resolved instantly to terminate it. Lord Cadurcis, however, who was quick as lightning, read all that was necessary in Venetia's look. Instead of instantly retiring, he remained some little time longer, talked a great deal to the Countess,—who was perfectly en-

chanted with him,—even sauntered up to the singers, and complimented them, and did not make his bow until he had convinced at least the mistress of the mansion, if not her sister-in-law, that it was not Venetia Herbert who was his principal attraction in this agreeable society.

CHAPTER XI.

THE moment he had quitted Venetia, Lord Cadurcis returned home. He could not endure the usual routine of gaiety after her society; and his coachman, often waiting until five o'clock in the morning at Monteagle House, could scarcely assure himself of his good fortune in this exception to his accustomed trial of patience. The vis-à-vis stopped, and Lord Cadurcis bounded out with a light step and a lighter heart. His table was covered with letters. The first one that caught his eye was a missive from Lady Monteagle. Cadurcis seized it like a wild animal darting on its prey, tore it in half without opening it, and, grasping the poker, crammed it

with great energy into the fire. This exploit being achieved, Cadurcis began walking up and down the room ; and indeed he paced it for nearly a couple of hours in a deep reverie, and evidently under a considerable degree of excitement, for his gestures were violent, and his voice often audible. At length, about an hour after midnight, he rang for his valet, tore off his cravat, and hurled it to one corner of the apartment, called for his robe de chambre, soda water, and more lights, seated himself, and began pouring forth, faster almost than his pen could trace the words, the poem that he had been meditating ever since he had quitted the roof where he had met Venetia. She had expressed a wish to read his poems ; he had resolved instantly to compose one for her solitary perusal. Thus he relieved his heart :—

I.

Within a cloistered pile, whose Gothic towers,
Rose by the margin of a sedgy lake,
Embosomed in a valley of green bowers,
And girt by many a grove, and ferny brake
Loved by the antlered deer ; a tender youth
Whom Time to childhood's gentle sway of love
Still spared ; yet innocent as is the dove,
Nor wounded yet by Care's relentless tooth ;
Stood musing : of that fair antique domain
The orphan Lord ! And yet no childish thought
With wayward purpose holds its transient reign
In his young mind, with deeper feelings fraught ;
Then mystery all to him, and yet a dream,
That Time has touched with its revealing beam.

II.

There came a maiden to that lonely boy,
And like to him as is the morn to night ;
Her sunny face a very type of joy,
And with her soul's unclouded lustre bright.
Still scantier summers had her brow illumed
Than that on which she threw a witching smile,
Unconscious of the spell that could beguile
His being of the burthen it was doomed
By his ancestral blood to bear—a spirit
Rife with desponding thoughts and fancies drear,
A moody soul that men sometimes inherit,
And worse than all the woes the world may bear.
But when he met that maiden's dazzling eye,
He bade each gloomy image baffled fly.

III.

Amid the shady woods and sunny lawns
The maiden and the youth now wander, gay
As the bright birds, and happy as the fawns,
Their sportive rivals, that around them play;
Their light hands linked in love, the golden
hours

Unconscious fly, while thus they graceful roam,
And careless ever till the voice of home
Recalled them from their sunshine and their
flowers;

For then they parted: to his lonely pile
The orphan-chief, for though his woe to lull,
The maiden called him brother, her fond smile
Gladdened another hearth, while his was dull.
Yet as they parted, she reproved his sadness,
And for her sake she gaily whispered gladness.

IV.

She was the daughter of a noble race,
That beauteous girl, and yet she owed her name
To one who needs no herald's skill to trace
His blazoned lineage, for his lofty fame
Lives in the mouth of men, and distant climes
Re-echo his wide glory ; where the brave
Are honoured, where 'tis noble deemed to save
A prostrate nation, and for future times
Work with a high devotion, that no taunt,
Or ribald lie, or zealot's eager curse,
Or the short-sighted world's neglect can daunt,
That name is worshipped ! His immortal verse
Blends with his godlike deeds, a double spell
To bind the coming age he loved too well !

v.

For from his ancient home, a scatterling,
They drove him forth, unconscious of their prize,
And branded as a vile unhallowed thing,
The man who struggled only to be wise.
And even his hearth rebelled, the duteous wife
Whose bosom well might soothe in that dark
hour,
Swelled with her gentle force the world's harsh
power,
And aimed her dart at his devoted life.
That struck; the rest his mighty soul might
scorn,
But when his household gods averted stood,
'Twas the last pang that cannot well be borne
When tortured e'en to torpor: his heart's blood
Flowed to the unseen blow: then forth he went,
And gloried in his ruthless banishment.

VI.

A new-born pledge of love within his home,
His alien home, the exiled father left ;
And when, like Cain, he wandered forth to roam,
A Cain without his solace, all bereft :
Stole down his pallid cheek the scalding tear,
To think a stranger to his tender love
His child must grow, untroubled where might
 rove
His restless life, or taught perchance to fear
Her father's name, and bred in sullen hate,
Shrink from his image. Thus the gentle maid,
Who with her smiles had soothed an orphan's
 fate,
Had felt an orphan's pang ; yet undismayed,
Though taught to deem her sire the child of
 shame,
She clung with instinct to that reverent name !

VII.

Time flew ; the boy became a man, no more
His shadow falls upon his cloistered hall,
But to a stirring world he learn'd to pour
The passion of his being, skilled to call
From the deep caverns of his musing thought
Shadows to which they bowed, and on their
mind

To stamp the image of his own ; the wind
Though all unseen, with force or odour fraught
Can sway mankind, and thus a poet's voice,
Now touched with sweetness, now inflamed with
rage,

Though breath, can make us grieve and then
rejoice ;

Such is the spell of his creative page,
That blends with all our moods ; and thoughts
can yield

That all have felt, and yet till then were sealed.

VIII.

The lute is sounding in a chamber bright
With a high festival,—on every side,
Soft in the gleamy blaze of mellowed light,
Fair women smile, and dancers graceful glide ;
And words still sweeter than a serenade
Are breathed with guarded voice and speaking
 eyes,
By joyous hearts in spite of all their sighs ;
But bye-gone fantasies that ne'er can fade
Retain the pensive spirit of the youth ;
Reclined against a column he surveys
His laughing compeers with a glance, in sooth,
Careless of all their mirth : for other days
Enchain him with their vision, the bright hours
Passed with the maiden in their sunny bowers.

.IX.

Why turns his brow so pale, why starts to life
That languid eye? What form before unseen,
With all the spells of hallowed memory rife,
Now rises on his vision? As the Queen
Of Beauty from her bed of sparkling foam
Sprang to the azure light; and felt the air—
Soft as her cheek, the wavy dancers bear
To his rapt sight a mien that calls his home,
His cloistered home, before him, with his dreams
Prophetic strangely blending. The bright muse
Of his dark childhood still divinely beams
Upon his being; glowing with the hues
That painters love, when raptured pencils soar
To trace a form that nations may adore!

X.

One word alone within her thrilling ear
Breathed with hushed voice the brother of her
heart,
And that for aye is hidden. With a tear
Smiling she strove to conquer, see her start,
The bright blood rising to her quivering cheek,
And meet the glance she hastened once to greet,
When not a thought had he, save in her sweet
And solacing society ; to seek
Her smiles his only life ; Ah ! happy prime
Of cloudless purity, no stormy fame
His unknown sprite then stirred, a golden time
Worth all the restless splendour of a name.
And one soft accent from those gentle lips
Might all the plaudits of a world eclipse.

XI.

My tale is done ; and if some deem it strange
My fancy thus should droop, deign then to learn
My tale is truth : imagination's range
Its bounds exact may touch not : to discern
Far stranger things than poets ever feign,
In life's perplexing annals, is the fate
Of those who act, and musing penetrate
The mystery of Fortune : to whose reign
The haughtiest brow must bend ; 'twas passing
 strange
The youth of these fond children ; strange the
 flush
Of his high fortunes and his spirit's change ;
Strange was the maiden's tear, the maiden's
 blush ;
Strange were his musing thoughts and trembling
 heart ;
'Tis strange they met, and stranger if they part!

CHAPTER XII.

WHEN Lady Monteagle discovered, which she did a very few hours after the mortifying event, where Lord Cadurcis had dined the day on which he had promised to be her guest, she was very indignant, but her vanity was more offended than her self-complacency. She was annoyed that Cadurcis should have compromised his exalted reputation by so publicly dangling in the train of the new beauty ; still more that he should have signified in so marked a manner the impression which the fair stranger had made upon him, by instantly accepting an invitation to a house so totally unconnected with his circle, and where, had it not been to meet this Miss Her-

bert, it would of course never have entered his head to be a visiter. But, on the whole, Lady Monteagle was rather irritated than jealous; and far from suspecting that there was the slightest chance of her losing her influence, such as it might be, over Lord Cadurcis, all that she felt was, that less lustre must redound to her from its possession and exercise, if it were obvious to the world that his attentions could be so easily attracted and commanded.

When Lord Cadurcis, therefore, having dispatched his poem to Venetia, paid his usual visit on the next day to Monteagle House, he was received rather with sneers than reproaches, as her ladyship, with no superficial knowledge of society or of his lordship's character, was clearly of opinion that this new fancy of her admirer was to be treated rather with ridicule than indignation; and, in short, as she had discovered that Cadurcis was far from being insensible to mockery, that it was clearly a fit occasion, to use a phrase then very much in vogue, for *quizzing*.

“How d’ye do?” said her ladyship with a very arch smile, “I really could not expect to see you!”

Cadurcis looked a little confused; he detested scenes, and now he dreaded one.

“You seem quite *distrain*,” continued Lady Monteagle after a moment’s pause, which his lordship ought to have broken. “But no wonder, if the world be right.”

“The world cannot be wrong,” said Cadurcis sarcastically.

“Had you a pleasant party yesterday?”

“Very.”

“Lady —— must have been quite charmed to have got you at last,” said Lady Monteagle. “I suppose she exhibited you to all her friends, as if you were one of the savages that went to Court the other day.”

“She was very courteous.”

“Oh! I can fancy her flutter! For my part, if there be one character in the world more odious than another, I think it is a fussy woman.

Lady ——, with Lord Cadurcis dining with her, and the new beauty for a niece, must have been in a most delectable state of bustle.”

“ I thought she was rather quiet,” said her companion with provoking indifference. “ She seemed to me a very agreeable person.”

“ I suppose you mean Miss Herbert ?” said Lady Monteagle.

“ Oh ! these are very moderate expressions to use in reference to a person like Miss Herbert.”

“ You know what they said of you two at Ranelagh ?” said her ladyship.

“ No,” said Lord Cadurcis, somewhat changing color, and speaking through his teeth.— “ Something devilish pleasant I dare say.”

“ They call you Seditious and Treason,” said Lady Monteagle.

“ Then we are well suited,” said Lord Cadurcis.

“ She certainly is a most beautiful creature,” said her ladyship.

“ I think so,” said Lord Cadurcis.

“ Rather too tall, I think.”

“ Do you ? ”

“ Beautiful complexion certainly ; wants delicacy, I think.”

“ Do you ? ”

“ Fine eyes ? Grey, I believe. Cannot say I admire grey eyes. Certain sign of bad temper, I believe, grey eyes.”

“ Are they ? ”

“ I did not observe her hand. I dare say a little coarse. Fair people who are tall generally fail in the hand and arm. What sort of a hand and arm has she ? ”

“ I did not observe anything coarse about Miss Herbert.”

