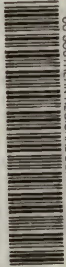
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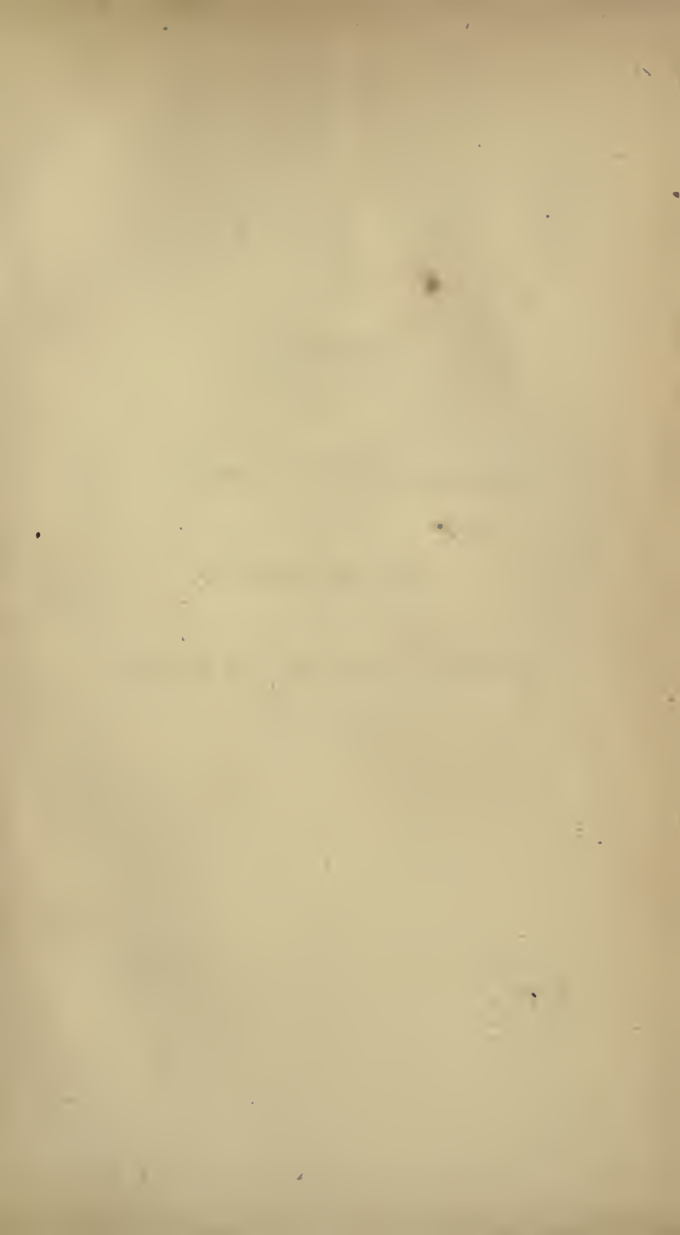

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NOVELS

OF

SIR EDWARD BULWER LYTTON

Library Edition

NOVELS OF LIFE AND MANNERS

VOL. XIII.

NIGHT AND MORNING

BY

SIR EDWARD BULWER LYTTON, BART.

LIBRARY EDITION—IN TWO VOLUMES

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NIGHT AND MORNING.

CHAPTER IX.

Meantime a moving scene was open laid,
That lazar-house.—THOMSON; *Castle of Indolence.*

It was near midnight. At the mouth of the lane in which Gawtrey resided there stood four men. Not far distant, in the broad street at angles with the lane, were heard the wheels of carriages and the sound of music. A lady, fair in form, tender of heart, stainless in repute, was receiving her friends!

"Monsieur Favart," said one of the men to the smallest of the four; "you understand the conditions—20,000 francs and a free pardon?"

"Nothing more reasonable—it is understood. Still I confess that I should like to have my men close at hand. I am not given to fear; but this is a dangerous experiment."

"You knew the danger beforehand and subscribed

a

to it; you must enter alone with me, or not at all. Mark you, the men are sworn to murder him who betrays them. Not for twenty times 20,000 francs would I have them know me as the informer. My life were not worth a day's purchase. Now, if you feel secure in your disguise, all is safe. You will have seen them at their work—you will recognise their persons—you can depose against them at the trial—I shall have time to quit France."

"Well, well! as you please."

"Mind, you must wait in the vault with them till they separate. We have so planted your men that whatever street each of the gang takes in going home, he can be seized, quietly and at once. The bravest and craftiest of all, who, though he has but just joined, is already their captain;—*him*, the man I told you of, who lives in the house, you must take after his return, in his bed. It is the sixth storey to the right, remember: here is the key to his door. He is a giant in strength, and will never be taken alive if up and armed."

"Ah, I comprehend!—Gilbert!" (and Favart turned to one of his companions who had not yet spoken), "take three men besides yourself, according to the directions I gave you—the porter will admit you, that's arranged. Make no noise. If I don't return by four o'clock, don't wait for me, but proceed at once. Look well to your primings. Take him alive, if possible—at the worst, dead. And now—*mon ami*—lead on!"

The traitor nodded, and walked slowly down the

street. Favart, pausing, whispered hastily to the man whom he had called Gilbert,—

"Follow me close—get to the door of the cellar—place eight men within hearing of my whistle—recollect the picklocks—the axes. If you hear the whistle, break in; if not, I'm safe, and the first orders to seize the captain in his room stand good."

So saying, Favart strode after his guide. The door of a large but ill-favoured-looking house stood ajar—they entered—passed unmolested through a courtyard—descended some stairs; the guide unlocked the door of a cellar, and took a dark lantern from under his cloak. As he drew up the slide, the dim light gleamed on barrels and wine-casks, which appeared to fill up the space. Rolling aside one of these, the guide lifted a trap-door, and lowered his lantern. "Enter," said he; and the two men disappeared.

. . . . . .

The coiners were at their work. A man, seated on a stool before a desk, was entering accounts in a large book. That man was William Gawtrey. While, with the rapid precision of honest mechanics, the machinery of the Dark Trade went on in its several departments. Apart—alone—at the foot of a long table, sat Philip Morton. The truth had exceeded his darkest suspicions. He had consented to take the oath not to divulge what was to be given to his survey; and when, led into that vault, the bandage was taken from his eyes, it was some minutes before he could fully comprehend the desperate and criminal occupations of the

wild forms amidst which towered the burly stature of his benefactor. As the truth slowly grew upon him, he shrank from the side of Gawtrey; but, deep compassion for his friend's degradation swallowing up the horror of the trade, he flung himself on one of the rude seats, and felt that the bond between them was indeed broken, and that the next morning he should be again alone in the world. Still, as the obscene jests, the fearful oaths, that from time to time rang through the vault, came on his ear, he cast his haughty eye in such disdain over the groups, that Gawtrey, observing him, trembled for his safety; and nothing but Philip's sense of his own impotence, and the brave, not timorous, desire not to perish by such hands, kept silent the fiery denunciations of a nature, still proud and honest, that quivered on his lips. All present were armed with pistols and cutlasses except Morton, who suffered the weapons presented to him to lie unheeded on the table.

"*Courage, mes amis!*" said Gawtrey, closing his book,—"*Courage!*—a few months more, and we shall have made enough to retire upon, and enjoy ourselves for the rest of the days. Where is Birnie?"

"Did he not tell you?" said one of the artisans, looking up. "He has found out the cleverest hand in France,—the very fellow who helped Bouchard in all his five-franc pieces. He has promised to bring him to-night."

"Ay, I remember," returned Gawtrey, "he told me this morning,—he is a famous decoy!"

"I think so, indeed!" quoth a coiner: "for he caught you, the best head to our hands that ever *les industriels* were blessed with—*sacré fichtre!*"

"Flatterer!" said Gawtrey, coming from the desk to the table, and pouring out wine from one of the bottles into a huge flagon—"To your healths!"

Here the door slided back, and Birnie glided in.

"Where is your booty, *mon brave?*" said Gawtrey. "We only coin money; you coin men, stamp with your own seal, and send them current to the devil!"

The coiners, who liked Birnie's ability (for the *ci-devant* engraver was of admirable skill in their craft), but who hated his joyless manners, laughed at this taunt, which Birnie did not seem to heed, except by a malignant gleam of his dead eye.

"If you mean the celebrated coiner, Jacques Giraumont, he waits without. You know our rules—I cannot admit him without leave."

"*Bon!* we give it—eh, messieurs?" said Gawtrey.

"Ay—ay," cried several voices. "He knows the oath, and will hear the penalty."

"Yes, he knows the oath," replied Birnie, and glided back.

In a moment more he returned with a small man in a mechanic's *blouse.* The new-comer wore the republican beard and mustache, of a sandy grey—his hair was the same colour; and a black patch over one eye increased the ill-favoured appearance of his features.

"*Diable!* Monsieur Giraumont! but you are more like Vulcan than Adonis!" said Gawtrey.

"I don't know anything about Vulcan, but I know how to make five-franc pieces," said Monsieur Giraumont, doggedly.

"Are you poor?"

"As a church mouse! The only thing belonging to a church, since the Bourbons came back, that *is* poor!"

At this sally, the coiners who had gathered round the table uttered the shout with which, in all circumstances, Frenchmen receive a *bon mot.*

"Humph!" said Gawtrey. "Who responds, with his own life, for your fidelity?"

"I," said Birnie.

"Administer the oath to him."

Suddenly four men advanced, seized the visitor, and bore him from the vault into another one within. After a few moments they returned.

"He has taken the oath and heard the penalty."

"Death to yourself, your wife, your son, and your grandson, if you betray us!"

"I have neither son nor grandson; as for my wife, Monsieur le Capitaine, you offer a bribe instead of a threat when you talk of *her* death!"

"*Sacré!* but you will be an addition to our circle, *mon brave!*" said Gawtrey, laughing; while again the grim circle shouted applause.

"But I suppose you care for your own life?"

"Otherwise I should have preferred starving to coming here," answered the laconic neophyte.

"I have done with you. Your health!"

On this the coiners gathered round Monsieur Giraumont, shook him by the hand, and commenced many questions with a view to ascertain his skill.

"Show me your coinage first; I see you use both the die and the furnace. Hem! this piece is not bad—you have struck it from an iron die?—right—it makes the impression sharper than plaster-of-Paris. But you take the poorest and the most dangerous part of the trade in taking the Home Market. I can put you in a way to make ten times as much—and with safety! Look at this!"—and Monsieur Giraumont took a forged Spanish dollar from his pocket, so skilfully manufactured that the *connoisseurs* were lost in admiration—"you may pass thousands of these all over Europe, except France, and who is ever to detect you? But it will require better machinery than you have here."

Thus conversing, Monsieur Giraumont did not perceive that Mr Gawtrey had been examining him very curiously and minutely. But Birnie had noted their chief's attention, and once attempted to join his new ally, when Gawtrey laid his hand on his shoulder and stopped him.

"Do not speak to your friend till I bid you, or ——" he stopped short, and touched his pistols.

Birnie grew a shade more pale, but replied with his usual sneer,—

"Suspicious!—well, so much the better!" and seating himself carelessly at the table, lighted his pipe.

"And now, Monsieur Giraumont," said Gawtrey, as he took the head of the table, "come to my right

hand. A half holiday in your honour. Clear these infernal instruments; and more wine, *mes amis!*"

The party arranged themselves at the table. Among the desperate there is almost invariably a tendency to mirth. A solitary ruffian, indeed, is moody, but a gang of ruffians are jovial. The coiners talked and laughed loud. Mr Birnie, from his dogged silence, seemed apart from the rest, though in the centre. For in a noisy circle, a silent tongue builds a wall round its owner. But that respectable personage kept his furtive watch upon Giraumont and Gawtrey, who appeared talking together very amicably. The younger novice of that night, equally silent, seated towards the bottom of the table, was not less watchful than Birnie. An uneasy, undefinable foreboding had come over him since the entrance of Monsieur Giraumont; this had been increased by the manner of Mr Gawtrey. His faculty of observation, which was very acute, had detected something false in the chief's blandness to their guest—something dangerous in the glittering eye that Gawtrey ever, as he spoke to Giraumont, bent on that person's lips as he listened to his reply. For, whenever William Gawtrey suspected a man, he watched not his eyes, but his lips.

Waked from his scornful reverie, a strange spell chained Morton's attention to the chief and the guest, and he bent forward, with parted mouth and straining ear, to catch their conversation.

"It seems to me a little strange," said Mr Gawtrey, raising his voice so as to be heard by the party, "that

a coiner so dexterous as Monsieur Giraumont should not be known to any of us except our friend Birnie."

"Not at all," replied Giraumont: "I worked only with Bouchard and two others, since sent to the galleys. We were but a small fraternity—everything has its commencement."

"*C'est juste: buvez donc, cher ami!*" *

The wine circulated: Gawtrey began again.

"You have had a bad accident, seemingly, Monsieur Giraumont—how did you lose your eye?"

"In a scuffle with the *gens d'armes* the night Bouchard was taken and I escaped: such misfortunes are on the cards."

"*C'est juste: buvez donc, Monsieur Giraumont!*" †

Again there was a pause, and again Gawtrey's deep voice was heard.

"You wear a wig, I think, Monsieur Giraumont?—to judge by your eyelashes, your own hair has been a handsomer colour."

"We seek disguise, not beauty, my host! and the police have sharp eyes."

"*C'est juste, buvez donc—vieux Renard!* ‡—when did we two meet last?"

"Never, that I know of!"

"*Ce n'est pas vrai! buvez donc, MONSIEUR FAVART!*" §

* That's right: drink, then, dear friend.

† That's right: drink, then, Monsieur Giraumont.

‡ That's right: drink, then, old fox.

§ That's not true: drink, then, Monsieur Favart.

At the sound of that name the company started in dismay and confusion, and the police officer, forgetting himself for the moment, sprung from his seat, and put his right hand into his *blouse.*

"Ho, there!—treason!" cried Gawtrey, in a voice of thunder; and he caught the unhappy man by the throat.

It was the work of a moment. Morton, where he sat, beheld a struggle—he heard a death-cry. He saw the huge form of the master-coiner rising above all the rest, as cutlasses gleamed and eyes sparkled round. He saw the quivering and powerless frame of the unhappy guest raised aloft in those mighty arms, and presently it was hurled along the table—bottles crashing—the board shaking beneath its weight—and lay before the very eyes of Morton a distorted and lifeless mass. At the same instant Gawtrey sprang upon the table, his black frown singling out from the group the ashen, cadaverous face of the shrinking traitor. Birnie had darted from the table—he was half-way towards the sliding door—his face, turned over his shoulder, met the eyes of the chief.

"Devil!" shouted Gawtrey, in his terrible voice, which the echoes of the vault gave back from side to side—"did I not give thee up my soul that thou mightest not compass my death? Hark ye! thus die my slavery and all our secrets!" The explosion of his pistol half swallowed up the last word, and with a single groan the traitor fell on the floor, pierced through the brain. Then there was a dead and grim

hush as the smoke rolled slowly along the roof of the dreary vault.

Morton sank back on his seat, and covered his face with his hands. The last seal on the fate of THE MAN OF CRIME was set; the last wave in the terrible and mysterious tide of his destiny had dashed on his soul to the shore whence there is no return. Vain, now and henceforth, the humour, the sentiment, the kindly impulse, the social instincts, which had invested that stalwart shape with dangerous fascination, which had implied the hope of ultimate repentance, of redemption even in this world. The HOUR and the CIRCUMSTANCE had seized their prey; and the self-defence, which a lawless career rendered a necessity, left the eternal die of blood upon his doom!

"Friends, I have saved you," said Gawtrey, slowly, gazing on the corpse of his second victim, while he returned the pistol to his belt: "I have not quailed before this man's eye"—and he spurned the clay of the officer as he spoke with a revengeful scorn—"without treasuring up its aspect in my heart of hearts. I knew him when he entered—knew him through his disguise—yet, faith, it was a clever one! Turn up his face and gaze on him now; he will never terrify us again, unless there be truth in ghosts!"

Murmuring and tremulous, the coiners scrambled on the table and examined the dead man. From this task Gawtrey interrupted them, for his quick eye detected, with the pistols under the policeman's *blouse*, a whistle of metal of curious construction,

and he conjectured at once that danger was yet at hand.

"I have saved you, I say, but only for the hour. This deed cannot sleep—see, he had help within call. The police know where to look for their comrade—we are dispersed. Each for himself. Quick, divide the spoils! *Sauve qui peut!*"

Then Morton heard where he sat, his hands still clasped before his face, a confused hubbub of voices, the jingle of money, the scrambling of feet, the creaking of doors—all was silent!

A strong grasp drew his hands from his eyes.

"Your first scene of life against life," said Gawtrey's voice, which seemed fearfully changed to the ear that heard it. "Bah! what would you think of a battle? Come to our eyrie: the carcasses are gone."

Morton looked fearfully round the vault. He and Gawtrey were alone. His eyes sought the places where the dead had lain—they were removed—no vestige of the deeds, not even a drop of blood.

"Come, take up your cutlass, come!" repeated the voice of the chief, as with his dim lantern, now the sole light of the vault, he stood in the shadow of the doorway.

Morton rose, took up the weapon mechanically, and followed that terrible guide, mute and unconscious, as a Soul follows a Dream through the House of Sleep!

CHAPTER X.

Sleep no more! — *Macbeth.*

After winding through gloomy and labyrinthine passages, which conducted to a different range of cellars from those entered by the unfortunate Favart, Gawtrey emerged at the foot of a flight of stairs, which, dark, narrow, and in many places broken, had been probably appropriated to servants of the house in its days of palmier glory. By these steps the pair regained their attic. Gawtrey placed the lantern on the table, and seated himself in silence. Morton, who had recovered his self-possession and formed his resolution, gazed on him for some moments equally taciturn; at length he spoke,—

"Gawtrey!"

"I bade you not call me by that name," said the coiner; for we need scarcely say that in his new trade he had assumed a new appellation.

"It is the least guilty one by which I have known you," returned Morton, firmly. "It is for the last time I call you by it! I demanded to see by what means one to whom I had intrusted my fate supported himself. I *have seen*," continued the young man, still firmly

but with a livid cheek and lip, "and the tie between us is rent for ever. Interrupt me not! it is not for me to blame you. I have eaten of your bread and drank of your cup. Confiding in you too blindly, and believing that you were at least free from those dark and terrible crimes for which there is no expiation, at least in this life—my conscience, seared by distress, my very soul made dormant by despair, I surrendered myself to one leading a career equivocal, suspicious, dishonourable perhaps, but still not, as I believed, of atrocity and bloodshed. I wake at the brink of the abyss—my mother's hand beckons to me from the grave; I think I hear her voice while I address you—I recede while it is yet time—we part, and for ever!"

Gawtrey, whose stormy passion was still deep upon his soul, had listened hitherto in sullen and dogged silence, with a gloomy frown on his knitted brow. He now rose with an oath,—

"Part! that I may let loose on the world a new traitor! Part! when you have seen me fresh from an act that, once whispered, gives me to the guillotine! Part—never! at least alive!"

"I have said it," said Morton, folding his arms calmly; "I say it to your face, though I might part from you in secret. Frown not on me, man of blood! I am fearless as yourself! In another minute I am gone."

"Ah! is it so?" said Gawtrey; and glancing round the room, which contained two doors, the one, concealed by the draperies of a bed, communicating with the

stairs by which they had entered, the other with the landing of the principal and common flight: he turned to the former, within his reach, which he locked, and put the key into his pocket, and then, throwing across the latter a heavy swing-bar, which fell into its socket with a harsh noise,—before the threshold he placed his vast bulk, and burst into his loud, fierce laugh —"Ho! ho! slave and fool, once mine, you are mine, body and soul, for ever!"

"Tempter, I defy you! stand back!" And, firm and dauntless, Morton laid his hand on the giant's vest.

Gawtrey seemed more astonished than enraged. He looked hard at his daring associate, on whose lip the down was yet scarcely dark.

"Boy," said he, "off! do not rouse the devil in me again! I could crush you with a hug."

"My soul supports my body, and I am armed," said Morton, laying hand on his cutlass. "But you dare not harm me, nor I you. Blood-stained as you are, you gave me shelter and bread; but accuse me not that I will save my soul while it is yet time! Shall my mother have blessed me in vain upon her deathbed?"

Gawtrey drew back, and Morton, by a sudden impulse, grasped his hand.

"Oh! hear me—hear me!" he cried, with great emotion. "Abandon this horrible career; you have been decoyed and betrayed to it by one who can deceive or terrify you no more! Abandon it, and I will

never desert you. For her sake—for your Fanny's sake—pause, like me, before the gulf swallow us. Let us fly!—far to the New World—to any land where our thews and sinews, our stout hands and hearts, can find an honest mart. Men, desperate as we are, have yet risen by honest means. Take her, your orphan, with us. We will work for her, both of us. Gawtrey! hear me. It is not my voice that speaks to you—it is your good angel's!"

Gawtrey fell back against the wall, and his chest heaved.

"Morton," he said, with choked and tremulous accents, "go now; leave me to my fate! I have sinned against you—shamefully sinned. It seemed to me so sweet to have a friend;—in your youth and character of mind there was so much about which the tough strings of my heart wound themselves, that I could not bear to lose you—to suffer you to know me for what I was. I blinded—I deceived you as to my past deeds; *that* was base in me: but I swore to my own heart to keep you unexposed to every danger, and free from every vice that darkened my own path. I kept that oath till this night, when seeing that you began to recoil from me, and dreading that you should desert me, I thought to bind you to me for ever by implicating you in this fellowship of crime. I am punished, and justly. Go, I repeat—leave me to the fate that strides nearer and nearer to me day by day. You are a boy still—I am no longer young. Habit is a second nature. Still—still I could repent—I could

begin life again. But repose!—to look back—to remember—to be haunted night and day with deeds that shall meet me bodily, and face to face, on the last day——"

"Add not to the spectres! Come—fly this night—this hour!"

Gawtrey paused, irresolute and wavering, when at that moment he heard steps on the stairs below. He started—as starts the boar caught in his lair—and listened, pale and breathless.

"Hush!—they are on us!—they come!" As he whispered, the key from without turned in the wards—the door shook. "Soft!—the bar preserves us both—this way;" and the coiner crept to the door of the private stairs. He unlocked and opened it cautiously. A man sprang through the aperture—

"Yield!—you are my prisoner!"

"Never!" cried Gawtrey, hurling back the intruder, and clapping to the door, though other and stout men were pressing against it with all their power.

"Ho! ho! Who shall open the tiger's cage?"

At both doors now were heard the sounds of voices. "Open in the king's name, or expect no mercy!"

"Hist!" said Gawtrey. "One way yet—the window—the rope."

Morton opened the casement—Gawtrey uncoiled the rope. The dawn was breaking; it was light in the streets, but all seemed quiet without. The doors reeled and shook beneath the pressure of the pursuers.

Gawtrey flung the rope across the street to the opposite parapet; after two or three efforts, the grappling-hook caught firm hold—the perilous path was made.

"On!—quick!—loiter not!" whispered Gawtrey: "you are active—it seems more dangerous than it is—cling with both hands—shut your eyes. When on the other side—you see the window of Birnie's room—enter it—descend the stairs—let yourself out, and you are safe."

"Go first," said Morton, in the same tone; "I will not leave you now: you will be longer getting across than I shall. I will keep guard till you are over."

"Hark! hark!—are you mad? *You* keep guard! What is your strength to mine? Twenty men shall not move that door while my weight is against it. Quick, or you destroy us both! Besides, you will hold the rope for me, it may not be strong enough for my bulk of itself. Stay!—stay one moment. If you escape, and I fall—Fanny—my father, he will take care of her—you remember—thanks! Forgive me all! Go; that's right!"

With a firm pulse Morton threw himself on that dreadful bridge; it swung and crackled at his weight. Shifting his grasp rapidly—holding his breath—with set teeth—with closed eyes—he moved on—he gained the parapet—he stood safe on the opposite side. And now, straining his eyes across, he saw through the open casement into the chamber he had just quitted. Gawtrey was still standing against the door to the principal staircase, for that of the two was the weaker

and the more assailed. Presently the explosion of a firearm was heard; they had shot through the panel. Gawtrey seemed wounded, for he staggered forward and uttered a fierce cry; a moment more, and he gained the window—he seized the rope—he hung over the tremendous depth! Morton knelt by the parapet, holding the grappling-hook in its place, with convulsive grasp, and fixing his eyes, bloodshot with fear and suspense, on the huge bulk that clung for life to that slender cord!

"*Le voilà! le voilà!*" cried a voice from the opposite side. Morton raised his gaze from Gawtrey; the casement was darkened by the forms of the pursuers—they had burst into the room—an officer sprung upon the parapet, and Gawtrey, now aware of his danger, opened his eyes, and, as he moved on, glared upon the foe. The policeman deliberately raised his pistol—Gawtrey arrested himself—from a wound in his side the blood trickled slowly and darkly down, drop by drop, upon the stones below; even the officers of law shuddered as they eyed him—his hair bristling—his cheek white—his lips drawn convulsively from his teeth, and his eye glaring from beneath the frown of agony and menace in which yet spoke the indomitable power and fierceness of the man. His look, so fixed—so intense—so stern, awed the policeman; his hand trembled as he fired, and the ball struck the parapet an inch below the spot where Morton knelt. An indistinct, wild, gurgling sound—half-laugh, half-yell—of scorn and glee, broke from Gawtrey's lips. He swung

himself on — near — near—nearer — a yard from the parapet.

"You are saved!" cried Morton; when at that moment a volley burst from the fatal casement—the smoke rolled over both the fugitives — a groan, or rather howl of rage and despair and agony, appalled even the hardiest on whose ear it came. Morton sprung to his feet and looked below. He saw on the rugged stones, far down, a dark, formless, motionless mass—the strong man of passion and levity—the giant who had played with life and soul, as an infant with the baubles that it prizes and breaks—was what the Cæsar and the leper alike are when the clay is without God's breath,—what glory, genius, power, and beauty, would be for ever and for ever, if there were no God!

"There is another!" cried the voice of one of the pursuers. "Fire!"

"Poor Gawtrey!" muttered Philip, "I will fulfil your last wish;" and scarcely conscious of the bullet that whistled by him, he disappeared behind the parapet.

CHAPTER XI.

Gently moved
By the soft wind of whispering silks.—DECKER.

THE reader may remember that while Monsieur Favart and Mr Birnie were holding commune in the lane, the sounds of festivity were heard from a house in the adjoining street. To that house we are now summoned.

At Paris the gaieties of balls, or *soirées*, are, I believe, very rare in that period of the year in which they are most frequent in London. The entertainment now given was in honour of a christening; the lady who gave it, a relation of the newborn.

Madame de Merville was a young widow; even before her marriage she had been distinguished in literature; she had written poems of more than common excellence; and being handsome, of good family, and large fortune, her talents made her an object of more interest than they might otherwise have done. Her poetry showed great sensibility and tenderness. If poetry be any index to the heart, you would have thought her one to love truly and deeply. Nevertheless, since she married—as girls in France do—not to

please herself, but her parents, she made a *mariage de convenance.* Monsieur de Merville was a sober, sensible man, past middle age. Not being fond of poetry, and by no means coveting a professional author for his wife, he had during their union, which lasted four years, discouraged his wife's *liaison* with Apollo. But her mind, active and ardent, did not the less prey upon itself. At the age of four-and-twenty she became a widow, with an income large even in England for a single woman, and at Paris constituting no ordinary fortune. Madame de Merville, however, though a person of elegant taste, was neither ostentatious nor selfish; she had no children, and she lived quietly in apartments, handsome indeed, but not more than adequate to the small establishment which—where, as on the Continent, the costly convenience of an entire house is not usually incurred—sufficed for her retinue. She devoted at least half her income, which was entirely at her own disposal, partly to the aid of her own relations, who were not rich, and partly to the encouragement of the literature she cultivated. Although she shrank from the ordeal of publication, her poems and sketches of romance were read to her own friends, and possessed an eloquence seldom accompanied with so much modesty. Thus her reputation, though not blown about the winds, was high in her own circle, and her position in fashion and in fortune made her looked up to by her relations as the head of her family; they regarded her as *femme supérieure*, and her advice with them was equivalent to a command. Eugénie de

Merville was a strange mixture of qualities at once feminine and masculine. On the one hand, she had a strong will, independent views, some contempt for the world, and followed her own inclinations without servility to the opinion of others; on the other hand, she was susceptible, romantic, of a sweet, affectionate, kind disposition. Her visit to M. Love, however indiscreet, was not less in accordance with her character than her charity to the mechanic's wife; masculine and careless where an eccentric thing was to be done—curiosity satisfied, or some object in female diplomacy achieved—womanly, delicate, and gentle, the instant her benevolence was appealed to or her heart touched. She had now been three years a widow, and was consequently at the age of twenty-seven. Despite the tenderness of her poetry and her character, her reputation was unblemished. She had never been in love. People who are much occupied do not fall in love easily; besides, Madame de Merville was refining, exacting, and wished to find heroes where she only met handsome dandies or ugly authors. Moreover, Eugénie was both a vain and a proud person—vain of her celebrity and proud of her birth. She was one whose goodness of heart made her always active in promoting the happiness of others. She was not only generous and charitable, but willing to serve people by good offices as well as money. Everybody loved her. The newborn infant, to whose addition to the Christian community the fête of this night was dedicated, was the pledge of a union which Madame de Merville had managed to effect

between two young persons, first cousins to each other, and related to herself. There had been scruples of parents to remove—money matters to adjust; Eugénie had smoothed all. The husband and wife, still lovers, looked up to her as the author, under Heaven, of their happiness.

The gala of that night had been, therefore, of a nature more than usually pleasurable, and the mirth did not sound hollow, but rung from the heart. Yet as Eugénie from time to time contemplated the young couple, whose eyes ever sought each other—so fair, so tender, and so joyous as they seemed—a melancholy shadow darkened her brow, and she sighed involuntarily. Once the young wife, Madame d'Anville, approaching her timidly, said,—

"Ah! my sweet cousin, when shall we see you as happy as ourselves? There is such happiness," she added, innocently and with a blush, "in being a mother!—that little life all one's own—it is something to think of every hour!"

"Perhaps," said Eugénie, smiling, and seeking to turn the conversation from a subject that touched too nearly upon feelings and thoughts her pride did not wish to reveal,—"perhaps it is you then who have made our cousin, poor Monsieur de Vaudemont, so determined to marry? Pray, be more cautious with him. How difficult I have found it to prevent his bringing into our family some one to make us all ridiculous!"

"True," said Madame d'Anville, laughing. "But

then the Vicomte is so poor and in debt. He would fall in love not with the demoiselle, but the dower. *A propos* of that, how cleverly you took advantage of his boastful confession to break off his *liaisons* with that *bureau de mariage.*"

"Yes; I congratulate myself on that manœuvre. Unpleasant as it was to go to such a place (for, of course, I could not send for Monsieur Love here), it would have been still more unpleasant to have received such a Madame de Vaudemont as our cousin would have presented to us. Only think,—he was the rival of an *épicier!* I heard that there was some curious *dénouement* to the farce of that establishment; but I could never get from Vaudemont the particulars. He was ashamed of them, I fancy."

"What droll professions there are in Paris!" said Madame d'Anville; "as if people could not marry without going to an office for a spouse as we go for a servant! And so the establishment is broken up? And you never again saw that dark, wild-looking boy who so struck your fancy, that you have taken him as the original for the Murillo sketch of the youth in that charming tale you read to us the other evening. Ah! cousin, I think you were a little taken with him; the *bureau de mariage* had its allurements for you as well as for our poor cousin!" The young mother said this laughingly and carelessly.

"Pooh!" returned Madame de Merville, laughing also; but a slight blush broke over her natural paleness. "But *à propos* of the Vicomte. You know how

cruelly he has behaved to that poor boy of his by his English wife—never seen him since he was an infant—kept him at some school in England; and all because his vanity does not like the world to know that he has a son of nineteen! Well, I have induced him to recall this poor youth."

"Indeed! and how?"

"Why," said Eugénie, with a smile, "he wanted a loan, poor man, and I could therefore impose conditions by way of interest. But I also managed to conciliate him to the proposition, by representing that, if the young man were good-looking, he might himself, with our connections, &c., form an advantageous marriage: and that, in such a case, if the father treated him now justly and kindly, he would naturally partake with the father whatever benefits the marriage might confer."

"Ah! you are an excellent diplomatist, Eugénie; and you turn people's heads by always acting from your heart. Hush, here comes the Vicomte!"

"A delightful ball," said Monsieur de Vaudemont, approaching the hostess. "Pray, has that young lady yonder, in the pink dress, any fortune? She is pretty—eh?—you observe she is looking at me—I mean at us!"

"My dear cousin, what a compliment you pay to marriage! You have had two wives, and you are ever on the *qui vive* for a third!"

"What would you have me do?—we cannot resist the overtures of your bewitching sex. Hum—what fortune has she?"

"Not a *sous;* besides, she is engaged."

"Oh! now I look at her, she is not pretty—not at all. I made a mistake. I did not mean her. I meant the young lady in blue."

"Worse and worse—she is married already. Shall I present you?"

"Ah, Monsieur de Vaudemont," said Madame d'Anville, "have you found out a new *bureau de mariage?*"

The Vicomte pretended not to hear that question. But, turning to Eugénie, took her aside, and said with an air in which he endeavoured to throw a great deal of sorrow—"You know, my dear cousin, that to oblige you I consented to send for my son, though, as I always said, it is very unpleasant for a man like me in the prime of life to hawk about a great boy of nineteen or twenty. People soon say, '*Old* Vaudemont and *young* Vaudemont.' However, a father's feelings are never appealed to in vain." (Here the Vicomte put his handkerchief to his eyes, and after a pause continued),—"I sent for him—I even went to your old *bonne*, Madame Dufour, to make a bargain for her lodgings, and this day, guess my grief, I received a letter sealed with black. My son is dead!—a sudden fever—it is shocking!"

"Horrible! dead!—your own son, whom you hardly ever saw—never since he was an infant!"

"Yes, that softens the blow very much. And now you see *I must* marry. If the boy had been good-looking, and like me, and so forth, why, as you observed,

he might have made a good match, and allowed me a certain sum, or we could have all lived together."

"And your son is dead, and you come to a ball!"

"*Je suis philosophe*," said the Vicomte, shrugging his shoulders. "And, as you say, I never saw him. It saves me seven hundred francs a-year. Don't say a word to any one—I shan't give out that he is dead, poor fellow! Pray be discreet: you see there are some ill-natured people who might think it odd I do not shut myself up. I can wait till Paris is quite empty. It would be a pity to lose any opportunity at present, for *now*, you see, I *must* marry!" And the *philosophe* sauntered away.

CHAPTER XII.

GUIOMAR.
Those devotions I am to pay
Are written in my heart, not in this book.

Enter RUTILIO.
I am pursued—all the ports are stopped, too,
Not any hope to escape—behind, before me,
On either side, I am beset.
BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER, *The Custom of the Country.*

THE party were just gone—it was already the peep of day—the wheels of the last carriage had died in the distance.

Madame de Merville had dismissed her woman, and was seated in her own room, leaning her head musingly on her hand.

Beside her was the table that held her MSS. and a few books, amidst which were scattered vases of flowers. On a pedestal beneath the window was placed a marble bust of Dante. Through the open door were seen in perspective the rooms just deserted by her guests—the lights still burned in the chandeliers and *girandoles*, contending with the daylight that came through the half-closed curtains. The person of the inmate was in harmony with the apartment. It was characterised by a certain grace which, for want of a better

epithet, writers are prone to call classical or antique. Her complexion, seeming paler than usual by that light, was yet soft and delicate—the features well cut, but small and womanly. About the face there was that rarest of all charms, the combination of intellect with sweetness—the eyes, of a dark blue, were thoughtful, perhaps melancholy, in their expression; but the long dark lashes, and the shape of the eyes, themselves more long than full, gave to their intelligence a softness approaching to languor, increased, perhaps, by that slight shadow round and below the orbs, which is common with those who have tasked too much either the mind or the heart. The contour of the face, without being sharp or angular, had yet lost a little of the roundness of earlier youth; and the hand on which she leaned was, perhaps, even too white, too delicate, for the beauty which belongs to health; but the throat and bust were of exquisite symmetry.

"I am not happy," murmured Eugénie to herself; "yet I scarce know why. Is it really as we women of romance have said till the saying is worn threadbare, that the destiny of women is not fame, but love? Strange, then, that while I have so often pictured what love should be, I have never felt it. And now—and now," she continued, half-rising, and with a natural pang—"now I am no longer in my first youth. If I loved, should I be loved again? How happy that young pair seemed—*they* are never alone!"

At this moment, at a distance, was heard the report of firearms—again! Eugénie started, and called to

her servant, who, with one of the waiters hired for the night, was engaged in removing, and nibbling as he removed, the remains of the feast. "What is that, at this hour?—open the window and look out!"

"I can see nothing, madame."

"Again—that is the third time. Go into the street and look—some one must be in danger."

The servant and the waiter, both curious, and not willing to part company, ran down the stairs, and thence into the street.

Meanwhile Morton, after vainly attempting Birnie's window, which the traitor had previously locked and barred against the escape of his intended victim, crept rapidly along the roof, screened by the parapet not only from the shot but the sight of the foe. But just as he gained the point at which the lane made an angle with the broad street it adjoined, he cast his eyes over the parapet, and perceived that one of the officers had ventured himself to the fearful bridge: he was pursued—detection and capture seemed inevitable. He paused and breathed hard. *He*, once the heir to such fortunes, the darling of such affections!—he, the hunted accomplice of a gang of miscreants! That was the thought that paralysed—the disgrace, not the danger. But he was in advance of the pursuer—he hastened on—he turned the angle—he heard a shout behind from the opposite side—the officer had passed the bridge: "it is but one man as yet," thought he, and his nostrils dilated and his hands clenched as he glided on, glancing at each casement as he passed.

Now, as youth and vigour thus struggled against Law for life, near at hand Death was busy with toil and disease.

In a miserable *grabat*, or garret, a mechanic, yet young, and stricken by a lingering malady contracted by the labour of his occupation, was slowly passing from that world which had frowned on his cradle, and relaxed not the gloom of its aspect to comfort his bed of Death. Now this man had married for love, and his wife had loved him ; and it was the cares of that early marriage which had consumed him to the bone. But extreme want, if long continued, eats up love when it has nothing else to eat. And when people are very long dying, the people they fret and trouble begin to think of that too often hypocritical prettiness of phrase called "a happy release." So the worn-out and half-famished wife did not care three straws for the dying husband whom a year or two ago she had vowed to love and cherish in sickness and in health. But still she *seemed* to care, for she moaned and pined and wept, as the man's breath grew fainter and fainter.

"Ah, Jean !" said she, sobbing, "what will become of *me*, a poor lone widow, with nobody to work for my bread ?" And with that thought she took on worse than before.

"I am stifling," said the dying man, rolling round his ghastly eyes. "How hot it is ! Open the window ; I should like to see the light—daylight once again."

"*Mon Dieu !* what whims he has, poor man !" muttered the woman, without stirring.

The poor wretch put out his skeleton hand and clutched his wife's arm.

"I shan't trouble you long, Marie! Air—air!"

"Jean, you will make yourself worse—besides, I shall catch my death of cold. I have scarce a rag on, but I will just open the door."

"Pardon me," groaned the sufferer; "leave me, then."

Poor fellow! perhaps at that moment the thought of unkindness was sharper than the sharp cough which brought blood at every paroxysm. He did not like her so near him, but he did not blame her. Again, I say —poor fellow!

The woman opened the door, went to the other side of the room and sat down on an old box, and began darning an old neck-handkerchief. The silence was soon broken by the moans of the fast-dying man, and again he muttered, as he tossed to and fro, with baked white lips—

"*Je m'étouffe!*—Air!"

There was no resisting that prayer, it seemed so like the last. The wife laid down the needle, put the handkerchief round her throat, and opened the window.

"Do you feel easier now?"

"Bless you, Marie—yes; that's good—good. It puts me in mind of old days, that breath of air, before we came to Paris. I wish I could work for you *now*, Marie."

"Jean! my poor Jean!" said the woman, and the

words and the voice took back her hardening heart to the fresh fields and tender thoughts of the past time. And she walked up to the bed, and he leaned his temples, damp with livid dews, upon her breast.

"I have been a sad burden to you, Marie: we should not have married so soon; but I thought I was stronger. Don't cry; we have no little ones, thank God. It will be much better for you when I am gone."

And so, word after word gasped out—he stopped suddenly and seemed to fall asleep.

The wife then attempted gently to lay him once more on his pillow—the head fell back heavily—the jaw had dropped—the teeth were set—the eyes were open and like stone—the truth broke on her!—

"Jean—Jean! My God, he is dead! and I was unkind to him at the last!" With these words she fell upon the corpse, happily herself insensible.

Just at that moment a human face peered in at the window. Through that aperture, after a moment's pause, a young man leaped lightly into the room. He looked round with a hurried glance, but scarcely noticed the forms stretched on the pallet. It was enough for him that they seemed to sleep, and saw him not. He stole across the room, the door of which Marie had left open, and descended the stairs. He had almost gained the courtyard into which the stairs conducted, when he heard voices below by the porter's lodge.

"The police have discovered a gang of coiners!"

"Coiners!"

"Yes; one has been shot dead! I have seen his body in the kennel: another has fled along the roofs —a desperate fellow! We were to watch for him. Let us go up-stairs and get on the roof and look out."

By the hum of approval that followed this proposition, Morton judged rightly that it had been addressed to several persons whom curiosity and the explosion of the pistols had drawn from their beds, and who were grouped round the porter's lodge. What was to be done?—to advance was impossible: was there yet time to retreat?—it was at least the only course left him; he sprang back up the stairs; he had just gained the first flight when he heard steps descending; then, suddenly, it flashed across him that he had left open the window above—that, doubtless, by that imprudent oversight, the officer in pursuit had detected a clue to the path he had taken. What was to be done?—die as Gawtrey had done!—death rather than the galleys. As he thus resolved, he saw to the right the open door of an apartment in which lights still glimmered in their sockets. It seemed deserted—he entered boldly and at once, closing the door after him. Wines and viands still left on the table; gilded mirrors, reflecting the stern face of the solitary intruder; here and there an artificial flower; a knot of ribbon on the floor; all betokening the gaieties and graces of luxurious life—the dance, the revel, the feast—all this in one apartment! —above, in the same house, the pallet—the corpse—the widow—famine and woe! Such is a great city!

such, above all, is Paris! where, under the same roof, are gathered such antagonistic varieties of the social state! Nothing strange in this; it *is* strange and sad, that so little do people, thus neighbours, know of each other, that the owner of those rooms had a heart soft to every distress, but she did not know the distress so close at hand. The music that had charmed her guests had mounted gaily to the vexed ears of agony and hunger. Morton passed the first room—a second—he came to a third, and Eugénie de Merville, looking up at that instant, saw before her an apparition that might well have alarmed the boldest. His head was uncovered—his dark hair shadowed in wild and disorderly profusion the pale face, and features, beautiful indeed, but at that moment of the beauty which an artist would impart to a young gladiator—stamped with defiance, menace, and despair. The disordered garb—the fierce aspect—the dark eyes, that literally shone through the shadows of the room—all conspired to increase the terror of so abrupt a presence.

"What are you?—What do you seek here?" said she, falteringly, placing her hand on the bell as she spoke.

Upon that soft hand Morton laid his own.

"I seek my life! I am pursued! I am at your mercy! I am innocent! Can you save me?"

As he spoke, the door of the outer room beyond was heard to open, and steps and voices were at hand.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, recoiling as he recognised her face. "And is it to *you* that I have fled?"

Eugénie also recognised the stranger; and there was something in their relative positions—the suppliant, the protectress—that excited both her imagination and her pity. A slight colour mantled to her cheeks—her look was gentle and compassionate.

"Poor boy! so young!" she said. "Hush!"

She withdrew her hand from his, retired a few steps, lifted a curtain drawn across a recess—and pointing to an alcove that contained one of those sofa-beds common in French houses, added in a whisper—

"Enter—you are saved."

Morton obeyed, and Eugénie replaced the curtain.

CHAPTER XIII.

GUIOMAR.
Speak What are you?

RUTILIO.
Gracious woman, hear me. I am a stranger;
And in that I answer all your demands.
Custom of the Country.

EUGENIE replaced the curtain. And scarcely had she done so, ere the steps in the outer room entered the chamber where she stood. Her servant was accompanied by two officers of the police.

"Pardon, madame," said one of the latter; "but we are in pursuit of a criminal. We think he must have entered this house through a window above while your servant was in the street. Permit us to search?"

"Without doubt," answered Eugénie, seating herself. "If he has entered, look in the other apartments. I have not quitted this room."

"You are right. Accept our apologies."

And the officers turned back to examine every corner where the fugitive was *not.* For in that, the scouts of Justice resembled their mistress: when does man's justice look to the right place?

The servant lingered to repeat the tale he had heard—the sight he had seen. When, at that instant, he saw the curtain of the alcove slightly stirred. He uttered an exclamation—sprung to the bed—his hand touched the curtain—Eugénie seized his arm. She did not speak: but as he turned his eyes to her, astonished, he saw that she trembled, and that her cheek was as white as marble.

"Madame," he said, hesitating, "there is some one hid in the recess."

"There is! Be silent!"

A suspicion flashed across the servant's mind. The pure, the proud, the immaculate Eugénie!

"There is!—and in madame's chamber!" he faltered unconsciously.

Eugénie's quick apprehensions seized the foul thought. Her eyes flashed—her cheek crimsoned. But her lofty and generous nature conquered even the indignant and scornful burst that rushed to her lips. The truth!—could she trust the man? A doubt—and the charge of the human life rendered to her might be betrayed. Her colour fell—tears gushed to her eyes.

"I have been kind to you, François. Not a word!"

"Madame confides in me—it is enough," said the Frenchman, bowing, with a slight smile on his lips; and he drew back respectfully.

One of the police-officers re-entered.

"We have done, madame, he is not here. Aha! that curtain!"

"It is madame's bed," said François. "But I have looked behind."

"I am most sorry to have disarranged you," said the policeman, satisfied with the answer; "but we shall have him yet." And he retired.

The last footsteps died away, the last door of the apartments closed behind the officers, and Eugénie and her servant stood alone gazing on each other.

"You may retire," said she, at last; and taking her purse from the table, she placed it in his hands.

The man took it, with a significant look.

"Madame may depend on my discretion."

Eugénie was alone again. Those words rang in her ear,—Eugénie de Merville dependent on the discretion of her lackey! She sank into her chair, and, her excitement succeeded by exhaustion, leaned her face on her hands, and burst into tears. She was aroused by a low voice, she looked up, and the young man was kneeling at her feet.

"Go—go!" she said: "I have done for you all I can. You heard—you heard—my own hireling, too! At the hazard of my own good name you are saved. Go!"

"Of your good name!"—for Eugenie forgot that it was looks, not words, that had so wrung her pride—"Your good name," he repeated: and glancing round the room—the toilette, the curtain, the recess he had quitted—all that bespoke that chastest sanctuary of a chaste woman, which for a stranger to enter is, as it were, to profane—her meaning broke on him. "Your

good name! — your hireling! No, madame — no!" And as he spoke, he rose to his feet. "Not for me, that sacrifice! Your humanity shall not cost you so dear. Ho, there! I am the man you seek." And he strode to the door.

Eugénie was penetrated with the answer. She sprung to him—she grasped his garments.

"Hush! hush!—for mercy's sake! What would you do? Think you I could ever be happy again, if the confidence you placed in me were betrayed? Be calm—be still. I knew not what I said. It will be easy to undeceive the man—later—when you are saved. And you are innocent,—are you not?"

"Oh, madam," said Morton, "from my soul, I say it, I am innocent—not of poverty—wretchedness—error—shame; I am innocent of crime. May Heaven bless you!" And as he reverently kissed the hand laid on his arm, there was something in his voice so touching, in his manner something so above his fortunes, that Eugénie was lost in her feelings of compassion, surprise, and something, it might be, of admiration in her wonder.

"And, oh!" he said, passionately, gazing on her with his dark, brilliant eyes, liquid with emotion, "you have made my life sweet in saving it. You—you—of whom, ever since the first time, almost the sole time, I beheld you—I have so often mused and dreamed. Henceforth, whatever befall me, there will be some recollections that will—that——"

He stopped short, for his heart was too full for

words; and the silence said more to Eugénie than if all the eloquence of Rousseau had glowed upon his tongue.

"And who, and what are you?" she asked, after a pause.

"An exile—an orphan—an outcast! I have no name! Farewell!"

"No—stay yet—the danger is not past. Wait till my servant is gone to rest; I hear him yet. Sit down—sit down. And whither would you go?"

"I know not."

"Have you no friends?"

"None."

"No home?"

"None."

"And the police of Paris so vigilant!" cried Eugénie, wringing her hands. "What is to be done? I shall have saved you in vain—you will be discovered! Of what do they charge you? Not robbery—not——"

And she, too, stopped short, for she did not dare to breathe the black word—"Murder!"

"I know not," said Morton, putting his hand to his forehead, "except of being friends with the only man who befriended me—and they have killed him!"

"Another time you shall tell me all."

"Another time!" he exclaimed, eagerly—"*shall* I see you again?"

Eugénie blushed beneath the gaze and the voice of joy.

"Yes," she said; "yes. But I must reflect. Be calm—be silent. Ah!—a happy thought!"

She sat down, wrote a hasty line, sealed, and gave it to Morton.

"Take this note, as addressed, to Madame Dufour; it will provide you with a safe lodging. She is a person I can depend on—an old servant who lived with my mother, and to whom I have given a small pension. She has a lodging—it is lately vacant—I promised to procure her a tenant,—go—say nothing of what has passed. I will see her and arrange all. Wait!—hark!—all is still! I will go first, and see that no one watches you. Stop" (and she threw open the window, and looked into the court). "The porter's door is open—that is fortunate! Hurry on, and God be with you!"

In a few minutes Morton was in the streets. It was still early—the thoroughfares deserted—none of the shops yet open. The address on the note was to a street at some distance on the other side of the Seine. He passed along the same Quai which he had trodden but a few hours since—he passed the same splendid bridge on which he had stood despairing, to quit it revived—he gained the Rue Faubourg St Honoré. A young man in a cabriolet, on whose fair cheek burned the hectic of late vigils and lavish dissipation, was rolling leisurely home from the gaming-house, at which he had been more than usually fortunate—his pockets were laden with notes and gold. He bent forwards as Morton passed him. Philip, absorbed in his reverie, perceived him not, and continued his way. The gentleman turned down one of the streets to the left,

stopped, and called to the servant dozing behind his cabriolet,

"Follow that passenger! quietly—see where he lodges; be sure to find out and let me know. I shall go home without you." With that he drove on.

Philip, unconscious of the *espionage*, arrived at a small house in a quiet but respectable street, and rang the bell several times before at last he was admitted by Madame Dufour herself, in her night-cap. The old woman looked askant and alarmed at the unexpected apparition. But the note seemed at once to satisfy her. She conducted him to an apartment on the first floor, small, but neatly and even elegantly furnished; consisting of a sitting-room and a bed-chamber, and said, quietly,—

"Will they suit monsieur?"

To monsieur they seemed a palace. Morton nodded assent.

"And will monsieur sleep for a short time?"

"Yes."

"The bed is well-aired. The rooms have only been vacant three days since. Can I get you anything till your luggage arrives?"

"No."

The woman left him. He threw off his clothes—flung himself on the bed—and did not wake till noon.

When his eyes unclosed—when they rested on that calm chamber, with its air of health, and cleanliness, and comfort, it was long before he could convince himself that he was yet awake. He missed the loud, deep

voice of Gawtrey—the smoke of the dead man's meerschaum—the gloomy garret—the distained walls—the stealthy whisper of the loathed Birnie; slowly the life led and the life gone within the last twelve hours grew upon his struggling memory. He groaned, and turned uneasily round, when the door slightly opened, and he sprung up fiercely—

"Who is there?"

"It is only I, sir," answered Madame Dufour. "I have been in three times to see if you were stirring. There is a letter, I believe, for you, sir; though there is no name to it," and she laid the letter on the chair beside him. Did it come from her—the saving angel? He seized it. The cover was blank; it was sealed with a small device, as of a ring seal. He tore it open, and found four *billets de banque* for 1000 francs each—a sum equivalent in our money to about £160.

"Who sent this, the—the lady from whom I brought the note?"

"Madame de Merville? certainly not, sir," said Madame Dufour, who, with the privilege of age, was now unscrupulously filling the water-jugs and settling the toilet-table. "A young man called about two hours after you had gone to bed; and describing you, inquired if you lodged here, and what your name was. I said you had just arrived, and that I did not yet know your name. So he went away, and came again half an hour afterwards with this letter, which he charged me to deliver to you safely."

"A young man—a gentleman?"

"No, sir; he seemed a smart but common sort of lad." For the unsophisticated Madame Dufour did not discover in the plain black frock and drab gaiters of the bearer of that letter the simple livery of an English gentleman's groom.

Whom could it come from, if not from Madame de Merville? Perhaps one of Gawtrey's late friends. A suspicion of Arthur Beaufort crossed him, but he indignantly dismissed it. Men are seldom credulous of what they are unwilling to believe! What kindness had the Beauforts hitherto shown him?—Left his mother to perish broken-hearted—stolen from him his brother, and steeled, in that brother, the only heart wherein he had a right to look for gratitude and love! No, it *must* be Madame de Merville. He dismissed Madame Dufour for pen and paper—rose—wrote a letter to Eugénie—grateful, but proud, and enclosed the notes. He then summoned Madame Dufour, and sent her with his despatch.

"Ah, madame," said the *ci-devant bonne*, when she found herself in Eugénie's presence. "The poor lad! how handsome he is, and how shameful in the Vicomte to let him wear such clothes!"

"The Vicomte!"

"Oh, my dear mistress, you must not deny it. You told me in your note to ask him no questions, but I guessed at once. The Vicomte told me himself that he should have the young gentleman over in a few days. You need not be ashamed of him. You will see what a difference clothes will make in his appear-

ance; and I have taken it on myself to order a tailor to go to him. The Vicomte *must* pay me."

"Not a word to the Vicomte as yet. We will surprise him," said Eugénie, laughing.

Madame de Merville had been all that morning trying to invent some story to account for her interest in the lodger, and now Fortune favoured her!

"But is that a letter for me?"

"And I had almost forgot it," said Madame Dufour, as she extended the letter.

Whatever there had hitherto been in the circumstances connected with Morton, that had roused the interest and excited the romance of Eugénie de Merville, her fancy was yet more attracted by the tone of the letter she now read. For though Morton, more accustomed to speak than to write French, expressed himself with less precision, and a less euphuistic selection of phrase, than the authors and *élégans* who formed her usual correspondents; there was an innate and rough nobleness—a strong and profound feeling in every line of his letter, which increased her surprise and admiration.

"All that surrounds him—all that belongs to him, is strangeness and mystery!" murmured she: and she sat down to reply.

When Madame Dufour departed with that letter, Eugénie remained silent and thoughtful for more than an hour—Morton's letter before her; and sweet, in their indistinctness, were the recollections and the images that crowded on her mind.

Morton, satisfied by the earnest and solemn assurances of Eugénie that she was not the unknown donor of the sum she reinclosed, after puzzling himself in vain to form any new conjectures as to the quarter whence it came, felt that, under his present circumstances, it would be an absurd Quixotism to refuse to apply what the very Providence to whom he had anew consigned himself seemed to have sent to his aid. And it placed him, too, beyond the offer of all pecuniary assistance from one from whom he could least have brooked to receive it. He consented, therefore, to all that the loquacious tailor proposed to him. And it would have been difficult to have recognised the wild and frenzied fugitive in the stately and graceful form, with its young beauty and air of well-born pride, which the next day sat by the side of Eugénie. And that day he told his sad and troubled story, and Eugénie wept; and from that day he came daily; and two weeks — happy, dreamlike, intoxicating to both — passed by; and as their last sun set, he was kneeling at her feet, and breathing to one to whom the homage of wit, and genius, and complacent wealth, had hitherto been vainly proffered, the impetuous, agitated, delicious secrets of the First Love. He spoke, and rose to depart for ever—when the look and sigh detained him.

The next day, after a sleepless night, Eugénie de Merville sent for the Vicomte de Vaudemont.

CHAPTER XIV.

> A silver river small
> In sweet accènts
> Its music vents ;—
> The warbling virginal
> To which the merry birds do sing,
> Timèd with stops of gold the silver string.
>
> SIR RICHARD FANSHAW.

ONE evening, several weeks after the events just commemorated, a stranger, leading in his hand a young child, entered the churchyard of H——. The sun had not long set, and the short twilight of deepening summer reigned in the tranquil skies ; you might still hear from the trees above the graves the chirp of some joyous bird ;—what cared he, the denizen of the skies, for the dead that slept below ?—what did he value save the greenness and repose of the spot ?—to him alike, the garden or the grave ! As the man and the child passed, the robin, scarcely scared by their tread from the long grass beside one of the mounds, looked at them with its bright, blithe eye. It was a famous spot for the robin—the old churchyard ! That domestic bird—" the friend of man," as it has been called by the poets—found a jolly supper among the worms !

The stranger, on reaching the middle of the sacred ground, paused and looked round him wistfully. He then approached, slowly and hesitatingly, an oblong tablet, on which were graven, in letters yet fresh and new, these words :—

TO THE
MEMORY OF ONE CALUMNIATED AND WRONGED,
THIS BURIAL-STONE IS DEDICATED
BY HER SON.

Such, with the addition of the dates of birth and death, was the tablet which Philip Morton had directed to be placed over his mother's bones ; and around it was set a simple palisade, which defended it from the tread of the children, who sometimes, in defiance of the beadle, played over the dust of the former race.

"Thy son !" muttered the stranger, while the child stood quietly by his side, pleased by the trees, the grass, the song of the birds, and recking not of grief or death—"thy son !—but not thy favoured son—thy darling—thy youngest born ; on what spot of earth do thine eyes look down on *him ?* Surely in heaven thy love has preserved the one whom on earth thou didst most cherish, from the sufferings and the trials that have visited the less-favoured outcast. Oh, mother—mother !—it was not his crime—not Philip's—that he did not fulfil to the last the trust bequeathed to him ! Happier, perhaps, as it is ! And, oh ! if thy memory be graven as deeply in my brother's heart as my own, how often will it warn and save him ! That memory ! —it has been to me the angel of my life ! To thee—

to thee, even in death, I owe it, if, though erring, I am not criminal—if I have lived with the lepers, and am still undefiled!" His lips then were silent—not his heart!

After a few minutes thus consumed he turned to the child, and said, gently and in a tremulous voice,—"Fanny, you have been taught to pray—you will live near this spot,—will you come sometimes here and pray that you may grow up good and innocent, and become a blessing to those who love you?"

"Will papa ever come to hear me pray?"

That sad and unconscious question went to the heart of Morton. The child could not comprehend death. He had sought to explain it, but she had been accustomed to consider her protector dead when he was absent from her, and she still insisted that he must come again to life. And that man of turbulence and crime, who had passed unrepentant, unabsolved, from sin to judgment; it was an awful question,—"If *he* should hear her pray?"

"Yes!" said he, after a pause,—"yes, Fanny, there *is* a Father who will hear you pray; and pray to him to be merciful to those who have been kind to you. Fanny, you and I may never meet again!"

"Are you going to die too? *Méchant*, every one dies to Fanny!" and, clinging to him endearingly, she put up her lips to kiss him. He took her in his arms; and, as a tear fell upon her rosy cheek, she said, "Don't cry, brother, for I love you."

"Do you, dear Fanny? Then, for my sake, when

you come to this place, if any one will give you a few flowers, scatter them on that stone. And now we will go to one whom you must love also, and to whom, as I have told you, *he* sends you; he who——Come!"

As he thus spoke, and placed Fanny again on the ground, he was startled to see, precisely on the spot where he had seen before the like apparition—on the same spot where the father had cursed the son, the motionless form of an old man. Morton recognised, as if by an instinct rather than by an effort of the memory, the person to whom he was bound.

He walked slowly towards him; but Fanny abruptly left his side, lured by a moth that flitted duskily over the graves.

"Your name, sir, I think, is Simon Gawtrey?" said Morton. "I have come to England in quest of you."

"Of me?" said the old man, half rising, and his eyes, now completely blind, rolled vacantly over Morton's person,—"of me?—for what?—Who are you?—I don't know your voice!"

"I come to you from your son!"

"My son!" exclaimed the old man, with great vehemence,—"the reprobate!—the dishonoured!—the infamous!—the accursed——"

"Hush! you revile the dead!"

"Dead!" muttered the wretched father, tottering back to the seat he had quitted,—"dead!" and the sound of his voice was so full of anguish, that the dog at his feet, which Morton had not hitherto perceived, echoed it with a dismal cry, that recalled to Philip the

awful day in which he had seen the son quit the father for the last time on earth.

The sound brought Fanny to the spot; and, with a laugh of delight, which made to it a strange contrast, she threw herself on the grass beside the dog and sought to entice it to play. So there, in that place of death, were knit together the four links in the Great Chain;—lusty and blooming life—desolate and doting age—infancy, yet scarce conscious of a soul—and the dumb brute, that has no warrant of a Hereafter!

"Dead—dead!" repeated the old man, covering his sightless balls with his withered hands. "Poor William!"

"He remembered you to the last. He bade me seek you out—he bade me replace the guilty son with a thing pure and innocent, as he had been had he died in his cradle—a child to comfort your old age! Kneel, Fanny, I have found you a father who will cherish you (oh! you will, sir, will you not?) as he whom you may see no more!"

There was something in Morton's voice so solemn, that it awed and touched both the old man and the infant; and Fanny, creeping to the protector thus assigned to her, and putting her little hands confidingly on his knees, said—

"Fanny will love you if papa wished it. Kiss Fanny."

"Is it his child—his?" said the blind man, sobbing. "Come to my heart; here—here! O God, forgive me!"

Morton did not think it right at that moment to

undeceive him with regard to the poor child's true connection with the deceased; and he waited in silence till Simon, after a burst of passionate grief and tenderness, rose, and, still clasping the child to his breast, said—

"Sir, forgive me!—I am a very weak old man—I have many thanks to give—I have much, too, to learn. My poor son! he did not die in want—did he?"

The particulars of Gawtrey's fate, with his real name and the various *aliases* he had assumed, had appeared in the French journals, and been partially copied into the English; and Morton had expected to have been saved the painful narrative of that fearful death: but the utter seclusion of the old man, his infirmity, and his estranged habits, had shut him out from the intelligence that it now devolved on Philip to communicate. Morton hesitated a little before he answered—

"It is late now; you are not yet prepared to receive this poor infant at your home, nor to hear the details I have to state. I arrived in England but to-day. I shall lodge in the neighbourhood, for it is dear to me. If I may feel sure, then, that you will receive and treasure this sacred and last deposit bequeathed to you by your unhappy son, I will bring my charge to you to-morrow, and we will then, more calmly than we can now, talk over the past."

"You do not answer my question," said Simon, passionately; "answer that and I will wait for the rest. They call me a miser! Did I send out my only child to starve? Answer that!"

"Be comforted. He did not die in want; and he has even left some little fortune for Fanny, which I was to place in your hands."

"And he thought to bribe the old miser to be human! Well—well—well! I will go home."

"Lean on me!"

The dog leapt playfully on his master as the latter rose, and Fanny slid from Simon's arms to caress and talk to the animal in her own way. As they slowly passed through the churchyard, Simon muttered incoherently to himself for several paces, and Morton would not disturb, since he could not comfort, him.

At last, he said, abruptly—"Did my son repent?"

"I hope," answered Morton, evasively, "that, had his life been spared, he would have amended!"

"Tush, sir!—I am past seventy; we repent!—we never amend!" And Simon again sunk into his own dim and disconnected reveries.

At length they arrived at the blind man's house. The door was opened to them by an old woman of disagreeable and sinister aspect, dressed out much too gaily for the station of a servant, though such was her reputed capacity; but the miser's affliction saved her from the chance of his comment on her extravagance. As she stood in the doorway, with a candle in her hand, she scanned curiously, and with no welcoming eye, her master's companions.

"Mrs Boxer, my son is dead!" said Simon, in a hollow voice.

"And a good thing it is, then, sir!"

"For shame, woman," said Morton, indignantly.

"Hey-day! sir! Whom have we got here?"

"One," said Simon, sternly, "whom you will treat with respect. He brings me a blessing to lighten my loss. One harsh word to this child, and you quit my house!"

The woman looked perfectly thunderstruck; but, recovering herself, she said, whiningly—

"I! a harsh word to anything my dear, kind master cares for. And, Lord, what a sweet, pretty creature it is! Come here, my dear!"

But Fanny shrunk back, and would not let go Philip's hand.

"To-morrow, then," said Morton; and he was turning away, when a sudden thought seemed to cross the old man—

"Stay, sir—stay! I—I—did my son say I was rich? I am very, very poor—nothing in the house, or I should have been robbed long ago!"

"Your son told me to bring money, not to ask for it!"

"Ask for it! No; but," added the old man, and a gleam of cunning intelligence shot over his face—"but he had got into a bad set. Ask!—No!—Put up the door-chain, Mrs Boxer!"

It was with doubt and misgivings that Morton, the next day, consigned the child, who had already nestled herself into the warmest core of his heart, to the care of Simon. Nothing short of that superstitious respect, which all men owe to the wishes of the dead, would

have made him select for her that asylum; for Fate had now, in brightening his own prospects, given him an alternative in the benevolence of Madame de Merville. But Gawtrey had been so earnest on the subject, that he felt as if he had no right to hesitate. And was it not a sort of atonement to any faults the son might have committed against the parent, to place by the old man's hearth so sweet a charge?

The strange and peculiar mind and character of Fanny made him, however, yet more anxious than otherwise he might have been. She certainly deserved not the harsh name of imbecile or idiot, but she was different from all other children; she *felt* more acutely than most of her age, but she could not be taught to *reason.* There was something either oblique or deficient in her intellect, which justified the most melancholy apprehensions; yet often, when some disordered, incoherent, inexplicable train of ideas most saddened the listener, it would be followed by fancies so exquisite in their strangeness, or feelings so endearing in their tenderness, that suddenly she seemed as much above, as before she seemed below the ordinary measure of infant comprehension. She was like a creature to which Nature, in some cruel but bright caprice, has given all that belongs to poetry, but denied all that belongs to the common understanding necessary to mankind; or, as a fairy changeling, not, indeed, according to the vulgar superstition, malignant and deformed, but lovelier than the children of men, and haunted by dim and struggling associations of a gentler

and fairer being, yet wholly incapable to learn the dry and hard elements which make up the knowledge of actual life.

Morton, as well as he could, sought to explain to Simon the peculiarities in Fanny's mental constitution. He urged on him the necessity of providing for her careful instruction, and Simon promised to send her to the best school the neighbourhood could afford; but, as the old man spoke, he dwelt so much on the supposed fact that Fanny was William's daughter, and with his remorse or affection there ran so interwoven a thread of selfishness and avarice, that Morton thought it would be dangerous to his interest in the child to undeceive his error. He, therefore,—perhaps excusably enough,—remained silent on that subject.

Gawtrey had placed with the superior of the convent, together with an order to give up the child to any one who should demand her in his true name, which he confided to the superior, a sum of nearly £300, which he solemnly swore had been honestly obtained, and which, in all his shifts and adversities, he had never allowed himself to touch. This sum, with the trifling deduction made for arrears due to the convent, Morton now placed in Simon's hands. The old man clutched the money, which was for the most in French gold, with a convulsive gripe; and then, as if ashamed of the impulse, said,—

"But you, sir,—will any sum—that is, any reasonable sum—be of use to you?"

"No! and if it were, it is neither yours nor mine—

it is hers. Save it for her, and add to it what you can."

While this conversation took place, Fanny had been consigned to the care of Mrs Boxer, and Philip now rose to see and bid her farewell before he departed.

"I may come again to visit you, Mr Gawtrey; and I pray Heaven to find that you and Fanny have been a mutual blessing to each other. Oh, remember how your son loved her!"

"He had a good heart in spite of all his sins. Poor William!" said Simon.

Philip Morton heard, and his lip curled with a sad and a just disdain.

If, when at the age of nineteen, William Gawtrey had quitted his father's roof, the father had then remembered that the son's heart was good,—the son had been alive still, an honest and a happy man. Do ye not laugh, O ye all-listening Fiends! when men praise those dead whose virtues they discovered not when alive! It takes much marble to build the sepulchre—how little of lath and plaster would have repaired the garret!

On turning into a small room adjoining the parlour in which Gawtrey sat, Morton found Fanny standing gloomily by a dull, soot-grimed window, which looked out on the dead walls of a small yard. Mrs Boxer, seated by a table, was employed in trimming a cap, and putting questions to Fanny in that falsetto voice of endearment in which people not used to children are apt to address them.

"And so, my dear, they've never taught you to read or write? You've been sadly neglected, poor thing!"

"We must do our best to supply the deficiency," said Morton, as he entered.

"Bless me, sir, is that you?" and the *gouvernante* bustled up and dropped a low curtsy; for Morton, dressed then in the garb of a gentleman, was of a mien and person calculated to strike the gaze of the vulgar.

"Ah, brother!" cried Fanny, for by that name he had taught her to call him; and she flew to his side. "Come away—it's ugly here—it makes me cold."

"My child, I told you you must stay; but I shall hope to see you again some day. Will you not be kind to this poor creature, ma'am? Forgive me if I offended you last night, and favour me by accepting this to show that we are friends." As he spoke he slid his purse into the woman's hand. "I shall feel ever grateful for whatever you can do for Fanny."

"Fanny wants nothing from any one else; Fanny wants her brother."

"Sweet child! I fear she don't take to me. Will you like me, Miss Fanny?"

"No! get along!"

"Fie, Fanny!—you remember you did not take to me at first. But she is so affectionate, ma'am; she never forgets a kindness."

"I will do all I can to please her, sir. And so she is really master's grandchild?" The woman fixed her eyes, as she spoke, so intently on Morton, that he felt embarrassed, and busied himself, without answering,

in caressing and soothing Fanny, who now seemed to awake to the affliction about to visit her; for though she did not weep—she very rarely wept—her slight frame trembled—her eyes closed—her cheeks, even her lips, were white—and her delicate hands were clasped tightly round the neck of the one about to abandon her to strange breasts.

Morton was greatly moved. "One kiss, Fanny! and do not forget me when we meet again."

The child pressed her lips to his cheek, but the lips were cold. He put her down gently; she stood mute and passive.

"Remember that *he* wished me to leave you here," whispered Morton, using an argument that never failed. "We must obey him; and so—God bless you, Fanny!"

He rose and retreated to the door; the child unclosed her eyes, and gazed at him with a strained, painful, imploring gaze; her lips moved, but she did not speak. Morton could not bear that silent woe. He sought to smile on her consolingly; but the smile would not come. He closed the door, and hurried from the house.