“ Ah ! you admire her. And you have cause. No one can deny she is a fine girl, and every one must regret, that with her decidedly provincial air and want of style altogether, which might naturally be expected, considering the rustic way I understand she has been brought up, (an

old house in the country, with a methodistical mother,) that she should have fallen into such hands as her aunt. Lady —— is enough to spoil any girl's fortune in London."

"I thought that the —— were people of the highest consideration," said Lord Cadurcis.

"Consideration!" exclaimed Lady Mont-eagle. "If you mean that they are people of rank, and good blood, and good property, they are certainly people of consideration; but they are Goths, Vandals, Huns, Calmucks, Canadian savages! They have no fashion, no style, no ton, no influence in the world. It is impossible that a greater misfortune could have befallen your beauty than having such an aunt. Why no man who has the slightest regard for his reputation would be seen in her company. She is a regular quiz, and you cannot imagine how everybody was laughing at you the other night."

"I am very much obliged to them," said Lord Cadurcis.

"And, upon my honour," continued Lady

Monteagle, “speaking merely as your friend, and not being the least jealous—Cadurcis, do not suppose that—not a twinge has crossed my mind on that score; but still I must tell you that it was most ridiculous for a man like you, to whom everybody looks up, and from whom the slightest attention is an honour, to go and fasten yourself the whole night upon a rustic simpleton, something between a wax-doll and a dairy-maid, whom every fool in London was staring at; the very reason why you should not have appeared to have been even aware of her existence.”

“We have all our moments of weakness, Gertrude,” said Lord Cadurcis, perfectly charmed that the lady was so thoroughly unaware and unsuspecting of his long and intimate connexion with the Herberts. “I suppose it was my cursed vanity. I saw, as you say, every fool staring at her, and so I determined to show that in an instant I could engross her attention.”

“Of course, I know it was only that; but

you should not have gone and dined there, Cadurcis," added the lady, very seriously. "That compromised you; but, by cutting them in future in the most marked manner, you may get over it."

"You really think I may?" inquired Lord Cadurcis, with some anxiety.

"Oh! I have no doubt of it," said Lady Monteagle.

"What it is to have a friend like you, Gertrude," said Cadurcis, "a friend who is neither a Goth, nor a Vandal, nor a Hun, nor a Calmuck, nor a Canadian savage; but a woman of fashion, style, ton, influence in the world. It is impossible that a greater piece of good fortune could have befallen me than having you for a friend!"

"Ah! méchant! you may mock," said the lady, triumphantly, for she was quite satisfied with the turn the conversation had taken; "but I am glad for your sake that you take such a sensible view of the case."

Notwithstanding, however, this sensible view of

the case, after lounging an hour at Monteagle House, Lord Cadurcis' carriage stopped at the door of Venetia's Gothic aunt. He was not so fortunate as to meet his heroine; but, nevertheless he did not esteem his time entirely thrown away, and consoled himself for the disappointment by confirming the favourable impression he had already made in this establishment, and cultivating an intimacy, which he was assured must contribute many opportunities of finding himself in the society of Venetia. From this day, indeed, he was a frequent guest at her uncle's, and generally contrived also to meet her several times in the week at some great assembly; but here, both from the occasional presence of Lady Monteagle, although party spirit deterred her from attending many circles where Cadurcis was now an habitual visitant, and from the crowd of admirers who surrounded the Herberts, he rarely found an opportunity for any private conversation with Venetia. His friend the Bishop also, notwithstanding the prejudices of Lady Annabel, re-

ceived him always with cordiality, and he met the Herberts more than once at his mansion. At the opera and in the park also he hovered about them, in spite of the sarcasms or reproaches of Lady Monteagle; for the reader is not to suppose that that lady continued to take the same self-complacent view of Lord Cadurcis' acquaintance with the Herberts which she originally adopted, and at first flattered herself was the just one. His admiration of Miss Herbert had become the topic of general conversation; it could no longer be concealed or disguised. But Lady Monteagle was convinced that Cadurcis was not a marrying man, and persuaded herself that this was a fancy which must evaporate. Moreover, Monteagle House still continued his spot of most constant resort; for his opportunities of being with Venetia were, with all his exertions, very limited, and he had no other resource which pleased him so much as the conversation and circle of the bright goddess of his party. After some fiery scenes therefore with the divinity,

which only led to his prolonged absence, for the profound and fervent genius of Cadurcis revolted from the base sentiment and mock emotions of society, the lady reconciled herself to her lot, still believing herself the most envied woman in London, and often ashamed of being jealous of a country girl.

The general result of the fortnight which elapsed since Cadurcis renewed his acquaintance with his Cherbury friends, was that he had become convinced of his inability of propitiating Lady Annabel, was devotedly attached to Venetia, though he had seldom an opportunity of intimating feelings, which the cordial manner in which she ever conducted herself to him gave him no reason to conclude desperate; at the same time that he had contrived that a day should seldom elapse, which did not under some circumstances, however unfavourable, bring them together, while her intimate friends and the circles in which she passed most of her life always witnessed his presence with favour.

CHAPTER XIII.

WE must, however, endeavour to be more intimately acquainted with the heart and mind of Venetia in her present situation, so strongly contrasting with the serene simplicity of her former life, than the limited and constrained opportunities of conversing with the companion of his childhood enjoyed by Lord Cadurcis could possibly enable him to become. Let us recur to her on the night when she returned home, after having met with Plantagenet at her uncle's, and having pursued a conversation with him, so unexpected, so strange, and so affecting! She had been very silent in the carriage, and retired to her room immediately. She retired to ponder.

The voice of Cadurcis lingered in her ear; his tearful eye still caught her vision. She leant her head upon her hand, and sighed! Why did she sigh? What at this instant was her uppermost thought? Her mother's dislike of Cadurcis. "Your mother hates me." These had been his words; these were the words she repeated to herself, and on whose fearful sounds she dwelt. "Your mother hates me." If by some means she had learnt a month ago at Weymouth, that her mother hated Cadurcis; that his general conduct had been such as to excite Lady Annabel's odium, Venetia might have for a moment been shocked that her old companion in whom she had once been so interested, had by his irregular behaviour incurred the dislike of her mother, by whom he had once been so loved. But it would have been a very transient emotion. She might have mused over past feelings and past hopes in a solitary ramble on the sea-shore; she might even have shed a tear over the misfortunes or infelicity of one

who had once been to her a brother ; but, perhaps, nay probably, on the morrow the remembrance of Plantagenet would scarcely have occurred to her. Long years had elapsed since their ancient fondness ; a very considerable interval since even his name had met her ear. She had heard nothing of him that could for a moment arrest her notice or command her attention.

But now the irresistible impression that her mother disliked this very individual filled her with intolerable grief. What occasioned this change in her feelings, this extraordinary difference in her emotions ? There was, apparently, but one cause. She had met Cadurcis. Could then a glance, could even the tender intonations of that unrivalled voice, and the dark passion of that speaking eye, work in an instant such marvels ? Could they revive the past so vividly, that Plantagenet in a moment resumed his ancient place in her affections. No, it was not that : it was less the tenderness of the past that made Venetia mourn her mother's sternness to

Cadurcis, than the feelings of the future. For now she felt that her mother's heart was not more changed towards this personage than was her own. In truth, she loved him, and no longer as a brother.

It seemed to Venetia that even before they met, from the very moment that his name had so strangely caught her eye in the volume on the first evening she had visited her relations, that her spirit suddenly turned to him. She had never heard that name mentioned since without a fluttering of the heart which she could not repress, and an emotion she could ill conceal. She loved to hear others talk of him, and yet scarcely dared speak of him herself. She recalled her emotion at unexpectedly seeing his portrait when with her aunt, and her mortification when her mother deprived her of the poem which she sighed to read. Day after day something seemed to have occurred to fix her brooding thoughts with fonder earnestness on his image. At length they met. Her emotion when she

first recognised him at Ranelagh and felt him approaching her, was one of those tumults of the heart that form almost a crisis in our sensations. With what difficulty had she maintained herself! Doubtful whether he would even formally acknowledge her presence, her vision as if by fascination had nevertheless met his, and grew dizzy as he passed. In the interval that had elapsed between his first passing and then joining her, what a chaos was her mind! What a wild blending of all the scenes and incidents of her life! What random answers had she made to those with whom she had been before conversing with ease and animation! And then when she unexpectedly found Cadurcis at her side, and listened to the sound of that familiar voice, familiar and yet changed, expressing so much tenderness in its tones, and in its words such deference and delicate respect—existence felt to her that moment affluent with a blissful excitement of which she had never dreamed!

Her life was a reverie until they met again,

in which she only mused over his fame, and the strange relations of their careers. She had watched the conduct of her mother to him at dinner with poignant sorrow; she scarcely believed that she should have an opportunity of expressing to him her sympathy. And then what had followed? A conversation, every word of which had touched her heart, a conversation that would have entirely controlled her feelings even if he had not already subjected them. The tone in which he so suddenly had pronounced "Venetia," was the sweetest music to which she had ever listened. His allusion to her father had drawn tears, which could not be restrained even in a crowded saloon. Now she wept plenteously. It was so generous, so noble, so kind, so affectionate! Dear, dear Cadurcis, is it wonderful that you should be loved!

Then falling into a reverie of sweet and unbroken stillness, with her eyes fixed in abstraction on the fire, Venetia reviewed her life from the moment she had known Plantagenet. Not

an incident that had ever occurred to them that did not rise obedient to her magical bidding. She loved to dwell upon the time when she was the consolation of his sorrows, and when Cherbury was to him a pleasant refuge! Oh! she felt sure her mother must remember those fond days, and love him as she once did! She pictured to herself the little Plantagenet of her childhood, so serious and so pensive when alone or with others, yet with her at times so gay and wild, and sarcastic: forebodings all of that deep and brilliant spirit, which had since stirred up the heart of a great nation, and dazzled the fancy of an admiring world. The change too in their mutual lots was also, to a degree, not free from that sympathy that had ever bound them together. A train of strange accidents had brought Venetia from her spell-bound seclusion, placed her suddenly in the most brilliant circle of civilization, and classed her among not the least admired of its favoured members. And whom had she come to meet? Whom did she

find in this new and splendid life the most courted and considered of its community; crowned as it were with garlands, and perfumed with the incense of a thousand altars? Her own Plantagenet. It was passing strange.

The morrow brought the verses from Cadurcis. They greatly affected her. The picture of their childhood, and of the singular sympathy of their mutual situations, and the description of her father, called forth her tears; she murmured, however, at the allusion to her other parent. It was not just, it could not be true. These verses were not, of course, shown to Lady Annabel. Would they have been shown, even if they had not contained the allusion? The question is not perplexing. Venetia had her secret, and a far deeper one than the mere reception of a poem; all confidence between her and her mother had expired. Love had stepped in, and before his magic touch, the discipline of a life expired in an instant.