From that day Fanny settled into a kind of dreary, inanimate stupor, which resembled that of the somnambulist whom the magnetiser forgets to waken. Hitherto, with all the eccentricities or deficiencies of her mind, had mingled a wild and airy gaiety. That was vanished. She spoke little—she never played—no toys could lure her—even the poor dog failed to

win her notice. If she was told to do anything, she stared vacantly, and stirred not. She evinced, however, a kind of dumb regard to the old blind man: she would creep to his knees, and sit there for hours, seldom answering when he addressed her; but uneasy, anxious, and restless, if he left her.

"Will you die, too?" she asked once; the old man understood her not, and she did not try to explain. Early one morning, some days after Morton was gone, they missed her: she was not in the house, nor the dull yard where she was sometimes dismissed and told to play—told in vain. In great alarm, the old man accused Mrs Boxer of having spirited her away; and threatened and stormed so loudly, that the woman, against her will, went forth to the search. At last, she found the child in the churchyard, standing wistfully beside a tomb.

"What do you here, you little plague?" said Mrs Boxer, rudely seizing her by the arm.

"This is the way they will both come back some day! I dreamt so!"

"If ever I catch you here again!" said the housekeeper; and, wiping her brow with one hand, she struck the child with the other. Fanny had never been struck before. She recoiled in terror and amazement; and, for the first time since her arrival, burst into tears.

"Come—come, no crying! and if you tell master, I'll beat you within an inch of your life!" So saying, she caught Fanny in her arms; and, walking about,

scolding and menacing, till she had frightened back the child's tears, she returned triumphantly to the house, and, bursting into the parlour, exclaimed, "Here's the little darling, sir!"

When old Simon learned where the child had been found, he was glad; for it was his constant habit, whenever the evening was fine, to glide out to that churchyard—his dog his guide—and sit on his one favourite spot opposite the setting sun. This, not so much for the sanctity of the place, or the meditations it might inspire, as because it was the nearest, the safest, and the loneliest spot, in the neighbourhood of his home, where the blind man could inhale the air, and bask in the light of heaven. Hitherto, thinking it sad for the child, he had never taken her with him: indeed, at the hour of his monotonous excursion, she had generally been banished to bed. Now she was permitted to accompany him; and the old man and the infant would sit there side by side, as Age and Infancy rested side by side in the graves below. The first symptom of childlike interest and curiosity that Fanny betrayed was awakened by the affliction of her protector. One evening, as they thus sat, she made him explain what the desolation of blindness is. She seemed to comprehend him, though he did not seek to adapt his complaints to her understanding.

"Fanny knows," said she, touchingly; "for she, too, is blind here;" and she pressed her hands to her temples.

Notwithstanding her silence and strange ways, and

although he could not see the exquisite loveliness which Nature, as in remorseful pity, had lavished on her outward form, Simon soon learned to love her better than he had ever loved yet: for they most cold to the child are often dotards to the grandchild. For her even his avarice slept. Dainties, never before known at his sparing board, were ordered to tempt her appetite;—toy-shops ransacked to amuse her indolence. He was long, however, before he could prevail on himself to fulfil his promise to Morton, and rob himself of her presence. At length, however, wearied with Mrs Boxer's lamentations at her ignorance, and alarmed himself at some evidences of helplessness, which made him dread to think what her future might be when left alone in life, he placed her at a day-school in the suburb. Here Fanny, for a considerable time, justified the harshest assertions of her stupidity. She could not even keep her eyes two minutes together on the page from which she was to learn the mysteries of reading; months passed before she mastered the alphabet, and, a month after, she had again forgot it, and the labour was renewed. The only thing in which she showed ability, if so it might be called, was in the use of the needle. The sisters of the convent had already taught her many pretty devices in this art, and when she found that at the school they were admired—that she was praised instead of blamed—her vanity was pleased, and she learned so readily all that they could teach in this not unprofitable accomplishment, that Mrs Boxer slyly and secretly turned her tasks to

account, and made a weekly perquisite of the poor pupil's industry. Another faculty she possessed, in common with persons usually deficient, and with the lower species,—viz., a most accurate and faithful recollection of places. At first, Mrs Boxer had been duly sent morning, noon, and evening, to take her to, or bring her from, the school; but this was so great a grievance to Simon's solitary superintendent, and Fanny coaxed the old man so endearingly to allow her to go and return alone, that the attendance, unwelcome to both, was waived. Fanny exulted in this liberty; and she never, in going or in returning, missed passing through the burial-ground, and gazing wistfully at the tomb from which she yet believed Morton would one day reappear. With his memory, she cherished also that of her earlier and more guilty protector; but they were separate feelings, which she distinguished in her own way,—

"Papa had given her up. She knew that he would not have sent her away, far—far over the great water, if he had meant to see Fanny again; but her brother was forced to leave her—he would come to life one day, and then they should live together!"

One day, towards the end of autumn, as her schoolmistress, a good woman on the whole, but who had not yet had the wit to discover by what chords to tune the instrument, over which so wearily she drew her unskilful hand—one day, we say, the schoolmistress happened to be dressed for a christening party to which

she was invited in the suburb; and, accordingly, after the morning lessons, the pupils were to be dismissed to a holiday. As Fanny now came last, with the hopeless spelling-book, she stopped suddenly short, and her eyes rested with avidity upon a large bouquet of exotic flowers, with which the good lady had enlivened the centre of the parted kerchief, whose yellow gauze modestly veiled that tender section of female beauty which poets have likened to hills of snow—a chilling simile! It was then autumn; and field, and even garden flowers were growing rare.

"Will you give me one of those flowers?" said Fanny, dropping her book.

"One of these flowers, child! why?"

Fanny did not answer; but one of the elder and cleverer girls, said,—

"Oh! she comes from France, you know, ma'am, and the Roman Catholics put flowers, and ribbons, and things, over the graves; you recollect, ma'am, we were reading yesterday about Père-la-Chaise?"

"Well, what then?"

"And Miss Fanny will do any kind of work for us if we will give her flowers."

"My brother told me where to put them;—but these pretty flowers, I never had any like them; *they* may bring him back again! I'll be so good if you'll give me one,—only one!"

"Will you learn your lesson if I do, Fanny?"

"Oh, yes! Wait a moment!"

And Fanny stole back to her desk, put the hateful

book resolutely before her, pressed both hands tightly on her temples,—*Eureka*, the chord *was* touched; and Fanny marched in triumph through half a column of hostile double-syllables!

From that day the schoolmistress knew how to stimulate her, and Fanny learned to read: her path to knowledge thus literally strewn with flowers! Catherine, thy children were far off, and thy grave looked gay!

It naturally happened that those short and simple rhymes, often sacred, which are repeated in schools as helps to memory, made a part of her studies; and no sooner had the sound of verse struck upon her fancy than it seemed to confuse and agitate anew all her senses. It was like the music of some breeze, to which dance and tremble all the young leaves of a wild plant. Even when at the convent she had been fond of repeating the infant rhymes with which they had sought to lull, or to amuse her, but now the taste was more strongly developed. She confounded, however, in meaningless and motley disorder, the various snatches of song that came to her ear, weaving them together in some form which she understood, but which was jargon to all others; and often, as she went alone through the green lanes or the bustling streets, the passenger would turn in pity and fear to hear her half chant—half murmur—ditties that seemed to suit only a wandering and unsettled imagination. And as Mrs Boxer, in her visits to the various shops in the suburb, took care to bemoan her hard fate in attending to a creature so

evidently moon-stricken, it was no wonder that the manner and habits of the child, coupled with that strange predilection to haunt the burial-ground, which is not uncommon with persons of weak and disordered intellect, confirmed the character thus given to her.

So, as she tripped gaily and lightly along the thoroughfares, the children would draw aside from her path, and whisper, with superstitious fear mingled with contempt,—"It's the idiot girl!"—Idiot!—how much more of heaven's light was there in that cloud than in the rushlights that, flickering in sordid chambers, shed on dull things the dull ray—esteeming themselves as stars!

Months—years passed—Fanny was thirteen, when there dawned a new era to her existence. Mrs Boxer had never got over her first grudge to Fanny. Her treatment of the poor girl was always harsh, and sometimes cruel. But Fanny did not complain; and as Mrs Boxer's manner to her before Simon was invariably cringing and caressing, the old man never guessed the hardships his supposed grandchild underwent. There had been scandal some years back in the suburb about the relative connection of the master and the housekeeper; and the flaunting dress of the latter, something bold in her regard, and certain whispers that her youth had not been vowed to Vesta, confirmed the suspicion. The only reason why we do not feel sure that the rumour was false is this,—Simon Gawtrey had been so hard on the early follies of his son! Certainly, at all events, the woman had exercised great

influence over the miser before the arrival of Fanny, and she had done much to steel his selfishness against the ill-fated William. And, as certainly she had fully calculated on succeeding to the savings, whatever they might be, of the miser, whenever Providence should be pleased to terminate his days. She knew that Simon had, many years back, made his will in her favour; she knew that he had not altered that will: she believed, therefore, that in spite of all his love for Fanny, he loved his gold so much more, that he could not accustom himself to the thought of bequeathing it to hands too helpless to guard the treasure. This had in some measure reconciled the housekeeper to the intruder; whom, nevertheless, she hated as a dog hates another dog, not only for taking his bone, but for looking at it.

But suddenly Simon fell ill. His age made it probable he would die. He took to his bed—his breathing grew fainter and fainter—he seemed dead. Fanny, all unconscious, sat by his bedside as usual, holding her breath not to waken him. Mrs Boxer flew to the bureau—she unlocked it—she could not find the will; but she found three bags of bright old guineas: the sight charmed her. She tumbled them forth on the distained green cloth of the bureau—she began to count them; and at that moment, the old man, as if there were a secret magnetism between himself and the guineas, woke from his trance. His blindness saved him the pain that might have been fatal, of seeing the unhallowed profanation; but he heard the chink of

the metal. The very sound restored his strength. But the infirm are always cunning—he breathed not a suspicion. "Mrs Boxer," said he faintly, "I think I could take some broth." Mrs Boxer rose in great dismay, gently reclosed the bureau, and ran down stairs for the broth. Simon took the occasion to question Fanny; and no sooner had he learnt the operation of the heir-expectant, than he bade the girl first lock the bureau and bring him the key, and next run to a lawyer (whose address he gave her), and fetch him instantly.

With a malignant smile the old man took the broth from his handmaid,—"Poor Boxer, you are a disinterested creature," said he, feebly; "I think you will grieve when I go."

Mrs Boxer sobbed; and before she had recovered, the lawyer entered. That day a new will was made; and the lawyer politely informed Mrs Boxer that her services would be dispensed with the next morning, when he should bring a nurse to the house. Mrs Boxer heard, and took her resolution. As soon as Simon again fell asleep, she crept into the room—led away Fanny—locked her up in her own chamber—returned—searched for the key of the bureau, which she found at last under Simon's pillow—possessed herself of all she could lay her hands on—and the next morning she had disappeared for ever! Simon's loss was greater than might have been supposed; for, except a trifling sum in the Savings' Bank, he, like many other misers, kept all he had, in notes or specie, under his own lock and key. His whole fortune, indeed, was

far less than was supposed; for money does not make money unless it is put out to interest,—and the miser cheated himself. Such portion as was in bank-notes Mrs Boxer probably had the prudence to destroy; for those numbers which Simon could remember were never traced; the gold, who could swear to? Except the pittance in the Savings' Bank, and whatever might be the paltry worth of the house he rented, the father who had enriched the menial to exile the son was a beggar in his dotage. This news, however, was carefully concealed from him by the advice of the doctor, whom, on his own responsibility, the lawyer introduced till he had recovered sufficiently to bear the shock without danger; and the delay naturally favoured Mrs Boxer's escape.

Simon remained for some moments perfectly stunned and speechless when the news was broken to him. Fanny, in alarm at his increasing paleness, sprang to his breast. He pushed her away,—"Go—go—go, child," he said; "I can't feed you now. Leave me to starve."

"To starve!" said Fanny, wonderingly; and she stole away, and sat herself down as if in deep thought. She then crept up to the lawyer as he was about to leave the room, after exhausting his stock of commonplace consolation; and putting her hand in his, whispered, "I want to talk to you—this way:"—She led him through the passage into the open air. "Tell me," she said, "when poor people try not to starve, don't they work?"

"My dear, yes."

"For rich people buy poor people's work?"

"Certainly, my dear; to be sure."

"Very well. Mrs Boxer used to sell my work. Fanny will feed grandpapa! Go and tell him never to say 'starve' again."

The good-natured lawyer was moved,—"Can you work, indeed, my poor girl? Well, put on your bonnet, and come and talk to my wife."

And *that* was the new era in Fanny's existence! Her schooling was stopped. But now life schooled her. Necessity ripened her intellect. And many a hard eye moistened,—as seeing her glide with her little basket of fancy-work along the streets, still murmuring her happy and bird-like snatches of unconnected song —men and children alike said with respect, in which there was *now* no contempt, "It's the idiot girl who supports her blind grandfather!"

They called her idiot still!

BOOK IV.

Hin zu einem großen Meere
  Trieb mich seiner Wellen Spiel;
Vor mir liegt's in weiter Leere,
  Näher bin ich nicht dem Ziel.

SCHILLER: *Der Pilgrim.*

BOOK IV.

CHAPTER I.

> Oh, that sweet gleam of sunshine on the lake!
> WILSON'S *City of the Plague.*

If, reader, you have ever looked through a solar microscope at the monsters in a drop of water, perhaps you have wondered to yourself how things so terrible have been hitherto unknown to you—you have felt a loathing at the limpid element you hitherto deemed so pure—you have half fancied that you would cease to be a water-drinker; yet, the next day you have forgotten the grim life that started before you, with its countless shapes, in that teeming globule; and, if so tempted by your thirst, you have not shrunk from the lying crystal, although myriads of the horrible Unseen are mangling, devouring, gorging each other, in the liquid you so tranquilly imbibe; so is it with that ancestral and master element called Life. Lapped in your sleek comforts, and lolling on the sofa of your patent conscience—when, perhaps for the first time,

you look through the glass of science upon one ghastly globule in the waters that heave around, that fill up, with their succulence, the pores of earth, that moisten every atom subject to your eyes, or handled by your touch—you are startled and dismayed; you say, mentally, "Can such things be? I never dreamed of this before! I thought what was invisible to me was non-existent in itself—I will remember this dread experiment." The next day the experiment is forgotten. —The Chemist may purify the Globule—can Science make pure the World?

Turn we now to the pleasant surface, seen in the whole, broad and fair to the common eye. Who would judge well of God's great designs, if he could look on no drop pendent from the rose-tree, or sparkling in the sun, without the help of his solar microscope?

It is ten years after the night on which William Gawtrey perished:—I transport you, reader, to the fairest scenes in England,—scenes consecrated by the only true pastoral poetry we have known, to Contemplation and Repose.

Autumn had begun to tinge the foliage on the banks of Winandermere. It had been a summer of unusual warmth and beauty; and if that year you had visited the English lakes, you might, from time to time, amidst the groups of happy idlers you encountered, have singled out two persons for interest, or, perhaps, for envy. Two who might have seemed to you in peculiar harmony with those serene and soft retreats, both young—both beautiful. Lovers you would have guessed them to

be; but such lovers as Fletcher might have placed under the care of his "Holy Shepherdess"—forms that might have reclined by

> "The Virtuous well, about whose flowery banks
> The nimble footed fairies dance their rounds
> By the pale moonshine."

For in the love of those persons there seemed a purity and innocence that suited well their youth and the character of their beauty. Perhaps, indeed, on the girl's side, love sprung rather from those affections which the spring of life throws upward to the surface, as the spring of earth does its flowers, than from that concentrated and deep absorption of self in self, which alone promises endurance and devotion, and of which first love, or rather the first fancy, is often less susceptible than that which grows out of the more thoughtful fondness of maturer years. Yet he, the lover, was of so rare and singular a beauty, that he might well seem calculated to awaken, to the utmost, the love which wins the heart through the eyes.

But to begin at the beginning. A lady of fashion had, in the autumn previous to the year on which our narrative reopens, taken, with her daughter, a girl then of about eighteen, the tour of the English lakes. Charmed by the beauty of Winandermere, and finding one of the most commodious villas on its banks to be let, they had remained there all the winter. In the early spring a severe illness had seized the elder lady, and finding herself, as she slowly recovered, unfit for the gaieties of a London season, nor unwilling, per-

haps—for she had been a beauty in her day—to postpone for another year the *début* of her daughter, she had continued her sojourn, with short intervals of absence, for a whole year. Her husband, a busy man of the world, with occupation in London, and fine estates in the country, joined them only occasionally, glad to escape the still beauty of landscapes which brought him no rental, and therefore afforded no charm to his eye.

In the first month of their arrival at Winandermere, the mother and daughter had made an eventful acquaintance in the following manner.

One evening, as they were walking on their lawn, which sloped to the lake, they heard the sound of a flute, played with a skill so exquisite as to draw them, surprised and spell-bound, to the banks. The musician was a young man, in a boat, which he had moored beneath the trees of their demesne. He was alone, or, rather, he had one companion, in a large Newfoundland dog, that sat watchful at the helm of the boat, and appeared to enjoy the music as much as his master. As the ladies approached the spot, the dog growled, and the young man ceased, though without seeing the fair causes of his companion's displeasure. The sun, then setting, shone full on his countenance as he looked round; and that countenance was one that might have haunted the nymphs of Delos; the face of Apollo, not as the hero, but the shepherd—not of the bow, but of the lute—not the Python-slayer, but the young dreamer by shady places—he whom

the sculptor has portrayed leaning idly against the tree—the boy-god whose home is yet on earth, and to whom the Oracle and the Spheres are still unknown.

At that moment the dog leaped from the boat, and the elder lady uttered a faint cry of alarm, which directing the attention of the musician, brought him also ashore. He called off his dog, and apologised, with a not ungraceful mixture of diffidence and ease, for his intrusion. He was not aware the place was inhabited—it was a favourite haunt of his—he lived near. The elder lady was pleased with his address, and struck with his appearance. There was, indeed, in his manner that undefinable charm which is more attractive than mere personal appearance, and which can never be imitated or acquired. They parted, however, without establishing any formal acquaintance. A few days after, they met at dinner at a neighbouring house, and were introduced by name. That of the young man seemed strange to the ladies; not so theirs to him. He turned pale when he heard it, and remained silent and aloof the rest of the evening. They met again and often; and for some weeks—nay, even for months—he appeared to avoid as much as possible the acquaintance so auspiciously begun; but by little and little the beauty of the younger lady seemed to gain ground on his diffidence or repugnance. Excursions among the neighbouring mountains threw them together, and at last he fairly surrendered himself to the charm he had at first determined to resist.

This young man lived on the opposite side of the

lake, in a quiet household, of which he was the idol. His life had been one of almost monastic purity and repose; his tastes were accomplished, his character seemed soft and gentle; but beneath that calm exterior, flashes of passion — the nature of the poet, ardent and sensitive — would break forth at times. He had scarcely ever, since his earliest childhood, quitted those retreats; he knew nothing of the world, except in books—books of poetry and romance. Those with whom he lived—his relations, an old bachelor, and the old bachelor's sisters, old maids — seemed equally innocent and inexperienced. It was a family whom the rich respected, and the poor loved—inoffensive, charitable, and well off. To whatever their easy fortune might be, he appeared the heir. The name of this young man was Charles Spencer; the ladies were Mrs Beaufort, and Camilla her daughter.

Mrs Beaufort, though a shrewd woman, did not at first perceive any danger in the growing intimacy between Camilla and the younger Spencer. Her daughter was not her favourite—not the object of her one thought or ambition. Her whole heart and soul were wrapped in her son Arthur, who lived principally abroad. Clever enough to be considered capable, when he pleased, of achieving distinction, good-looking enough to be thought handsome by all who were on the *qui vive* for an advantageous match, good-natured enough to be popular with the society in which he lived, scattering to and fro money without limit,—Arthur Beaufort, at the age of thirty, had established one of those brilliant and

evanescent reputations, which, for a few years, reward the ambition of the fine gentleman. It was precisely the reputation that the mother could appreciate, and which even the more saving father secretly admired, while, ever respectable in phrase, Mr Robert Beaufort seemed openly to regret it. This son was, I say, everything to them; they cared little, in comparison, for their daughter. How could a daughter keep up the proud name of Beaufort? However well she might marry, it was another house, not theirs, which her graces and beauty would adorn. Moreover, the better she might marry, the greater her dowry would naturally be—the dowry to go out of the family! And Arthur, poor fellow! was so extravagant, that really he would want every sixpence. Such was the reasoning of the father. The mother reasoned less upon the matter. Mrs Beaufort, faded and meagre, in blonde and cashmere, was jealous of the charms of her daughter; and she herself, growing sentimental and lachrymose as she advanced in life, as silly women often do, had convinced herself that Camilla was a girl of no feeling.

Miss Beaufort was, indeed, of a character singularly calm and placid; it was the character that charms men in proportion, perhaps, to their own strength and passion. She had been rigidly brought up—her affections had been very early chilled and subdued; they moved, therefore, now, with ease, in the serene path of her duties. She held her parents, especially her

father, in reverential fear, and never dreamed of the possibility of resisting one of their wishes, much less their commands. Pious, kind, gentle, of a fine and never-ruffled temper, Camilla, an admirable daughter, was likely to make no less admirable a wife; you might depend on her principles, if ever you could doubt her affection. Few girls were more calculated to inspire love. You would scarcely wonder at any folly, any madness, which even a wise man might commit for her sake. This did not depend on her beauty alone, though she was extremely lovely rather than handsome, and of that style of loveliness which is universally fascinating: the figure, especially as to the arms, throat, and bust, was exquisite; the mouth dimpled; the teeth dazzling; the eyes of that *velvet* softness which to look on is to love. But her charm was in a certain prettiness of manner, an exceeding innocence, mixed with the most captivating, because unconscious, coquetry. With all this, there was a freshness, a joy, a virgin and bewitching candour in her voice, her laugh—you might almost say in her very movements. Such was Camilla Beaufort at that age. Such she seemed to others. To her parents she was only a great girl rather in the way. To Mrs Beaufort a rival, to Mr Beaufort an incumbrance on the property.

CHAPTER II.

The moon
Saddening the solemn night, yet with that sadness
Mingling the breath of undisturbed Peace.
WILSON, *City of the Plague.*

Tell me his fate.
Say that he lives, or say that he is dead:
But tell me—tell me!
. . . . .
I see him not—some cloud envelops him.—*Ibid.*

ONE day (nearly a year after their first introduction) as with a party of friends Camilla and Charles Spencer were riding through those wild and romantic scenes which lie between the sunny Winandermere and the dark and sullen Wastwater, their conversation fell on topics more personal than it had hitherto done, for as yet, if they felt love, they had never spoken of it.

The narrowness of the path allowed only two to ride abreast, and the two to whom I confine my description were the last of the little band.

"How I wish Arthur were here!" said Camilla; "I am sure you would like him."

"Are you? He lives much in the world—the world of which I know nothing. Are we then characters to suit each other?"

"He is the kindest—the best of human beings!" said Camilla, rather evasively, but with more warmth than usually dwelt in her soft and low voice.

"Is he so kind?" returned Spencer, musingly. "Well, it may be so. And who would not be kind to you? Ah! it is a beautiful connection that of brother and sister—I never had a sister!"

"Have you then a brother?" asked Camilla, in some surprise, and turning her ingenuous eyes full on her companion.

Spencer's colour rose—rose to his temples: his voice trembled as he answered, "No;—no brother!" then, speaking in a rapid and hurried tone, he continued, "My life has been a strange and lonely one. I am an orphan. I have mixed with few of my own age: my boyhood and youth have been spent in these scenes; my education such as Nature and books could bestow, with scarcely any guide or tutor save my guardian—the dear old man! Thus the world, the stir of cities, ambition, enterprise—all seem to me as things belonging to a distant land to which I shall never wander. Yet I have had my dreams, Miss Beaufort; dreams of which these solitudes still form a part—but solitudes not unshared. And lately I have thought that those dreams might be prophetic. And you—do *you* love the world?"

"I, like you, have scarcely tried it," said Camilla, with a sweet laugh. "But I love the country better,—oh! far better than what little I have seen of towns. But for you," she continued, with a charming hesita-

tion, "a man is so different from us,—for you to shrink from the world—you, so young and with talents too—nay, it is true!—it seems to me strange."

"It may be so, but I cannot tell you what feelings of dread—what vague forebodings of terror seize me if I carry my thoughts beyond these retreats. Perhaps, my good guardian——"

"Your uncle?" interrupted Camilla.

"Ay, my uncle—may have contributed to engender feelings, as you say, strange at my age; but still——"

"Still what?"

"My earlier childhood," continued Spencer, breathing hard and turning pale, "was not spent in the happy home I have now; it was passed in a premature ordeal of suffering and pain. Its recollections have left a dark shadow on my mind, and under that shadow lies every thought that points towards the troublous and labouring career of other men. But," he resumed, after a pause, and in a deep, earnest, almost solemn voice,—"but, after all, is this cowardice or wisdom? I find no monotony—no tedium in this quiet life. Is there not a certain morality—a certain religion in the spirit of a secluded and country existence? In it we do not know the evil passions which ambition and strife are said to arouse. I never feel jealous or envious of other men; I never know what it is to hate; my boat, my horse, our garden, music, books, and, if I may dare to say so, the solemn gladness that comes from the hopes of another life,—these fill up every hour with thoughts and pursuits, peace-

ful, happy, and without a cloud, till of late, when—when——"

"When what?" said Camilla, innocently.

"When I have longed, but did not dare to ask another, if to share such a lot would content her!"

He bent, as he spoke, his soft blue eyes full upon the blushing face of her whom he addressed, and Camilla half smiled and half sighed,—

"Our companions are far before us," said she, turning away her face; "and see, the road is now smooth." She quickened her horse's pace as she said this; and Spencer, too new to women to interpret favourably her evasion of his words and looks, fell into a profound silence which lasted during the rest of their excursion.

As towards the decline of day he bent his solitary way home, emotions and passions to which his life had hitherto been a stranger, and which, alas! he had vainly imagined a life so tranquil would everlastingly restrain, swelled his heart.

"She does not love me," he muttered, half aloud; "she will leave me, and what then will all the beauty of the landscape seem in my eyes? And how dare I look up to her? Even if her cold, vain mother—her father, the man, they say, of forms and scruples, were to consent, would they not question closely of my true birth and origin? And if the one blot were overlooked, is there no other? His early habits and vices, *his!*—a brother's—his unknown career terminating at any day, perhaps, in shame, in crime, in exposure, in

the gibbet,—will they overlook this?" As he spoke, he groaned aloud, and, as if impatient to escape himself, spurred on his horse and rested not till he reached the belt of trim and sober evergreens that surrounded his hitherto happy home.

Leaving his horse to find its way to the stables, the young man passed through rooms, which he found deserted, to the lawn on the other side, which sloped to the smooth waters of the lake.

Here, seated under the one large tree that formed the pride of the lawn, over which it cast its shadow broad and far, he perceived his guardian poring idly over an oft-read book, one of those books of which literary dreamers are apt to grow fanatically fond—books by the old English writers, full of phrases and conceits half quaint and half sublime, interspersed with praises of the country, imbued with a poetical rather than orthodox religion, and adorned with a strange mixture of monastic learning and aphorisms collected from the weary experience of actual life.

To the left, by a greenhouse, built between the house and the lake, might be seen the white dress and lean form of the eldest spinster sister, to whom the care of the flowers—for she had been early crossed in love—was consigned; at a little distance from her, the other two were seated at work, and conversing in whispers, not to disturb their studious brother, no doubt upon the nephew, who was their all in all. It was the calmest hour of eve, and the quiet of the several forms, their simple and harmless occupations—

if occupations they might be called—the breathless foliage, rich in the depth of summer; behind, the old-fashioned house, unpretending, not mean, its open doors and windows giving glimpses of the comfortable repose within; before, the lake, without a ripple, and catching the gleam of the sunset clouds—all made a picture of that complete tranquillity and stillness which sometimes soothes and sometimes saddens us, according as we are in the temper to woo CONTENT.

The young man glided to his guardian and touched his shoulder, "Sir, may I speak to you?—Hush! *they* need not see us now! it is only you I would speak with."

The elder Spencer rose; and, with his book still in his hand, moved side by side with his nephew under the shadow of the tree and towards a walk to the right, which led for a short distance along the margin of the lake, backed by the interlaced boughs of a thick copse.

"Sir!" said the young man, speaking first and with a visible effort, "your cautions have been in vain! I love this girl—this daughter of the haughty Beauforts! I love her—better than life I love her!"

"My poor boy," said the uncle, tenderly, and with a simple fondness passing his arm over the speaker's shoulder, "do not think I can chide you—I know what it is to love in vain!"

"In vain!—but why in vain?" exclaimed the younger Spencer with a vehemence that had in it something of both agony and fierceness. "She may

love me—she shall love me!" and almost for the first time in his life, the proud consciousness of his rare gifts of person spoke in his kindled eye and dilated stature. "Do they not say that Nature has been favourable to me?—What rival have I here?—Is she not young?—And" (sinking his voice till it almost breathed like music) "is not love contagious?"

"I do not doubt that she may love you—who would not? but—but—the parents, will they ever consent?"

"Nay!" answered the lover, as with that inconsistency common to passion he now argued stubbornly against those fears in another to which he had just before yielded in himself,—"Nay!—after all, am I not of their own blood?—Do I not come from the elder branch?—Was I not reared in equal luxury and with higher hopes?—And my mother—my poor mother—did she not to the last maintain our birthright—her own honour?—Has not accident or law unjustly stripped us of our true station?—Is it not for us to forgive spoliation?—Am I not, in fact, the person who descends, who forgets the wrongs of the dead—the heritage of the living?"

The young man had never yet assumed this tone—had never yet shown that he looked back to the history connected with his birth with the feelings of resentment and the remembrance of wrong. It was a tone contrary to his habitual calm and contentment—it struck forcibly on his listener—and the elder Spencer was silent for some moments before he replied, "If you feel thus (and it is natural) you have yet

stronger reason to struggle against this unhappy affection."

"I have been conscious of that, sir," replied the young man, mournfully. "I *have* struggled!—and I say again, it is in vain! I turn, then, to face the obstacles! My birth—let us suppose that the Beauforts overlook it. Did you not tell me that Mr Beaufort wrote to inform you of the abrupt and intemperate visit of my brother—of his determination never to forgive it? I think I remember something of this years ago."

"It is true!" said the guardian; "and the conduct of that brother is, in fact, the true cause why you never ought to reassume your proper name!—never to divulge it, even to the family with whom you connect yourself by marriage; but, above all, to the Beauforts, who, for that cause, if that cause alone, would reject your suit."

The young man groaned—placed one hand before his eyes, and with the other grasped his guardian's arm convulsively, as if to check him from proceeding further: but the good man, not divining his meaning, and absorbed in his subject, went on, irritating the wound he had touched.

"Reflect!—your brother in boyhood—in the dying hours of his mother, scarcely saved from the crime of a thief, flying from a friendly pursuit with a notorious reprobate; afterwards implicated in some discreditable transaction about a horse, rejecting all—every hand that could save him, clinging by choice to the lowest

companions and the meanest habits, disappearing from the country, and last seen, ten years ago—the beard not yet on his chin—with that same reprobate of whom I have spoken, in Paris, a day or so only before his companion, a coiner—a murderer—fell by the hands of the police! You remember that when, in your seventeenth year, you evinced some desire to retake your name — nay, even to refind that guilty brother — I placed before you, as a sad and terrible duty, the newspaper that contained the particulars of the death and the former adventures of that wretched accomplice, the notorious Gawtrey. And,—telling you that Mr Beaufort had long since written to inform me that his own son and Lord Lilburne had seen your brother in company with the miscreant just before his fate—nay, was, in all probability, the very youth described in the account, as found in his chamber and escaping the pursuit—I asked you if you would now venture to leave that disguise—that shelter under which you would for ever be safe from the opprobrium of the world—from the shame that, sooner or later, your brother must bring upon your name!"

"It is true—it is true!" said the pretended nephew, in a tone of great anguish, and with trembling lips which the blood had forsaken. "Horrible to look either to his past or his future! But—but—we have heard of him no more—no one ever has learned his fate. Perhaps—perhaps" (and he seemed to breathe more freely) "*my brother is no more!*"

And poor Catherine—and poor Philip—had it come

to this? Did the one brother feel a sentiment of release, of joy, in conjecturing the death—perhaps the death of violence and shame—of his fellow orphan? Mr Spencer shook his head doubtingly, but made no reply. The young man sighed heavily and strode on for several paces in advance of his protector, then, turning back, he laid his hand on his shoulder.

"Sir," he said, in a low voice and with downcast eyes, "you are right: this disguise—this false name—must be for ever borne! Why need the Beauforts, then, ever know who and what I am? Why not as your nephew—nephew to one so respected and exemplary—proffer my claims and plead my cause?"

"They are proud—so it is said—and worldly;—you know my family was in trade—still—but—" and here Mr Spencer broke off from a tone of doubt into that of despondency, "but, recollect, though Mrs Beaufort may not remember the circumstance, both her husband and her son have seen me—have known my name. Will they not suspect, when once introduced to you, the stratagem that has been adopted? Nay, has it not been from that very fear that you have wished me to shun the acquaintance of the family? Both Mr Beaufort and Arthur saw you in childhood, and their suspicion once aroused, they may recognise you at once; your features are developed, but not altogether changed. Come, come!—my adopted, my dear son, shake off this fantasy betimes: let us change the scene: I will travel with you—read with you—go where——"

"Sir—sir!" exclaimed the lover, smiting his breast,

"you are ever kind, compassionate, generous; but do not—do not rob me of hope. I have never—thanks to you—felt, save in a momentary dejection, the curse of my birth. Now how heavily it falls! Where shall I look for comfort?"

As he spoke, the sound of a bell broke over the translucent air and the slumbering lake: it was the bell that every eve and morn summoned that innocent and pious family to prayer. The old man's face changed as he heard it—changed from its customary indolent, absent, listless aspect, into an expression of dignity, even of animation.

"Hark!" he said, pointing upwards; "hark! it chides you. Who shall say '*where* shall I look for comfort,' while God is in the heavens?"

The young man, habituated to the faith and observance of religion, till they had pervaded his whole nature, bowed his head in rebuke; a few tears stole from his eyes.

"You are right, *father*," he said, tenderly, giving emphasis to the deserved and endearing name. "I am comforted already!"

So, side by side, silently and noiselessly, the young and the old man glided back to the house. When they gained the quiet room in which the family usually assembled, the sisters and servants were already gathered round the table. They knelt as the loiterers entered. It was the wonted duty of the younger Spencer to read the prayers; and as he now did so, his graceful countenance more hushed, his sweet voice more earnest

than usual, in its accents: who that heard could have deemed the heart within convulsed by such stormy passions? Or was it not in that hour—that solemn commune—soothed from its woe? O beneficent Creator! thou who inspirest all the tribes of earth with the *desire to pray*, hast thou not, in that divinest instinct, bestowed on us the happiest of thy gifts?

CHAPTER III.

Bertram.—I mean the business is not ended, as fearing to hear of it hereafter.

. . . .

1st Soldier.—Do you know this Captain Dumain?

All's Well that Ends Well.

One evening, some weeks after the date of the last chapter, Mr Robert Beaufort sat alone in his house in Berkeley Square. He had arrived that morning from Beaufort Court, on his way to Winandermere, to which he was summoned by a letter from his wife.

That year was an agitated and eventful epoch in England; and Mr Beaufort had recently gone through the bustle of an election—not, indeed, contested; for his popularity and his property defied all rivalry in his own county.