Such is a slight sketch of the state and pro-

gress of Venetia's feelings; and from this, however weak, the reader may form an idea of the mood in which, during the fortnight before alluded to, she was in the habit of meeting Lord Cadurcis. During this period not the slightest conversation respecting him had occurred between her mother and herself. Lady Annabel never mentioned him, and her brow clouded when his name, as was often the case, was introduced. At the end of this fortnight, it happened that her aunt and mother were out together in the carriage, and had left her in the course of the morning at her uncle's house. During this interval, Lord Cadurcis called, and having ascertained, through a garrulous servant, that though his mistress was out, Miss Herbert was in the drawing room, he immediately took the opportunity of being introduced. Venetia was not a little surprised at his appearance and, conscious of her mother's feelings upon the subject, for a moment a little agitated, yet, it must be confessed, as much pleased. She seized this

occasion of speaking to him about his verses, for hitherto she had only been able to acknowledge the receipt of them by a word. While she expressed without affectation the emotions they had occasioned her, she complained of his injustice to her mother: this was the cause of an interesting conversation of which her father was the subject, and for which she had long sighed. With what deep, unbroken attention she listened to her companion's enthusiastic delineation of his character and career! What multiplied questions did she not ask him, and how eagerly, how amply, how affectionately he satisfied her just and natural curiosity! Hours flew away while they indulged in this rare communion.

“Oh! that I could see him!” sighed Venetia.

“You will,” replied Plantagenet, “your destiny requires it. You will see him as surely as you beheld that portrait that it was the labour of a life to prevent you beholding.”

Venetia shook her head; "And yet," she added, musingly, "my mother loves him."

"Her life proves it," said Cadurcis, bitterly.

"I think it does," replied Venetia, sincerely.

"I pretend not to understand her heart," he answered, "it is an enigma that I cannot solve. I ought not to believe that she is without one; but, at any rate, her pride is deeper than her love."

"They were ill-suited," said Venetia, mournfully; "and yet it is one of my dreams that they may yet meet."

"Ah! Venetia," he exclaimed, in a voice of great softness, "they had not known each other from their childhood, like us. They met, and they parted, alike in haste."

Venetia made no reply; her eyes were fixed in abstraction on a hand-screen, which she was unconscious that she held.

"Tell me," said Cadurcis, drawing his chair close to hers; "tell me, Venetia, if——."

At this moment a thundering knock at the

door announced the return of the Countess and her sister-in-law. Cadurcis rose from his seat, but his chair, which still remained close to that on which Venetia was sitting, did not escape the quick glance of her mortified mother. The Countess welcomed Cadurcis with extreme cordiality; Lady Annabel only returned his very courteous bow.

“Stop and dine with us, my dear Lord,” said the Countess. “We are only ourselves, and Lady Annabel and Venetia.”

“I thank you, Clara,” said Lady Annabel, “but we cannot stop to-day.”

“Oh!” exclaimed her sister. “It will be such a disappointment to Philip. Indeed you must stay,” she added, in a coaxing tone. “We shall be such an agreeable little party, with Lord Cadurcis.”

“I cannot, indeed, my dear Clara,” replied Lady Annabel; “not to-day, indeed not to-day. Come, Venetia, we must be going.”

CHAPTER XIV.

LADY ANNABEL was particularly kind to Venetia on their return to their hotel, otherwise her daughter might have fancied that she had offended her, for she was very silent. Venetia did not doubt that the presence of Lord Cadurcis was the reason that her mother would not remain and dine at her uncle's. This conviction grieved Venetia, but she did not repine; she indulged the fond hope that time would remove the strong prejudice which Lady Annabel now so singularly entertained against one in whose welfare she was originally so deeply interested. During their simple and short repast Venetia was occupied in a reverie, in which, it must be

owned, Cadurcis greatly figured, and answered the occasional though very kind remarks of her mother with an absent air.

After dinner, Lady Annabel drew her chair towards the fire—for although May, the weather was chill—and said, “A quiet evening at home, Venetia, will be a relief after all this gaiety.” Venetia assented to her mother’s observation, and nearly a quarter of an hour elapsed without another word being spoken. Venetia had taken up a book, and Lady Annabel was apparently lost in her reflections. At length she said, somewhat abruptly, “It is more than three years, I think, since Lord Cadurcis left Cherbury?”

“Yes; it is more than three years,” replied Venetia.

“He quitted us suddenly.”

“Very suddenly,” agreed Venetia.

“I never asked you whether you knew the cause, Venetia,” continued her mother, “but I

always concluded that you did. I suppose I was not in error?"

This was not a very agreeable inquiry. Venetia did not reply to it with her previous readiness and indifference. That, indeed, was impossible; but, with her accustomed frankness, after a moment's hesitation, she answered, "Lord Cadurcis never specifically stated the cause to me, mamma; indeed I was myself surprised at his departure, but some conversation had occurred between us on the very morning he quitted Cadurcis, which, on reflection, I could not doubt occasioned that departure."

"Lord Cadurcis preferred his suit to you, Venetia, and you rejected him?" said Lady Annabel.

"It is as you believe," replied Venetia, not a little agitated.

"You did wisely, my child, and I was a fool ever to have regretted your conduct."

"Why should you think so, dearest mamma?"

“ Whatever may have been the cause that impelled your conduct then,” said Lady Annabel, “ I shall ever esteem your decision as a signal interposition of Providence in your favour. Except his extreme youth, there was apparently no reason which should not have induced you to adopt a very different decision. I tremble when I think what might have been the consequences.”

“ Tremble ! dearest mother ? ”

“ Tremble, Venetia. My only thought in this life is the happiness of my child. It was in peril.”

“ Nay, I trust not that, mamma : you are prejudiced against Plantagenet. It makes me very unhappy, and him also.”

“ He is again your suitor ? ” said Lady Annabel, with a scrutinising glance.

“ Indeed he is not.”

“ He will be,” said Lady Annabel. “ Prepare yourself. Tell me, then, are your feelings the same towards him as when he last quitted us ? ”

“ Feelings, mamma !” said Venetia, echoing her mother’s words ; for, indeed, the question was one very difficult to answer, “ I ever loved Plantagenet ; I love him still.”

“ But do you love him now as then ? Then you looked upon him as a brother. He has no soul now for sisterly affections. I beseech you tell me, my child—me, your mother, your friend, your best, your only friend—tell me, have you for a moment repented that you ever refused to extend to him any other affection ? ”

“ I have not thought of the subject, mamma ; I have not wished to think of the subject ; I have had no occasion to think of it. Lord Cadurcis is not my suitor now.”

“ Venetia !” said Lady Annabel, “ I cannot doubt you love me.”

“ Dearest mother !” exclaimed Venetia, in a tone of mingled fondness and reproach, and she rose from her seat and embraced Lady Annabel.

“ My happiness is an object to you, Venetia ?” continued Lady Annabel.

“Mother, mother,” said Venetia, in a deprecatory tone. “Do not ask such cruel questions! Whom should I love but you, the best, the dearest mother that ever existed! And what object can I have in life that for a moment can be placed in competition with your happiness?”

“Then, Venetia, I tell you,” said Lady Annabel, in a solemn, yet excited, voice, “that that happiness is gone for ever, nay, my very life will be the forfeit, if I ever live to see you the bride of Lord Cadurcis.”

“I have no thought of being the bride of any one,” said Venetia. “I am happy with you. I wish never to leave you.”

“My child, the fulfilment of such a wish is not in the nature of things,” replied Lady Annabel. “The day will come when we must part; I am prepared for the event,—nay, I look forward to it not only with resignation, but delight, when I think it may increase your happiness; but were that step to destroy it—oh!

then, then I could live no more. I can endure my own sorrows, I can struggle with my own bitter lot, I have some sources of consolation which enable me to endure my own misery without repining, but yours, yours, Venetia, I could not bear. No ! if once I were to behold you lingering in life as your mother, with blighted hopes and with a heart broken, if hearts can break, I should not survive the spectacle; I know myself, Venetia, I could not survive it."

"But why anticipate such misery? Why indulge in such gloomy forebodings? Am I not happy now? Do you not love me?"

Venetia had drawn her chair close to that of her mother; she sat by her side and held her hand.

"Venetia," said Lady Annabel, after a pause of some minutes, and in a low voice, "I must speak to you on a subject on which we have never conversed. I must speak to you," and here Lady Annabel's voice dropped lower and lower, but still its tones were very distinct,

although she expressed herself with evident effort—"I must speak to you about——your father."

Venetia uttered a faint cry, she clenched her mother's hand with a convulsive grasp, and sank upon her bosom. She struggled to maintain herself, but the first sound of that name from her mother's lips, and all the long-suppressed emotions that it conjured up, overpowered her. The blood seemed to desert her heart ; still she did not faint ; she clung to Lady Annabel, pallid and shivering.

Her mother tenderly embraced her, she whispered to her words of great affection, she attempted to comfort and console her. Venetia murmured, "This is very foolish of me, mother ; but speak, oh ! speak of what I have so long desired to hear."

"Not now, Venetia !"

"Now, mother ! yes, now ! I am quite composed. I could not bear the postponement of what you were about to say. I could not sleep,

dear mother, if you did not speak to me. It was only for a moment I was overcome. See! I am quite composed." And indeed she spoke in a calm and steady voice, but her pale and suffering countenance expressed the painful struggle which it cost her to command herself.

"Venetia," said Lady Annabel, "it has been one of the objects of my life, that you should not share my sorrows."

Venetia pressed her mother's hand, but made no other reply.

"I concealed from you for years," continued Lady Annabel, "a circumstance in which, indeed, you were deeply interested, but the knowledge of which could only bring you unhappiness. Yet it was destined that my solicitude should eventually be baffled. I know that it is not from my lips that you learn for the first time that you have a father—a father living."

"Mother, let me tell you all!" said Venetia, eagerly.

"I know all," said Lady Annabel.

“But, mother, there is something that you do not know ; and now I would confess it.”

“There is nothing that you can confess with which I am not acquainted, Venetia ; and I feel assured, I have ever felt assured, that your only reason for concealment was a desire to save me pain.”

“That, indeed, has ever been my only motive,” replied Venetia, “for having a secret from my mother.”

“In my absence from Cherbury, you entered the chamber,” said Lady Annabel, very calmly. “In the delirium of your fever, I became acquainted with a circumstance which so nearly proved fatal to you.”

Venetia's cheek turned scarlet.

“In that chamber you beheld the portrait of your father,” continued Lady Annabel. “From our friend you learnt that father was still living. That is all?” said Lady Annabel, enquiringly.

“No, not all, dear mother ; not all. Lord Cadurcis reproached me at Cherbury with—with

—with having such a father,” she added, in a hesitating voice. “It was then I learnt—his misfortunes, mother; his misery.”

“I thought that misfortunes, that misery, were the lot of your other parent,” replied Lady Annabel, somewhat coldly.

“Not with my love,” said Venetia, eagerly; “not with my love, mother. You have forgotten your misery in my love. Say so, say so, dearest mother.” And Venetia threw herself on her knees before Lady Annabel, and looked up with earnestness in her face.

The expression of that countenance had been for a moment stern, but it relaxed into fondness, as Lady Annabel gently bowed her head, and pressed her lips to her daughter’s forehead. “Ah! Venetia,” she said, “all depends upon you. I can endure, nay, I can forget the past, if my child be faithful to me. There are no misfortunes, there is no misery, if the being to whom I have consecrated the devotion of my life will only be dutiful, will only be guided by

my advice, will only profit by my sad experience."

"Mother, I repeat I have no thought but for you," said Venetia. "My own dearest mother, if my duty, if my devotion can content you, you shall be happy. But wherein have I failed?"

"In nothing, love. Your life has hitherto been one unbroken course of affectionate obedience."

"And ever shall be," said Venetia. "But you were speaking, mother, you were speaking of—of my—my father!"

"Of him!" said Lady Annabel, thoughtfully. "You have seen his picture?"

Venetia kissed her mother's hand.