The rich man had just dined, and was seated in lazy enjoyment by the side of the fire, which he had lighted, less for the warmth—though it was then September—than for the companionship;—engaged in finishing his madeira, and with half-closed eyes munching his devilled biscuits.

"I am sure," he soliloquised while thus employed, "I don't know exactly what to do—my wife ought to

decide matters where the *girl* is concerned; a son is another affair—that's the use of a wife. Humph!"

"Sir," said a fat servant, opening the door, "a gentleman wishes to see you upon very particular business."

"Business at this hour! Tell him to go to Mr Blackwell."

"Yes, sir."

"Stay! perhaps he is a constituent, Simmons. Ask him if he belongs to the county."

"Yes, sir."

"A great estate is a great plague," muttered Mr Beaufort, "so is a great constituency. It is pleasanter, after all, to be in the House of Lords. I suppose I could if I wished; but then one must rat—that's a bore. I will consult Lilburne. Humph!" The servant re-appeared.

"Sir, he says he does belong to the county."

"Show him in!—What sort of a person?"

"A sort of gentleman, sir; that is," continued the butler, mindful of five shillings just slipped within his palm by the stranger, "quite *the* gentleman."

"More wine, then—stir up the fire."

In a few moments the visitor was ushered into the apartment. He was a man between fifty and sixty, but still aiming at the appearance of youth. His dress evinced military pretensions; consisting of a blue coat, buttoned up to the chin, a black stock, loose trousers of the fashion called cossacks, and brass spurs. He wore a wig, of great luxuriance in curl and rich auburn

in hue; with large whiskers of the same colour, slightly tinged with grey at the roots. By the imperfect light of the room it was not perceptible that the clothes were somewhat threadbare, and that the boots, cracked at the side, admitted glimpses of no very white hosiery within. Mr Beaufort, reluctantly rising from his repose and gladly sinking back to it, motioned to a chair, and put on a doleful and doubtful semi-smile of welcome. The servant placed the wine and glasses before the stranger;—the host and visitor were alone.

"So, sir," said Mr Beaufort, languidly, "you are from ——shire; I suppose about the canal—may I offer you a glass of wine?"

"Most hauppy, sir—your health!" and the stranger, with evident satisfaction, tossed off a bumper to so complimentary a toast.

"About the canal?" repeated Mr Beaufort.

"No, sir, no! You parliament gentlemen must hauve a vaust deal of trouble on your haunds—very foine property I understaund yours is, sir. Sir, allow me to drink the health of your good lady!"

"I thank you, Mr —, Mr —, what did you say your name was?—I beg you a thousand pardons."

"No offaunce in the least, sir; no ceremony with me—this is perticler good madeira!"

"May I ask how I can serve you?" said Mr Beaufort, struggling between the sense of annoyance and the fear to be uncivil. "And pray, had I the honour of your vote in the last election?"

"No, sir, no! It's mauny years since I have been in your part of the world, though I was born there."

"Then I don't exactly see——" began Mr Beaufort, and stopped with dignity.

"Why I call on you," put in the stranger, tapping his boots with his cane; and then recognising the rents, he thrust both feet under the table.

"I don't say that; but at this hour I am seldom at leisure—not but what I am always at the service of a constituent, that is, a *voter!* Mr ——, I beg your pardon, I did not catch your name."

"Sir," said the stranger, helping himself to a third glass of wine; "here's a health to your young folk! And now to business." Here the visitor, drawing his chair nearer to his host, assuming a more grave aspect, and dropping something of his stilted pronunciation, continued,—"You had a brother?"

"Well, sir," said Mr Beaufort, with a very changed countenance.

"And that brother had a wife!"

Had a cannon gone off in the ear of Mr Robert Beaufort, it could not have shocked or stunned him more than that simple word with which his companion closed his sentence. He fell back in his chair—his lips apart, his eyes fixed on the stranger. He sought to speak, but his tongue clove to his mouth.

"That wife had two sons, born in wedlock!"

"It is false!" cried Mr Beaufort, finding a voice at length, and springing to his feet. "And who are you, sir? and what do you mean by——"

"Hush!" said the stranger, perfectly unconcerned, and regaining the dignity of his *haw-haw* enunciation: "better not let the servants hear aunything. For my pawt, I think servants hauve the longest pair of ears of auny persons, not excepting jauckasses; their ears stretch from the pauntry to the parlour. Hush, sir!—perticler good madeira, this!"

"Sir!" said Mr Beaufort, struggling to preserve, or rather recover, his temper, "your conduct is exceedingly strange: but allow me to say, that you are wholly misinformed. My brother never did marry; and if you have anything to say on behalf of those young men—his natural sons—I refer you to my solicitor, Mr Blackwell, of Lincoln's Inn. I wish you a good-evening."

"Sir!—the same to you—I won't trouble you auny farther; it was only out of koindness I called—I am not used to be treated so—sir, I am in his maujesty's service—sir, you will foind that the witness of the marriage is forthcoming; you will think of me then, and, perhaps, be sorry. But I've done,—'Your most obedient humble, sir!'" And the stranger, with a flourish of his hand, turned to the door.

At the sight of this determination on the part of his strange guest, a cold, uneasy vague presentiment seized Mr Beaufort. There, not flashed, but rather froze, across him the recollection of his brother's emphatic but disbelieved assurances—of Catherine's obstinate assertion of her son's alleged rights—rights which her lawsuit, undertaken on her own behalf, had not com-

promised ;—a fresh lawsuit might be instituted by the son, and the evidence which had been wanting in the former suit might be found at last. With this remembrance and these reflections came a horrible train of shadowy fears—witnesses, verdict, surrender, spoliation —arrears—ruin !

The man, who had gained the door, turned back and looked at him with a complacent, half-triumphant leer upon his impudent, reckless face.

"Sir," then said Mr Beaufort, mildly, "I repeat that you had better see Mr Blackwell."

The tempter saw his triumph. "I have a secret to communicate, which it is best for you to keep snug. How mauny people do you wish me to see about it? Come, sir, there is no need of a lawyer; or, if you think so, tell him yourself. Now or never, Mr Beaufort."

"I can have no objection to hear anything you have to say, sir," said the rich man, yet more mildly than before; and then added, with a forced smile, "though my rights are already too confirmed to admit of a doubt."

Without heeding the last assertion, the stranger coolly walked back, resumed his seat, and, placing both arms on the table, and looking Mr Beaufort full in the face, thus proceeded,—

"Sir, of the marriage between Philip Beaufort and Catherine Morton there were two witnesses: the one is dead, the other went abroad—the last is alive still!"

"If so," said Mr Beaufort, who, not naturally de-

ficient in cunning and sense, felt every faculty now prodigiously sharpened, and was resolved to know the precise grounds for alarm,—"if so, why did not the man—it was a servant, sir, a man-servant, whom Mrs Morton pretended to rely on—appear on the trial?"

"Because, I say, he was abroad, and could not be found; or, the search after him miscaurried, from clumsy management and a lack of the rhino."

"Hum!" said Mr Beaufort—"one witness—*one* witness, observe, there *is* only one!—does not alarm me much. It is not what a man deposes, it is what a jury believe, sir! Moreover, what has become of the young men?—They have never been heard of for years. They are probably dead; if so, I am heir-at-law!"

"I know where one of them is to be found, at all events."

"The elder?—Philip?" asked Mr Beaufort, anxiously, and with a fearful remembrance of the energetic and vehement character prematurely exhibited by his nephew.

"Pawdon me! I need not aunswer that question."

"Sir! a lawsuit of this nature, against one in possession, is very doubtful, and," added the rich man, drawing himself up—"and, perhaps, very expensive!"

"The young man I speak of does not want friends, who will not grudge the money."

"Sir!" said Mr Beaufort, rising and placing his back to the fire—"sir! what is your object in this communication? Do you come, on the part of the young man, to propose a compromise?—If so, be plain!"

"I come on my own pawt. It rests with you to say if the young men shall never know it!"

"And what do you want?"

"Five hundred a-year as long as the secret is kept."

"And how can you prove that there is a secret, after all?"

"By producing the witness, if you wish."

"Will he go halves in the £500 a-year?" asked Mr Beaufort artfully.

"That is moy affair, sir," replied the stranger.

"What you say," resumed Mr Beaufort, "is so extraordinary—so unexpected, and still, to me, seems so improbable, that I must have time to consider. If you will call on me in a week, and produce your facts, I will give you my answer. I am not the man, sir, to wish to keep any one out of his true rights, but I will not yield, on the other hand, to imposture."

"If you don't want to keep them out of their rights, I'd best go and tell my young gentlemen," said the stranger, with cool impudence.

"I tell you I must have time," repeated Beaufort, disconcerted. "Besides, I have not myself alone to look to, sir," he added, with dignified emphasis—"I am a father!"

"This day week I will call on you again. Good evening, Mr Beaufort!" And the man stretched out his hand with an air of amicable condescension.

The respectable Mr Beaufort changed colour, hesitated, and finally suffered two fingers to be enticed into

the grasp of the visitor, whom he ardently wished at that bourne whence no visitor returns.

The stranger smiled, stalked to the door, laid his finger on his lip, winked knowingly, and vanished, leaving Mr Beaufort a prey to such feelings of uneasiness, dread, and terror, as may be experienced by a man whom, on some inch or two of slippery rock, the tides have suddenly surrounded.

He remained perfectly still for some moments, and then glancing round the dim and spacious room, his eyes took in all the evidences of luxury and wealth which it betrayed. Above the huge sideboard, that on festive days groaned beneath the hoarded weight of the silver heirlooms of the Beauforts, hung, in its gilded frame, a large picture of the family seat, with the stately porticoes—the noble park—the groups of deer; and around the wall, interspersed here and there with ancestral portraits of knight and dame, long since gathered to their rest, were placed masterpieces of the Italian and Flemish art, which generation after generation had slowly accumulated, till the Beaufort Collection had become the theme of connoisseurs and the study of young genius.

The still room, the dumb pictures—even the heavy sideboard, seemed to gain voice, and speak to him audibly. He thrust his hand into the folds of his waistcoat, and griped his own flesh convulsively; then striding to and fro the apartment, he endeavoured to re-collect his thoughts.

"I dare not consult Mrs Beaufort," he muttered;

"no—no,—she is a fool! Besides, she's not in the way. No time to lose—I will go to Lilburne."

"Scarce had that thought crossed him than he hastened to put it into execution. He rang for his hat and gloves, and sallied out on foot to Lord Lilburne's house in Park Lane,—the distance was short, and impatience has long strides.

He knew Lord Lilburne was in town, for that personage loved London for its own sake; and even in September he would have said with the old Duke of Queensbury, when some one observed that London was very empty—"Yes, but it is fuller than the country."

Mr Beaufort found Lord Lilburne reclined on a sofa, by the open window of his drawing-room, beyond which the early stars shone upon the glimmering trees and silver turf of the deserted park. Unlike the simple dessert of his respectable brother-in-law, the costliest fruits, the richest wines of France, graced the small table placed beside his sofa; and as the starch man of forms and method entered the room at one door, a rustling silk, that vanished through the aperture of another, seemed to betray tokens of a *tête-à-tête* probably more agreeable to Lilburne than the one with which only our narrative is concerned.

It would have been a curious study for such men as love to gaze upon the dark and wily features of human character, to have watched the contrast between the reciter and the listener, as Beaufort, with much circumlocution, much affected disdain, and real anxiety,

narrated the singular and ominous conversation between himself and his visitor.

The servant, in introducing Mr Beaufort, had added to the light of the room; and the candles shone full on the face and form of Mr Beaufort. All about that gentleman was so completely in unison with the world's forms and seemings, that there was something moral in the very sight of him! Since his accession of fortune, he had grown less pale and less thin; the angles in his figure were filled up. On his brow there was no trace of younger passion. No able vice had ever sharpened the expression—no exhausting vice ever deepened the lines. He was the *beau idéal* of a county member,—so sleek, so staid, so business-like; yet so clean, so neat, so much the gentleman. And now there was a kind of pathos in his grey hairs, his nervous smile, his agitated hands, his quick and uneasy transition of posture, the tremble of his voice. He would have appeared to those who saw, but heard not, The Good Man in trouble. Cold, motionless, speechless, seemingly apathetic, but in truth observant, still reclined on the sofa, his head thrown back, but one eye fixed on his companion, his hands clasped before him, Lord Lilburne listened; and in that repose, about his face, even about his person, might be read the history of how different a life and character! What native acuteness in the stealthy eye! What hardened resolve in the full nostril and firm lips! What sardonic contempt for all things in the intricate lines about the mouth! What animal enjoyment of all

things so despised in that delicate nervous system, which, combined with original vigour of constitution, yet betrayed itself in the veins on the hands and temples, the occasional quiver of the upper lip! His was the frame above all others the most alive to pleasure—deep-chested, compact, sinewy, but thin to leanness—delicate in its texture and extremities, almost to effeminacy. The indifference of the posture, the very habit of the dress—not slovenly, indeed, but easy, loose, careless—seemed to speak of the man's manner of thought and life—his profound disdain of externals.

Not till Beaufort had concluded did Lord Lilburne change his position or open his lips; and then, turning to his brother-in-law his calm face, he said dryly,—

"I always thought your brother had married that woman; he was the sort of man to do it. Besides, why should she have gone to law without a vestige of proof, unless she was convinced of her rights? Imposture never proceeds without some evidence. Innocence, like a fool, as it is, fancies it has only to speak to be believed. But there is no cause for alarm."

"No cause!—And yet you think there was a marriage."

"It is quite clear," continued Lilburne, without heeding this interruption, "that the man, whatever his evidence, has not got sufficient proofs. If he had he would go to the young men rather than you: it is evident that they would promise infinitely larger rewards than he could expect from yourself. Men are always more generous with what they expect than

with what they have. All rogues know this. 'Tis the way Jews and usurers thrive upon heirs rather than possessors ; 'tis the philosophy of *post-obits.* I dare-say the man has found out the real witness of the marriage, but ascertained also that the testimony of that witness would not suffice to dispossess you. He might be discredited — rich men have a way sometimes of discrediting poor witnesses. Mind, he says nothing of the lost copy of the register, whatever may be the value of that document, which I am not lawyer enough to say—of any letters of your brother avowing the marriage. Consider, the register itself is destroyed—the clergyman dead. Pooh ! make yourself easy."

"True," said Mr Beaufort, much comforted ; "what a memory you have !"

"Naturally. Your wife is my sister—I hate poor relations — and I was therefore much interested in your accession and your lawsuit. No—you may feel at rest on this matter, so far as a *successful* lawsuit is concerned. The next question is, Will you have a lawsuit at all ? and is it worth while buying this fellow ? That I can't say unless I see him myself."

"I wish to Heaven you would !"

"Very willingly : 'tis a sort of thing I like—I'm fond of dealing with rogues—it amuses me. This day week ? I'll be at your house—your proxy ; I shall do better than Blackwell. And since you say you are wanted at the Lakes, go down, and leave all to me."

"A thousand thanks. I can't say how grateful I

am. You certainly are the kindest and cleverest person in the world."

"You can't think worse of the world's cleverness and kindness than I do," was Lilburne's rather ambiguous answer to the compliment. "But why does my sister want to see you?"

"Oh, I forgot!—here is her letter. I was going to ask your advice in this too."

Lord Lilburne took the letter, and glanced over it with the rapid eye of a man accustomed to seize in everything the main gist and pith.

"An offer to my pretty niece—Mr Spencer—requires no fortune—his uncle will settle all his own—(poor silly old man). All! Why that's only £1000 a-year. You don't think much of this, eh? How my sister can even ask you about it puzzles me."

"Why, you see, Lilburne," said Mr Beaufort, rather embarrassed, "there is no question of fortune—nothing to go out of the family; and, really, Arthur is so expensive; and, if she were to marry *well*, I could not give her less than fifteen or twenty thousand pounds."

"Aha!—I see—every man to his taste: here a daughter—there a dowry. You are devilish fond of money, Beaufort. Any pleasure in avarice—eh?"

Mr Beaufort coloured very much at the remark and the question, and, forcing a smile, said,—

"You are severe. But you don't know what it is to be father to a young man."

"Then a great many young women have told me sad fibs! But you are right in *your* sense of the

phrase. No, I never had an heir apparent, thank Heaven! No children imposed upon me by law—natural enemies, to count the years between the bells that ring for their majority, and those that will toll for my decease. It is enough for me that I have a brother and a sister—that my brother's son will inherit my estates—and that, in the mean time, he grudges me every tick in that clock. What then? If he had been *my* uncle, I had done the same. Meanwhile, I see as little of him as good-breeding will permit. On the face of a rich man's heir is written the rich man's *memento mori!* But *revenons à nos moutons.* Yes, if you give your daughter no fortune, your death will be so much the more profitable to Arthur!"

"Really, you take such a very odd view of the matter," said Mr Beaufort, exceedingly shocked. "But I see you don't like the marriage; perhaps you are right."

"Indeed, I have no choice in the matter; I never interfere between father and children. If I had children myself, I will, however, tell you, for your comfort, that they might marry exactly as they pleased—I would never thwart them. I should be too happy to get them out of my way. If they married well, one would have all the credit; if ill, one would have an excuse to disown them. As I said before, I dislike poor relations. Though if Camilla lives at the Lakes when she is married, it is but a letter now and then; and that's your wife's trouble, not yours. But, Spencer—what Spencer?—what family? Was there not a Mr Spencer who lived at Winandermere—who——"

"Who went with us in search of these boys to be sure. Very likely the same—nay, he must be so. I thought so at the first."

"Go down to the Lakes to-morrow. You may hear something about your *nephews;*" at that word Mr Beaufort winced. "'Tis well to be forearmed."

"Many thanks for all your counsel," said Beaufort, rising, and glad to escape; for though both he and his wife held the advice of Lord Lilburne in the highest reverence, they always smarted beneath the quiet and careless stings which accompanied the honey. Lord Lilburne was singular in this,—he would give to any one who asked it, but especially a relation, the best advice in his power; and none gave better, that is, more *worldly* advice. Thus, without the least benevolence, he was often of the greatest service; but he could not help mixing up the draught with as much aloes and bitter-apple as possible. His intellect delighted in exhibiting itself even gratuitously. His heart equally delighted in that only cruelty which polished life leaves to its tyrants towards their equals, —thrusting pins into the feelings, and breaking self-love upon the wheel. But just as Mr Beaufort had drawn on his gloves and gained the doorway, a thought seemed to strike Lord Lilburne,—

"By the by," he said, "you understand that when I promised I would try and settle the matter for you, I only meant that I would learn the exact causes you have for alarm on the one hand, or for a compromise with this fellow on the other. If the last be advisable,

you are aware that I cannot interfere. I might get into a scrape; and Beaufort Court is not *my* property."

"I don't quite understand you."

"I am plain enough, too. If there is money to be given, it is given in order to defeat what is called *justice*—to keep these nephews of yours out of their inheritance. Now, should this ever come to light, it would have an ugly appearance. They who risk the blame must be the persons who possess the estate."

"If you think it dishonourable or dishonest——" said Beaufort, irresolutely.

"I! I never can advise as to the feelings; I can only advise as to the policy. If you don't think there ever was a marriage, it may, still, be honest in you to prevent the bore of a lawsuit."

"But if he can prove to me that they were married?"

"Pooh!" said Lilburne, raising his eyebrows with a slight expression of contemptuous impatience; "it rests on yourself whether or not he *prove it to* YOUR *satisfaction!* For my part, as a third person, I am persuaded the marriage did take place. But if I had Beaufort Court, my convictions would be all the other way. You understand. I am too happy to serve you. But no man can be expected to jeopardise his character, or coquet with the law, unless it be for his own individual interest. *Then*, of course, he must judge for himself. Adieu! I expect some friends—foreigners—Carlists—to whist. You won't join them?"

"I never play, you know. You will write to me at Winandermere: and, at all events, you will keep off the man till I return?"

"Certainly."

Beaufort, whom the latter part of the conversation had comforted far less than the former, hesitated, and turned the door-handle three or four times; but, glancing towards his brother-in-law, he saw in that cold face so little sympathy in the struggle between interest and conscience, that he judged it best to withdraw at once.

As soon as he was gone, Lilburne summoned his valet, who had lived with him many years, and who was his confidant in all the adventurous gallantries with which he still enlivened the autumn of his life.

"Dykeman," said he, "you have let out that lady?"

"Yes, my lord."

"I am not at home if she calls again. She is stupid; she cannot get the girl to come to her again. I shall trust you with an adventure, Dykeman—an adventure that will remind you of our young days, man. This charming creature—I tell you she is irresistible—her very oddities bewitch me. You must—well, you look uneasy. What would you say?"

"My lord, I have found out more about her—and—and——"

"Well, well."

The valet drew near and whispered something in his master's ear.

"They are idiots who say it, then," answered Lilburne.

"And," faltered the man, with the shame of humanity on his face, "she is not worthy your lordship's notice—a poor——"

"Yes, I know she is poor; and, for that reason, there can be no difficulty, if the thing is properly managed. You never, perhaps, heard of a certain Philip, king of Macedon; but I will tell you what he once said, as well as I can remember it: 'Lead an ass with a pannier of gold; send the ass through the gates of a city, and all the sentinels will run away.' Poor! —where there is love, there is charity also, Dykeman. Besides——"

Here Lilburne's countenance assumed a sudden aspect of dark and angry passion,—he broke off abruptly, rose, and paced the room, muttering to himself. Suddenly he stopped, and put his hand to his hip, as an expression of pain again altered the character of his face.

"The limb pains me still! Dykeman—I was scarce —twenty-one—when I became a cripple for life." He paused, drew a long breath, smiled, rubbed his hands gently, and added—"Never fear—you shall be the ass; and thus Philip of Macedon begins to fill the pannier." And he tossed his purse into the hands of the valet, whose face seemed to lose its anxious embarrassment at the touch of the gold. Lilburne glanced at him with a quiet sneer: "Go!—I will give you my orders when I undress."

"Yes!" he repeated to himself, "the limb pains me still. But he died!—shot as a man would shoot

a jay or a polecat! I have the newspaper still in that drawer. *He* died an outcast—a felon—a murderer! And I blasted his name—and I seduced his mistress—and I—am John Lord Lilburne!"

About ten o'clock some half-a-dozen of those gay lovers of London, who, like Lilburne, remain faithful to its charms when more vulgar worshippers desert its sunburnt streets—mostly single men—mostly men of middle age—dropped in. And soon after came three or four high-born foreigners, who had followed into England the exile of the unfortunate Charles X. Their looks, at once proud and sad—their mustaches curled downward—their beards permitted to grow—made at first a strong contrast with the smooth gay Englishmen. But Lilburne, who was fond of French society, and who, when he pleased, could be courteous and agreeable, soon placed the exiles at their ease; and, in the excitement of high play, all differences of mood and humour speedily vanished. Morning was in the skies before they sat down to supper.

"You have been very fortunate to-night, milord," said one of the Frenchmen, with an envious tone of congratulation.

"But, indeed," said another, who, having been several times his host's partner, had won largely, "you are the finest player, milord, I ever encountered."

"Always excepting Monsieur Deschapelles and ——," replied Lilburne, indifferently. And, turning the conversation, he asked one of the guests why he had not introduced him to a French officer of merit

and distinction; "With whom," said Lord Lilburne, "I understand that you are intimate, and of whom I hear your countrymen very often speak."

"You mean De Vaudemont. Poor fellow!" said a middle-aged Frenchman, of a graver appearance than the rest.

"But why 'poor fellow,' Monsieur de Liancourt?"

"He was rising so high before the revolution. There was not a braver officer in the army. But he is but a soldier of fortune, and his career is closed."

"Till the Bourbons return," said another Carlist, playing with his mustache.

"You will really honour me much by introducing me to him," said Lord Lilburne. "De Vaudemont—it is a good name,—perhaps, too, he plays at whist."

"But," observed one of the Frenchmen, "I am by no means sure that he has the best right in the world to the name. 'Tis a strange story."

"May I hear it?" asked the host.

"Certainly. It is briefly this:—There was an old Vicomte de Vaudemont about Paris; of good birth, but extremely poor—a *mauvais sujet.* He had already had two wives, and run through their fortunes. Being old and ugly, and men who survive two wives having a bad reputation among marriageable ladies at Paris, he found it difficult to get a third. Despairing of the *noblesse,* he went among the *bourgeoisie* with that hope. His family were kept in perpetual fear of a ridiculous *mésalliance.* Among these relations was Madame de Merville, whom you may have heard of."

"Madame de Merville! Ah, yes! Handsome, was she not?"

"It is true. Madame de Merville, whose failing was pride, was known more than once to have bought off the matrimonial inclinations of the amorous Vicomte. Suddenly there appeared in her circles a very handsome young man. He was presented formally to her friends as the son of the Vicomte de Vaudemont by his second marriage with an English lady, brought up in England, and now for the first time publicly acknowledged. Some scandal was circulated——"

"Sir," interrupted Monsieur de Liancourt, very gravely, "the scandal was such as all honourable men must stigmatise and despise—it was only to be traced to some lying lackey—a scandal that the young man was already the lover of a woman of stainless reputation the very first day that he entered Paris! I answer for the falsity of that report. But that report I own was one that decided not only Madame de Merville, who was a sensitive—too sensitive a person, but my friend young Vaudemont, to a marriage, from the pecuniary advantages of which he was too high-spirited not to shrink."

"Well," said Lord Lilburne, "then this young De Vaudemont married Madame de Merville?"

"No," said Liancourt, somewhat sadly, "it was not so decreed; for Vaudemont, with a feeling which belongs to a gentleman, and which I honour, while deeply and gratefully attached to Madame de Merville, desired that he might first win for himself some honour-

able distinction before he claimed a hand to which men of fortunes so much higher had aspired in vain. I am not ashamed," he added, after a slight pause, "to say that I had been one of the rejected suitors, and that I still revere the memory of Eugénie de Merville. The young man, therefore, was to have entered my regiment. Before, however, he had joined it, and while yet in the full flush of a young man's love for a woman formed to excite the strongest attachment, she—she——" The Frenchman's voice trembled, and he resumed with affected composure,—"Madame de Merville, who had the best and kindest heart that ever beat in a human breast, learned one day that there was a poor widow in the garret of the hotel she inhabited who was dangerously ill—without medicine and without food—having lost her only friend and supporter in her husband some time before. In the impulse of the moment Madame de Merville herself attended this widow—caught the fever that preyed upon her—was confined to her bed ten days—and died as she had lived—in serving others and forgetting self.—And so much, sir, for the scandal you spoke of!"

"A warning," observed Lord Lilburne, "against trifling with one's health by that vanity of parading a kind heart which is called charity. If charity, *mon cher*, begins at home, it is in the drawing-room, not the garret!"

The Frenchman looked at his host in some disdain, bit his lip, and was silent.

"But still," resumed Lord Lilburne, "still it is so probable that your old Vicomte had a son; and I can so perfectly understand why he did not wish to be embarrassed with him as long as he could help it, that I do not understand why there should be any doubt of the younger De Vaudemont's parentage."

"Because," said the Frenchman who had first commenced the narrative, —"because the young man refused to take the legal steps to proclaim his birth and naturalise himself a Frenchman; because, no sooner was Madame de Merville dead than he forsook the father he had so newly discovered—forsook France, and entered with some other officers under the brave ——, in the service of one of the native princes of India."

"But perhaps he was poor," observed Lord Lilburne. "A father is a very good thing, and a country is a very good thing, but still a man must have money; and if your father does not do much for you, somehow or other your country generally follows his example."

"My lord," said Liancourt, "my friend here has forgotten to say that Madame de Merville had by deed of gift (though unknown to her lover) before her death made over to young Vaudemont the bulk of her fortune; and that, when he was informed of this donation after her decease, and sufficiently recovered from the stupor of his grief, he summoned her relations round him, declared that her memory was too dear to him for wealth to console him for her loss, and reserving to himself but a modest and bare sufficiency for the

common necessaries of a gentleman, he divided the rest amongst them, and repaired to the East; not only to conquer his sorrow by the novelty and stir of an exciting life, but to carve out with his own hand the reputation of an honourable and brave man. My friend remembered the scandal long buried—he forgot the generous action."

"Your friend, you see, my dear Monsieur de Liancourt," remarked Lilburne, "is more a man of the world than you are!"

"And I was just going to observe," said the friend thus referred to, "that that very action seemed to confirm the rumour that there had been some little manœuvring as to this unexpected addition to the name of De Vaudemont; for, if himself related to Madame de Merville, why have such scruples to receive her gift?"

"A very shrewd remark," said Lord Lilburne, looking with some respect at the speaker; "and I own that it is a very unaccountable proceeding, and one of which I don't think you or I would ever have been guilty. Well, and the old Vicomte?"

"Did not live long!" said the Frenchman, evidently gratified by his host's compliment, while Liancourt threw himself back in his chair in grave displeasure. "The young man remained some years in India, and when he returned to Paris, our friend here, Monsieur de Liancourt (then in favour with Charles X.) and Madame de Merville's relations took him up. He had already acquired a reputation in this foreign service, and he obtained a place at the court, and a commission

in the king's guards. I allow that he would certainly have made a career, had it not been for the Three Days. As it is, you see him in London, like the rest of us, an exile!"

"And, I suppose, without a *sou*."

"No, I believe that he had still saved, and even augmented in India, the portion he allotted to himself from Madame de Merville's bequest."

"And if he don't play whist, he ought to play it," said Lilburne. "You have roused my curiosity; I hope you will let me make his acquaintance, Monsieur de Liancourt. I am no politician, but allow me to propose this toast,—'Success to those who have the wit to plan, and the strength to execute.' In other words, 'the Right Divine!'"

Soon afterwards the guests retired.

CHAPTER IV.

Ros.—Happily, he's the second time come to them.—*Hamlet.*

It was the evening after that in which the conversations recorded in our last chapter, were held;—evening in the quiet suburb of H——. The desertion and silence of the metropolis in September had extended to its neighbouring hamlets;—a village in the heart of the country could scarcely have seemed more still; the lamps were lighted, many of the shops already closed, a few of the sober couples and retired spinsters of the place might, here and there, be seen slowly wandering homeward after their evening walk; two or three dogs, in spite of the prohibitions of the magistrates placarded on the walls,—(manifestoes which threatened with death the dogs, and predicted more than ordinary madness to the public),—were playing in the main road, disturbed from time to time as the slow coach, plying between the city and the suburb, crawled along the thoroughfare, or as the brisk mails whirled rapidly by, announced by the cloudy dust and the guard's lively horn. Gradually even these evidences of life ceased—the saunterers disappeared, the mails had passed, the dogs gave place to the later and

more stealthy perambulations of their feline successors "who love the moon." At unfrequent intervals, the more important shops—the linen-drapers', the chemists', and the gin-palace—still poured out, across the shadowy road, their streams of light, from windows yet unclosed: but, with these exceptions, the business of the place stood still.

At this time there emerged from a milliner's house (shop, to outward appearance, it was not, evincing its gentility and its degree, above the Capelocracy, to use a certain classical neologism, by a brass plate on an oak door, whereon was graven,—"Miss Semper, Milliner and Dressmaker, from Madam Devy"), at this time, I say, and from this house, there emerged the light and graceful form of a young female. She held in her left hand a little basket, of the contents of which (for it was empty) she had apparently just disposed; and, as she stepped across the road, the lamp-light fell on a face in the first bloom of youth, and characterised by an expression of child-like innocence and candour. It was a face regularly and exquisitely lovely, yet something there was in the aspect that saddened you; you knew not why, for it was not sad itself; on the contrary, the lips smiled and the eyes sparkled. As she now glided along the shadowy street with a light, quick step, a man, who had hitherto been concealed by the portico of an attorney's house, advanced stealthily, and followed her at a little distance. Unconscious that she was dogged, and seemingly fearless of all danger, the girl went lightly on, swinging her basket playfully

to and fro, and chanting, in a low but musical tone, some verses that seemed rather to belong to the nursery than to that age which the fair singer had attained.

As she came to an angle which the main street formed with a lane, narrow, and partially lighted, a policeman, stationed there, looked hard at her, and then touched his hat with an air of respect, in which there seemed also a little of compassion.

"Good night to you," said the girl, passing him, and with a frank, gay tone.

"Shall I attend you home, Miss?" said the man.

"What for? I am very well!" answered the young woman, with an accent and look of innocent surprise.

Just at this time the man, who had hitherto followed her, gained the spot, and turned down the lane.

"Yes," replied the policeman; "but it is getting dark, Miss."

"So it is every night when I walk home, unless there's a moon.—Good-bye.—The moon," she repeated to herself as she walked on, "I used to be afraid of the moon when I was a little child;" and then, after a pause, she murmured, in a low chant,—

'The moon, she is a wandering ghost
That walks in penance nightly.
How sad she is, that wandering moon,
For all she shines so brightly!

'I watched her eyes when I was young,
Until they turned my brain,
And now I often weep to think
'Twill ne'er be right again.'"

As the murmur of these words died at a distance

down the lane in which the girl had disappeared, the policeman, who had paused to listen, shook his head mournfully, and said, while he moved on,—

"Poor thing! they should not let her always go about by herself; and yet, who would harm her?"

Meanwhile the girl proceeded along the lane, which was skirted by small, but not mean houses, till it terminated in a cross-stile, that admitted into a churchyard. Here hung the last lamp in the path, and a few dim stars broke palely over the long grass and scattered grave-stones, without piercing the deep shadow which the church threw over a large portion of the sacred ground. Just as she passed the stile, the man, whom we have before noticed, and who had been leaning, as if waiting for some one, against the pales, approached, and said gently,—

"Ah, Miss! it is a lone place for one so beautiful as you are to be alone. You ought never to be on foot."

The girl stopped, and looked full, but without any alarm in her eyes, into the man's face.

"Go away!" she said, with a half peevish, half kindly tone of command. "I don't know you."

"But I have been sent to speak to you by one who does know you, Miss—one who loves you to distraction—he has seen you before at Mrs West's. He is so grieved to think you should walk—you, who ought, he says, to have every luxury—that he has sent his carriage for you. It is on the other side of the yard. Do come now;" and he laid his hand, though very lightly, on her arm.

"At Mrs West's!" she said; and, for the first time, her voice and look showed fear. "Go away directly! How dare you touch me!"

"But, my dear Miss, you have no idea how my employer loves you, and how rich he is. See, he has sent you all this money; it is gold—real gold. You may have what you like, if you will but come. Now, don't be silly, Miss."

The girl made no answer, but, with a sudden spring, passed the man, and ran lightly and rapidly along the path, in an opposite direction from that to which the tempter had pointed, when inviting her to the carriage. The man, surprised, but not baffled, reached her in an instant, and caught hold of her dress.

"Stay! you must come—you must!" he said, threateningly; and, loosening his grasp on her shawl, he threw his arm round her waist.

"Don't!" cried the girl, pleadingly, and apparently subdued, turning her fair, soft face upon her pursuer, and clasping her hands. "Be quiet! Fanny *is* silly! No one is ever rude to poor Fanny!"

"And no one will be rude to you, Miss," said the man, apparently touched; "but I dare not go without you. You don't know what you refuse. Come;" and he attempted gently to draw her back.

"No, no!" said the girl, changing from supplication to anger, and raising her voice into a loud shriek, "No! I will——"

"Nay, then," interrupted the man, looking round anxiously; and, with a quick and dexterous movement,

he threw a large handkerchief over her face, and, as he held it fast to her lips with one hand, he lifted her from the ground. Still violently struggling, the girl contrived to remove the handkerchief, and once more her shriek of terror rang through the violated sanctuary.

At that instant a loud deep voice was heard, "Who calls?" And a tall figure seemed to rise, as from the grave itself, and emerge from the shadow of the church. A moment more, and a strong gripe was laid on the shoulder of the ravisher. "What is this? On God's ground, too! Release her, wretch!"