"Was he less beautiful than Cadurcis? Was he less gifted?" exclaimed Lady Annabel, with animation. "He could whisper in tones as sweet, and pour out his vows as fervently. Yet what am I!"

"O! my child," continued Lady Annabel,

“beware of such beings! They bear within them a spirit on which all the devotion of our sex is lavished in vain. A year—no! not a year, not one short year!—and all my hopes were blighted! O! Venetia, if your future should be like my bitter past!—and it might have been, and I might have contributed to the fulfilment!—can you wonder that I should look upon Cadurcis with aversion?”

“But, mother, dearest mother, we have known Plantagenet from his childhood. You ever loved him; you ever gave him credit for a heart—most tender and affectionate.”

“He has no heart.”

“Mother!”

“He cannot have a heart. Spirits like him are heartless. It is another impulse that sways their existence. It is imagination; it is vanity; it is self, disguised with glittering qualities that dazzle our weak senses, but selfishness, the most entire, the most concentrated. We knew him as a child,—ah! what can women know!

We are born to love, and to be deceived. We saw him young, helpless, abandoned;—he moved our pity. We knew not his nature; then he was ignorant of it himself. But the young tiger, though cradled at our hearths and fed on milk, will in good time retire to its jungle and prey on blood. You cannot change its nature; and the very hand that fostered it will be its first victim.”

“How often have we parted!” said Venetia, in a deprecating tone; “how long have we been separated! and yet we find him ever the same; he ever loves us. Yes! dear mother, he loves you now, the same as in old days. If you had seen him, as I have seen him, weep when he recalled your promise to be a parent to him, and then contrasted with such sweet hopes your present reserve, oh! you would believe he had a heart, you would, indeed!”

“Weep!” exclaimed Lady Annabel, bitterly, “ay! they can weep. Sensibility is a luxury which they love to indulge. Their very sus-

ceptibility is our bane. They can weep ; they can play upon our feelings : and our emotion, so easily excited, is an homage to their own power, in which they glory.

“Look at Cadurcis,” she suddenly resumed ; “bred with so much care ; the soundest principles instilled into him with such sedulousness ; imbibing them apparently with so much intelligence, ardour, and sincerity, with all that fervour, indeed, with which men of his temperament for the moment pursue every object ; but a few years back, pious, dutiful, and moral, viewing perhaps with intolerance too youthful all that differed from the opinions and the conduct he had been educated to admire and follow. And what is he now ? The most lawless of the wild ; casting to the winds every salutary principle of restraint and social discipline, and glorying only in the abandoned energy of self. Three years ago, you yourself confess to me, he reproached you with your father’s conduct ; now he emulates it. There is a career which

such men must run, and from which no influence can divert them; it is in their blood. To-day Cadurcis may vow to you eternal devotion; but, if the world speaks truth, Venetia, a month ago he was equally enamoured of another—and one, too, who cannot be his. But grant that his sentiments towards you are for the moment sincere; his imagination broods upon your idea, it transfigures it with a halo which exists only to his vision. Yield to him; become his bride; and you will have the mortification of finding, that before six months have elapsed, his restless spirit is already occupied with objects which may excite your mortification, your disgust, even your horror!”

“Ah! mother, it is not with Plantagenet as with my father; Plantagenet could not forget Cherbury, he could not forget our childhood,” said Venetia.

“On the contrary, while you lived together these recollections would be wearisome, commonplace to him; when you had separated, indeed,

mellowed by distance, and the comparative vagueness with which your absence would invest them, they would become the objects of his muse, and he would insult you by making the public the confidant of all your most delicate domestic feelings.”

Lady Annabel rose from her seat, and walked up and down the room, speaking with an excitement very unusual with her. “To have all the soft secrets of your life revealed to the coarse wonder of the gloating multitude; to find yourself the object of the world’s curiosity—still worse, their pity, their sympathy; to have the sacred conduct of your hearth canvassed in every circle, and be the grand subject of the pros and cons of every paltry journal,—ah! Venetia, you know not, you cannot understand, it is impossible you can comprehend, the bitterness of such a lot.”

“My beloved mother!” said Venetia, with

streaming eyes, “you cannot have a feeling that I do not share.”

“Venetia, you know not what I had to endure!” exclaimed Lady Annabel, in a tone of extreme bitterness. “There is no degree of wretchedness that you can conceive equal to what has been the life of your mother. And what has sustained me—what, throughout all my tumultuous troubles, has been the star on which I have ever gazed?—My child! And am I to lose her now, after all my sufferings, all my hopes that she at least might be spared my miserable doom! Am I to witness her also a victim!” Lady Annabel clasped her hands in passionate grief.

“Mother! mother!” exclaimed Venetia, in agony, “spare yourself, spare me!”

“Venetia, you know how I have doated upon you; you know how I have watched and tended you from your infancy. Have I had a thought, a wish, a hope, a plan?—has there been the slightest action of my life, of which you have

not been the object? All mothers feel, but none ever felt like me: you were my solitary joy."

Venetia leant her face upon the table at which she was sitting, and sobbed aloud.

"My love was baffled," Lady Annabel continued. "I fled, for both our sakes, from the world in which my family were honoured;—I sacrificed without a sigh, in the very prime of my youth, every pursuit which interests woman; but I had my child—I had my child!"

"And you have her still!" exclaimed the miserable Venetia. "Mother, you have her still!"

"I have schooled my mind," continued Lady Annabel, still pacing the room with agitated steps; "I have disciplined my emotions; I have felt at my heart the constant, the undying pang, and yet I have smiled, that you might be happy. But I can struggle against my fate no longer. No longer can I suffer my un-

paralleled,—yes, my unjust doom. What have I done to merit these afflictions?— Now, then, let me struggle no more; let me die!”

Venetia tried to rise; her limbs refused their office; she tottered; she fell again into her seat with an hysteric cry.

“Alas! alas!” exclaimed Lady Annabel, “to a mother, a child is everything; but to a child, a parent is only a link in the chain of her existence. It was weakness, it was folly, it was madness to stake everything on a resource which must fail me. I feel it now, but I feel it too late.”

Venetia held forth her arms; she could not speak; she was stifled with her emotion.

“But was it wonderful that I was so weak?” continued her mother, as it were communing only with herself. “What child was like mine? Oh! the joy, the bliss, the hours of rapture that I have passed, in gazing upon my

treasure, and dreaming of all her beauty and her rare qualities! I was so happy!—I was so proud! Ah! Venetia, you know not how I have loved you!”

Venetia sprang from her seat; she rushed forward with convulsive energy; she clung to her mother, threw her arms round her neck, and buried her passionate woe in Lady Annabel's bosom.

Lady Annabel stood for some minutes supporting her speechless and agitated child; then, as her sobs became fainter, and the tumult of her grief gradually died away, she bore her to the sofa, and seated herself by her side, holding Venetia's hand in her own, and ever and anon soothing her with soft embraces, and still softer words.

At length, in a faint voice, Venetia said, “Mother, what can I do to restore the past? How can we be to each other as we were, for this I cannot bear?”

“Love me, my Venetia, as I love you; be

faithful to your mother; do not disregard her counsel; profit by her errors."

"I will in all things obey you," said Venetia, in a low voice; "there is no sacrifice I am not prepared to make, for your happiness."

"Let us not talk of sacrifices, my darling child; it is not a sacrifice that I require. I wish only to prevent your everlasting misery."

"What, then, shall I do?"

"Make me only one promise; whatever pledge you give, I feel assured that no influence, Venetia, will ever induce you to forfeit it."

"Name it, mother."

"Promise me never to marry Lord Cadurcis," said Lady Annabel, in a whisper, but a whisper of which not a word was lost by the person to whom it was addressed.

"I promise never to marry, but with your approbation," said Venetia, in a solemn voice, and uttering the words with great distinctness.

The countenance of Lady Annabel instantly brightened ; she embraced her child with extreme fondness, and breathed the softest and the sweetest expressions of gratitude and love.

CHAPTER XV.

WHEN Lady Monteagle discovered that of which her good-natured friends took care she should not long remain ignorant,—that Venetia Herbert had been the companion of Lord Cardurcis' childhood, and that the most intimate relations had once subsisted between the two families,—she became the prey of the most violent jealousy; and the bitterness of her feelings was not a little increased, when she felt that she had not only been abandoned, but duped; and that the new beauty, out of his fancy for whom she had flattered herself she had so triumphantly rallied him, was an old friend, whom he had always admired. She seized the first occasion,

after this discovery, of relieving her feelings, by a scene so violent, that Cadurcis had never again entered Monteagle House; and then repenting of this mortifying result, which she had herself precipitated, she overwhelmed him with letters, which, next to scenes, were the very things which Lord Cadurcis most heartily abhorred. These,—now indignant, now passionate, now loading him with reproaches, now appealing to his love, and now to his pity,—daily arrived at his residence, and were greeted at first only with short and sarcastic replies, and finally by silence. Then the lady solicited a final interview, and Lord Cadurcis having made an appointment to quiet her, went out of town the day before to Richmond, to a villa belonging to Venetia's uncle, and where, among other guests, he was of course to meet Lady Annabel and her daughter.

The party was a most agreeable one, and assumed an additional interest with Cadurcis, who had resolved to seize this favourable opportunity to bring his aspirations to Venetia to a crisis.

The day after the last conversation with her, which we have noticed, he had indeed boldly called upon the Herberts at their hotel for that purpose, but without success, as they were again absent from home. He had been since almost daily in the society of Venetia; but London, to a lover who is not smiled upon by the domestic circle of his mistress, is a very unfavourable spot for confidential conversations. A villa life, with its easy, unembarrassed habits, its gardens and lounging walks, to say nothing of the increased opportunities resulting from being together at all hours, and living under the same roof, was more promising; and here he flattered himself he might defy even the Argus eye and ceaseless vigilance of his intended mother-in-law, his enemy, whom he could not propitiate, and whom he now fairly hated.

His cousin George, too, was a guest, and his cousin George was the confidant of his love. Upon this kind relation devolved the duty—far from a disagreeable one—of amusing the mother;

and as Lady Annabel, though she relaxed not a jot of the grim courtesy which she ever extended to Lord Cadurcis, was no longer seriously uneasy as to his influence after the promise she had extracted from her daughter, it would seem that circumstances combined to prevent Lord Cadurcis from being disappointed at least in the first object which he wished to obtain—an opportunity.

And yet several days elapsed before this offered itself,—passed by Cadurcis, however, very pleasantly in the presence of the being he loved, and very judiciously too, for no one could possibly be more amiable and ingratiating than our friend. Every one present, except Lady Annabel, appeared to entertain for him as much affection as admiration: those who had only met him in throngs were quite surprised how their superficial observation and the delusive reports of the world had misled them. As for his hostess, whom it had ever been his study to please, he had long won her heart; and, as she could not be blind to his

projects and pretensions, she heartily wished him success, assisted him with all her efforts, and desired nothing more sincerely than that her niece should achieve such a conquest, and she obtain so distinguished a nephew.

Notwithstanding her promise to her mother, Venetia felt justified in making no alteration in her conduct to one whom she still sincerely loved; and, under the immediate influence of his fascination, it was often, when she was alone, that she mourned with a sorrowing heart over the opinion which her mother entertained of him. Could it indeed be possible that Plantagenet,—the same Plantagenet she had known so early and so long, to her invariably so tender and so devoted,—could entail on her, by their union, such unspeakable and inevitable misery? Whatever might be the view adopted by her mother of her conduct, Venetia felt every hour more keenly that it was a sacrifice, and the greatest; and she still indulged in a vague yet delicious dream, that Lady Annabel might ultimately withdraw the

harsh and perhaps heart-breaking interdict she had so rigidly decreed.