The man, trembling, half with superstitious, half with bodily fear, let go his captive, who fell at once at the knees of her deliverer.

"Don't *you* hurt me, too," she said, as the tears rolled down her eyes. "I am a good girl—and my grandfather's blind."

The stranger bent down and raised her; then looking round for the assailant with an eye whose dark fire shone through the gloom, he perceived the coward stealing off. He disdained to pursue.

"My poor child," said he, with that voice which the strong assume to the weak—the man to some wounded infant—the voice of tender superiority and compassion, "there is no cause for fear now. Be soothed. Do you live near? Shall I see you home?"

"Thank you! That's kind. Pray do!" And, with an infantine confidence she took his hand, as a child does that of a grown-up person;—so they walked on together.

"And," said the stranger, "do you know that man? Has he insulted you before?"

"No—don't talk of him: *ce me fait mal!*" And she put her hand to her forehead.

The French was spoken with so French an accent, that, in some curiosity, the stranger cast his eye over her plain dress.

"You speak French well."

"Do I? I wish I knew more words—I only recollect a few. When I am very happy or very sad they come into my head. But I am happy now. I like your voice—I like you.—Oh! I have dropped my basket!"

"Shall I go back for it, or shall I buy you another?"

"Another!—Oh, no! come back for it. How kind you are!—Ah! I see it!" and she broke away and ran forward to pick it up.

When she had recovered it, she laughed—she spoke to it—she kissed it.

Her companion smiled as he said,—

"Some sweetheart has given you that basket—it seems but a common basket, too."

"I have had it—oh, ever since—since—I don't know how long! It came with me from France—it was full of little toys. *They* are gone—I am so sorry!"

"How old are you?"

"I don't know."

"My pretty one," said the stranger, with deep pity in his rich voice, "your mother should not let you go out alone at this hour."

"Mother! mother!" repeated the girl, in a tone of surprise.

"Have you no mother?"

"No!—I had a father once. But he died, they say. I did not see him die. I sometimes cry when I think that I shall never, never see him again! But," she said, changing her accent from melancholy almost to joy, "he is to have a grave here like the other girls' fathers!—a fine stone upon it—and all to be done with my money!"

"Your money, my child?"

"Yes; the money I make. I sell my work and take the money to my grandfather; but I lay by a little every week for a gravestone for my father."

"Will the gravestone be placed in *that* churchyard?" They were now in another lane; and, as he spoke, the stranger checked her, and bending down to look into her face, he murmured to himself, "Is it possible?—it must be—it must!"

"Yes! I love that churchyard—my brother told me to put flowers there; and grandfather and I sit there in the summer, without speaking. But I don't talk much, I like singing better:—

'All things that good and harmless are,
Are taught, they say, to sing,—
The maiden resting at her work,
The bird upon the wing;
The little ones at church, in prayer,
The angels in the sky—
The angels less when babes are born
Than when the aged die.'"

And unconscious of the latent moral, dark or cheering,

according as we estimate the value of *this* life, couched in the concluding rhyme, Fanny turned round to the stranger, and said, "Why should the angels be glad when the aged die?"

"That they are released from a false, unjust, and miserable world, in which the first man was a rebel, and the second a murderer!" muttered the stranger between his teeth, which he gnashed as he spoke.

The girl did not understand him; she shook her head gently, and made no reply. A few moments, and she paused before a small house.

"This is my home."

"It is so," said her companion, examining the exterior of the house with an earnest gaze; "and your name is Fanny."

"Yes—every one knows Fanny. Come in;" and the girl opened the door with a latch-key.

The stranger bowed his stately height as he crossed the low threshold and followed his guide into a little parlour.

Before a table, on which burned dimly, and with unheeded wick, a single candle, sat a man of advanced age; and as he turned his face to the door, the stranger saw that he was blind. The girl bounded to his chair, passed her arms round the old man's neck, and kissed his forehead; then nestling herself at his feet, and leaning her clasped hands caressingly on his knee, she said,—

"Grandpapa, I have brought you somebody you must love. He has been so kind to Fanny."

"And neither of you can remember me!" said the guest.

The old man, whose dull face seemed to indicate dotage, half raised himself at the sound of the stranger's voice.

"Who is that?" said he, with a feeble and querulous voice. "Who wants me?"

"I am the friend of your lost son. I am he who, ten years ago, brought Fanny to your roof, and gave her to your care—your son's last charge. And you blessed your son, and forgave him, and vowed to be a father to his Fanny."

The old man, who had now slowly risen to his feet, trembled violently, and stretched out his hands.

"Come near—near—let me put my hands on your head. I cannot see you; but Fanny talks of you, and prays for you; and Fanny—she has been an angel to me!"

The stranger approached and half knelt as the old man spread his hands over his head, muttering inaudibly. Meanwhile Fanny, pale as death—her lips apart—an eager, painful expression on her face—looking inquiringly on the dark, marked countenance of the visitor, and creeping towards him inch by inch, fearfully touched his dress—his arms—his countenance.

"Brother," she said at last, doubtingly and timidly,—"Brother, I thought I could never forget you! But you are not like my brother; you are older;—you are—you are!—no! no! you are not my brother!"

"I am much changed, Fanny; and you too!"

He smiled as he spoke; and the smile—sweet and pitying—thoroughly changed the character of his face, which was ordinarily stern, grave, and proud.

"I know you now!" exclaimed Fanny, in a tone of wild joy. "And you come back from that grave! My flowers have brought you back at last! I knew they would! Brother! Brother!"

And she threw herself on his breast and burst into passionate tears. Then, suddenly drawing herself back, she laid her finger on his arm, and looked up at him beseechingly.

"Pray, now, is *he* really dead? He, my father!—he, too, was lost like you. Can't he come back again as you have done?"

"Do you grieve for him still, then? Poor girl!" said the stranger, evasively, and seating himself. Fanny continued to listen for an answer to her touching question; but finding that none was given, she stole away to a corner of the room and leaned her face on her hands, and seemed to think—till at last, as she so sat, the tears began to flow down her cheeks, and she wept, but silently and unnoticed.

"But, sir," said the guest, after a short pause, "how is this? Fanny tells me she supports you by her work. Are you so poor, then? Yet I left you your son's bequest; and you, too, I understood, though not rich, were not in want!"

"There was a curse on my gold," said the old man, sternly. "It was stolen from us."

There was another pause. Simon broke it.

"And you, young man,—how has it fared with you? You have prospered, I hope."

"I am as I have been for years—alone in the world, without kindred and without friends. But, thanks to Heaven, I am not a beggar!"

"No kindred and no friends!" repeated the old man. "No father—no brother—no wife—no sister!"

"None! No one to care whether I live or die," answered the stranger, with a mixture of pride and sadness in his voice. "But, as the song has it—

'I care for nobody—no, not I,
For nobody cares for me!'"

There was a certain pathos in the mockery with which he repeated the homely lines, although, as he did, he gathered himself up, as if conscious of a certain consolation and reliance on the resources not dependent on others which he had found in his own strong limbs and his own stout heart.

At that moment he felt a soft touch upon his hand, and he saw Fanny looking at him through the tears that still flowed.

"You have no one to care for you? Don't say so! Come and live with us, brother; we'll care for you. I have never forgotten the flowers—never! Do come! Fanny shall love you. Fanny can work for *three!*"

"And they call her an idiot!" mumbled the old man, with a vacant smile on his lips.

"My sister! You *shall* be my sister! Forlorn one—whom even Nature has fooled and betrayed! Sister!—we, both orphans!—Sister!" exclaimed that dark, stern man, passionately, and with a broken voice; and

he opened his arms, and Fanny, without a blush or a thought of shame, threw herself on his breast. He kissed her forehead with a kiss that was, indeed, pure and holy as a brother's: and Fanny felt that he had left upon her cheek a tear that was not her own.

"Well," he said, with an altered voice, and taking the old man's hand, "what say you? Shall I take up my lodging with you? I have a little money; I can protect and aid you both. I shall be often away—in London or elsewhere—and will not intrude too much on you. But you blind, and she——[here he broke off the sentence abruptly, and went on] you should not be left alone. And this neighbourhood, that burial-place, are dear to me. I, too, Fanny, have lost a parent; and that grave——"

He paused, and then added, in a trembling voice, "And you have placed flowers over that grave?"

"Stay with us," said the blind man; "not for our sake, but your own. The world is a bad place. I have been long sick of the world. Yes! come and live near the burial-ground—the nearer you are to the grave, the safer you are;—and you have a little money, you say?"

"I will come to-morrow, then. I must return now. To-morrow, Fanny, we shall meet again."

"*Must* you go?" said Fanny, tenderly. "But you *will* come again; you know I used to think every one died when *he* left me. I am wiser now. Yet still, when you do leave me, it is true that you die for Fanny!"

At this moment, as the three persons were grouped, each had assumed a posture of form, an expression of

face, which a painter of fitting sentiment and skill would have loved to study. The visitor had gained the door; and as he stood there, his noble height—the magnificent strength and health of his manhood in its full prime—contrasted alike the almost spectral debility of extreme age and the graceful delicacy of Fanny, half girl, half child. There was something foreign in his air, and the half military habit, relieved by the red ribbon of the Bourbon knighthood. His complexion was dark as that of a Moor, and his raven hair curled close to the stately head. The soldier-mustache—thick, but glossy as silk—shaded the firm lip; and the pointed beard, assumed by the exiled Carlists, heightened the effect of the strong and haughty features, and the expression of the martial countenance.

But as Fanny's voice died on his ear, he half averted that proud face; and the dark eyes—almost Oriental in their brilliancy and depth of shade—seemed soft and humid. And there stood Fanny, in a posture of such unconscious sadness—such childlike innocence; her arms drooping—her face wistfully turned to his—and a half-smile upon the lips, that made still more touching the tears not yet dried upon her cheeks. While thin, frail, shadowy, with white hair and furrowed cheeks, the old man fixed his sightless orbs on space; and his face, usually only animated from the lethargy of advancing dotage by a certain querulous cynicism, now grew suddenly earnest, and even thoughtful, as Fanny spoke of Death!

CHAPTER V.

> *Ulyss.*—Time hath a wallet at his back
> Wherein he puts alms for oblivion.
> . . . . Perseverance, dear, my lord,
> Keeps honour bright.—*Troilus and Cressida.*

I HAVE not sought—as would have been easy, by a little ingenuity in the early portion of this narrative—whatever source of vulgar interest might be derived from the mystery of names and persons. As in Charles Spencer the reader is allowed at a glance to detect Sidney Morton, so in Philip de Vaudemont (the stranger who rescued Fanny) the reader at once recognises the hero of my tale; but, since neither of these young men has a better right to the name resigned than to the name adopted, it will be simpler and more convenient to designate them by those appellations by which they are now known to the world. In truth, Philip de Vaudemont was scarcely the same being as Philip Morton. In the short visit he had paid to the elder Gawtrey, when he consigned Fanny to his charge, he had given no name; and the one he now took (when, towards the evening of the next day, he returned to Simon's house) the old man heard for the

first time. Once more sunk into his usual apathy, Simon did not express any surprise that a Frenchman should be so well acquainted with English—he scarcely observed that the name was French. Simon's age seemed daily to bring him more and more to that state when life is mere mechanism, and the soul, preparing for its departure, no longer heeds the tenement that crumbles silently and neglected into its lonely dust. Vaudemont came with but little luggage (for he had an apartment also in London) and no attendant—a single horse was consigned to the stables of an inn at hand, and he seemed, as soldiers are, more careful for the comforts of the animal than his own. There was but one woman servant in the humble household, who did all the ruder work; for Fanny's industry could afford it. The solitary servant and the homely fare sufficed for the simple and hardy adventurer.

Fanny, with a countenance radiant with joy, took his hand and led him to his room. Poor child! with that instinct of *woman* which never deserted her, she had busied herself the whole day in striving to deck the chamber according to her own notions of comfort. She had stolen from her little hoard wherewithal to make some small purchases, on which the Dowbiggin of the suburb had been consulted. And what with flowers on the table, and a fire at the hearth, the room looked cheerful.

She watched him as he glanced around, and felt disappointed that he did not utter the admiration she expected. Angry at last with the indifference which,

in fact, as to external accommodation, was habitual to him, she plucked his sleeve, and said—

"Why don't you speak? Is it not nice?—Fanny did her best."

"And a thousand thanks to Fanny! It is all I could wish."

"There is another room, bigger than this, but the wicked woman who robbed us slept *there;* and besides, you said you liked the churchyard. See!" and she opened the window, and pointed to the church-tower rising dark against the evening sky.

"This is better than all!" said Vaudemont; and he looked out from the window in a silent reverie, which Fanny did not disturb.

And now he was settled! From a career so wild, agitated, and various, the adventurer paused in that humble resting-nook. But quiet is not repose—obscurity is not content. Often as, morn and eve, he looked forth upon the spot, where his mother's heart, unconscious of love and woe, mouldered away, the indignant and bitter feelings of the wronged outcast and the son who could not clear the mother's name, swept away the subdued and gentle melancholy into which time usually softens regret for the dead, and with which most of us think of the distant past, and the once joyous childhood!

In this man's breast lay, concealed by his external calm, those memories and aspirations which are as strong as passions. In his earlier years, when he had been put to hard shifts for existence, he had found

no leisure for close and brooding reflection upon that spoliation of just rights — that calumny upon his mother's name, which had first brought the Night into his Morning. His resentment towards the Beauforts, it is true, had ever been an intense but a fitful and irregular passion. It was exactly in proportion as, by those rare and romantic incidents which Fiction cannot invent, and which Narrative takes with diffidence from the great storehouse of Real Life, his steps had ascended in the social ladder—that all which his childhood had lost — all which the robbers of his heritage had gained, the grandeur and the power of WEALTH—above all, the hourly and the tranquil happiness of a stainless name, became palpable and distinct. He had loved Eugénie as a boy loves for the first time an accomplished woman. He regarded her, —so refined, so gentle, so gifted—with the feelings due to a superior being, with an eternal recollection of the ministering angel that had shone upon him when he stood on the dark abyss. She was the first that had redeemed his fate — the first that had guided aright his path—the first that had tamed the savage at his breast : it was the young lion charmed by the eyes of Una. The outline of his story had been truly given at Lord Lilburne's. Despite his pride, which revolted from such obligations to another, and a woman —which disliked and struggled against a disguise which at once and alone saved him from the detection of the past and the terrors of the future—he had yielded to her, the wise and the gentle, as one whose judgment

he could not doubt; and, indeed, the slanderous falsehoods circulated by the lackey, to whose discretion, the night of Gawtrey's death, Eugénie had preferred to confide her own honour rather than another's life, had (as Liancourt rightly stated) left Philip no option but that which Madame de Merville deemed the best, whether for her happiness or her good name. Then had followed a brief season—the holiday of his life—the season of young hope and passion, of brilliancy and joy, closing by that abrupt death which again left him lonely in the world.

When, from the grief that succeeded to the death of Eugénie, he woke to find himself amidst the strange faces and exciting scenes of an Oriental court, he turned with hard and disgustful contempt from Pleasure, as an infidelity to the dead. Ambition crept over him—his mind hardened as his cheek bronzed under those burning suns—his hardy frame, his energies prematurely awakened, his constitutional disregard to danger—made him a brave and skilful soldier. He acquired reputation and rank. But, as time went on, the ambition took a higher flight—he felt his sphere circumscribed; the Eastern indolence that filled up the long intervals between Eastern action chafed a temper never at rest: he returned to France: his reputation, Liancourt's friendship, and the relations of Eugénie—grateful, as has before been implied, for the generosity with which he surrendered the principal part of her donation—opened for him a new career, but one painful and galling. In the Indian court

there was no question of his birth—one adventurer was equal with the rest. But in Paris, a man attempting to rise provoked all the sarcasm of wit, all the cavils of party; and in polished and civil life, what valour has weapons against a jest? Thus, in civilisation, all the passions that spring from humiliated self-love and baffled aspiration again preyed upon his breast. He saw, then, that the more he struggled from obscurity, the more acute would become research into his true origin; and his writhing pride almost stung to death his ambition. To succeed in life by regular means was indeed difficult for this man; always recoiling from the name he bore—always strong in the hope yet to regain that to which he conceived himself entitled — cherishing that pride of country which never deserts the native of a Free State, however harsh a parent she may have proved; and, above all, whatever his ambition and his passions, taking, from the very misfortunes he had known, an indomitable belief in the ultimate justice of Heaven;—he had refused to sever the last ties that connected him with his lost heritage and his forsaken land—he refused to be naturalised—to make the name he bore legally undisputed—he was contented to be an alien. Neither was Vaudemont fitted exactly for that crisis in the social world when the men of journals and talk bustle aside the men of action. He had not cultivated literature, he had no book-knowledge — the world had been his school, and stern life his teacher. Still, eminently skilled in those physical accomplish-

ments which men admire and soldiers covet, calm and self-possessed in manner, of great personal advantages, of much ready talent and of practised observation in character, he continued to breast the obstacles around him, and to establish himself in the favour of those in power. It was natural to a person so reared and circumstanced to have no sympathy with what is called the popular cause. He was no citizen in the state — he was a stranger in the land. He had suffered, and still suffered, too much from mankind, to have that philanthropy, sometimes visionary but always noble, which, in fact, generally springs from the studies we cultivate, not in the forum, but the closet. Men, alas ! too often lose the Democratic Enthusiasm in proportion as they find reason to suspect or despise their kind. And if there were not hopes for the Future, which this hard, practical, daily life does not suffice to teach us, the vision and the glory that belong to the Great Popular Creed, dimmed beneath the injustice, the follies, and the vices of the world as it is, would fade into the lukewarm sectarianism of temporary Party. Moreover, Vaudemont's habits of thought and reasoning were those of the camp, confirmed by the systems familiar to him in the East : he regarded the populace as a soldier enamoured of discipline and order usually does. His theories, therefore, or rather his ignorance of what is sound in theory, went with Charles X. in his excesses, but not with the timidity which terminated those excesses by dethronement and disgrace. Chafed to the heart, gnawed with proud grief, he obeyed the

royal mandates, and followed the exiled monarch : his hopes overthrown, his career in France annihilated for ever. But on entering England, his temper, confident and ready of resource, fastened itself on new food. In the land where he had no name he might yet rebuild his fortunes. It was an arduous effort—an improbable hope ; but the words heard by the bridge of Paris—words that had often cheered him in his exile through hardships and through dangers which it is unnecessary to our narrative to detail—yet rang again in his ear, as he leaped on his native land—"Time, Faith, Energy."

While such his character in the larger and more distant relations of life, in the closer circles of companionship many rare and noble qualities were visible. It is true that he was stern, perhaps imperious—of a temper that always struggled for command ; but he was deeply susceptible of kindness, and if feared by those who opposed, loved by those who served him. About his character was that mixture of tenderness and fierceness, which belonged, of old, to the descriptions of the warrior. Though so little lettered, Life had taught him a certain poetry of sentiment and idea : —more poetry, perhaps, in the silent thoughts that, in his happier moments, filled his solitude, than in half the pages that his brother had read and written by the dreaming lake. A certain largeness of idea and nobility of impulse often made him *act* the sentiments of which bookmen *write.* With all his passions, he held licentiousness in disdain ; with all his ambition for the *power* of wealth, he despised its *luxury.* Simple,

masculine, severe, abstemious, he was of that mould in which, in earlier times, the successful men of action have been cast. But to successful action, circumstance is more necessary than to triumphant study.

It was to be expected that, in proportion as he had been familiar with a purer and nobler life, he should look with great and deep self-humiliation at his early association with Gawtrey. He was in this respect more severe on himself than any other mind ordinarily just and candid would have been—when fairly surveying the circumstances of penury, hunger, and despair, which had driven him to Gawtrey's roof, the imperfect nature of his early education, the boyish trust and affection he had felt for his protector, and his own ignorance of, and exemption from, all the worse practices of that unhappy criminal. But still, when, with the knowledge he had now acquired, the *man* looked calmly back, his cheek burned with remorseful shame at his unreflecting companionship in a life of subterfuge and equivocation, the true nature of which, the *boy* (so circumstanced as we have shown him) might be forgiven for not at that time comprehending. Two advantages resulted, however, from the error and the remorse : first, the humiliation it brought, curbed, in some measure, a pride that might otherwise have been arrogant and unamiable ; and, secondly, as I have before intimated, his profound gratitude to Heaven for his deliverance from the snares that had beset his youth, gave his future the guide of an earnest and heartfelt faith. He acknowledged in life no such thing as *acci-*

dent. Whatever his struggles, whatever his melancholy, whatever his sense of worldly wrong, he never despaired; for nothing now could shake his belief in one directing Providence.

The ways and habits of Vaudemont were not at discord with those of the quiet household in which he was now a guest. Like most men of strong frames, and accustomed to active, not studious pursuits, he rose early, and usually rode to London, to come back late at noon to their frugal meal. And if again, perhaps after the hour when Fanny and Simon retired, he would often return to London, his own pass-key re-admitted him, at whatever time he came back, without disturbing the sleep of the household. Sometimes, when the sun began to decline, if the air was warm, the old man would crawl out, leaning on that strong arm, through the neighbouring lanes, ever returning through the lonely burial-ground; or when the blind host clung to his fireside, and composed himself to sleep, Philip would saunter forth along with Fanny; and on the days when she went to sell her work, or select her purchases, he always made a point of attending her. And her cheek wore a flush of pride when she saw him carrying her little basket, or waiting without, in musing patience, while she performed her commissions in the shops. Though, in reality, Fanny's intellect was ripening within, yet still the surface often misled the eye as to the depths. It was rather that something yet held back the faculties from their growth, than that the faculties themselves were wanting. Her

weakness was more of the nature of the infant's than of one afflicted with incurable imbecility. For instance, she managed the little household with skill and prudence; she could calculate in her head as rapidly as Vaudemont himself, the arithmetic necessary to her simple duties; she knew the value of money, which is more than some of us wise folk do. Her skill, even in her infancy so remarkable, in various branches of female handiwork, was carried, not only by perseverance, but by invention and peculiar talent, to a marvellous and exquisite perfection. Her embroidery, especially in what was then more rare than at present —viz., flowers on silk—was much in request among the great *modistes* of London, to whom it found its way through the agency of Miss Semper. So that all this had enabled her, for years, to provide every necessary comfort of life for herself and her blind protector. And her care for the old man was beautiful in its minuteness, its vigilance. Wherever her heart was interested, there never seemed a deficiency of mind. Vaudemont was touched to see how much of affectionate and pitying respect she appeared to enjoy in the neighbourhood, especially among the humbler classes —even the beggar who swept the crossings did not beg of *her*, but bade God bless her as she passed; and the rude, discontented artisan would draw himself from the wall and answer, with a softened brow, the smile with which the harmless one charmed his courtesy. In fact, whatever attraction she took from her youth,

her beauty, her misfortune, and her affecting industry, was heightened, in the eyes of the poorer neighbours, by many little traits of charity and kindness; many a sick child had she tended, and many a breadless board had stolen something from the stock set aside for her father's grave.

"Don't you think," she once whispered to Vaudemont, "that God attends to us more if we are good to those who are sick and hungry?"

"Certainly, we are taught to think so."

"Well, I'll tell you a secret—don't tell again. Grandpapa once said that my father had done bad things; now, if Fanny is good to those she can help, I think that God will hear her more kindly when she prays him to forgive what her father did. Do you think so too? Do say—you are so wise!"

"Fanny, you are wiser than all of us; and I feel myself better and happier when I hear you speak."

There were, indeed, many moments when Vaudemont thought that her deficiencies of intellect might have been repaired, long since, by skilful culture and habitual companionship with those of her own age; from which companionship, however, Fanny, even when at school, had shrunk aloof. At other moments, there was something so absent and distracted about her, or so fantastic and incoherent, that Vaudemont, with the man's hard, worldly eye, read in it nothing but melancholy confusion. Nevertheless, if the skein of ideas was entangled, each thread in itself was a thread of gold.

Fanny's great object—her great ambition—her one hope—was a tomb for her supposed father. Whether from some of that early religion attached to the grave, which is most felt in Catholic countries, and which she had imbibed at the convent; or from her residence so near the burial-ground, and the affection with which she regarded the spot;—whatever the cause, she had cherished for some years, as young maidens usually cherish the desire of the Altar, the dream of the Gravestone. But the hoard was amassed so slowly;—now old Gawtrey was attacked by illness;—now there was some little difficulty in the rent; now some fluctuation in the price of work; and now, and more often than all, some demand on her charity, which interfered with, and drew from, the pious savings. This was a sentiment in which her new friend sympathised deeply; for he, too, remembered that his first gold had bought that humble stone which still preserved upon the earth the memory of his mother.

Meanwhile, days crept on, and no new violence was offered to Fanny. Vaudemont learned, then, by little and little—and Fanny's account was very confused—the nature of the danger she had run.

It seemed that one day, tempted by the fineness of the weather up the road that led from the suburb farther into the country, Fanny was stopped by a gentleman, in a carriage, who accosted her, as she said, very kindly: and after several questions, which she answered with her usual unsuspecting innocence, learned her trade, insisted on purchasing some articles

of work which she had at the moment in her basket, and promised to procure her a constant purchaser, upon much better terms than she had hitherto obtained, if she would call at the house of a Mrs West, about a mile from the suburb towards London. This she promised to do, and this she did, according to the address he gave her. She was admitted to a lady more gaily dressed than Fanny had ever seen a lady before—the gentleman was also present — they both loaded her with compliments, and bought her work at a price which seemed about to realise all the hopes of the poor girl as to the gravestone for William Gawtrey—as if his evil fate pursued that wild man beyond the grave, and his very tomb was to be purchased by the gold of the polluter! The lady then appointed her to call again; but meanwhile, she met Fanny in the streets, and while she was accosting her, it fortunately chanced that Miss Semper the milliner passed that way—turned round, looked hard at the lady, used very angry language to her, seized Fanny's hand, led her away, while the lady slunk off; and told her that the said lady was a very bad woman, and that Fanny must never speak to her again. Fanny most cheerfully promised this. And, in fact, the lady, probably afraid, whether of the mob or the magistrates, never again came near her.

"And," said Fanny, "I gave the money they had both given to me to Miss Semper, who said she would send it back."

"You did right, Fanny; and as you made one pro-

mise to Miss Semper, so you must make me one—never to stir from home again without me or some other person. No, no *other* person—only me. I will give up everything else to go with you."

"Will you? Oh, yes, I promise! I used to like going alone, but that was before you came, brother."

And as Fanny kept her promise, it would have been a bold gallant, indeed, who would have ventured to molest her by the side of that stately and strong protector.

CHAPTER VI.

> *Timon.*—Each thing's a thief:
> The laws, your curb and whip, in their rough power
> Have uncheeked theft.
> . . . . .
> The sweet degrees that this brief world affords,
> To such as may the passive drugs of it
> Freely command.—*Timon of Athens.*

ON the day and at the hour fixed for the interview with the stranger who had visited Mr Beaufort, Lord Lilburne was seated in the library of his brother-in-law; and before the elbow-chair, on which he lolled carelessly, stood our old friend Mr Sharp, of Bow Street notability.

"Mr Sharp," said the peer, "I have sent for you to do me a little favour. I expect a man here who professes to give Mr Beaufort, my brother-in-law, some information about a lawsuit. It is necessary to know the exact value of his evidence. I wish you to ascertain all particulars about him. Be so good as to seat yourself in the porter's chair in the hall; note him when he enters, unobserved yourself—but as he is probably a stranger to you, note him still more when he leaves the house; follow him at a distance; find out where he lives, whom he associates with, where he

visits, their names and directions, what his character and calling are;—in a word, everything you can, and report to me each evening. Dog him well, never lose sight of him—you will be handsomely paid. You understand?"

"Ah!" said Mr Sharp, "leave me alone, my lord. Been employed before by your lordship's brother-in-law. We knows what's what."

"I don't doubt it. To your post.—I expect him every moment."

And, in fact, Mr Sharp had only just ensconced himself in the porter's chair when the stranger knocked at the door—in another moment he was shown in to Lord Lilburne.

"Sir," said his lordship, without rising, "be so good as to take a chair. Mr Beaufort is obliged to leave town—he has asked me to see you—I am one of his family—his wife is my sister—you may be as frank with me as with him,—more so, perhaps."

"I beg the fauvour of your name, sir," said the stranger, adjusting his collar.

"Yours first—business is business."

"Well, then, Captain Smith."

"Of what regiment?"

"Half-pay."

"I am Lord Lilburne. Your name is Smith—humph!" added the peer, looking over some notes before him. "I see it is also the name of the witness appealed to by Mrs Morton—humph!"

At this remark, and still more at the look which

accompanied it, the countenance, before impudent and complacent, of Captain Smith fell into visible embarrassment; he cleared his throat and said, with a little hesitation,—

"My lord, that witness is living!"

"No doubt of it—witnesses never die where property is concerned and imposture intended."

At this moment the servant entered and placed a little note, quaintly folded, before Lord Lilburne. He glanced at it in surprise—opened, and read as follows, in pencil:—

"My Lord,—I knows the man; take caer of him; he is as big a roge as ever stept; he was transported some three year back, and unless his time has been shortened by the Home, he's absent without leve. We used to call him Dashing Jerry. That ere youngster we went arter, by Mr Bofort's wish, was a pal of his. Scuze the liberty I take, J. Sharp."

While Lord Lilburne held this effusion to the candle, and spelled his way through it, Captain Smith, recovering his self-composure, thus proceeded:—

"Imposture, my lord! imposture! I really don't understand. Your lordship really seems so suspicious that it is quite uncomfortable. I am sure it is all the same to me; and if Mr Beaufort does not think proper to see me himself, why, I'd best make my bow."

And Captain Smith rose.

"Stay a moment, sir. What Mr Beaufort may yet do, I cannot say; but I know this, you stand charged of a very grave offence, and if your witness or witnesses—you may have fifty for what I care—are equally guilty, so much the worse for them."

"My lord, I really don't comprehend."

"Then I will be more plain. I accuse you of devising an infamous falsehood for the purpose of extorting money. Let your witnesses appear in court, and I promise that you, they, and the young man, Mr Morton, whose claim they set up, shall be indicted for conspiracy—conspiracy, if accompanied (as in the case of your witnesses) with perjury, of the blackest dye. Mr Smith, I know you; and, before ten o'clock to-morrow, I shall know also if you had his majesty's leave to quit the colonies! Ah! I am plain enough now, I see."

And Lord Lilburne threw himself back in his chair, and coldly contemplated the white face and dismayed expression of the crestfallen captain. That most worthy person, after a pause of confusion, amaze, and fear, made an involuntary stride, with a menacing gesture, towards Lilburne; the peer quietly placed his hand on the bell.

"One moment more," said the latter; "if I ring this bell, it is to place you in custody. Let Mr Beaufort but see you here once again—nay, let him but hear another word of this pretended lawsuit—and you return to the colonies. Pshaw! Frown not at me, sir! A Bow Street officer is in the hall. Begone!—no, stop one moment, and take a lesson in life. Never again

attempt to threaten people of property and station. Around every rich man is a wall—better not run your head against it."

"But I swear solemnly," cried the knave, with an emphasis so startling that it carried with it the appearance of truth, "that the marriage did take place."

"And I say, no less solemnly, that any one who swears it in a court of law shall be prosecuted for perjury!—Bah! you are a sorry rogue, after all!"

And with an air of supreme and half-compassionate contempt, Lord Lilburne turned away and stirred the fire. Captain Smith muttered and fumbled a moment with his gloves, then shrugged his shoulders and sneaked out.

That night Lord Lilburne again received his friends, and amongst his guests came Vaudemont. Lilburne was one who liked the study of character, especially the character of men wrestling against the world. Wholly free from every species of ambition, he seemed to reconcile himself to his apathy by examining into the disquietude, the mortification, the heart's wear and tear, which are the lot of the ambitious. Like the spider in his hole, he watched with hungry pleasure the flies struggling in the web, through whose slimy labyrinth he walked with an easy safety. Perhaps, one reason why he loved gaming was less from the joy of winning than the philosophical complacency with which he feasted on the emotions of those who lost: always serene, and, except, in debauch, always passionless,—Majendie, tracing the experiments of

science in the agonies of some tortured dog, could not be more wrapt in the science, and more indifferent to the dog, than Lord Lilburne ruining a victim in the analysis of human passions,—stoical in the writhings of the wretch whom he tranquilly dissected. He wished to win money of Vaudemont—to ruin this man, who presumed to be more generous than other people—to see a bold adventurer submitted to the wheel of the Fortune which reigns in a pack of cards;—and all, of course, without the least hate to the man whom he then saw for the first time. On the contrary, he felt a respect for Vaudemont. Like most worldly men, Lord Lilburne was prepossessed in favour of those who seek to rise in life: and like men who have excelled in manly and athletic exercises, he was also prepossessed in favour of those who appeared fitted for the same success.

Liancourt took aside his friend, as Lord Lilburne was talking with his other guests:—

"I need not caution you, who never play, not to commit yourself to Lord Lilburne's tender mercies; remember, he is an admirable player."

"Nay," answered Vaudemont, "I want to know this man: I have reasons, which alone induce me to enter his house. I can afford to venture something, because I wish to see if I can gain something for one dear to me. And for the rest," he muttered, "I know him too well not to be on my guard." With that he joined Lord Lilburne's group, and accepted the invitation to the card-table. At supper, Vaudemont conversed more

than was habitual to him; he especially addressed himself to his host, and listened, with great attention, to Lilburne's caustic comments upon every topic successively started. And whether it was the art of De Vaudemont, or from an interest that Lord Lilburne took in studying what was to him a new character,—or whether that, both men excelling peculiarly in all masculine accomplishments, their conversation was of a nature that was more attractive to themselves than to others; it so happened, that they were still talking while the daylight already peered through the window-curtains.

"And I have outstayed all your guests," said De Vaudemont, glancing round the emptied room.

"It is the best compliment you could pay me. Another night we can enliven our *tête-à-tête* with *écarté;* though at your age, and with your appearance, I am surprised, Monsieur de Vaudemont, that you are fond of play: I should have thought that it was not in a pack of cards that you looked for hearts. But perhaps you are *blasé* betimes of the *beau sexe.*"

"Yet your lordship's devotion to it is, perhaps, as great now as ever?"

"Mine?—no, not as ever. To different ages different degrees. At your age I wooed; at mine I purchase—the better plan of the two: it does not take up half so much time."

"Your marriage, I think, Lord Lilburne, was not blessed with children. Perhaps sometimes you feel the want of them?"

"If I did, I could have them by the dozen. Other ladies have been more generous in that department than the late Lady Lilburne, Heaven rest her!"

"And," said Vaudemont, fixing his eyes with some earnestness on his host, "if you were really persuaded that you had a child, or perhaps a grandchild—the mother one whom you loved in your first youth—a child affectionate, beautiful, and especially needing your care and protection, would you not suffer that child, though illegitimate, to supply to you the want of filial affection?"

"Filial affection, *mon cher!*" repeated Lord Lilburne, "needing my care and protection! Pshaw! In other words, would I give board and lodging to some young vagabond who was good enough to say he was son to Lord Lilburne?"

"But if you were *convinced* that the claimant were your son, or perhaps your daughter—a tenderer name of the two, and a more helpless claimant?"

"My dear Monsieur de Vaudemont, you are doubtless a man of gallantry and of the world. If the children whom the law forces on one are, nine times out of ten, such damnable plagues, judge if one would father those whom the law permits us to disown! Natural children are the Parias of the world, and *I*—am one of the Brahmins."

"But," persisted Vaudemont, "forgive me if I press the question farther. Perhaps I seek from your wisdom a guide to my own conduct;—suppose then, a man had loved, had wronged, the mother, suppose that

in the child he saw one who, without his aid, might be exposed to every curse with which the Parias (true, the *Parias!*) of the world are too often visited, and who *with* his aid might become, as age advanced, his companion, his nurse, his comforter——"

"Tush!" interrupted Lilburne, with some impatience; "I know not how our conversation fell on such a topic—but if you really ask my opinion in reference to any case in practical life, you shall have it. Look you, then, Monsieur de Vaudemont, no man has studied the art of happiness more than I have; and I will tell you the great secret—have as few ties as possible. Nurse!—pooh! you or I could hire one by the week a thousand times more useful and careful than a bore of a child. Comforter!—a man of mind never wants comfort. And there is no such thing as sorrow while we have health and money, and don't care a straw for anybody in the world. If you choose to love people, *their* health and circumstances, if either go wrong, can fret you: that opens many avenues to pain. Never *live* alone, but always *feel* alone. You think this unamiable: possibly. I am no hypocrite, and, for my part, I never affect to be anything but what I am—John Lilburne."

As the peer thus spoke, Vaudemont, leaning against the door, contemplated him with a strange mixture of interest and disgust. "And John Lilburne is thought a great man, and William Gawtrey was a great rogue. You don't conceal your heart?—no, I understand. Wealth and power have no need of hypocrisy: you

are the man of vice—Gawtrey, the man of crime. You never sin against the law—he was a felon by his trade. And the felon saved from vice the child, and from want the grandchild (*your* flesh and blood) whom you disown: which will Heaven consider the worse man? No, poor Fanny! I see I am wrong. If he would own you, I would not give you up to the ice of such a soul: better the blind man than the dead heart!"

"Well, Lord Lilburne," said De Vaudemont, aloud, shaking off his reverie, "I must own that your philosophy seems to me the wisest for yourself. For a poor man it might be different—the poor need affection."

"Ay, the poor, certainly," said Lord Lilburne, with an air of patronising candour.

"And I will own farther," continued De Vaudemont, "that I have willingly lost my money in return for the instruction I have received in hearing you converse."

"You are kind: come and take your revenge next Thursday. Adieu."

As Lord Lilburne undressed, and his valet attended him, he said to that worthy functionary—

"So you have not been able to make out the name of the stranger—the new lodger you tell me of?"

"No, my lord. They only say he is a very fine-looking man."

"You have not seen him?"

"No, my lord. What do you wish me now to do?"

"Humph! Nothing at this moment! you manage things so badly, you might get me into a scrape. I

never do anything which the law, or the police, or even the newspapers, can get hold of. I must think of some other way — humph ! I never give up what I once commence, and I never fail in what I undertake ! If life had been worth what fools trouble it with—business and ambition—I suppose I should have been a great man with a very bad liver—ha ! ha ! I, alone, of all the world, ever found out what the world was good for. Draw the curtains, Dykeman."

CHAPTER VII.

Org.—Welcome thou ice that sitt'st about *his* heart!
No heat can ever thaw thee!—FORD, *Broken Heart.*

Nearch.—Honourable infamy!—*Ibid.*

Amyc.—Her tenderness hath yet deserved no rigour,
So to be crossed by fate!
Arm.—You misapply, sir,
With favour let me speak it, what Apollo
Hath clouded in dim sense!—*Ibid.*

IF Vaudemont had fancied that, considering the age and poverty of Simon, it was his duty to see whether Fanny's not more legal, but more natural protector were, indeed, the unredeemed and unmalleable egotist which Gawtrey had painted him, the conversation of one night was sufficient to make him abandon for ever the notion of advancing her claims upon Lord Lilburne. But Philip had another motive in continuing his acquaintance with that personage. The sight of his mother's grave had recalled to him the image of that lost brother over whom he had vowed to watch. And, despite the deep sense of wronged affection with which he yet remembered the cruel letter that had contained the last tidings of Sidney, Philip's heart clung with

undying fondness to that fair shape associated with all the happy recollections of childhood; and his conscience as well as his love asked him, each time that he passed the churchyard, "Will you make no effort to obey that last prayer of the mother who consigned her darling to your charge?" Perhaps, had Philip been in want, or had the name he now bore been sullied by his conduct, he might have shrunk from seeking one whom he might injure, but could not serve. But though not rich, he had more than enough for tastes as hardy and simple as any to which soldier of fortune ever limited his desires. And he thought, with a sentiment of just and noble pride, that the name which Eugénie had forced upon him had been borne spotless as the ermine through the trials and vicissitudes he had passed since he had assumed it. Sidney could give him nothing, and therefore it was his duty to seek Sidney out. Now, he had always believed in his heart that the Beauforts were acquainted with a secret which he more and more pined to penetrate. He would, for Sidney's sake, smother his hate to the Beauforts; he would not reject their acquaintance if thrown in his way; nay, secure in his change of name and his altered features, from all suspicion on their part, he would seek that acquaintance in order to find his brother and fulfil Catherine's last commands. His intercourse with Lilburne would necessarily bring him easily into contact with Lilburne's family. And in this thought he did not reject the invitations pressed on him. He felt, too, a dark and absorbing interest in examining a man

who was in himself the incarnation of the World—the World of Art—the World as the Preacher paints it—the hollow, sensual, sharp-witted, self-wrapped WORLD—the World that is all for this life, and thinks of no Future and no God!

Lord Lilburne was, indeed, a study for deep contemplation—a study to perplex the ordinary thinker, and task to the utmost the analysis of more profound reflection. William Gawtrey had possessed no common talents; *he* had discovered that his life had been one mistake;—Lord Lilburne's intellect was far keener than Gawtrey's, and *he* had never made, and if he had lived to the age of Old Parr never would have made, a similar discovery. He never wrestled against a law, though he slipped through all laws! And he knew no remorse, for he knew no fear. Lord Lilburne had married early, and long survived, a lady of fortune, the daughter of the then Premier—the best match, in fact, of his day. And for one very brief period of his life he had suffered himself to enter into the field of politics — the only ambition common with men of equal rank. He showed talents that might have raised one so gifted by circumstance to any height, and then retired at once into his old habits and old system of pleasure. "I wished to try," said he once, "if fame was worth one headache, and I have convinced myself that the man who can sacrifice the bone in his mouth to the shadow of the bone in the water is a fool." From that time he never attended the House of Lords, and declared himself of no political

opinions one way or the other. Nevertheless, the world had a general belief in his powers, and Vaudemont reluctantly subscribed to the world's verdict. Yet he had done nothing, he had read but little, he laughed at the world to its face,—and that last was, after all, the main secret of his ascendancy over those who were drawn into his circle. That contempt of the world placed the world at his feet. His sardonic and polished indifference, his professed code that there was no life worth caring for but his own life, his exemption from all cant, prejudice, and disguise, the frigid lubricity with which he glided out of the grasp of the conventional, whenever it so pleased him, without shocking the Decorums whose sense is in their ear, and who are not roused by the deed but by the noise,—all this had in it the marrow and essence of a system triumphant with the vulgar; for little minds give importance to the man who gives importance to nothing. Lord Lilburne's authority, not in matters of taste alone, but in those which the world calls judgment and common sense, was regarded as an oracle. He cared not a straw for the ordinary baubles that attract his order; he had refused both an earldom and the garter, and this was often quoted in his honour. But you only try a man's virtue when you offer him something that he covets. The earldom and the garter were to Lord Lilburne no more tempting inducements than a doll or a skipping-rope; had you offered him an infallible cure for the gout, or an antidote against old age, you might have hired him, as

your lackey, on your own terms. Lord Lilburne's next heir was the son of his only brother, a person entirely dependent on his uncle. Lord Lilburne allowed him £1000 a-year, and kept him always abroad in a diplomatic situation. He looked upon his successor as a man who wanted power, but not inclination, to become his assassin.

Though he lived sumptuously and grudged himself nothing, Lord Lilburne was far from an extravagant man: he might, indeed, be considered close; for he knew how much of comfort and consideration he owed to his money, and valued it accordingly; he knew the best speculations and the best investments. If he took shares in an American canal, you might be sure that the shares would soon be double in value; if he purchased an estate, you might be certain it was a bargain. This pecuniary tact and success necessarily augmented his fame for wisdom.

He had been in early life a successful gambler, and some suspicions of his fair play had been noised abroad; but, as has been recently seen in the instance of a man of rank equal to Lilburne's, though, perhaps, of less acute, if more cultivated intellect, it is long before the pigeon will turn round upon a falcon of breed and mettle. The rumours, indeed, were so vague as to carry with them no weight. During the middle of his career, when in the full flush of health and fortune, he had renounced the gaming-table. Of late years, as advancing age made time more heavy, he had resumed the resource, and with all his former good

luck. The money-market, the table, the sex, constituted the other occupations and amusements with which Lord Lilburne filled up his rosy leisure.

Another way by which this man had acquired reputation for ability was this,—he never pretended to any branch of knowledge of which he was ignorant, any more than to any virtue in which he was deficient. Honesty itself was never more free from quackery or deception than was this embodied and walking VICE. If the world chose to esteem him, he did not buy its opinion by imposture. No man ever saw Lord Lilburne's name in a public subscription, whether for a new church, or a Bible Society, or a distressed family, —no man ever heard of his doing one generous, benevolent, or kindly action,—no man was ever startled by one philanthropic, pious, or amiable sentiment from those mocking lips. Yet, in spite of all this, John Lord Lilburne was not only esteemed but liked by the world, and set up in the chair of its Rhadamanthuses. In a word, he seemed to Vaudemont, and he was so in reality, a brilliant example of the might of Circumstance — an instance of what may be done in the way of reputation and influence by a rich, well-born man, to whom the will a kingdom is. A little of genius, and Lord Lilburne would have made his vices notorious and his deficiencies glaring; a little of heart, and his habits would have led him into countless follies and discreditable scrapes. It was the lead and the stone that he carried about him, that preserved his equilibrium, no matter which way the breeze

blew. But all his qualities, positive or negative, would have availed him nothing without that position which enabled him to take his ease in that inn, the world — which presented, to every detection of his want of intrinsic nobleness, the irreproachable respectability of a high name, a splendid mansion, and a rent-roll without a flaw. Vaudemont drew comparisons between Lilburne and Gawtrey, and he comprehended at last why one was a low rascal and the other a great man.

Although it was but a few days after their first introduction to each other, Vaudemont had been twice to Lord Lilburne's, and their acquaintance was already on an easy footing—when one afternoon, as the former was riding through the streets towards H——, he met the peer, mounted on a stout cob, which, from its symmetrical strength, pure English breed, and exquisite grooming, showed something of those sporting tastes for which, in earlier life, Lord Lilburne had been noted.

"Why, Monsieur de Vaudemont, what brings you to this part of the town?—curiosity and the desire to explore?"

"That might be natural enough in me; but you, who know London so well,—rather what brings *you* here?"

"Why, I am returned from a long ride. I have had symptoms of a fit of the gout, and been trying to keep it off by exercise. I have been to a cottage that belongs to me, some miles from town—a pretty place

enough by the way — you must come and see me there next month. I shall fill the house for a *battue!* I have some tolerable covers—you are a good shot, I suppose?"

"I have not practised, except with a rifle, for some years."

"That's a pity; for as I think a week's shooting once a-year quite enough, I fear that your visit to me at Fernside may not be sufficiently long to put your hand in."

"Fernside!"

"Yes; is the name familiar to you?"

"I think I have heard it before. Did your lordship purchase or inherit it?"

"I bought it of my brother-in-law. It belonged to *his* brother—a gay, wild sort of fellow, who broke his neck over a six-barred gate;—through that gate my friend Robert walked the same day into a very fine estate!"

"I have heard so. The late Mr Beaufort, then, left no children?"

"Yes; two. But they came into the world in the primitive way in which Mr Owen wishes us all to come—too naturally for the present state of Society, and Mr Owen's parallelogram was not ready for them. By the way, one of them disappeared at Paris;—you never met with him, I suppose?"

"Under what name?"

"Morton."

"Morton!—hem! What Christian name?"

"Philip."

"Philip!—no. But did Mr Beaufort do nothing for the young men? I think I have heard somewhere that he took compassion on *one* of them."

"Have you? Ah, my brother-in-law is precisely one of those excellent men of whom the world always speaks well. No; he would very willingly have served either or both the boys, but the mother refused all his overtures and went to law, I fancy. The elder of these bastards turned out a sad fellow, and the younger,—I don't know exactly where he is, but no doubt with one of his mother's relations. You seem to interest yourself in natural children, my dear Vaudemont?"

"Perhaps you have heard that people have doubted if I were a natural son?"

"Ah! I understand now. But are you going?—I was in hopes you would have turned back my way, and——"

"You are very good; but I have a particular appointment, and I am now too late. Good morning, Lord Lilburne."

Sidney with one of his mother's relations! Returned, perhaps to the Mortons! How had he never *before* chanced on a conjecture so probable? He would go at once!—that very night he would go to the house from which he had taken his brother. At least, and at the worst, they might give him some clue.

Buoyed with this hope and this resolve, he rode hastily to H——, to announce to Simon and Fanny that he should not return to them, perhaps, for two or

three days. As he entered the suburb, he drew up by the statuary of whom he had purchased his mother's gravestone.

The artist of the melancholy trade was at work in his yard.

"Ho! there!" said Vaudemont, looking over the low railing; "is the tomb I have ordered nearly finished?"

"Why, sir, as you were so anxious for despatch, and as it would take a long time to get a new one ready, I thought of giving you this, which is finished all but the inscription. It was meant for Miss Deborah Primme; but her nephew and heir called on me yesterday to say, that as the poor lady died worth less by £5000 than he had expected, he thought a handsome wooden tomb would do as well, if I could get rid of this for him. It is a beauty, sir. It will look so cheerful——"

"Well, that will do: and you can place it now where I told you."

"In three days, sir."

"So be it." And he rode on, muttering, "Fanny, your pious wish will be fulfilled. But flowers,—will they suit *that* stone?"

He put up his horse, and walked through the lane to Simon's.

As he approached the house, he saw Fanny's bright eyes at the window. She was watching his return. She hastened to open the door to him, and the world's wanderer felt what music there is in the footstep, what summer there is in the smile, of *Welcome!*

"My dear Fanny," he said, affected by her joyous

greeting, "it makes my heart warm to see you. I have brought you a present from town. When I was a boy, I remember that my poor mother was fond of singing some simple songs, which often, somehow or other, come back to me, when I see and hear you. I fancy you would understand and like them as well at least as I do—for Heaven knows (he added to himself) my ear is dull enough generally to the jingle of rhyme." And he placed in her hands a little volume of those exquisite songs in which Burns has set Nature to music.

"Oh! you are so kind, brother," said Fanny, with tears swimming in her eyes, and she kissed the book.

After their simple meal, Vaudemont broke to Fanny and Simon the intelligence of his intended departure for a few days. Simon heard it with the silent apathy into which, except on rare occasions, his life had settled. But Fanny turned away her face and wept.

"It is but for a day or two, Fanny."

"An hour is very—very long sometimes," said the girl, shaking her head mournfully.

"Come, I have a little time yet left, and the air is mild, you have not been out to-day, shall we walk——"

"Hem!" interrupted Simon, clearing his throat, and seeming to start into sudden animation; "had not you better settle the board and lodging before you go?"

"Oh, grandfather!" cried Fanny, springing to her feet, with *such* a blush upon her face.

"Nay, child," said Vaudemont, laughingly; "your grandfather only anticipates me. But do not talk of

board and lodging; Fanny is as a sister to me, and our purse is in common."

"I should like to feel a sovereign—just to *feel* it," muttered Simon, in a sort of apologetic tone, that was really pathetic; and as Vaudemont scattered some coins on the table, the old man clawed them up, chuckling and talking to himself; and, rising with great alacrity, hobbled out of the room like a raven carrying some cunning theft to its hiding-place.

This was so amusing to Vaudemont that he burst out fairly into an incontrollable laughter. Fanny looked at him, humbled and wondering, for some moments; and then, creeping to him, put her hand gently on his arm, and said,—

"Don't laugh—it pains me. It was not nice in grandpapa; but—but, it does not mean anything. It—it—don't laugh—Fanny feels so sad!"

"Well, you are right. Come, put on your bonnet, we will go out."

Fanny obeyed; but with less ready delight than usual. And they took their way through lanes over which hung, still in the cool air, the leaves of the yellow autumn.

Fanny was the first to break silence.

"Do you know," she said, timidly, "that people here think me very silly?—do you think so, too?"

Vaudemont was startled by the simplicity of the question, and hesitated. Fanny looked up in his dark face anxiously and inquiringly.

"Well," she said, "you don't answer?"

"My dear Fanny, there are some things in which I could wish you less childlike and, perhaps, less charming. Those strange snatches of song, for instance——"

"What! do you not like me to sing? It is my way of talking."

"Yes; sing, pretty one! But sing something that we can understand,—sing the songs I have given you, if you will. And now, may I ask why you put to me that question?"

"I have forgotten," said Fanny, absently, and looking down.

Now, at that instant, as Philip Vaudemont bent over the exceeding sweetness of that young face, a sudden thrill shot through his heart, and he too became silent and lost in thought. Was it possible that there could creep into his breast a wilder affection for this creature than that of tenderness and pity? He was startled as the idea crossed him. He shrunk from it as a profanation—as a crime—as a frenzy. He, with his fate so uncertain and checkered—he to link himself with one so helpless—he to debase the very poetry that clung to the mental temperament of this pure being, with the feelings which every fair face may awaken to every coarse heart—*to love Fanny!* No, it was impossible! For what could he love in her but beauty, which the very spirit had forgotten to guard? And she—could she even know what love was? He despised himself for even admitting such a thought; and with that iron and hardy vigour which belonged to his mind, resolved to watch closely against every fancy that would pass

the fairy boundary which separated Fanny from the world of women.

He was roused from this self-commune by an abrupt exclamation from his companion.

"Oh! I recollect now, why I asked you that question. There is one thing that always puzzles me—I want you to explain it. Why does everything in life depend upon money? You see even my poor grandfather forgot how good you are to us both, when—when—— Ah! I don't understand—it pains—it puzzles me!"

"Fanny, look there—no, to the left—you see that old woman, in rags, crawling wearily along: turn now to the right—you see that fine house glancing through the trees, with a carriage-and-four at the gates? The difference between that old woman and the owner of that house is—Money; and who shall blame your grandfather for liking Money?"

Fanny understood; and while the wise man thus moralised, the girl, whom his very compassion so haughtily contemned, moved away to the old woman to do her little best to smooth down those disparities from which wisdom and moralising never deduct a grain! Vaudemont felt this as he saw her glide towards the beggar; but when she came bounding back to him, she had forgotten his dislike to her songs, and was chanting, in the glee of the heart that a kind act had made glad, one of her own impromptu melodies.

Vaudemont turned away. Poor Fanny had unconsciously decided his self-conquest: she guessed not what passed within him, but she suddenly recollected

what he had said to her about her songs, and fancied him displeased.

"Ah! I will never do it again. Brother, don't turn away!"

"But we must go home. Hark! the clock strikes seven—I have no time to lose. And you will promise me never to stir out till I return?"

"I shall have no heart to stir out," said Fanny, sadly; and then, in a more cheerful voice, she added, "And I shall sing the songs you like, before you come back again!"

CHAPTER VIII.

> Well did they know that service all by rote ;
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Some singing loud as if they had complained,
> Some with their notes another manner feigned.
>
> CHAUCER, *The Cuckoo and the Nightingale*, modernised by WORDSWORTH.—HORNE'S edition.

AND once more, sweet Winandermere, we are on the banks of thy happy lake ! The softest ray of the soft clear sun of early autumn trembled on the fresh waters, and glanced through the leaves of the limes and willows that were reflected—distinct as a home for the Naiads—beneath the limpid surface. You might hear in the bushes the young blackbirds trilling their first untutored notes. And the graceful dragonfly, his wings glittering in the translucent sunshine, darted to and fro the reeds gathered here and there in the mimic bays that broke the shelving marge of the grassy shore.

And by that grassy shore, and beneath those shadowy limes, sat the young lovers. It was the very place where Spencer had first beheld Camilla. And now they were met to say " Farewell ! "

"Oh, Camilla !" said he, with great emotion, and eyes that swam in tears, " be firm—be true. You

know how my whole life is wrapped up in your love. You go amidst scenes where all will tempt you to forget me. I linger behind in those which are consecrated by your remembrance, which will speak to me, every hour, of you. Camilla, since you do love me—you do, do you not?—since you have confessed it—since your parents have consented to our marriage, provided only that your love last (for of mine there can be no doubt) for one year—one terrible year—shall I not trust you as truth itself? And yet how darkly I despair at times!"

Camilla innocently took the hands that, clasped together, were raised to her, as if in supplication, and pressed them kindly between her own.

"Do not doubt me—never doubt my affection. Has not my father consented? Reflect, it is but a year's delay!"

"A year!—can you speak thus of a year—a whole year? Not to see—not to hear you for a whole year, except in my dreams! And if at the end your parents waver? Your father—I distrust him still. If this delay is but meant to wean you from me—if, at the end, there are new excuses found—if they then, for some cause or other not now foreseen, still refuse their assent—you—may I not still look to *you?*"

Camilla sighed heavily; and, turning her meek face on her lover, said timidly—"Never think that so short a time can make me unfaithful, and do not suspect that my father will break his promise."

"But, if he does, you will still be mine?"

"Ah, Charles, how could you esteem me as a wife if I were to tell you I could forget I am a daughter?"

This was said so touchingly, and with so perfect a freedom from all affectation, that her lover could only reply by covering her hand with his kisses. And it was not till after a pause that he continued passionately—

"You do but show me how much deeper is my love than yours. You can never dream how I love you. But I do not ask you to love me as well—it would be impossible. My life, from my earliest childhood, has been passed in these solitudes; a happy life, though tranquil and monotonous, till you suddenly broke upon it. You seemed to me the living form of the very poetry I had worshipped—so bright—so heavenly —I loved you from the very first moment that we met. I am not like other men of my age. I have no pursuit —no occupation—nothing to abstract me from your thought. And I love you so purely—so devotedly, Camilla. I have never known even a passing fancy for another. You are the first—the only woman—it ever seemed to me possible to love. You are my Eve— your presence my paradise! Think how sad I shall be when you are gone—how I shall visit every spot your footstep has hallowed—how I shall count every moment till the year is past!"

While he thus spoke he had risen in that restless agitation which belongs to great emotion; and Camilla now rose also, and said, soothingly, as she laid her

hand on his shoulder with tender but modest frankness, "And shall I not also think of you? I am sad to feel that you will be so much alone—no sister—no brother!"

"Do not grieve for that. The memory of you will be dearer to me than comfort from all else. And you *will* be true?"

Camilla made no answer by words, but her eyes and her colour spoke. And in that moment, while plighting eternal truth, they forgot that they were about to part!

Meanwhile, in a room in the house which, screened by the foliage, was only partially visible where the lovers stood, sat Mr Robert Beaufort and Mr Spencer.

"I assure you, sir," said the former, "that I am not insensible to the merits of your nephew, and to the very handsome proposals you make, still I cannot consent to abridge the time I have named. They are both very young. What is a year?"

"It is a long time when it is a year of suspense," said the recluse, shaking his head.

"It is a longer time when it is a year of domestic dissension and repentance. And it is a very true proverb, 'Marry in haste and repent at leisure.' No! If at the end of the year the young people continue of the same mind, and no unforeseen circumstances occur——"

"No unforeseen circumstances, Mr Beaufort!—that is a new condition—it is a very vague phrase."

"My dear sir, it is hard to please you. Unforeseen

circumstances," said the wary father, with a wise look, "means circumstances that we don't foresee at present. I assure you that I have no intention to trifle with you, and I shall be sincerely happy in so respectable a connection."

"The young people may write to each other?"

"Why, I'll consult Mrs Beaufort. At all events, it must not be very often, and Camilla is well brought up, and will show all the letters to her mother. I don't much like a correspondence of that nature. It often leads to unpleasant results; if, for instance——"

"If what?"

"Why, if the parties change their minds, and my girl were to marry another. It is not prudent in matters of business, my dear sir, to put down anything on paper that can be avoided."

Mr Spencer opened his eyes. "Matters of business, Mr Beaufort!"

"Well, is not marriage a matter of business, and a very grave matter, too? More lawsuits about marriage and settlements, &c., than I like to think of. But to change the subject. You have never heard anything more of those young men, you say?"

"No," said Mr Spencer, rather inaudibly, and looking down.

"And it is your firm impression that the elder one, Philip, is dead?"

"I don't doubt it."

"That was a very vexatious and improper lawsuit their mother brought against me. Do you know that

some wretched impostor, who, it appears, is a convict broke loose before his time, has threatened me with another, on the part of one of those young men. You never heard anything of it—eh?"

"Never, upon my honour."

"And, of course, you would not countenance so villanous an attempt?"

"Certainly not."

"Because *that* would break off our contract at once. But you are too much a gentleman and a man of honour. Forgive me so improper a question. As for the younger Mr Morton, I have no ill-feeling against him. But the elder!—Oh, a thorough reprobate! a very alarming character! I could have nothing to do with any member of the family while the elder lived; it would only expose me to every species of insult and imposition. And now I think we have left our young friends alone long enough.

"But stay, to prevent future misunderstanding, I may as well read over again the heads of the arrangement you honour me by proposing. You agree to settle your fortune after your decease, amounting to £23,000, and your house, with twenty-five acres, one rood, and two poles, more or less, upon your nephew and my daughter, jointly—remainder to their children. Certainly, without offence, in a worldly point of view, Camilla might do better; still, you are so very respectable, and you speak so handsomely, that I cannot touch upon that point; and I own, that though there is a large nominal rent-roll attached to Beaufort Court

(indeed, there is not a finer property in the county), yet there are many encumbrances, and ready money would not be convenient to me. Arthur,—poor fellow, a very fine young man, sir,—is, as I have told you in perfect confidence, a little imprudent and lavish; in short, your offer to dispense with any dowry is extremely liberal, and proves your nephew is actuated by no mercenary feelings: such conduct prepossesses me highly in your favour and his too."

Mr Spencer bowed, and the great man rising, with a stiff affectation of kindly affability, put his arm into the uncle's, and strolled with him across the lawn towards the lovers. And such is life—love on the lawn and settlements in the parlour!

The lover was the first to perceive the approach of the elder parties. And a change came over his face as he saw the dry aspect and marked the stealthy stride of his future father-in-law; for, then, there flashed across him a dreary reminiscence of early childhood; the happy evening when, with his joyous father, that grave and ominous aspect was first beheld; and then the dismal burial, the funereal sables, the carriage at the door, and he himself clinging to the cold uncle to ask him to say a word of comfort to the mother who now slept far away.

"Well, my young friend," said Mr Beaufort, patronisingly, "your good uncle and myself are quite agreed —a little time for reflection, that's all. Oh! I don't think the worse of you for wishing to abridge it. But papas must be papas."

There was so little jocular about that sedate man, that this attempt at jovial good-humour seemed harsh and grating—the hinges of that wily mouth wanted oil for a hearty smile.

"Come, don't be faint-hearted, Mr Charles. 'Faint heart'—you know the proverb. You must stay and dine with us. We return to-morrow to town. I should tell you, that I received this morning a letter from my son Arthur, announcing his return from Baden, so we must give him the meeting—a very joyful one, you may guess. We have not seen him these three years. Poor fellow! he says he has been very ill, and the waters have ceased to do him any good. But a little quiet and country air at Beaufort Court will set him up, I hope."

Thus running on about his son—then about his shooting—about Beaufort Court and its splendours—about Parliament and its fatigues—about the last French Revolution, and the last English election—about Mrs Beaufort, and her good qualities and bad health—about, in short, everything relating to himself, some things relating to the public, and nothing that related to the persons to whom his conversation was directed, Mr Robert Beaufort wore away half-an-hour, when the Spencers took their leave, promising to return to dinner.

"Charles," said Mr Spencer, as the boat, which the young man rowed, bounded over the water towards their quiet home; "Charles, I dislike these Beauforts!"

"Not the daughter?"

"No, she is beautiful, and seems good: not so handsome as your poor mother, but who ever was?"—Here Mr Spencer sighed, and repeated some lines from Shenstone.

"Do you think Mr Beaufort suspects in the least who I am?"

"Why, that puzzles me; I rather think he does."

"And that is the cause of the delay? I knew it."

"No, on the contrary, I incline to think he has some kindly feeling to you, though not to your brother, and that it is such a feeling that made him consent to your marriage. He sifted me very closely as to what I knew of the young Mortons—observed that you were very handsome, and that he had fancied at first that he had seen you before."

"Indeed!"

"Yes: and looked hard at me while he spoke; and said more than once, significantly, 'So his name is Charles?' He talked about some attempt at imposture and litigation, but that was, evidently, merely to sound me about your brother—whom, of course, he spoke ill of—impressing on me, three or four times, that he would never have anything to say to any of the family while Philip lived."

"And you told him," said the young man, hesitatingly, and with a deep blush of shame over his face, "that you were persuad——that is, that you believed Philip was—was——"

"Was dead! Yes—and without confusion. For the more I reflect, the more I think he must be dead. At all events, you may be sure that he is dead to us, that we shall never hear more of him."

"Poor Philip!"

"Your feelings are natural; they are worthy of your excellent heart; but remember, what would have become of you if you had stayed with him!"

"True!" said the brother, with a slight shudder,—"a career of suffering—crime—perhaps the gibbet! Ah! what do I owe you?"

The dinner-party at Mr Beaufort's that day was constrained and formal, though the host, in unusual good-humour, sought to make himself agreeable. Mrs Beaufort, languid and afflicted with headache, said little. The two Spencers were yet more silent. But the younger sat next to her he loved; and both hearts were full: and in the evening they contrived to creep apart into a corner by the window, through which the starry heavens looked kindly on them. They conversed in whispers, with long pauses between each: and at times Camilla's tears flowed silently down her cheeks, and were followed by the false smiles intended to cheer her lover.

Time did not fly, but crept on breathlessly and heavily. And then came the last parting—formal, cold—before witnesses. But the lover could not restrain his emotion, and the hard father heard his suppressed sob as he closed the door.

It will now be well to explain the cause of Mr Beau-

fort's heightened spirits, and the motives of his conduct with respect to his daughter's suitor.

This, perhaps, can be best done by laying before the reader the following letters that passed between Mr Beaufort and Lord Lilburne :—

From Lord Lilburne *to* Robert Beaufort, Esq., M.P.

"Dear Beaufort,—I think I have settled, pretty satisfactorily, your affair with your unwelcome visitor. The first thing it seemed to me necessary to do was to learn exactly what and who he was, and with what parties that could annoy you he held intercourse. I sent for Sharp, the Bow Street officer, and placed him in the hall to mark, and afterwards to dog and keep watch on, your new friend. The moment the latter entered I saw at once, from his dress and his address, that he was a 'scamp;' and thought it highly inexpedient to place you in his power by any money transactions. While talking with him, Sharp sent in a billet containing his recognition of our gentleman as a transported convict.

"I acted accordingly; soon saw, from the fellow's manner, that he had returned before his time; and sent him away with a promise, which you may be sure he believes will be kept, that if he molest you further he shall return to the colonies, and that if his lawsuit proceed, his witness or witnesses shall be indicted for conspiracy and perjury. Make your mind easy so far. For the rest, I own to you that I think what he says probable enough : but my object in setting Sharp to watch him is to learn what other parties he sees. And

if there be really anything formidable in his proofs or witnesses, it is with those other parties I advise you to deal. Never transact business with the go-between, if you can with the principal. Remember, the two young men are the persons to arrange with after all. They must be poor, and therefore easily dealt with. For if poor, they will think a bird in the hand worth two in the bush of a lawsuit.

"If, through Mr Spencer, you can learn anything of either of the young men, do so; and try and open some channel through which you can always establish a communication with them, if necessary. Perhaps, by learning their early history you may learn something to put them into your power.

"I have had a twinge of the gout this morning, and am likely, I fear, to be laid up for some weeks.—Yours truly, LILBURNE.

"*P.S.*—Sharp has just been here. He followed the man who calls himself 'Captain Smith' to a house in Lambeth, where he lodges, and from which he did not stir till midnight, when Sharp ceased his watch. On renewing it this morning, he found that the captain had gone off, to what place Sharp has not yet discovered.

"Burn this immediately."

From ROBERT BEAUFORT, ESQ., M.P., *to the* LORD LILBURNE.

"DEAR LILBURNE,—Accept my warmest thanks for your kindness; you have done admirably, and I do not see that I have anything further to apprehend. I

suspect that it was an entire fabrication on that man's part, and your firmness has foiled his wicked designs. Only think, I have discovered—I am sure of it—one of the Mortons; and he, too, though the younger, yet, in all probability, the sole pretender the fellow could set up. You remember that the child Sidney had disappeared mysteriously, — you remember, also, how much that Mr Spencer had interested himself in finding out the same Sidney. Well,—this gentleman at the Lakes is, as we suspected, the identical Mr Spencer, and his *soi-disant* nephew, Camilla's suitor, is assuredly no other than the lost Sidney. The moment I saw the young man, I recognised him, for he is very little altered, and has a great look of his mother into the bargain. Concealing my more than suspicions, I, however, took care to sound Mr Spencer (a very poor soul), and his manner was so embarrassed as to leave no doubt of the matter; but in asking him what he had heard of the brothers, I had the satisfaction of learning that, in all human probability, the elder is dead: of this Mr Spencer seems convinced. I also assured myself that neither Spencer nor the young man had the remotest connection with our Captain Smith, nor any idea of litigation. This is very satisfactory, you will allow. And now, I hope you will approve of what I have done. I find that young Morton, or Spencer, as he is called, is desperately enamoured of Camilla; he seems a meek, well-conditioned, amiable young man, writes poetry,—in short, rather weak than otherwise. I have demanded a year's delay to allow mutual trial and re-

flection. This gives us the channel for constant information which you advise me to establish, and I shall have the opportunity to learn if the impostor makes any communication to them, or if there be any news of the brother. If by any trick or chicanery (for I will never believe that there was a marriage) a lawsuit that might be critical or hazardous can be cooked up, I can, I am sure, make such terms with Sidney, through his love for my daughter, as would effectively and permanently secure me from all further trouble and machinations in regard to my property. And if, during the year, we convince ourselves that, after all, there is not a leg of law for any claimant to stand on, I may be guided by other circumstances how far I shall finally accept or reject the suit. That must depend on any other views we may then form for Camilla; and I shall not allow a hint of such an engagement to get abroad. At the worst, as Mr Spencer's heir, it is not so very bad a match, seeing that they dispense with all marriage-portion, &c.—a proof how easily they can be managed. I have not let Mr Spencer see that I have discovered his secret—I can do that or not, according to circumstances, hereafter; neither have I said anything of my discovery to Mrs B. or Camilla. At present, 'least said soonest mended.' I heard from Arthur to-day. He is on his road home, and we hasten to town sooner than we expected to meet him. He complains still of his health. We shall all go down to Beaufort Court. I write this at night, the pretended uncle and sham nephew having just gone. But though we start

to-morrow, you will get this a day or two before we arrive, as Mrs Beaufort's health renders short stages necessary. I really do hope that Arthur, also, will not be an invalid, poor fellow! one in a family is quite enough; and I find Mrs Beaufort's delicacy very inconvenient, especially in moving about, and in keeping up one's county connections. A young man's health, however, is soon restored. I am very sorry to hear of your gout, except that it carries off all other complaints. I am very well, thank Heaven; indeed my health has been much better of late years: Beaufort Court agrees with me so well! The more I reflect, the more I am astonished at the monstrous and wicked impudence of that fellow—to defraud a man out of his own property! You are quite right,—certainly a conspiracy.—Yours truly, R. B.