“ Cadurcis,” said his cousin to him one morning, “ we are all going to Hampton Court. Now is your time ; Lady Annabel, the Vernons, and myself, will fill one carriage ; I have arranged that. Look out, and something may be done. Speak to the Countess.”

Accordingly Lord Cadurcis hastened to make a suggestion to a friend always flattered by his notice. “ My dear friend,” he said in his softest tone, “ let you, and Venetia, and myself, manage to be together ; it will be so delightful ; we shall quite enjoy ourselves.”

The Countess did not require this animating compliment to effect the object which Cadurcis did not express. She had gradually fallen into the unacknowledged conspiracy against her sister-in-law, whose prejudice against her friend she had long discovered, and had now ceased to combat. Two carriages, and one filled as George had arranged, accordingly drove gaily away ;

and Venetia, and her aunt, and Lord Cadurcis, were to follow them on horseback. They rode with delight through the splendid avenues of Bushey, and Cadurcis was never in a lighter or happier mood.

The month of May was in its decline, and the cloudless sky and the balmy air such as suited so agreeable a season. The London season was approaching its close; for the royal birthday was, at the period of our history, generally the signal of preparation for country quarters. The carriages arrived long before the riding party, for they had walked their steeds, and they found a messenger who requested them to join their friends in the apartments which they were visiting.

“For my part,” said Cadurcis, “I love the sun that rarely shines in this land. I feel no inclination to lose the golden hours in these gloomy rooms. What say you, ladies fair, to a stroll in the gardens? It will be doubly charming after our ride.”

His companions cheerfully assented, and they walked away, congratulating themselves on their escape from the wearisome amusement of palace-hunting, straining their eyes to see pictures hung at a gigantic height, and solemnly wandering through formal apartments full of state beds and massy cabinets and modern armour.

Taking their way along the terrace, they struck at length into a less formal path. At length the Countess seated herself on a bench. "I must rest," she said, "but you, young people, may roam about ; only do not lose me."

"Come, Venetia !" said Lord Cadurcis.

Venetia was hesitating; she did not like to leave her aunt alone, but the Countess encouraged her, "If you will not go, you will only make me continue walking," she said. And so Venetia proceeded, and for the first time since her visit was alone with Plantagenet.

"I quite love your aunt," said Lord Cadurcis.

"It is difficult indeed not to love her," said Venetia.

“ Ah ! Venetia, I wish your mother was like your aunt,” he continued. It was an observation which was not heard without some emotion by his companion, though it was imperceptible. “ Venetia,” said Cadurcis, “ when I recollect old days, how strange it seems that we now never should be alone, but by some mere accident, like this for instance.”

“ It is of no use thinking of old days,” said Venetia.

“ No use ! ” said Cadurcis. “ I do not like to hear you say that, Venetia. Those are some of the least agreeable words that were ever uttered by that mouth. I cling to old days ; they are my only joy and my only hope.”

“ They are gone,” said Venetia.

“ But may they not return ? ” said Cadurcis.

“ Never,” said Venetia, mournfully.

They had walked on to a marble fountain of gigantic proportions and elaborate workmanship, an assemblage of divinities and genii, all spouting water in fantastic attitudes.

“Old days,” said Plantagenet, “are like the old fountain at Cadurcis, dearer to me than all this modern splendour.”

“The old fountain at Cadurcis,” said Venetia, musingly, and gazing on the water with an abstracted air, “I loved it well!”

“Venetia,” said her companion, in a tone of extreme tenderness, yet not untouched with melancholy, “dear Venetia, let us return, and return together, to that old fountain and those old days!”

Venetia shook her head. “Ah! Plantagenet,” she exclaimed in a mournful voice, “we must not speak of these things.”

“Why not, Venetia?” exclaimed Lord Cadurcis, eagerly. “Why should we be estranged from each other? I love you; I love only you; never have I loved another. And you—have you forgotten all our youthful affection? You cannot, Venetia. Our childhood can never be a blank.”

“I told you, when first we met, my heart was

unchanged," said Venetia, in a very serious tone.

"Remember the vows I made to you, when last at Cherbury," said Cadurcis. "Years have flown on, Venetia; but they find me urging the same. At any rate, now I know myself; at any rate, I am not now an obscure boy; yet what is manhood, and what is fame, without the charm of my infancy and my youth! Yes! Venetia, you must—you will be mine?"

"Plantagenet," she replied, in a solemn tone, "yours I never can be."

"You do not, then, love me?" said Cadurcis, reproachfully, and in a voice of great feeling.

"It is impossible for you to be loved more than I love you," said Venetia.

"My own Venetia!" said Cadurcis; "Venetia that I dote on! what does this mean? Why, then, will you not be mine?"

"I cannot; there is an obstacle—an insuperable obstacle."

"Tell it me," said Cadurcis eagerly; "I will overcome it."

“ I have promised never to marry without the approbation of my mother ; her approbation you never can obtain.”

Cadurcis' countenance fell ; this was an obstacle which he felt that even he could not overcome.

“ I told you your mother hated me, Venetia.” And then, as she did not reply, he continued, “ You confess it, I see you confess it. Once you flattered me I was mistaken ; but now, now you confess it.”

“ Hatred is a word which I cannot understand,” replied Venetia. “ My mother has reasons for disapproving my union with you ; not founded on the circumstances of your life and therefore removable—for I know what the world says, Plantagenet, of you—but I have confidence in your love, and that is nothing ; but founded on your character, on your nature ; they may be unjust, but they are insuperable, and I must yield to them.”

“ You have another parent, Venetia,” said

Cadurcis, in a tone of almost irresistible softness, “the best and greatest of men! Once you told me that his sanction was necessary to your marriage. I will obtain it. O! Venetia, be mine, and we will join him; join that ill-fated and illustrious being, who loves you with a passion second only to mine; him, who has addressed you in language which rests on every lip and has thrilled many a heart that you even can never know. My adored Venetia, picture to yourself, for one moment, a life with him; resting on my bosom, consecrated by his paternal love! Let us quit this mean and miserable existence, which we now pursue, which never could have suited us; let us shun for ever this dull and degrading life, that is not life, if life be what I deem it; let us fly to those beautiful solitudes, where he communes with an inspiring nature; let us—let us be happy!”

He uttered these last words in a tone of melting tenderness; he leant forward his head, and his gaze caught hers which was fixed upon the

water. Her hand was pressed suddenly in his; his eye glittered, his lip seemed still speaking; he awaited his doom.

The countenance of Venetia was quite pale, but it was disturbed. You might see as it were the shadowy progress of thought, and mark the tumultuous passage of conflicting passions. Her mind for a moment was indeed a chaos. There was a terrible conflict between love and duty. At length a tear, one solitary tear, burst from her burning eye-ball, and stole slowly down her cheek; it relieved her pain. She pressed Cadurcis' hand, and speaking in a hollow voice, and with a look vague and painful, she said "I am a victim, but I am resolved. I never will desert her who devoted herself to me."

Cadurcis quitted her hand rather abruptly, and began walking up and down on the turf that surrounded the fountain.

"Devoted herself to you!" he exclaimed with a fiendish laugh, and speaking, as was his custom, between his teeth, "Commend me to such de-

votion. Not content with depriving you of a father, now forsooth she must bereave you of a lover too ! And this is a mother, a devoted mother ! The cold-blooded, sullen, selfish, inexorable tyrant !”

“Plantagenet !” exclaimed Venetia, with great animation.

“Nay, I will speak. Victim, indeed ! You have ever been her slave. She a devoted mother ! Ay ! as devoted as a mother as she was dutiful as a wife ! She has no heart ; she never had a feeling. And she cajoles you with her love, her devotion—the stern hypocrite !”

“I must leave you,” said Venetia ; “I cannot bear this.”

“Oh ! the truth, the truth is precious,” said Cadurcis, taking her hand and preventing her from moving. “Your mother, your devoted mother, has driven one man of genius from her bosom, and his country. Yet there is another. Deny me what I ask, and to-morrow’s sun shall light me to another land ; to this I will never

return ; I will blend my tears with your father's, and I will publish to Europe the double infamy of your mother. I swear it solemnly. Still I stand here, Venetia ; prepared, if you will but smile upon me, to be her son, her dutiful son. Nay ! her slave like you. She shall not murmur. I will be dutiful ; she shall be devoted ; we will all be happy," he added in a softer tone. " Now, now, Venetia, my happiness is on the stake, now, now."

" I have spoken," said Venetia. " My heart may break, but my purpose shall not falter."

" Then my curse upon your mother's head !" said Cadurcis, with terrible vehemency. " May Heaven rain all its plagues upon her ! The Hecate !"

" I will listen no more," exclaimed Venetia indignantly, and she moved away. She had proceeded some little distance when she paused and looked back ; Cadurcis was still at the fountain, but he did not observe her. She remembered his sudden departure from Cherbury, she did

not doubt that, in the present instance, he would leave them as abruptly, and that he would keep his word so solemnly given. Her heart was nearly breaking, but she could not bear the idea of parting in bitterness with the being whom perhaps she loved best in the world. She stopt, she called his name in a voice low indeed, but in that silent spot it reached him. He joined her immediately, but with a slow step. When he had reached her, he said, without any animation, and in a frigid tone, "I believe you called me?"

Venetia burst into tears. "I cannot bear to part in anger, Plantagenet. I wished to say farewell in kindness. I shall always pray for your happiness. God bless you, Plantagenet!"

Lord Cadurcis made no reply, though for a moment he seemed about to speak; he bowed, and as Venetia approached her aunt, he turned his steps in a different direction.

CHAPTER XVI.

VENETIA stopped for a moment to collect herself before she joined her aunt, but it was impossible to conceal her agitation from the Countess. They had not, however, been long together before they observed their friends in the distance, who had now quitted the palace. Venetia made the utmost efforts to compose herself, and not unsuccessful ones. She was sufficiently calm on their arrival, to listen, if not to converse. The Countess, with all the tact of a woman, covered her niece's confusion by her animated description of their agreeable ride, and their still more pleasant promenade ; and in a few minutes the whole party were walking

back to their carriages. When they had arrived at the inn, they found Lord Cadurcis, to whose temporary absence the Countess had alluded with some casual observation which she flattered herself was very satisfactory. Cadurcis appeared rather sullen, and the Countess, with feminine quickness, suddenly discovered that both herself and her niece were extremely fatigued, and that they had better return in the carriages. There was one vacant place, and some of the gentlemen must ride outside. Lord Cadurcis, however, said that he should return as he came, and the grooms might lead back the ladies' horses: and so in a few minutes the carriages had driven off.

Our solitary equestrian, however, was no sooner mounted than he put his horse to its speed, and never drew in his rein, until he reached Hyde Park Corner. The rapid motion accorded with his tumultuous mood. He was soon at home, gave his horse to a servant, for he had left his groom behind, rushed into his

library, tore up a letter of Lady Monteagle's with a demoniac glance, and rang his bell with such force that it broke. His valet, not unused to such ebullitions, immediately appeared.

“Has any thing happened, Spalding,” said his lordship.

“Nothing particular, my lord. Her ladyship sent every day, and called herself twice, but I told her your lordship was in Yorkshire.”

“That was right; I saw a letter from her. When did it come?”

“It has been here several days, my lord.”

“Mind, I am at home to nobody; I am not in town.”

The valet bowed and disappeared. Cadurcis threw himself into an easy chair, stretched his legs, sighed, and then swore; then suddenly starting up, he seized a mass of letters that were lying on the table, and hurled them to the other end of the apartment, dashed several books to the ground, kicked down several chairs that were in his way, and began pacing

the room with his usual troubled step; and so he continued until the shades of twilight entered his apartment. Then he pulled down the other bell-rope, and Mr. Spalding again appeared.

“Order post-horses for to-morrow,” said his lordship.

“Where to, my lord?”

“I don’t know; order the horses.”

Mr. Spalding again bowed and disappeared.

In a few minutes he heard a great stamping and confusion in his master’s apartment, and presently the door opened and his master’s voice was heard calling him repeatedly in a very irritable tone.

“Why are there no bells in this cursed room?” inquired Lord Cadurcis.

“The ropes are broken, my lord.”

“Why are they broken?”

“I can’t say, my lord.”

“I cannot leave this house for a day but I

find every thing in confusion. Bring me some Burgundy."

"Yes, my lord; there is a young lad, my lord, called a few minutes back, and asked for your lordship. He says he has something very particular to say to your lordship. I told him your lordship was out of town. He said your lordship would wish very much to see him, and that he had come from the Abbey."

"The Abbey!" said Cadurcis, in a tone of curiosity. "Why did you not show him in?"

"Your lordship said you were not at home to any body."

"Idiot! Is this anybody? Of course I would have seen him. What the devil do I keep you for, sir? You seem to me to have lost your head."

Mr. Spalding retired.

"The Abbey! that is droll," said Cadurcis. "I owe some duties to the poor Abbey. I should not like to quit England, and leave any

body in trouble at the Abbey. I wish I had seen the lad. Some son of a tenant who has written to me, and I have never opened his letters. I am sorry."

In a few minutes Mr. Spalding again entered the room. "The young lad has called again, my lord. He says he thinks your lordship has come to town, and he wishes to see your lordship very much."

"Bring lights and show him up. Show him up first."

Accordingly, a country lad was ushered into the room, although it was so dusky that Cadurcis could only observe his figure standing at the door.

"Well, my good fellow," said Cadurcis; "what do you want? Are you in any trouble?"

The boy hesitated.

"Speak out, my good fellow; do not be alarmed. If I can serve you, or any one at the Abbey, I will do it."

Here Mr. Spalding entered with the lights. The lad held a cotton handkerchief to his face; he appeared to be weeping; all that was seen of his head were his locks of red hair. He seemed a country lad, dressed in a long green coat with silver buttons, and he twirled in his disengaged hand a peasant's white hat.

“That will do, Spalding,” said Lord Cadurcis. “Leave the room. Now, my good fellow, my time is precious; but speak out, and do not be afraid.”

“Cadurcis!” said the lad in a sweet and trembling voice.

“Gertrude, by G—d!” exclaimed Lord Cadurcis starting. “What infernal masquerade is this?”

“Is it a greater disguise than I have to bear every hour of my life?” exclaimed Lady Mont-eagle advancing. “Have I not to bear a smiling face with a breaking heart!”

“By Jove! a scene,” exclaimed Cadurcis in a piteous tone.

“ A scene ! ” exclaimed Lady Monteagle, bursting into a flood of indignant tears. “ Is this the way the expression of my feelings is ever to be stigmatised ! Barbarous man ! ”

Cadurcis stood with his back to the fire-place, with his lips compressed, and his hands under his coat-tails. He was resolved that nothing should induce him to utter a word. He looked the picture of dogged indifference.

“ I know where you have been, ” continued Lady Monteagle. “ You have been to Richmond ; you have been with Miss Herbert. Yes ! I know all. I am a victim, but I will not be a dupe. Yorkshire indeed ! Paltry coward ! ”

Cadurcis hummed an air.

“ And this is Lord Cadurcis ! ” continued the lady. “ The sublime, etherial Lord Cadurcis, condescending to the last refuge of the meanest, most commonplace mind, a vulgar, wretched lie ! What could have been expected from such a mind ? You may delude the world, but I know you. Yes ! Sir ; I know you. And I will let every body know you. I will tear away the veil of

charlatanism with which you have enveloped yourself. The world shall at length discover the nature of the idol they have worshipped. All your meanness, all your falsehood, all your selfishness, all your baseness, shall be revealed. I may be spurned, but at any rate I will be revenged ! ”

Lord Cadurcis yawned.

“ Insulting, pitiful wretch ! ” continued the lady. “ And you think that I wish to hear you speak ! You think the sound of that deceitful voice has any charm for me ! You are mistaken, Sir. I have listened to you too long. It was not to remonstrate with you that I resolved to see you. The tones of your voice can only excite my disgust. I am here to speak myself ; to express to you the contempt, the detestation, the aversion, the scorn, the hatred, which I entertain for you ! ”

Lord Cadurcis whistled.

The lady paused ; she had effected the professed purport of her visit ; she ought now to

have retired, and Cadurcis would most willingly have opened the door for her, and bowed her out of his apartment. But her conduct did not exactly accord with her speech. She intimated no intention of moving. Her courteous friend retained his position, and adhered to his policy of silence. There was a dead pause, and then Lady Monteagle, throwing herself into a chair, went into violent hysterics.

Lord Cadurcis, following her example, also seated himself, took up a book, and began to read.

The hysterics became fainter and fainter; they experienced all those gradations of convulsive noise with which Lord Cadurcis was so well acquainted; at length they subsided into sobs and sighs. Finally, there was again silence, now only disturbed by the sound of a page turned by Lord Cadurcis.

Suddenly the lady sprang from her seat, and firmly grasping the arm of Cadurcis, threw herself on her knees at his side.

“ Cadurcis ! ” she exclaimed in a tender tone,
“ Do you love me ? ”

“ My dear Gertrude,” said Lord Cadurcis coolly, but rather regretting he had quitted his original and less assailable posture, “ You know I like quiet women.”

“ Cadurcis, forgive me ! ” murmured the lady. “ Pity me ! Think only how miserable I am ! ”

“ Your misery is of your own making,” said Lord Cadurcis. “ What occasion is there for any of these extraordinary proceedings ? I have told you a thousand times that I cannot endure scenes. Female society is a relaxation to me ; you convert it into torture. I like to sail upon a summer sea ; and you always will insist upon a white squall.”

“ But you have deserted me ! ”

“ I never desert any one,” replied Cadurcis very calmly, raising her from her supplicating attitude, and leading her to a seat. “ The last time we met, you banished me your presence,

and told me never to speak to you again. Well, I obeyed your orders, as I always do."

"But I did not mean what I said," said Lady Monteagle.

"How should I know that?" said Lord Cadurcis.

"Your heart ought to have assured you," said the lady.

"The tongue is a less deceptive organ than the heart," replied her companion.

"Cadurcis," said the lady, looking at her strange disguise, "what do you advise me to do?"

"To go home; and if you like I will order my vis-a-vis for you directly," and he rose from his seat to give the order.

"Ah! you are sighing to get rid of me!" said the lady, in a reproachful, but still very subdued tone.

"Why, the fact is, Gertrude, I prefer calling upon you, to your calling upon me. When I am fitted for your society, I seek it: and, when

you are good-tempered, always with pleasure; when I am not in the mood for it, I stay away. And when I am at home, I wish to see no one;—I have business now, and not very agreeable business. I am disturbed by many causes, and you could not have taken a step which could have given me greater annoyance than the strange one you have adopted this evening.”

“I am sorry for it now,” said the lady, weeping. “When shall I see you again?”

“I will call upon you to-morrow, and pray receive me with smiles.”

“I ever will,” said the lady, weeping plentifully. “It is all my fault; you are ever too good. There is not in the world a kinder and more gentle being than yourself. I shall never forgive myself for this exposure.”

“Would you like to take anything?” said Lord Cadurcis; “I am sure you must feel exhausted. You see I am drinking wine; it is my only dinner to-day, but I dare say there is

some sal-volatile in the house; I dare say, when my maids go into hysterics, they have it!"

"Ah! mocker," said Lady Monteagle, "but I can pardon everything, if you will only let me see you."

"Au revoir! then," said his lordship; "I am sure the carriage must be ready. I hear it. Come, Mr. Gertrude, settle your wig,—it is quite awry. By Jove! we might as well go to the Pantheon, as you are ready dressed. I have a domino." And so saying, Lord Cadurcis handed the lady to his carriage, and pressed her lightly by the hand, as he reiterated his promise of calling at Monteagle House the next day.

CHAPTER XVII.

LORD CADURCIS—unhappy at home, and wearied of the common-place resources of society—had passed the night in every species of dissipation; his principal companion being that same young nobleman in whose company he had been when he first met Venetia at Ranelagh. The morn was nearly breaking when Cadurcis and his friend arrived at his door. They had settled to welcome the dawn with a beaker of burnt Burgundy.

“Now, my dear Scrope,” said Cadurcis, “now for quiet and philosophy. The laughter of those infernal women, the rattle of those cursed dice, and the oaths of those ruffians, are still

ringing in my ears. Let us compose ourselves, and moralise.”

Accustomed to their master's habits—who generally turned night into day—the household were all on the alert; a blazing fire greeted them, and his lordship ordered instantly a devil and the burnt Burgundy.

“Sit you down here, my Scrope; that is the seat of honour, and you shall have it. What is this—a letter? and marked ‘urgent’—and in a man's hand? It must be read. Some good fellow nabbed by a bailiff, or planted by his mistress. Signals of distress! We must assist our friends.”

The flame of the fire fell upon Lord Cadurcis' face as he read the letter; he was still standing, while his friend was stretched out in his easy chair, and inwardly congratulating himself on his comfortable prospects. The countenance of Cadurcis did not change, but he bit his lip, and read the letter twice, and turned it over, but with a careless air; and then he asked what

o'clock it was. The servant informed him, and left the room.

“Scrope,” said Lord Cadurcis, very quietly, and still standing, “are you very drunk?”

“My dear fellow, I am as fresh as possible; you will see what justice I shall do to the Burgundy.”

“‘Burgundy to-morrow,’ as the Greek proverb saith,” observed Lord Cadurcis. “Read that.”

His companion had the pleasure of perusing a challenge from Lord Monteagle, couched in no gentle terms, and requesting an immediate meeting.

“Well, I never heard anything more ridiculous in my life,” said Lord Scrope. “Does he want satisfaction because you have planted her?”

“D—n her!” said Lord Cadurcis. “She has occasioned me a thousand annoyances, and now she has spoilt our supper. I don’t know, though; he wants to fight quickly,—let us fight

at once. I will send him a cartel now, and then we can have our Burgundy. You will go out with me, of course? Hyde Park, six o'clock, and short swords."

Lord Cadurcis accordingly sat down, wrote his letter, and dispatched it by Mr. Spalding to Monteagle House, with peremptory instructions to bring back an answer. The companions then turned to their devil.

"This is a bore, Cadurcis," said Lord Scrope.

"It is. I cannot say I am very valorous in a bad cause. I do not like to fight 'upon compulsion,' I confess. If I had time to screw my courage up, I dare say I should do it very well. I dare say, for instance, if ever I am publicly executed, I shall die game."

"God forbid," said Lord Scrope. "I say, Cadurcis, I would not drink any Burgundy if I were you. I shall take a glass of cold water."