"*P.S.*—I shall keep a constant eye on the Spencers.

"Burn this immediately."

After he had written and sealed this letter, Mr Beaufort went to bed and slept soundly.

And the next day that place was desolate, and the board on the lawn announced that it was again to be let. But thither daily, in rain or sunshine, came the solitary lover, as a bird that seeks its young in the deserted nest:—Again and again he haunted the spot where he had strayed with the lost one,—and again and again murmured his passionate vows beneath the fast-fading limes. Are those vows destined to be ratified or annulled? Will the absent forget, or the lingerer

be consoled? Had the characters of that young romance been lightly stamped on the fancy, where once obliterated they are erased for ever,—or were they graven deep in those tablets where the writing, even when invisible, exists still, and revives, sweet letter by letter, when the light and the warmth borrowed from the One Bright Presence are applied to the faithful record? There is but one Wizard to disclose that secret, as all others,—the old Gravedigger whose Churchyard is the Earth,—whose trade is to find burial-places for Passions that seemed immortal,—disinterring the ashes of some long-crumbling Memory,—to hollow out the dark bed of some new-perished Hope;—He who determines all things and prophesies none,—for his oracles are uncomprehended till the doom is sealed:—He who in the bloom of the fairest affection detects the hectic that consumes it, and while the hymn rings at the altar, marks with his joyless eye the grave for the bridal vow.—Wherever is the sepulchre, there is thy temple, O melancholy TIME!

BOOK V.

Und zu eines Stroms Gestaden
Kam ich, der nach Morgen floß.

SCHILLER, *Der Pilgrim.*

BOOK V.

CHAPTER I.

Per ambages et ministeria deorum.*—PETRONIUS.

MR ROGER MORTON was behind his counter one drizzling, melancholy day. Mr Roger Morton, alderman, and twice mayor of his native town, was a thriving man. He had grown portly and corpulent. The nightly potations of brandy-and-water, continued year after year with mechanical perseverance, had deepened the roses on his cheek. Mr Roger Morton was never intoxicated—he only "made himself comfortable." His constitution was strong; but somehow or other his digestion was not as good as it might be. He was certain that something or other disagreed with him. He left off the joint one day—the pudding another. Now he avoided vegetables as poison—and now he submitted with a sigh to the doctor's interdict of his cigar. Mr Roger Morton never thought of leaving off the brandy-and-water: and he would have resented as

* Through the mysteries and ministerings of the gods.

the height of impertinent insinuation any hint upon that score to a man of so sober and respectable a character.

Mr Roger Morton was seated—for the last four years, ever since his second mayoralty, he had arrogated to himself the dignity of a chair. He received rather than served his customers. The latter task was left to two of his sons. For Tom, after much cogitation, the profession of an apothecary had been selected. Mrs Morton observed, that it was a genteel business, and Tom had always been a likely lad; and Mr Roger considered that it would be a great comfort and a great saving to have his medical adviser in his own son.

The other two sons, and the various attendants of the shop, were plying the profitable trade, as customer after customer, with umbrellas and in pattens, dropped into the tempting shelter—when a man, meanly dressed, and who was somewhat past middle age, with a careworn, hungry face, entered timidly. He waited in patience by the crowded counter, elbowed by sharp-boned and eager spinsters—and how sharp the elbows of spinsters are, no man can tell who has not forced his unwelcome way through the agitated groups in a linendraper's shop!—the man, I say, waited patiently and sadly till the smallest of the shopboys turned from a lady, who, after much sorting and shading, had finally decided on two yards of lilac-coloured penny ribbon, and asked, in an insinuating professional tone—

"What shall I show you, sir?"

"I wish to speak to Mr Morton. Which is he?"

"Mr Morton is engaged, sir. I can give you what you want."

"No; it is a matter of business—important business."

The boy eyed the napless and dripping hat, the gloveless hands, and the rusty neckcloth of the speaker; and said, as he passed his fingers through a profusion of light curls—

"Mr Morton don't attend much to business himself now; but that's *he*. Any cravats, sir?"

The man made no answer, but moved where, near the window, and chatting with the banker of the town (as the banker tried on a pair of beaver gloves), sat still—after due apology for sitting—Mr Roger Morton.

The alderman lowered his spectacles as he glanced grimly at the lean apparition that shaded the spruce banker, and said—

"Do you want me, friend?"

"Yes, sir, if you please;" and the man took off his shabby hat, and bowed low.

"Well, speak out. No begging petition, I hope?"

"No, sir; your nephews——"

The banker turned round, and in his turn eyed the new comer. The linendraper started back.

"Nephews!" he repeated, with a bewildered look. "What does the man mean? Wait a bit."

"Oh, I've done!" said the banker, smiling. "I am glad to find we agree so well upon this question: I knew we should. Our member will never suit us if

he goes on in this way. Trade must take care of itself. Good-day to you."

"Nephews!" repeated Mr Morton, rising, and beckoning to the man to follow him into the back parlour, where Mrs Morton sat casting up the washing bills.

"Now," said the husband, closing the door, "what do you mean, my good fellow?"

"Sir, what I wish to ask you is—if you can tell me what has become of—of the young Beau——, —that is, of your sister's sons. I understand there were two —and I am told that—that they are both dead. Is it so?"

"What is that to you, friend?"

"An please you, sir, it is a great deal to *them!*"

"Yes—ha! ha!—it is a great deal to everybody, whether they are alive or dead!" Mr Morton, since he had been mayor, now and then had his joke. "But really——"

"Roger!" said Mrs Morton, under her breath—"Roger!"

"Yes, my dear."

"Come this way—I want to speak to you about this bill." The husband approached, and bent over his wife. "Who's this man?"

"I don't know."

"Depend on it, he has some claim to make—some bills, or something. Don't commit yourself—the boys are dead for what we know!"

Mr Morton hemmed, and returned to his visitor.

"To tell you the truth, I am not aware of what has become of the young men."

"Then they are not dead—I thought not!" exclaimed the man, joyously.

"That's more than I can say. It's many years since I lost sight of the only one I ever saw; and they may be both dead for what I know."

"Indeed!" said the man. "Then you can give me no kind of—of—hint like, to find them out?"

"No. Do they owe you anything?"

"It does not signify talking now, sir. I beg your pardon."

"Stay—who are you?"

"I am a very poor man, sir."

Mr Morton recoiled.

"Poor! Oh, very well—very well. You have done with me now. Good-day—good-day. I'm busy."

The stranger pecked for a moment at his hat—turned the handle of the door—peered under his grey eyebrows at the portly trader, who, with both hands buried in his pockets, his mouth pursed up, like a man about to say "No"—fidgeted uneasily behind Mrs Morton's chair. He sighed, shook his head, and vanished.

Mrs Morton rang the bell—the maid-servant entered.

"Wipe the carpet, Jenny;—dirty feet! Mr Morton, it's a Brussels!"

"It was not my fault, my dear. I could not talk about family matters before the whole shop. Do you

know, I'd quite forgot those poor boys. This unsettles me. Poor Catherine! she was so fond of them. A pretty boy that Sidney, too. What can have become of them? My heart rebukes me. I wish I had asked the man more."

"More!—why, he was just going to beg."

"Beg—yes—very true!" said Mr Morton, pausing irresolutely; and then, with a hearty tone, he cried out,—"And, damme, if he had begged, I could afford him a shilling! I'll go after him." So saying, he hastened back through the shop, but the man was gone—the rain was falling—Mr Morton had his thin shoes on—he blew his nose, and went back to the counter. But there still rose to his memory the pale face of his dead sister; and a voice murmured in his ear, "Brother, where is my child?"

"Pshaw! it is not my fault if he ran away. Bob, go and get me the county paper."

Mr Morton had again settled himself, and was deep in a trial for murder, when another stranger strode haughtily into the shop. The new comer, wrapped in a pelisse of furs, with a thick mustache, and an eye that took in the whole shop, from master to boy, from ceiling to floor, in a glance, had the air at once of a foreigner and a soldier. Every look fastened on him, as he paused an instant, and then walking up to the alderman, said,—

"Sir, you are doubtless Mr Morton?"

"At your commands, sir," said Roger, rising involuntarily.

"A word with you, then, on business."

"Business!" echoed Mr Morton, turning rather pale, for he began to think himself haunted; "anything in my line, sir? I should be——"

The stranger bent down his tall stature, and hissed into Mr Morton's foreboding ear,—

"Your nephews!"

Mr Morton was literally dumb-stricken. Yes, he certainly *was* haunted! He stared at this second questioner, and fancied that there was something very supernatural and unearthly about him. He was so tall, and so dark, and so stern, and so strange. Was it the Unspeakable himself come for the linendraper? Nephews again! The uncle of the babes in the wood could hardly have been more startled by the demand!

"Sir," said Mr Morton at last, recovering his dignity and somewhat peevishly,—"sir, I don't know why people should meddle with my family affairs. I don't ask other folks about their nephews. I have no nephew that I know of."

"Permit me to speak to you, alone, for one instant."

Mr Morton sighed, hitched up his trousers, and led the way to the parlour, where Mrs Morton, having finished the washing bills, was now engaged in tying certain pieces of bladder round certain pots of preserves. The eldest Miss Morton, a young woman of five or six and twenty, who was about to be very advantageously married to a young gentleman who dealt in coals and played the violin (for N—— was a very musical town), had just joined her for the purpose of

extorting "The Swiss Boy, with variations," out of a sleepy little piano, that emitted a very painful cry under the awakening fingers of Miss Margaret Morton.

Mr Morton threw open the door with a grunt, and the stranger pausing at the threshold, the full flood of sound (key C) upon which "The Swiss Boy" was swimming along, "kine" and all, for life and death, came splash upon him.

"Silence! can't you?" cried the father, putting one hand to his ear, while with the other he pointed to a chair; and as Mrs Morton looked up from the preserves with that air of indignant suffering with which female meekness upbraids a husband's wanton outrage, Mr Roger added, shrugging his shoulders,—

"My nephews again, Mrs M.!"

Miss Margaret turned round, and dropped a curtsy. Mrs Morton gently let fall a napkin over the preserves, and muttered a sort of salutation, as the stranger, taking off his hat, turned to mother and daughter one of those noble faces in which Nature has written her grant and warranty of the lordship of creation.

"Pardon me," he said, "if I disturb you; but my business will be short. I have come to ask you, sir, frankly, and as one who has a right to ask it, what tidings you can give me of Sidney Morton?"

"Sir, I know nothing whatever about him. He was taken from my house, about twelve years since, by his brother. Myself, and the two Mr Beauforts, and another friend of the family, went in search of them both. My search failed."

"And theirs?"

"I understood from Mr Beaufort that they had not been more successful. I have had no communication with those gentlemen since. But that's neither here nor there. In all probability, the elder of the boys—who, I fear, was a sad character—corrupted and ruined his brother; and, by this time, Heaven knows what and where they are."

"And no one has inquired of you since—no one has asked the brother of Catherine Morton—nay, rather of Catherine Beaufort—where is the child entrusted to your care?"

This question, so exactly similar to that which his superstition had rung on his own ears, perfectly appalled the worthy alderman. He staggered back—stared at the marked and stern face that lowered upon him—and at last cried,—

"For pity's sake, sir, be just! What could I do for one who left me of his own accord?——"

"The day you had beaten him like a dog. You see, Mr Morton, I know all."

"And what are you?" said Mr Morton, recovering his English courage, and feeling himself strangely browbeaten in his own house;—"what and who are you, that you thus take the liberty to catechise a man of my character and respectability?"

"Twice mayor——" began Mrs Morton.

"Hush, mother!" whispered Miss Margaret,—"don't work him up."

"I repeat, sir, what are you?"

"What am I?—your nephew! Who am I? Before men, I bear a name that I have assumed, and not dishonoured—before Heaven, I am Philip Beaufort!"

Mrs Morton dropped down upon her stool. Margaret murmured "My cousin!" in a tone that the ear of the musical coal-merchant might not have greatly relished. And Mr Morton, after a long pause, came up with a frank and manly expression of joy, and said—

"Then, sir, I thank Heaven, from my heart, that one of my sister's children stands alive before me!"

"And now, again, I—I whom you accuse of having corrupted and ruined him—*him* for whom I toiled and worked—him, who was to me, then, as a last surviving son to some anxious father,—I, from whom he was reft and robbed—I ask you again for Sidney—for my brother!"

"And again, I say, that I have no information to give you—that—stay a moment—stay. You must pardon what I have said of you before you made yourself known. I went but by the accounts I had received from Mr Beaufort. Let me speak plainly; that gentleman thought, right or wrong, that it would be a great thing to separate your brother from you. He may have found him—it must be so—and kept his name and condition concealed from us all, lest you should detect it. Mrs M., don't you think so?"

"I'm sure I'm so terrified I don't know what to think," said Mrs Morton, putting her hand to her forehead, and see-sawing herself to and fro upon her stool.

"But since they wronged you—since you—you seem so very—very——"

"Very much the gentleman," suggested Miss Margaret.

"Yes, so much the gentleman;—well off, too, I should hope, sir,"—and the experienced eye of Mr Morton glanced at the costly sables that lined the pelisse—"there can be no difficulty in your learning from Mr Beaufort all that you wish to know. And pray, sir, may I ask, did you send any one here to-day to make the very inquiry you have made?"

"I?—No. What do you mean?"

"Well, well—sit down—there may be something in all this that you may make out better than I can."

And as Philip obeyed, Mr Morton, who was really and honestly rejoiced to see his sister's son alive and apparently thriving, proceeded to relate pretty exactly the conversation he had held with the previous visitor. Philip listened earnestly and with attention. Who could this questioner be? Some one who knew his birth—some one who sought him out?—some one, who—Good Heavens! could it be the long-lost witness of the marriage?

As soon as that idea struck him, he started from his seat, and entreated Morton to accompany him in search of the stranger. "You know not," he said, in a tone impressed with that energy of will in which lay the talent of his mind,—"you know not of what importance this may be to my prospects—to your sister's fair name. If it should be the witness returned at

last! Who else, of the rank you describe, would be interested in such inquiries? Come!"

"What witness?" said Mrs Morton, fretfully. "You don't mean to come over us with the old story of the marriage?"

"Shall your wife slander your own sister, sir? A marriage there was—God yet will proclaim the right—and the name of Beaufort shall be yet placed on my mother's gravestone. Come!"

"Here are your shoes and umbrella, pa," cried Miss Margaret, inspired by Philip's earnestness.

"My fair cousin, I guess;" and as the soldier took her hand, he kissed the unreluctant cheek—turned to the door—Mr Morton placed his arm in his, and the next moment they were in the street.

When Catherine, in her meek tones, had said, "Philip Beaufort was my husband," Roger Morton had disbelieved her. And now one word from the son, who could, in comparison, know so little of the matter, had almost sufficed to convert and to convince the sceptic. Why was this?—Because—Man believes the Strong!

CHAPTER II.

Quid Virtus et quid Sapientia possit
Utile proposuit nobis exemplar *Ulyssem.**—Hor.

Meanwhile the object of their search, on quitting Mr Morton's shop, had walked slowly and sadly on, through the plashing streets, till he came to a public-house in the outskirts and on the high-road to London. Here he took shelter for a short time, drying himself by the kitchen fire, with the licence purchased by fourpennyworth of gin; and having learned that the next coach to London would not pass for some hours, he finally settled himself in the ingle, till the guard's horn should arouse him. By the same coach that the night before had conveyed Philip to N——, had the very man he sought been also a passenger!

The poor fellow was sickly and wearied out: he had settled into a doze, when he was suddenly wakened by the wheels of a coach and the trampling of horses. Not knowing how long he had slept, and imagining that the vehicle he had awaited was at the door, he ran out. It was a coach coming *from* London, and the driver was joking with a pretty barmaid, who, in rather

* He has proposed to us Ulysses as a useful example of how much may be accomplished by Virtue and Wisdom.

short petticoats, was holding up to him the customary glass. The man, after satisfying himself that his time was not yet come, was turning back to the fire, when a head popped itself out of the window, and a voice cried—"Stars and garters! Will—so that's you!" At the sound of the voice the man halted abruptly, turned very pale, and his limbs trembled. The inside passenger opened the door, jumped out with a little carpet-bag in his hand, took forth a long leathern purse, from which he ostentatiously selected the coins that paid his fare and satisfied the coachman, and then, passing his arm through that of the acquaintance he had discovered, led him back into the house.

"Will—Will," he whispered, "you have been to the Mortons. Never moind—let's hear all. Jenny or Dolly, or whatever your sweet praetty name is—a private room and a pint of brandy, my dear. Hot water and lots of the grocery. That's right."

And as soon as the pair found themselves, with the brandy before them, in a small parlour with a good fire, the last-comer went to the door, shut it cautiously, flung his bag under the table, took off his gloves, spread himself wider and wider before the fire, until he had entirely excluded every ray from his friend, and then suddenly turning, so that the back might enjoy what the front had gained, he exclaimed,

"Damme, Will, you're a praetty sort of a broather to give me the slip in that way. But in this world, every man for his-self!"

"I tell you," said William, with something like

decision in his voice, "that I will not do any wrong to these young men if they live."

"Who asks you to do a wrong to them?—booby! Perhaps I may be the best friend they may have yet —ay, or you too, though you're the ungratefullest, whimsicallest sort of a son of a gun that ever I came across. Come, help yourself, and don't roll up your eyes in that way, like a Muggletonian asoide of a Fye-Fye!"

Here the speaker paused a moment, and with a graver and more natural tone of voice proceeded.

"So you did not believe me when I told you that these brothers were dead, and you have been to the Mortons to learn more?"

"Yes."

"Well, and what have you learned?"

"Nothing. Morton declares that he does not know that they are alive, but he says also that he does not know that they are dead."

"Indeed," said the other, listening with great attention; "and you really think that he does *not* know anything about them?"

"I do, indeed."

"Hum! Is he a sort of man who would post down the rhino to help the search?"

"He looked as if he had the yellow fever when I said I was poor," returned William, turning round, and trying to catch a glimpse at the fire, as he gulped his brandy-and-water.

"Then I'll be d—d if I run the risk of calling. I

have done some things in this town by way of business before now; and though it's a long time ago, yet folks don't forget a haundsome man in a hurry—especially if he has done 'em! Now, then, listen to me. You see, I have given this matter all the 'tention in my power. 'If the lads be dead,' said I to you, 'it is no use burning one's fingers by holding a candle to bones in a coffin. But Mr Beaufort need not know they are dead, and we'll see what we can get out of him; and if I succeeds, as I think I shall, you and I may hold up our heads for the rest of our life.' Accordingly, as I told you, I went to Mr Beaufort, and—'Gad, I thought we had it all our own way. But since I saw you last, there's been the devil and all. When I called again, Will, I was shown in to an old lord, sharp as a gimlet. Hang me, William, if he did not frighten me out of my seven senses!"

Here Captain Smith (the reader has, no doubt, already discovered that the speaker was no less a personage) took three or four nervous strides across the room, returned to the table, threw himself in a chair, placed one foot on one hob and one on the other, laid his finger on his nose, and, with a significant wink, said in a whisper—"Will, he knew I had been lagged! He not only refused to hear all I had to say, but threatened to prosecute—persecute, hang, draw, and quarter us both, if we ever dared to come out with the truth."

"But what's the good of the truth if the boys are dead?" said William, timidly.

The captain, without heeding this question, con-

tinued, as he stirred the sugar in his glass, "Well, out I sneaked, and as soon as I had got to my own door I turned round and saw Sharp the runner on the other side of the way—I felt deuced queer. However, I went in, sat down, and began to think. I saw that it was up with us, so far as the old uns were concerned; and now it might be worth while to find out if the young uns really were dead."

"Then you did not know *that* after all! I thought so. Oh, Jerry!"

"Why, look you, man, it was not our interest to take their side if we could make our bargain out of the other. 'Cause why? You are only one witness—you are a good fellow, but poor, and with very shaky nerves, Will. You does not know what them big wigs are when a man's caged in a witness-box—they flank one up, and they flank one down, and they bully and bother, till one's like a horse at Astley's dancing on hot iron. If your testimony broke down, why it would be all up with the case, and what then would become of us? Besides," added the captain, with dignified candour, "I *have* been lagged, it's no use denying it; I am back before my time. Inquiries about your respectability would soon bring the bulkies about me. And you would not have poor Jerry sent back to that d—d low place on t'other side of the Herring-pond, would you?"

"Ah, Jerry!" said William, kindly placing his hand in his brother's, "you know I helped you to escape; I left all to come over with you."

"So you did, and you're a good fellow; though as to leaving *all*, why you had got rid of *all* first. And when you told me about the marriage, did not I say that I saw our way to a snug thing for life? But to return to my story. There is a danger in going with the youngsters. But since, Will—since nothing but hard words is to be got on the other side, we'll do our duty, and I'll find them out, and do the best I can for us—that is, if they be yet above ground. And now I'll own to you that I think I knows that the younger one is alive."

"You do?"

"Yes! But as he won't come in for anything unless his brother is dead, we must have a hunt for the heir. Now I told you that, many years ago, there was a lad with me, who, putting all things together—seeing how the Beauforts came after him, and recollecting different things he let out at the time—I feel pretty sure is your old master's Hopeful. I know that poor Will Gawtrey gave this lad the address of old Gregg, a friend of mine. So, after watching Sharp off the sly, I went that very night, or rather at two in the morning, to Gregg's house, and, after brushing up his memory, I found that the lad had been to him, and gone over afterwards to Paris in search of Gawtrey, who was then keeping a matrimony shop. As I was not rich enough to go off to Paris in a pleasant, gentlemanlike way, I allowed Gregg to put me up to a noice, quiet, little bit of business. Don't shake your head—all safe—a rural affair! That took some days. You

see it has helped to new rig me," and the captain glanced complacently over a very smart suit of clothes. "Well, on my return I went to call on you, but you were flown. I half suspected you might have gone to the mother's relations here; and I thought, at all events, that I could not do better than go myself and see what they knew of the matter. From what you say I feel I had better now let that alone, and go over to Paris at once; leave me alone to find out. And faith, what with Sharp and the old lord, the sooner I quit England the better."

"And you really think you shall get hold of them after all? Oh, never fear my nerves if I'm once in the right; it's living with you, and seeing you do wrong, and hearing you talk wickedly, that makes me tremble.

"Bother!" said the captain, "you need not crow over me. Stand up, Will; there now, look at us two in the glass! Why, I look ten years younger than you do, in spite of all my troubles. I dress like a gentleman, as I am; I have money in my pocket; I put money in yours; without me you'd starve. Look you, you carried over a little fortune to Australia—you married—you farmed—you lived honestly, and yet that d—d shilly-shally disposition of yours, 'ticed into one speculation to-day, and scared out of another to-morrow, ruined you!"

"Jerry! Jerry!" cried William, writhing; "don't—don't."

"But it's all true, and I wants to cure you of

preaching. And then, when you were nearly run out, instead of putting a bold face on it, and setting your shoulder to the wheel, you gives it up—you sells what you have—you bolts over, wife and all, to Boston, because some one tells you you can do better in America—you are out of the way when a search is made for you; years ago, when you could have benefited yourself and your master's family without any danger to you or me, nobody can find you; 'cause why? you could not bear that your old friends in England, or in the colony either, should know that you were turned a slave-driver in Kentucky. You kick up a mutiny among the niggers by moaning over them instead of keeping 'em to it—you get kicked out yourself—your wife begs you to go back to Australia, where her relations will do something for you—you work your passage out, looking as ragged as a colt from grass—wife's uncle don't like ragged nephews-in-law—wife dies broken-hearted—and you might be breaking stones on the roads with the convicts, if I, myself a convict, had not taken compassion on you. Don't cry, Will, it is all for your own good; I hates cant! Whereas I, my own master from eighteen, never stooped to serve any other—have dressed like a gentleman—kissed the pretty girls—drove my phe-*a*ton—been in all the papers as 'the celebrated Dashing Jerry'—never wanted a guinea in my pocket, and even when lagged at last, had a pretty little sum in the colonial bank to lighten my misfortunes. I escape—I bring you over—and here I am, supporting you, and,

in all probability, the one on whom depends the fate of one of the first families in the country. And you preaches at me, do you? Look you, Will;—in this world, honesty's nothing without force of character! And so your health!"

Here the captain emptied the rest of the brandy into his glass, drained it at a draught, and, while poor William was wiping his eyes with a ragged blue pocket-handkerchief, rang the bell, and asked what coaches would pass that way to ——, a seaport town, at some distance. On hearing that there was one at six o'clock, the captain ordered the best dinner the larder would afford to be got ready as soon as possible; and, when they were again alone, thus accosted his brother,—

"Now you go back to town—here are four shiners for you. Keep quiet—don't speak to a soul; don't put *your* foot in it, that's all I beg, and I'll find out whatever there is to be found. It is damnably out of my way embarking at ——, but I had best keep clear of Lunnon. And I tell you what, if these youngsters have hopped the twig, there's another bird on the bough that may prove a goldfinch after all;—young Arthur Beaufort:—I hear he is a wild, expensive chap, and one who can't live without lots of money. Now, it's easy to frighten a man of that sort, and I sha'n't have the old lord at *his* elbow."

"But I tell you, that I only care for my poor master's children."

"Yes; but if they are dead, and by saying they are

alive one can make old age comfortable, there's no harm in it—eh?"

"I don't know," said William, irresolutely. "But certainly it is a hard thing to be so poor at my time of life; and so honest a man as I've been, too!"

Captain Smith went a little too far when he said that "honesty's nothing without force of character." Still Honesty has no business to be helpless and draggle-tailed;—she must be active and brisk, and make use of her wits; or, though she keep clear of the prison, 'tis no very great wonder if she fall on the parish.

CHAPTER III.

Mitis.—This Macilente, signior, begins to be more sociable on a sudden
Every Man out of his Humour.

Punt.—Signior, you are sufficiently instructed.
Fast.—Who? I, sir?"—*Ibid.*

After spending the greater part of the day in vain inquiries and a vain search, Philip and Mr Morton returned to the house of the latter.

"And now," said Philip, "all that remains to be done is this; first, give to the police of the town a detailed description of the man; and, secondly, let us put an advertisement both in the county journal and in some of the London papers, to the effect, that if the person who called on you will take the trouble to apply again, either personally or by letter, he may obtain the information sought for. In case he does, I will trouble you to direct him to——yes—to Monsieur de Vaudemont, according to this address."

"Not to you, then?"

"It is the same thing," replied Philip, dryly. "You have confirmed my suspicions that the Beauforts know something of my brother. What did you say of some other friend of the family who assisted in the search?"

"Oh—a Mr Spencer! an old acquaintance of your mother's." Here Mr Morton smiled, but not being encouraged in a joke, went on—"However, that's neither here nor there; *he* certainly never found out your brother. For I have had several letters from him at different times, asking if any news had been heard of either of you."

And, indeed, Spencer had taken peculiar pains to deceive the Mortons, whose interposition he feared little less than that of the Beauforts.

"Then it can be of no use to apply to him," said Philip, carelessly, not having any recollection of the name of Spencer, and therefore attaching little importance to the mention of him.

"Certainly, I should think not. Depend on it Mr Beaufort must know."

"True," said Philip, "and I have only to thank you for your kindness, and return to town."

"But stay with us this day—do; let me feel that we are friends. I assure you, poor Sidney's fate has been a load on my mind ever since he left. You shall have the bed he slept in, and over which your mother bent when she left him and me for the last time."

These words were said with so much feeling, that the adventurer wrung his uncle's hand, and said, "Forgive me, I wronged you—I will be your guest."

Mrs Morton, strange to say, evinced no symptoms of ill-humour at the news of the proffered hospitality. In fact, Miss Margaret had been so eloquent in Philip's praise during his absence, that she suffered herself to

be favourably impressed. Her daughter, indeed, had obtained a sort of ascendancy over Mrs M. and the whole house, ever since she had received so excellent an offer. And moreover, some people are like dogs—they snarl at the ragged and fawn on the well-dressed. Mrs Morton did not object to a nephew *de facto*, she only objected to a nephew *in formâ pauperis*. The evening, therefore, passed more cheerfully than might have been anticipated, though Philip found some difficulty in parrying the many questions put to him on the past. He contented himself with saying, as briefly as possible, that he had served in a foreign service, and acquired what sufficed him for an independence; and then, with the ease which a man picks up in the great world, turned the conversation to the prospects of the family whose guest he was. Having listened with due attention to Mrs Morton's eulogies on Tom, who had been sent for, and who drank the praises on his own gentility into a very large pair of blushing ears—also, to her self-felicitations on Miss Margaret's marriage,—*item*, on the service rendered to the town by Mr Roger, who had repaired the town-hall in his first mayoralty at his own expense,—*item*, to a long chronicle of her own genealogy, how she had one cousin a clergyman, and how her great-grandfather had been knighted,—*item*, to the domestic virtues of all her children,—*item*, to a confused explanation of the chastisement inflicted on Sidney, which Philip cut short in the middle; he asked, with a smile, what had become of the Plaskwiths. "Oh," said Mrs Morton,

"my brother Kit has retired from business. His son-in-law, Mr Plimmins, has succeeded."

"Oh, then, Plimmins married one of the young ladies?"

"Yes, Jane—she had a sad squint!—Tom, there is nothing to laugh at!—we are all as God made us—'Handsome is as handsome does;' she has had three little uns!"

"Do they squint too?" asked Philip; and Miss Margaret giggled, and Tom roared, and the other young men roared too. Philip had certainly said something very witty.

This time Mrs Morton administered no reproof; but replied, pensively—

"Natur is very mysterious—they *all* squint!"

Mr Morton conducted Philip to his chamber. There it was, fresh, clean, unaltered—the same white curtains, the same honeysuckle paper, as when Catherine had crept across the threshold.

"Did Sidney ever tell you that his mother placed a ring round his neck that night?" asked Mr Morton.

"Yes; and the dear boy wept when he said that he had slept too soundly to know that she was by his side that last, last time. The ring—oh, how well I remember it!—she never put it off till then; and often in the fields—for we were wild wanderers together in that day—often when his head lay on my shoulder, I felt that ring still resting on his heart, and fancied it was a talisman—a blessing. Well, well—good-night to you!" And he shut the door on his uncle, and was alone.

CHAPTER IV.

The Man of Law, . . .
And a great suit is like to be between them.
BEN JONSON, *Staple of News.*

ON arriving in London, Philip went first to the lodging he still kept there, and to which his letters were directed; and, among some communications from Paris, full of the politics and the hopes of the Carlists, he found the following note from Lord Lilburne :—

"DEAR SIR,—When I met you the other day, I told you I had been threatened with the gout. The enemy has now taken possession of the field. I am sentenced to regimen and the sofa. But as it is my rule in life to make afflictions as light as possible, so I have asked a few friends to take compassion on me, and help me 'to shuffle off this mortal coil,' by dealing me, if they can, four by honours. Any time between nine and twelve to-night, or to-morrow night, you will find me at home; and if you are not better engaged, suppose you dine with me to-day—or rather dine opposite to me—and excuse my Spartan broth. You will meet (besides any two or three friends whom an impromptu

invitation may find disengaged) my sister, with Beaufort and their daughter: they only arrived in town this morning, and are kind enough 'to nurse me,' as they call it,—that is to say, their cook is taken ill!—Yours,

LILBURNE.

"PARK LANE, *Sept.* —."

"The Beauforts. Fate favours me—I will go. The date is for to-day."

He sent off a hasty line to accept the invitation, and finding he had a few hours yet to spare, he resolved to employ them in consultation with some lawyer as to the chances of ultimately regaining his inheritance—a hope which, however wild, he had, since his return to his native shore, and especially since he had heard of the strange visit made to Roger Morton, permitted himself to indulge. With this idea he sallied out, meaning to consult Liancourt, who, having a large acquaintance among the English, seemed the best person to advise him as to the choice of a lawyer at once active and honest,—when he suddenly chanced upon that gentleman himself.

"This is lucky, my dear Liancourt. I was just going to your lodgings."

"And I was coming to yours to know if you dine with Lord Lilburne. He told me he had asked you. I have just left him. And by the sofa of Mephistopheles, there was the prettiest Margaret you ever beheld."

"Indeed!—Who?"

"He called her his niece; but I should doubt if he had any relation on this side the Styx so human as a niece."

"You seem to have no great predilection for our host."

"My dear Vaudemont, between our blunt, soldierly natures, and those wily, icy, sneering intellects, there is the antipathy of the dog to the cat."

"Perhaps so on our side, not on his—or why does he invite us?"

"London is empty, there is no one else to ask. We are new faces, new minds to him. We amuse him more than the hackneyed comrades he has worn out. Besides, he plays—and you too. Fie on you!"

"Liancourt, I had two objects in knowing that man, and I pay the toll for the bridge. When I cease to want the passage, I shall cease to pay the toll."

"But the bridge may be a drawbridge, and the moat is devilish deep below. Without metaphor, that man may ruin you before you know where you are."

"Bah! I have my eyes open. I know how much to spend on the rogue, whose service I hire as a lackey's; and I know also where to stop. Liancourt," he added, after a short pause, and in a tone deep with suppressed passion, "when I first saw that man I thought of appealing to his heart for one who has a claim on it. That was a vain hope. And then there came upon me a sterner and deadlier thought—the scheme of the Avenger!—this Lilburne—this rogue whom the world sets up to worship—ruined, body and soul ruined—one whose name the world gibbets with scorn! Well, I

thought to avenge that man. In his own house—amidst you all—I thought to detect the sharper and brand the cheat!"

"You startle me! It has been whispered, indeed, that Lord Lilburne is dangerous,—but skill is dangerous. To cheat!—an English gentleman!—a nobleman! Impossible!"

"Whether he do or not," returned Vaudemont, in a calmer tone, "I have foregone the vengeance, because he is——"

"Is what?"

"No matter," said Vaudemont aloud, but he added to himself,—"Because he *is* the grandfather of Fanny!"

"You are very enigmatical to-day."

"Patience, Liancourt; I may solve all the riddles that make up my life, yet. Bear with me a little longer. And now can you help me to a lawyer?—a man experienced, indeed, and of repute, but young, active, not overladen with business;—I want his zeal and his time, for a hazard that your monopolists of clients may not deem worth their devotion."

"I can recommend you, then, the very man you require. I had a suit some years ago at Paris, for which English witnesses were necessary. My *avocat* employed a solicitor here whose activity in collecting my evidence gained my cause. I will answer for his diligence and his honesty."

"His address?"

"Mr Barlow—somewhere by the Strand—let me see—Essex—yes,—Essex Street."

"Then good-bye to you for the present.—You dine at Lord Lilburne's, too?"

"Yes. Adieu till then."

Vaudemont was not long before he arrived at Mr Barlow's; a brass-plate announced to him the house. He was shown at once into a parlour, where he saw a man whom lawyers would call young, and spinsters middle-aged—viz., about two-and-forty; with a bold, resolute, intelligent countenance, and that steady, calm, sagacious eye, which inspires at once confidence and esteem.

Vaudemont scanned him with the look of one who has been accustomed to judge mankind—as a scholar does books—with rapidity because with practice. He had at first resolved to submit to him the heads of his case without mentioning names, and, in fact, he so commenced his narrative; but by degrees, as he perceived how much his own earnestness arrested and engrossed the interest of his listener, he warmed into fuller confidence, and ended by a full disclosure, and a caution as to the profoundest secrecy, in case, if there were no hope to recover his rightful name, he might yet wish to retain, unannoyed by curiosity or suspicion, that by which he was not discreditably known.