"Ah! you are only a second, and so you want

to cool your valour," said Cadurcis. "You have all the fun."

"But how came this blow-up?" inquired Lord Scrope. "Letters discovered—eh? Because I thought you never saw her now?"

"By Jove! my dear fellow, she has been the whole evening here, masquerading it like a very vixen, as she is; and now she has committed us both. I have burnt her letters, without reading them, for the last month. Now I call that honourable; because, as I had no longer any claim on her heart, I would not think of trenching on her correspondence. But honour, what is honour in these dishonourable days? This is my reward. She contrived to enter my house this evening, dressed like a farmer's boy, and you may imagine what ensued; rage, hysterics, and repentance. I am sure if Monteagle had seen me, he would not have been jealous. I never opened my mouth, but, like a fool, sent her home in my carriage; and now I am going to be run through the body for my politeness."

In this light strain,—blended, however, with more decorous feeling on the part of Lord Scrope,—the young men conversed until the messengers returned, with Lord Monteagle's answer. In Hyde Park, in the course of an hour, himself and Lord Cadurcis, attended by their friends, were to meet.

“Well there is nothing like having these affairs over,” said Cadurcis, “and, to confess the truth, my dear Scrope, I should not much care if Monteagle were to despatch me to my fathers; for, in the whole course of my miserable life,—and miserable, whatever the world may think, it has been,—I never felt much more wretched than I have during the last four-and-twenty hours. By Jove! do you know I was going to leave England this morning, and I have ordered my horses too.”

“Leave England!”

“Yes, leave England; and where I never intended to return.”

“ Well, you are the oddest person I ever knew, Cadurcis. I should have thought you the happiest person that ever existed. Everybody admires, everybody envies you. You seem to have every thing that man can desire. Your life is a perpetual triumph.”

“ Ah ! my dear Scrope, there is a skeleton in every house. If you knew all, you would not envy me.”

“ Well, we have not much time,” said Lord Scrope, “ have you any arrangements to make ? ”

“ None. My property goes to George, who is my only relative, without the necessity of a will, otherwise I should leave every thing to him, for he is a good fellow, and my blood is in his veins. Just you remember, Scrope, that I will be buried with my mother. That is all ; and now let us get ready.”

The sun had just risen when the young men went forth, and the day promised to be as brilliant as the preceding one. Not a soul was

stirring in the courtly quarter in which Cadurcis resided; even the last watchman had stolen to repose. They called a hackney coach at the first stand they reached, and were soon at the destined spot. They were indeed before their time, and strolling by the side of the Serpentine, Cadurcis said, "Yesterday morning was one of the happiest of my life, Scrope, and I was in hopes that an event would have occurred in the course of the day, that might have been my salvation. If it had, by the bye, I should not have returned to town, and got into this cursed scrape. However, the gods were against me, and now I am reckless."

Now Lord Monteagle and his friend, who was Mr. Horace Pole, appeared. Cadurcis advanced, and bowed; Lord Monteagle returned his bow, stiffly, but did not speak. The seconds chose their ground, the champions disembarassed themselves of their coats, and their swords crossed. It was a brief affair. After a few

passes, Cadurcis received a slight wound in his arm, while his weapon pierced his antagonist in the breast. Lord Monteagle dropped his sword, and fell.

“You had better fly, Lord Cadurcis,” said Mr. Horace Pole. “This is a bad business, I fear; we have a surgeon at hand, and he can help us to the coach that is waiting close by.”

“I thank you, Sir, I never fly,” said Lord Cadurcis; “and I shall wait here until I see your principal safely deposited in his carriage; he will have no objection to my friend, Lord Scrope, assisting him, who, by his presence to-day, has only fulfilled one of the painful duties that society imposes upon us.”

The surgeon gave a very unfavourable report of the wound, which he dressed on the field. Lord Monteagle was then borne to his carriage, which was at hand, and Lord Scrope, the moment he had seen the equipage move slowly off, returned to his friend.

“ Well, Cadurcis,” he exclaimed, in an anxious voice, “ I hope you have not killed him. What will you do now ?”

“ I shall go home, and await the result, my dear Scrope. I am sorry for you, for this may get you into trouble. For myself, I care nothing.”

“ You bleed !” said Lord Scrope.

“ A scratch. I almost wish our lots had been the reverse. Come, Scrope, help me on with my coat. Yesterday I lost my heart, last night I lost my money, and perhaps to-morrow I shall lose my arm. It seems we are not in luck.”

CHAPTER XVIII.

IT has been well observed, that no spectacle is so ridiculous as the British public, in one of its periodical fits of morality. In general, elopements, divorces, and family quarrels, pass with little notice. We read the scandal, talk about it for a day, and forget it. But once in six or seven years, our virtue becomes outrageous. We cannot suffer the laws of religion and decency to be violated. We must make a stand against vice. We must teach libertines that the English people appreciate the importance of domestic ties. Accordingly, some unfortunate man, in no respect more depraved than hundreds whose offences have been treated with

lenity, is singled out as an expiatory sacrifice. If he has children, they are to be taken from him. If he has a profession, he is to be driven from it. He is cut by the higher orders, and hissed by the lower. He is, in truth, a sort of whipping boy, by whose vicarious agonies all the other transgressors of the same class are, it is supposed, sufficiently chastised. We reflect very complacently on our own severity, and compare, with great pride, the high standard of morals established in England, with the Parisian laxity. At length, our anger is satiated,—our victim is ruined, and heart-broken,—and our virtue goes quietly to sleep for seven years more.

Thus it happened to Lord Cadurcis; he was the periodical victim, the scape-goat of English morality, sent into the wilderness with all the crimes and curses of the multitude on his head. Lord Cadurcis had certainly committed a great crime: not his intrigue with Lady Monteagle, for that surely was not an unprecedented offence;

not his duel with her husband, for after all it was a duel in self-defence; and, at all events, divorces and duels, under any circumstances, would scarcely have excited or authorised the storm which was now about to burst over the late spoiled child of society. But Lord Cadurcis had been guilty of the offence which, of all offences, is punished most severely:—Lord Cadurcis had been overpraised. He had excited too warm an interest; and the public, with its usual justice, was resolved to chastise him for its own folly.

There are no fits of caprice so hasty and so violent as those of society. Society, indeed, is all passions and no heart. Cadurcis, in allusion to his sudden and singular success, had been in the habit of saying to his intimates, that he “woke one morning and found himself famous.” He might now observe, “I woke one morning and found myself infamous.” Before twenty-four hours had passed over his duel with Lord Mont-eagle, he found himself branded by every journal.

in London, as an unprincipled and unparalleled reprobate. The public, without waiting to think or even to inquire after the truth, instantly selected as genuine the most false and the most flagrant of the fifty libellous narratives that were circulated of the transaction. Stories, inconsistent with themselves, were all alike eagerly believed, and what evidence there might be for any one of them, the virtuous people, by whom they were repeated, neither cared nor knew. The public, in short, fell into a passion with their darling, and, ashamed of their past idolatry, nothing would satisfy them but knocking the divinity on the head.

Until Lord Monteagle, to the great regret of society, who really wished him to die in order that his antagonist might commit murder, was declared out of danger, Lord Cadurcis never quitted his house, and he was not a little surprised that scarcely a human being called upon him except his cousin, who immediately flew to his succour. George, indeed, would gladly have

spared Cadurcis any knowledge of the storm that was raging against him, and which he flattered himself would blow over before Cadurcis was again abroad, but he was so much with his cousin, and Cadurcis was so extremely acute and naturally so suspicious, that this was impossible. Moreover, his absolute desertion by his friends, and the invectives and the lampoons with which the newspapers abounded, and of which he was the subject, rendered any concealment out of the question, and poor George passed his life in running about contradicting falsehoods, stating truth, fighting his cousin's battles, and then reporting to him, in the course of the day, the state of the campaign.

Cadurcis, being a man of infinite sensibility, suffered tortures. He had been so habituated to panegyric, that the slightest criticism ruffled him, and now his works had suddenly become the subject of universal and outrageous attack ; having lived only in a cloud of incense, he suddenly found himself in a pillory of moral indig-

nation; his writings, his habits, his temper, his person, were all alike ridiculed and vilified. In a word, Cadurcis, the petted, idolised, spoiled Cadurcis, was enduring that charming vicissitude in a prosperous existence, styled a reaction; and a conqueror, who deemed himself invincible, suddenly vanquished, could scarcely be more thunderstruck or feel more impotently desperate.

The tortures of his mind, however, which this sudden change in his position and in the opinions of society, were of themselves competent to occasion to one of so impetuous and irritable a temperament, and who ever magnified both misery and delight with all the creative power of a brooding imagination, were excited in his case even to the liveliest agony, when he reminded himself of the situation in which he was now placed with Venetia. All hope of ever obtaining her hand had now certainly vanished, and he doubted whether even her love could survive the quick occurrence, after his ardent

vows, of this degrading and mortifying catastrophe. He execrated Lady Monteagle with the most heartfelt rage, and when he remembered that all this time the world believed him the devoted admirer of this vixen, his brain was stimulated almost to the verge of insanity. His only hope of the truth reaching Venetia was through the medium of his cousin, and he impressed daily upon Captain Cadurcis the infinite consolation it would prove to him, if he could contrive to make her aware of the real facts of the case. According to the public voice, Lady Monteagle at his solicitation had fled to his house and remained there, and her husband forced his entrance into the mansion in the middle of the night, while his wife escaped disguised in Lord Cadurcis' clothes. She did not, however, reach Monteagle House in time enough to escape detection by her Lord, who had instantly sought and obtained satisfaction from his treacherous friend. All the monstrous inventions of the first week had now subsided into

this circumstantial and undoubted narrative; at least this was the version believed by those who had been Cadurcis' friends. They circulated the authentic tale with the most considerate assiduity, and shook their heads, and said it was too bad, and that he must not be countenanced.

The moment Lord Monteagle was declared out of danger, Lord Cadurcis made his appearance in public. He walked into Brookes's, and everybody seemed suddenly so deeply interested in the newspaper, that you might have supposed they had brought intelligence of a great battle, or a revolution, or a change of ministry at the least. One or two men spoke to him, who had never presumed to address him at any other time, and he received a faint bow from a very distinguished nobleman, who had ever professed for him the greatest consideration and esteem.

Cadurcis mounted his horse and rode down to the House of Lords. There was a debate of some public interest, and a considerable crowd was collected round the Peers' entrance. The

moment Lord Cadurcis was recognised, the multitude began hooting. He was agitated, and grinned a ghastly smile at the rabble. But he dismounted, without further annoyance, and took his seat. Not a single peer of his own party spoke to him. The leader of the opposition, indeed, bowed to him, and, in the course of the evening, he received, from one or two more of his party, some formal evidences of frigid courtesy. The tone of his reception by his friends could not be concealed from the ministerial party. It was soon detected, and generally whispered, that Lord Cadurcis was cut. Nevertheless, he sat out the debate and voted. The house broke up. He felt lonely; his old friend, the Bishop of ——, who had observed all that had occurred, and who might easily have avoided him; came forward, however, in the most marked manner, and, in a tone which everybody heard, said, “How do you do, Lord Cadurcis? I am very glad to see you,” shaking his hand most cordially. This made a great impression.

Several of the Tory Lords, among them Venetia's uncle, now advanced and saluted him. He received their advances with a haughty, but not disdainful, courtesy; but when his Whig friends, very confused, now hurried to encumber him with their assistance, he treated them with the scorn which they well deserved.

“Will you take a seat in my carriage home, Lord Cadurcis?” said his leader, for it was notorious that Cadurcis had been mobbed on his arrival.

“Thank you, my Lord,” said Cadurcis, speaking very audibly, “I prefer returning as I came. We are really both of us such very unpopular personages, that your kindness would scarcely be prudent.”

The house had been very full; there was a great scuffle and confusion as the peers were departing; the mob, now very considerable, were prepared for the appearance of Lord Cadurcis, and their demeanour was very menacing.

Some shouted out his name ; then it was repeated with the most odious and vindictive epithets, followed by ferocious yells. A great many peers collected round Cadurcis, and entreated him not to return on horseback. It must be confessed that very genuine and considerable feeling was now shown by men of all parties. And indeed to witness this young, and noble, and gifted creature, but a few days back the idol of the nation, and from whom a word, a glance even, was deemed the greatest and most gratifying distinction—whom all orders, classes, and conditions of men had combined to stimulate with multiplied adulation,—with all the glory and ravishing delights of the world, as it were, forced upon him—to see him thus assailed with the savage execrations of all those vile things who exult in the fall of every thing that is great, and the abasement of every thing that is noble, was indeed a spectacle which might have silenced malice and satisfied envy !

“ My carriage is most heartily at your service,

Lord Cadurcis," said the noble leader of the government, in the upper house; "you can enter it without the slightest suspicion by these ruffians."—"Lord Cadurcis; my dear Lord; my good Lord—for our sakes, if not for your own—Cadurcis, dear Cadurcis, my good Cadurcis, it is madness, folly, insanity—a mob will do any thing, and an English mob is viler than all—for Heaven's sake!" Such were a few of the varied exclamations which resounded on all sides, but which produced on the person to whom they were addressed only the result of his desiring the attendant to call for his horses.

The lobby was yet full; it was a fine thing in the light of the archway to see Cadurcis spring into his saddle. Instantly there was a horrible yell. Yet, in spite of all their menaces, the mob were for a time awed by his courage; they made way for him; he might even have rode quickly on for some few yards, but he would not; he reined his fiery steed into a slow but stately pace, and, with a countenance scornful and com-

posed, he continued his progress, apparently unconscious of impediment. Meanwhile, the hooting continued without abatement, increasing indeed, after the first comparative pause in violence and menace. At length a bolder ruffian, excited by the uproar, rushed forward and seized Cadurcis' bridle. Cadurcis struck the man over the eyes with his whip, and at the same time touched his horse with his spur, and the assailant was dashed to the ground. This seemed a signal for a general assault. It commenced with the most hideous yells. His friends at the house, who had watched every thing with the keenest interest, immediately directed all the constables who were at hand to rush to his succour; hitherto they had restrained the police, lest their interference might stimulate rather than repress the mob. The charge of the constables was well timed; they laid about them with their staves; you might have heard the echo of many a broken crown. Nevertheless, though they dispersed the mass, they could not penetrate the immediate

barrier that surrounded Lord Cadurcis, whose only defence indeed, for they had cut off his groom, was the terrors of his horse's heels, and whose managed motions he regulated with admirable skill—now rearing, now prancing, now kicking behind, and now turning round with a quick yet sweeping motion, before which the mob retreated. Off his horse, however, they seemed resolved to drag him; and it was not difficult to conceive, if they succeeded, what must be his eventual fate. They were indeed infuriate, but his contact with his assailants fortunately prevented their co-mates from hurling stones at him from the fear of endangering their own friends.

A messenger to the Horse Guards had been sent from the House of Lords; but, before the military could arrive, and fortunately—for, with their utmost expedition, they must have been too late—a rumour of the attack got current in the House of Commons. Captain Cadurcis, Lord

Scrope, and a few other young men instantly, rushed out ; and, ascertaining the truth, armed with good cudgels and such other effective weapons as they could instantly obtain, they mounted their horses and charged the nearly-triumphant populace, dealing such vigorous blows that their efforts soon made a visible diversion in Lord Cadurcis' favour. It is very difficult, indeed, to convey an idea of the exertions and achievements of Captain Cadurcis ; no Paladin of chivalry ever executed such marvels in a swarm of Paynim slaves ; and many a bloody coxcomb and broken limb bore witness in Petty France that night to his achievements. Still the mob struggled and were not daunted by the delay in immolating their victim. As long as they had only to fight against men in plain clothes, they were valorous and obstinate enough ; but the moment that the crests of a company of Horse-Guards were seen trotting down Parliament-street, every body ran away, and in a few minutes all Palace-Yard was as still as if

the genius of the place rendered a riot impossible.

Lord Cadurcis thanked his friends, who were profuse in their compliments to his pluck. His manner, usually playful with his intimates of his own standing, was, however, rather grave at present, though very cordial. He asked them home to dine with him; but they were obliged to decline his invitation, as a division was expected; so, saying "Good-bye, George, perhaps I shall see you to-night," Cadurcis rode rapidly off.

With Cadurcis there was but one step from the most exquisite sensitiveness to the most violent defiance. The experience of this day had entirely cured him of his previous nervous deference to the feelings of society. Society had outraged him, and now he resolved to outrage society. He owed society nothing; his reception in the House of Lords and the riot in Palace-yard, had alike cleared his accounts with

all orders of men, from the highest to the lowest. He had experienced, indeed, some kindness that he could not forget, but only from his own kin, and those who with his associations were the same as kin. His memory dwelt with gratification on his cousin's courageous zeal, and still more on the demonstration which Masham had made in his favour, which, if possible, argued still greater boldness and sincere regard. That was a trial of true affection, and an instance of moral courage, which Cadurcis honoured, and which he never could forget. He was anxious about Venetia; he wished to stand as well with her as he deserved; no better; but he was grieved to think she could believe all those infamous tales at present current respecting himself. But for the rest of the world, he delivered them all to the most absolute contempt, disgust, and execration; he resolved, from this time, nothing should ever induce him again to enter society, or admit the advances of a single

civilised ruffian who affected to be social. The country, the people, their habits, laws, manners, customs, opinions, and every thing connected with them were viewed with the same jaundiced eye; and his only object now was to quit England, to which he resolved never to return.

CHAPTER XIX.

IN the mean time we must not forget Venetia, who was perhaps not quite so surprised as the rest of her friends, when, on their return to Richmond, Lord Cadurcis was not again seen. She was very unhappy: she recalled the scene in the garden at Cherbury some years back; and with the knowledge of the impetuosity of his temper, she believed she should never see him again. Poor Plantagenet, who loved her so much, and whose love she so fully returned! why might they not be happy? She neither doubted the constancy of his affection, nor their permanent felicity if they were united. She shared none of her mother's appre-

hensions or her prejudices, but she was the victim of duty and her vow. In the course of four-and-twenty hours strange rumours were afloat respecting Lord Cadurcis; and the newspapers on the ensuing morning told the truth, and more than the truth. Venetia could not doubt as to the duel or the elopement; but instead of feeling indignation, she attributed what had occurred to the desperation of his mortified mind; and she visited on herself all the fatal consequences that had happened. At present, however, all her emotions were quickly absorbed in the one terrible fear, that Lord Monteagle would die. In that dreadful and urgent apprehension, every other sentiment merged. It was impossible to conceal her misery, and she entreated her mother to return to town.

Very differently, however, was the catastrophe viewed by Lady Annabel. She, on the contrary, triumphed in her sagacity and her prudence. She hourly congratulated herself on being the

saviour of her daughter; and though she refrained from indulging in any open exultation over Venetia's escape and her own profound discretion, it was nevertheless impossible for her to conceal from her daughter her infinite satisfaction and self-congratulation. While Venetia was half broken-hearted, her mother silently returned thanks to Providence for the merciful dispensation which had exempted her child from so much misery.

The day after their return to town, Captain Cadurcis called upon them. Lady Annabel never mentioned the name of his cousin; but George finding no opportunity of conversing with Venetia alone, and being indeed too much excited to speak on any other subject, plunged at once into the full narrative; defended Lord Cadurcis, abused the Monteagles and the slanderous world, and in spite of Lady Annabel's ill-concealed dissatisfaction, favoured her with an exact and circumstantial account of every thing that had happened; how it happened,

when it happened, and where it happened; concluding by a declaration that Cadurcis was the best fellow that ever lived, the most unfortunate, and the most ill used; and that, if he were to be hunted down for an affair like this, over which he had no control, there was not a man in London who could be safe for ten minutes. All that George effected by his zeal, was to convince Lady Annabel that his cousin had entirely corrupted him; she looked upon her former favourite as another victim; but Venetia listened in silence, and not without solace.

Two or three days after the riot at the House of Lords, Captain Cadurcis burst into his cousin's room with a triumphant countenance. "Well, Plantagenet!" he exclaimed, "I have done it; I have seen her alone; and I have put you as right as possible. Nothing can be better."

"Tell me, my dear fellow," said Lord Cadurcis, eagerly.

"Well, you know, I have called half a dozen

times," said George; "but either Lady Annabel was there, or they were not at home, or something always occurred to prevent any private communication. But I met her to-day with her aunt; I joined them immediately, and kept with them the whole morning. I am sorry to say, she, I mean Venetia, is devilish ill; she is indeed. However, her aunt now is quite on your side, and very kind, I can tell you that. I put her right at first, and she has fought our battle bravely. Well, they stopped to call somewhere, and Venetia was so unwell, that she would not get out, and I was left alone in the carriage with her. Time was precious, and I opened at once. I told her how wretched you were, and that the only thing that made you miserable was about her, because you were afraid she would think you so profligate, and all that. I went through it all; told her the exact truth, which indeed she had before heard; but now I assured her on my honour, that it was exactly what happened; and she said she did not doubt

it, and could not, from some conversation which you had together the day we were all at Hampton Court, and that she felt that nothing could have been premeditated, and fully believed that every thing had occurred as I said; and, however she deplored it, she felt the same for you as ever, and prayed for your happiness. Then she told me what misery the danger of Lord Mont eagle had occasioned her; that she thought his death must have been the forerunner of her own, but the moment he was declared out of danger, seemed the happiest hour of her life. I told her you were going to leave England, and asked her whether she had any message for you; and she said, ‘Tell him he is the same to me that he has always been.’ So when her aunt returned, I jumped out and ran on to you at once.”

“You are the best fellow that ever lived, George,” said Lord Cadurcis; “and now the world may go to the devil!”

This message from Venetia acted upon Lord Cadurcis like a charm. It instantly cleared his mind. He shut himself up in his house for a week, and wrote a farewell to England, perhaps the most masterly effusion of his powerful spirit. It abounded in passages of overwhelming passion, and almost Satanic sarcasm. Its composition entirely relieved his long-brooding brain. It contained, moreover, a veiled address to Venetia, —delicate, tender, and irresistibly affecting. He appended also to the publication, the verses he had previously addressed to her.

This volume, which was purchased with an avidity exceeding even the eagerness with which his former productions had been received, exercised the most extraordinary influence on public opinion. It enlisted the feelings of the nation on his side in a struggle with a coterie. It was suddenly discovered that Lord Cadurcis was the most injured of mortals, and far more interesting than ever. The address to the unknown

object of his adoration, and the verses to Venetia, mystified every body. Lady Monteagle was universally abused, and all sympathised with the long-treasured and baffled affection of the unhappy poet. Cadurcis, however, was not to be conciliated. He left his native shores in a blaze of glory, but with the accents of scorn still quivering on his lip.

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