"Sir," said Mr Barlow, after assuring him of the most scrupulous discretion,—"sir, I have some recollection of the trial instituted by your mother, Mrs *Beaufort*"—and the slight emphasis he laid on that name was the most grateful compliment he could have paid to the truth of Philip's recital. "My impression

is, that it was managed in a very slovenly manner by her lawyer; and some of his oversights we may repair in a suit instituted by yourself. But it would be absurd to conceal from you the great difficulties that beset us, —your mother's suit, designed to establish her own rights, was far easier than than which you must commence—viz., an action for ejectment against a man who has been some years in undisturbed possession. Of course, until the missing witness is found out, it would be madness to commence litigation. And the question, then, will be, how far that witness will suffice? It is true, that one witness of a marriage, if the others are dead, is held sufficient by law. But I need not add, that that witness must be thoroughly credible. In suits for real property, very little documentary or secondary evidence is admitted. I doubt even whether the certificate of the marriage on which—in the loss or destruction of the register—you lay so much stress, would be available in itself. But if *an examined copy*, it becomes of the last importance, for it will then inform us of the name of the person who extracted and examined it. Heaven grant it may not have been the clergyman himself who performed the ceremony, and who, you say, is dead; if some one else, we should then have a second, no doubt credible and most valuable, witness. The document would thus become available as proof, and I think that we should not fail to establish our case."

"But this certificate, how is it ever to be found? I told you we had searched everywhere in vain."

"True; but you say that your mother always declared that the late Mr Beaufort had so solemnly assured her, even just prior to his decease, that it was in existence, that I have no doubt as to the fact. It may be possible, but it is a terrible insinuation to make, that if Mr Robert Beaufort, in examining the papers of the deceased, chanced upon a document so important to him, he abstracted or destroyed it. If this should not have been the case (and Mr Robert Beaufort's moral character is unspotted—and we have no right to suppose it), the probability is, either that it was intrusted to some third person, or placed in some hidden drawer or deposit, the secret of which your father never disclosed. Who has purchased the house you lived in?"

"Fernside? Lord Lilburne, Mrs Robert Beaufort's brother."

"Humph!—probably, then, he took the furniture and all. Sir, this is a matter that requires some time for close consideration. With your leave I will not only insert in the London papers an advertisement to the effect that you suggested to Mr Roger Morton (in case you should have made a right conjecture as to the object of the man who applied to him), but I will also advertise for the witness himself. William Smith, you say, his name is. Did the lawyer employed by Mrs Beaufort send to inquire for him in the colony?"

"No; I fear there could not have been time for that. My mother was so anxious and eager, and so convinced of the justice of her case——"

"That's a pity; her lawyer must have been a sad driveller."

"Besides, now I remember, inquiry was made of his relations in England. His father, a farmer, was then alive; the answer was that he had certainly left Australia. His last letter, written two years before that date, containing a request for money, which the father, himself made a bankrupt by reverses, could not give, had stated that he was about to seek his fortune elsewhere—since then they had heard nothing of him."

"Ahem! Well, you will perhaps let me know where any relations of his are yet to be found, and I will look up the former suit, and go into the whole case without delay. In the mean time, you do right, sir—if you will allow me to say it—not to disclose either your own identity or a hint of your intentions. It is no use putting suspicion on its guard. And my search for this certificate must be managed with the greatest address. But, by the way, speaking of *identity*—there can be no difficulty, I hope, in proving yours?"

Philip was startled. "Why, I am greatly altered."

"But, probably, your beard and mustache may contribute to that change; and doubtless, in the village where you lived, there would be many with whom you were in sufficient intercourse, and on whose recollection, by recalling little anecdotes and circumstances with which no one but yourself could be acquainted, your features would force themselves, along with the

moral conviction that the man who spoke to them could be no other but Philip Morton—or rather Beaufort."

"You are right; there must be many such. There was not a cottage in the place where I and my dogs were not familiar and half domesticated."

"All's right, so far, then. But, I repeat, we must not be too sanguine. Law is not justice——"

"But *God* is," said Philip; and he left the room.

CHAPTER V.

> *Volpone.*—A little in a mist, but not dejected:
> Never—but still myself.
> BEN JONSON, *Volpone.*
>
> *Peregrine.*—Am I enough disguised?
> *Mer.*—Ay, I warrant you.
> *Per.*—Save you, fair lady.—*Ibid.*

IT is an ill wind that blows nobody good. The ill wind that had blown gout to Lord Lilburne had blown Lord Lilburne away from the injury he had meditated against what he called "the object of his attachment." How completely and entirely, indeed, the state of Lord Lilburne's feelings depended on the state of his health, may be seen in the answer he gave to his valet, when, the morning after the first attack of the gout, that worthy person, by way of cheering his master, proposed to ascertain something as to the movements of one with whom Lord Lilburne professed to be so violently in love,—"Confound you, Dykeman!" exclaimed the invalid—"why do you trouble me about women when I'm in this condition? I don't care if they were all at the bottom of the sea! Reach me the colchicum; I must keep my mind calm."

Whenever tolerably well, Lord Lilburne was care-

less of his health; the moment he was ill, Lord Lilburne paid himself the greatest possible attention. Though a man of firm nerves, in youth of remarkable daring, and still, though no longer rash, of sufficient personal courage, he was by no means fond of the thought of death—that is, of his *own* death. Not that he was tormented by any religious apprehensions of the Dread Unknown, but simply because the only life of which he had any experience seemed to him a peculiarly pleasant thing. He had a sort of instinctive persuasion that John Lord Lilburne would not be better off anywhere else. Always disliking solitude, he disliked it more than ever when he was ill, and he therefore welcomed the visit of his sister, and the gentle hand of his pretty niece. As for Beaufort, he bored the sufferer; and when that gentleman, on his arrival, shutting out his wife and daughter, whispered to Lilburne—"Any more news of that impostor?" Lilburne answered peevishly, "I never talk about business when I have the gout! I have set Sharp to keep a look-out for him, but he has learned nothing as yet. And now go to your club. You are a worthy creature, but too solemn for my spirits just at this moment. I have a few people coming to dine with me, your wife will do the honours, and—*you* can come in the evening."

Though Mr Robert Beaufort's sense of importance swelled and chafed at this very unceremonious *congé*, he forced a smile, and said—

"Well, it is no wonder you are a little fretful with

the gout. I have plenty to do in town, and Mrs Beaufort and Camilla can come back without waiting for me."

"Why, as your cook is ill, and they can't dine at a club, you may as well leave them here till I am a little better; not that I care, for I can hire a better nurse than either of them."

"My dear Lilburne, don't talk of hiring nurses: certainly, I am too happy if they can be of comfort to you."

"No! on second thoughts, you may take back your wife, she's always talking of her own complaints, and leave me Camilla; you can't want *her* for a few days."

"Just as you like. And you really think I have managed as well as I could about this young man—eh?"

"Yes—yes! And so you go to Beaufort Court in a few days?"

"I propose doing so. I wish you were well enough to come."

"Um! Chambers says that it would be a very good air for me—better than Fernside; and as to my castle in the north, I would as soon go to Siberia. Well, if I get better, I will pay you a visit, only you always have such a stupid set of respectable people about you. I shock them, and they oppress me."

"Why, as I hope soon to see Arthur, I shall make it as agreeable to him as I can, and I shall be very much obliged to you if you would invite a few of your own friends."

"Well, you are a good fellow, Beaufort, and I will take you at your word; and, since one good turn deserves another, I have now no scruple in telling you that I feel quite sure that you will have no further annoyance from this troublesome witness-monger."

"In that case," said Beaufort, "I may pick up a better match for Camilla! Good-bye, my dear Lilburne."

"Form and Ceremony of the world!" snarled the peer, as the door closed on his brother-in-law, "ye make little men very moral, and not a bit the better for being so!"

It so happened that Vaudemont arrived before any of the other guests that day, and during the half-hour which Dr Chambers assigned to his illustrious patient, so that, when he entered, there were only Mrs Beaufort and Camilla in the drawing-room.

Vaudemont drew back involuntarily, as he recognised in the faded countenance of the elder lady features associated with one of the dark passages in his earlier life; but Mrs Beaufort's gracious smile, and urbane, though languid welcome, sufficed to assure him that the recognition was not mutual. He advanced, and again stopped short, as his eye fell upon that fair and still childlike form, which had once knelt by his side and pleaded, with the orphan, for his brother. While he spoke to her, many recollections, some dark and stern—but those, at least, connected with Camilla, soft and gentle—thrilled through his heart. Occupied as her own thoughts and feelings necessarily

were with Sidney, there was something in Vaudemont's appearance, his manner, his voice, which forced upon Camilla a strange and undefined interest; and even Mrs Beaufort was roused from her customary apathy, as she glanced to that dark and commanding face with something between admiration and fear. Vaudemont had scarcely, however, spoken ten words, when some other guests were announced, and Lord Lilburne was wheeled in upon his sofa shortly afterwards. Vaudemont continued, however, seated next to Camilla, and the embarrassment he had at first felt disappeared. He possessed, when he pleased it, that kind of eloquence which belongs to men who have seen much and felt deeply, and whose talk has not been frittered down to the commonplace jargon of the world. His very phraseology was distinct and peculiar, and he had that rarest of all charms in polished life, originality both of thought and of manner. Camilla blushed when she found at dinner that he placed himself by her side. That evening De Vaudemont excused himself from playing, but the table was easily made without him, and still he continued to converse with the daughter of the man whom he held as his worst foe. By degrees, he turned the conversation into a channel that might lead him to the knowledge he sought.

"It was my fate," said he, "once to become acquainted with an intimate friend of the late Mr Beaufort. Will you pardon me if I venture to fulfil a promise I made to him, and ask you to inform me what has become of a—a—that is, of Sidney Morton?"

"Sidney Morton! I don't even remember the name. Oh, yes! I have heard it," added Camilla, innocently, and with a candour that showed how little she knew of the secrets of the family; "he was one of two poor boys in whom my brother felt a deep interest—some relations to my uncle. Yes—yes! I remember now. I never knew Sidney, but I once did see his brother."

"Indeed! and you remember——"

"Yes! I was very young then. I scarcely recollect what passed, it was all so confused and strange, but I know that I made papa very angry, and I was told never to mention the name of Morton again. I believe they behaved very ill to papa."

"And you never learned—never!—the fate of either—of Sidney?"

"Never!"

"But your father must know?"

"I think not; but tell me," said Camilla, with girlish and unaffected innocence, "I have always felt anxious to know—what and who were those poor boys?"

What and who were they? So deep, then, was the stain upon their name, that the modest mother and the decorous father had never even said to that young girl—"They are your cousins—the children of the man in whose gold we revel!"

Philip bit his lip, and the spell of Camilla's presence seemed vanished. He muttered some inaudible answer, turned away to the card-table, and Liancourt took the chair he had left vacant.

"And how does Miss Beaufort like my friend Vaudemont? I assure you that I have seldom seen him so alive to the fascination of female beauty!"

"Oh!" said Camilla, with her silver laugh, "your nation spoils us for our own countrymen. You forget how little we are accustomed to flattery."

"Flattery! what truth could flatter on the lips of an exile? But you don't answer my question—what think you of Vaudemont? Few are more admired. He is handsome!"

"Is he?" said Camilla, and she glanced at Vaudemont, as he stood at a little distance, thoughtful and abstracted. Every girl forms to herself some untold dream of that which she considers fairest. And Vaudemont had not the delicate and faultless beauty of Sidney. There was nothing that corresponded to her ideal in his marked features and lordly shape! But she owned, reluctantly to herself, that she had seldom seen, among the trim gallants of everyday life, a form so striking and impressive. The air, indeed, was professional—the most careless glance could detect the soldier. But it seemed the soldier of an elder age or a wilder clime. He recalled to her those heads which she had seen in the Beaufort Gallery and other collections yet more celebrated—portraits by Titian of those warrior statesmen who lived in the old republics of Italy in a perpetual struggle with their kind—images of dark, resolute, earnest men. Even whatever was intellectual in his countenance spoke, as in those portraits, of a mind sharpened rather in active than in

studious life;—intellectual, not from the pale hues, the worn exhaustion, and the sunken cheek of the bookman and dreamer, but from its collected and stern repose, the calm depth that lay beneath the fire of the eyes, and the strong will that spoke in the close full lips, and the high but not cloudless forehead.

And, as she gazed, Vaudement turned round—her eyes fell beneath his, and she felt angry with herself that she blushed. Vaudemont saw the downcast eye, he saw the blush, and the attraction of Camilla's presence was restored. He would have approached her, but at that moment Mr Beaufort himself entered, and his thoughts went again into a darker channel.

"Yes," said Liancourt, "you must allow Vaudemont looks what he is—a noble fellow and a gallant soldier. Did you never hear of his battle with the tigress? It made a noise in India. I must tell it you as I have heard it."

And while Liancourt was narrating the adventure, whatever it was, to which he referred, the card-table was broken up, and Lord Lilburne, still reclining on his sofa, lazily introduced his brother-in-law to such of the guests as were strangers to him—Vaudemont among the rest. Mr Beaufort had never seen Philip Morton more than three times; once at Fernside, and the other times by an imperfect light, and when his features were convulsed by passion, and his form disfigured by his dress. Certainly, therefore, had Robert Beaufort even possessed that faculty of memory which is supposed to belong peculiarly to kings and princes, and which re-

calls every face once seen, it might have tasked the gift to the utmost to have detected, in the bronzed and decorated foreigner to whom he was now presented, the features of the wild and long-lost boy. But still some dim and uneasy presentiment, or some struggling and painful effort of recollection, was in his mind, as he spoke to Vaudemont, and listened to the cold, calm tone of his reply.

"Who do you say that Frenchman is?" he whispered to his brother-in-law, as Vaudemont turned away.

"Oh! a cleverish sort of adventurer—a gentleman;—he plays. He has seen a good deal of the world—he rather amuses me—different from other people. I think of asking him to join our circle at Beaufort Court."

Mr Beaufort coughed huskily, but not seeing any reasonable objection to the proposal, and afraid of rousing the sleeping hyæna of Lord Lilburne's sarcasm, he merely said,—

"Any one you like to invite:" and looking round for some one on whom to vent his displeasure, perceived Camilla still listening to Liancourt. He stalked up to her, and, as Liancourt, seeing her rise, rose also and moved away, he said peevishly, "You will never learn to conduct yourself properly; you are to be left here to nurse and comfort your uncle, and not to listen to the gibberish of every French adventurer. Well, Heaven be praised, I have a son!—girls are a great plague!"

"So they are, Mr Beaufort," sighed his wife, who had just joined him, and who was jealous of the preference Lilburne had given to her daughter.

"And so selfish," added Mrs Beaufort; "they only care for their own amusements, and never mind how uncomfortable their parents are for want of them."

"Oh! dear mamma, don't say so—let me go home with you—I'll speak to my uncle!"

"Nonsense, child!—Come along, Mr Beaufort;" and the affectionate parents went out arm in arm. They did not perceive that Vaudemont had been standing close behind them; but Camilla, now looking up with tears in her eyes, again caught his gaze: he had heard all.

"And they ill-treat her," he muttered: "*that divides her from them!*—she will be left here—I shall see her again."

As he turned to depart, Lilburne beckoned to him.

"You do not mean to desert our table?"

"No; but I am not very well to-night—to-morrow, if you will allow me."

"Ay, to-morrow; and if you can spare an hour in the morning it will be a charity. You see," he added in a whisper, "I have a nurse, though I have no children. D'ye think that's love? Bah! sir—a legacy! Good night."

"No—no—no!" said Vaudemont to himself, as he walked through the moonlight streets. "No! though my heart burns,—poor murdered felon!—to avenge thy wrongs and thy crimes, revenge cannot come from me—he is Fanny's grandfather, and—*Camilla's uncle!*"

And Camilla, when that uncle had dismissed her for the night, sat down thoughtfully in her own room.

The dark eyes of Vaudemont seemed still to shine on her; his voice yet rung in her ear; the wild tales of daring and danger with which Liancourt had associated his name, yet haunted her bewildered fancy — she started, frightened at her own thoughts. She took from her bosom some lines that Sidney had addressed to her, and, as she read and re-read, her spirit became calmed to its wonted and faithful melancholy. Vaudemont was forgotten, and the name of Sidney yet murmured on her lips, when sleep came to renew the image of the absent one, and paint in dreams the fairy land of a happy Future!

CHAPTER VI.

Ring on, ye bells—most pleasant is your chime!
WILSON, *Isle of Palms.*

O fairy child! What can I wish for thee?—*Ibid.*

VAUDEMONT remained six days in London without going to H——, and each of those days he paid a visit to Lord Lilburne. On the seventh day, the invalid being much better, though still unable to leave his room, Camilla returned to Berkeley Square. On the same day, Vaudemont went once more to see Simon and poor Fanny.

As he approached the door, he heard from the window, partially opened, for the day was clear and fine, Fanny's sweet voice. She was chanting one of the simple songs she had promised to learn by heart; and Vaudemont, though but a poor judge of the art, was struck and affected by the music of the voice and the earnest depth of the feeling. He paused opposite the window and called her by her name. Fanny looked forth joyously, and ran, as usual, to open the door to him.

"Oh! you have been so long away; but I already

know many of the songs: they say so much that I always wanted to say!"

Vaudemont smiled, but languidly.

"How strange it is," said Fanny, musingly, "that there should be so much in a piece of paper! for, after all," pointing to the open page of her book, "this *is* but a piece of paper,—only there is life in it!"

"Ay," said Vaudemont, gloomily, and far from seizing the subtle delicacy of Fanny's thought—*her* mind dwelling upon Poetry and *his* upon Law,—"ay, and do you know that upon a mere scrap of paper, if I could but find it, may depend my whole fortune, my whole happiness, all that I care for in life?"

"Upon a scrap of paper? Oh! how I wish I could find it! Ah! you look as if you thought I should never be wise enough for that!"

Vaudemont, not listening to her, uttered a deep sigh. Fanny approached him timidly.

"Do not sigh, brother—I can't bear to hear you sigh. You are changed. Have *you*, too, not been happy?"

"Happy, Fanny! yes, lately very happy — too happy!"

"Happy, have you? and *I*——" the girl stopped short—her tone had been that of sadness and reproach, and she stopped—why she knew not, but she felt her heart sink within her. Fanny suffered him to pass her, and he went straight to his own room. Her eyes followed him wistfully: it was not his habit to leave her thus abruptly. The family meal of the day was

over; and it was an hour before Vaudemont descended to the parlour. Fanny had put aside the songs, she had no heart to recommence those gentle studies that had been so sweet—they had drawn no pleasure, no praise from him. She was seated idly and listlessly beside the silent old man, who every day grew more and more silent still. She turned her head as Vaudemont entered, and her pretty lip pouted as that of a neglected child. But he did not heed it, and the pout vanished, and tears rushed to her eyes.

Vaudemont *was* changed. His countenance was thoughtful and overcast—his manner abstracted. He addressed a few words to Simon, and then, seating himself by the window, leant his cheek on his hand, and was soon lost in reverie. Fanny, finding that he did not speak, and after stealing many a long and earnest glance at his motionless attitude and gloomy brow, rose gently, and, gliding to him with her light step, said, in a trembling voice—

"Are you in pain, brother?"

"No, pretty one!"

"Then why won't you speak to Fanny? Will you not walk with her? Perhaps my grandfather will come, too."

"Not this evening. I shall go out; but it will be alone."

"Where? has not Fanny been good? I have not been out since you left us. And the grave—brother! —I sent Sarah with the flowers—but——"

Vaudemont rose abruptly. The mention of the grave

brought back his thoughts from the dreaming channel into which they had flowed. Fanny, whose very childishness had once so soothed him, now disturbed; he felt the want of that complete solitude which makes the atmosphere of growing passion: he muttered some scarcely audible excuse, and quitted the house. Fanny saw him no more that evening. He did not return till midnight. But Fanny did not sleep till she heard his step on the stairs, and his chamber-door close: and when she did sleep, her dreams were disturbed and painful. The next morning, when they met at breakfast (for Vaudemont did not return to London), her eyes were red and heavy, and her cheek pale. And, still buried in meditation, Vaudemont's eye, usually so kind and watchful, did not detect those signs of a grief that Fanny could not have explained. After breakfast, however, he asked her to walk out; and her face brightened as she hastened to put on her bonnet, and take her little basket, full of fresh flowers, which she had already sent Sarah forth to purchase.

"Fanny," said Vaudemont, as leaving the house, he saw the basket on her arm, "to-day you may place some of those flowers on *another* tombstone! Poor child, what natural goodness there is in that heart!—what pity that——"

He paused. Fanny looked delightedly in his face.

"You were praising me—*you!*—And what is a pity, brother?"

While she spoke, the sound of the joy-bells was heard near at hand.

"Hark!" said Vaudemont, forgetting her question —and almost gaily—"hark!—I accept the omen. It is a marriage peal!"

He quickened his steps, and they reached the churchyard.

There was a crowd already assembled, and Vaudemont and Fanny paused, and, leaning over the little gate, looked on.

"Why are these people here, and why does the bell ring so merrily?"

"There is to be a wedding, Fanny."

"I have heard of a wedding very often," said Fanny, with a pretty look of puzzlement and doubt, "but I don't know exactly what it means. Will you tell me? —and the bells, too?"

"Yes, Fanny, those bells toll but three times for man! The first time, when he comes into the world; the last time, when he leaves it; the time between, when he takes to his side a partner in all the sorrows —in all the joys that yet remain to him: and who, even when the last bell announces his death to this earth, may yet, for ever and ever, be his partner in that world to come—that Heaven, where they who are as innocent as you, Fanny, may hope to live and to love each other in a land in which there are no graves!"

"And *this* bell?"

"Tolls for that partnership—for the wedding!"

"I think I understand you;—and they who are to be wed are happy?"

"Happy, Fanny, if they love, and their love con-

tinue. Oh! conceive the happiness to know some one person dearer to you than your own self—some one breast into which you can pour every thought, every grief, every joy! One person, who, if all the rest of the world were to calumniate or forsake you, would never wrong you by a harsh thought or an unjust word—who would cling to you the closer in sickness, in poverty, in care—who would sacrifice all things to you, and for whom you would sacrifice all—from whom, except by death, night or day, you may be never divided—whose smile is ever at your hearth—who has no tears while you are well and happy, and your love the same. Fanny, such is marriage, if they who marry have hearts and souls to feel that there is no bond on earth so tender and so sublime. There is an opposite picture;—I will not draw *that!*—And as it is, Fanny, you cannot understand me!"

He turned away:—and Fanny's tears were falling like rain upon the grass below;—he did not see them! He entered the churchyard; for the bell now ceased. The ceremony was to begin. He followed the bridal party into the church, and Fanny, lowering her veil, crept after him, awed and trembling.

They stood, unobserved, at a little distance, and heard the service.

The betrothed were of the middle class of life, young, both comely; and their behaviour was such as suited the reverence and sanctity of the rite. Vaudemont stood, looking on intently, with his arms folded

on his breast. Fanny leant behind him, and apart from all, against one of the pews. And still in her hand, while the priest was solemnising marriage, she held the flowers intended for the grave. Even to *that* MORNING—hushed, calm, earnest, with her mysterious and unconjectured heart—her shape brought a thought of NIGHT !

When the ceremony was over—when the bride fell on her mother's breast, and wept ; and then, when turning thence, her eyes met the bridegroom's, and the tears were all smiled away—when, in that one rapid interchange of looks, spoke all that holy love can speak to love, and with timid frankness she placed her hand in his to whom she had just vowed her life—a thrill went through the hearts of those present. Vaudemont sighed heavily. He heard his sigh echoed, but by one that had in its sound no breath of pain ; he turned ; Fanny had raised her veil ; her eyes met his, moistened, but bright, soft, and her cheeks were rosy-red. Vaudemont recoiled before that gaze, and turned from the church. The persons interested retired to the vestry to sign their names in the registry ; the crowd dispersed, and Vaudemont and Fanny stood alone in the burial-ground.

"Look, Fanny," said the former, pointing to a tomb that stood far from his mother's (for *those* ashes were too hallowed for such a neighbourhood). "Look yonder ; it is a new tomb, Fanny, let us approach it. Can you read what is there inscribed ?"

The inscription was simply this :—

To W— G—.

MAN SEES THE DEED—
GOD THE CIRCUMSTANCE.
JUDGE NOT, THAT YE BE NOT JUDGED.

"Fanny, this tomb fulfils your pious wish : it is to the memory of him whom you called your father. Whatever was his life here—whatever sentence it hath received, Heaven, at least, will not condemn *your* piety, if you honour one who was good to *you*, and place flowers, however idle, even over that grave."

"It is his—my father's—and you have thought of this for me !" said Fanny, taking his hand, and sobbing. "And I have been thinking that you were not so kind to me as you were !"

"Have I not been so kind to you? nay, forgive me, I am not happy."

"Not?—you said yesterday you had been *too* happy."

"To remember happiness is not to be happy, Fanny."

"That's true—and——"

Fanny stopped ; and, as she bent over the tomb musing, Vaudemont—willing to leave her undisturbed, and feeling bitterly how little his conscience could vindicate, though it might find palliation for, the dark man who slept *not* there—retired a few paces.

At this time the new-married pair, with their witnesses, the clergyman, &c., came from the vestry, and crossed the path. Fanny, as she turned from the tomb, saw them, and stood still, looking earnestly at the bride.

"What a lovely face!" said the mother. "Is it—yes it is—the poor idiot girl."

"Ah!" said the bridegroom, tenderly, "and she, Mary, beautiful as she is, *she* can never make another as happy as you have made me."

Vaudemont heard, and his heart felt sad. "Poor Fanny!—And yet, but for that affliction, *I* might have loved her, ere I met the fatal face of the daughter of my foe!" And with a deep compassion, an inexpressible and holy fondness, he moved to Fanny.

"Come, my child; now let us go home."

"Stay," said Fanny—"you forget." And she went to strew the flowers still left over Catherine's grave.

"Will my mother," thought Vaudemont, "forgive me, if I have other thoughts than hate and vengeance for that house which builds its greatness over her slandered name?" He groaned:—and that grave had lost its melancholy charm.

CHAPTER VII.

> Of all men, I say,
> That dare, for 'tis a desperate adventure,
> Wear on their free necks the yoke of women,
> Give me a soldier.—*Knight of Malta.*

> So lightly doth this little boat
> Upon the scarce-touched billows float;
> So careless doth she seem to be,
> Thus left by herself on the homeless sea,
> To lie there with her cheerful sail,
> Till heaven shall send some gracious gale.
> WILSON, *Isle of Palms.*

VAUDEMONT returned that evening to London, and found at his lodgings a note from Lord Lilburne, stating that as his gout was now somewhat mitigated, his physician had recommended him to try change of air—that Beaufort Court was in one of the western counties, in a genial climate—that he was therefore going thither the next day for a short time—that he had asked some of Monsieur de Vaudemont's countrymen, and a few other friends, to enliven the circle of a dull country-house—that Mr and Mrs Beaufort would be delighted to see Monsieur de Vaudemont also—and that his compliance with their invitation would be a charity to Monsieur de Vaudemont's faithful and obliged LILBURNE.

The first sensation of Vaudemont on reading this effusion was delight. "I shall see *her*," he cried; "I shall be under the same roof!" But the glow faded at once from his cheek.—The roof!—what roof? Be the guest where he held himself the lord!—be the guest of Robert Beaufort!—Was that all? Did he not meditate the deadliest war which civilised life admits of—the *War of Law*—war for name, property, that very hearth, with all its household gods, against this man—could he receive his hospitality? "And what then?" he exclaimed, as he paced to and fro the room, —"because her father wronged me, and because I would claim mine own, must I therefore exclude from my thoughts, from my sight, an image so fair and gentle—the one who knelt by my side, an infant, to that hard man? Is Hate so noble a passion that it is not to admit one glimpse of Love?—*Love!* what word is that? Let me beware in time!" He paused in fierce self-contest, and, throwing open the window, gasped for air. The street in which he lodged was situated in the neighbourhood of St James's; and, at that very moment, as if to defeat all opposition, and to close the struggle, Mrs Beaufort's barouche drove by, Camilla at her side. Mrs Beaufort, glancing up, languidly bowed; and Camilla herself perceived him, and he saw her change colour as she inclined her head. He gazed after them almost breathless, till the carriage disappeared; and then, reclosing the window, he sat down to collect his thoughts, and again to reason with himself. But still, as he reasoned, he saw ever before him

that blush and that smile. At last he sprang up, and a noble and bright expression elevated the character of his face,—" Yes, if I enter that house, if I eat that man's bread and drink of his cup, I must forego, not justice—not what is due to my mother's name—but whatever belongs to hate and vengeance. If I enter that house, and if Providence permit me the means whereby to regain my rights, why, she—the innocent one—*she* may be the means of saving her father from ruin, and stand like an angel by that boundary where justice runs into revenge!—Besides, is it not my duty to discover Sidney? Here is the only clue I shall obtain." With these thoughts, he hesitated no more—he decided: he would not reject this hospitality, since it might be in his power to pay it back ten thousand-fold. "And who knows," he murmured again, "if Heaven, in throwing this sweet being in my way, might not have designed to subdue and chasten in me the angry passions I have so long fed on? I have seen her,—can I *now* hate her father?"

He sent off his note accepting the invitation. When he had done so, was he satisfied? He had taken as noble and as large a view of the duties thereby imposed on him as he well could take; but something whispered at his heart, "There is weakness in thy generosity—Darest thou love the daughter of Robert Beaufort?" And his heart had no answer to this voice.

The rapidity with which love is ripened depends less upon the actual number of years that have passed over the soil in which the seed is cast, than upon the fresh-

ness of the soil itself. A young man who lives the ordinary life of the world, and who fritters away rather than exhausts his feelings upon a variety of quick succeeding subjects—the Cynthias of the minute—is not apt to form a real passion at the first sight. Youth is inflammable only when the *heart* is young.

There are certain times of life when, in either sex, the affections are prepared, as it were, to be impressed with the first fair face that attracts the fancy and delights the eye. Such times are when the heart has been long solitary, and when some interval of idleness and rest succeeds to periods of harsher and more turbulent excitement. It was precisely such a period in the life of Vaudemont. Although his ambition had been for many years his dream, and his sword his mistress, yet, naturally affectionate, and susceptible of strong emotion, he had often repined at his lonely lot. By degrees, the boy's fantasy and reverence which had wound themselves round the image of Eugénie, subsided into that gentle and tender melancholy which, perhaps, by weakening the strength of the sterner thoughts, leaves us inclined rather to receive than to resist a new attachment;—and on the verge of the sweet Memory trembles the sweet Hope. The suspension of his profession, his schemes, his struggles, his career, left his passions unemployed. Vaudemont was thus unconsciously prepared to love. As we have seen, his first and earliest feelings directed themselves to Fanny. But he had so immediately detected the danger, and so immediately recoiled from nursing those

thoughts and fancies, without which love dies for want of food, for a person to whom he ascribed the affliction of an imbecility which would give to such a sentiment all the attributes either of the weakest rashness or of dishonour approaching to sacrilege—that the wings of the deity were scared away the instant their very shadow fell upon his mind. And thus, when Camilla rose upon him, his heart was free to receive her image. Her graces, her accomplishments, a certain nameless charm that invested her, pleased him even more than her beauty; the recollections connected with that first time in which he had ever beheld her were also grateful and endearing; the harshness with which her parents spoke to her moved his compassion, and addressed itself to a temper peculiarly alive to the generosity that leans towards the weak and the wronged; the engaging mixture of mildness and gaiety with which she tended her peevish and sneering uncle, convinced him of her better and more enduring qualities of disposition and womanly heart. And even—so strange and contradictory are our feelings—the very remembrance that she was connected with a family so hateful to him made her own image the more bright from the darkness that surrounded it. For was it not with the daughter of his foe that the lover of Verona fell in love at first sight? And is not *that* a common type of us all—as if Passion delighted in contradictions? As the Diver, in Schiller's exquisite ballad, fastened upon the rock of coral in the midst of the gloomy sea, so we cling the more gratefully to whatever of fair thought

and gentle shelter smiles out to us in the depths of Hate and Strife.

But, perhaps, Vaudemont would not so suddenly and so utterly have rendered himself to a passion that began, already, completely to master his strong spirit, if he had not, from Camilla's embarrassment, her timidity, her blushes, intoxicated himself with the belief that his feelings were not unshared. And who knows not that such a belief, once cherished, ripens our own love to a development in which hours are as years?

It was, then, with such emotions as made him almost insensible to every thought but the luxury of breathing the same air as his cousin, which swept from his mind the Past, the Future—leaving nothing but a joyous, a breathless PRESENT on the Face of Time—that he repaired to Beaufort Court. He did not return to H—— before he went, but he wrote to Fanny a short and hurried line to explain that he might be absent for some days at least, and promised to write again, if he should be detained longer than he anticipated.

In the meanwhile, one of those successive revolutions which had marked the eras in Fanny's moral existence, took its date from that last time they had walked and conversed together.

The very evening of that day, some hours after Philip was gone, and after Simon had retired to rest, Fanny was sitting before the dying fire in the little parlour in an attitude of deep and pensive reverie. The old woman-servant, Sarah, who, very different from Mrs Boxer, loved Fanny with her whole heart, came into

the room, as was her wont before going to bed, to see that the fire was duly out, and all safe: and as she approached the hearth, she started to see Fanny still up.

"Dear heart alive!" she said: "why, Miss Fanny, you will catch your death of cold,—what are you thinking about?"

"Sit down, Sarah; I want to speak to you." Now, though Fanny was exceedingly kind and attached to Sarah, she was seldom communicative to her, or indeed to any one. It was usually in its own silence and darkness that that lovely mind worked out its own doubts.

"Do you, my sweet young lady? I'm sure anything I can do——" and Sarah seated herself in her master's great chair, and drew it close to Fanny. There was no light in the room but the expiring fire, and it threw upward a pale glimmer on the two faces bending over it,—the one so strangely beautiful, so smooth, so blooming, so exquisite in its youth and innocence—the other withered, wrinkled, meagre, and astute. It was like the Fairy and the Witch together.

"Well, miss," said the crone, observing that, after a considerable pause, Fanny was still silent—"well——"

"Sarah, I have seen a wedding!"

"Have you?" and the old woman laughed. "Oh! I heard it was to be to-day!—young Waldron's wedding!—Yes, they have been long sweethearts."

"Were you ever married, Sarah?"

"Lord bless you—yes! and a very good husband I had, poor man! But he's dead these many years; and

if you had not taken me, I must have gone to the workhus."

"He is dead!—Wasn't it very hard to live after that, Sarah?"

"The Lord strengthens the hearts of widders!" observed Sarah, sanctimoniously.

"Did you marry your brother, Sarah?" said Fanny, playing with the corner of her apron.

"My brother!" exclaimed the old woman, aghast. "La! miss, you must not talk in that way—it's quite wicked and heathenish! One must not marry one's brother!"

"No!" said Fanny, trembling, and turning very pale, even by that light. "No!—are you sure of that?"

"It is the wickedest thing even to talk about, my dear young mistress;—but you're like a babby unborn!"

Fanny was silent for some moments. At length she said, unconscious that she was speaking aloud, "But he is *not* my brother, after all!"

"Oh, miss, fie!—Are you letting your pretty head run on the handsome gentleman?—*You*, too—dear, dear! I see we're all alike, we poor femel creturs!—You! who'd have thought it? Oh, Miss Fanny!—you'll break your heart if you goes for to fancy any such thing."

"Any what thing?"

"Why, that that gentleman will marry you!—I'm sure, thof he's so simple like, he's some great gentleman! They say his hoss is worth a hundred pounds!

Dear, dear! why didn't I ever think of this before? He must be a very wicked man. I see, now, why he comes here. I'll speak to him, *that* I will!—a *very* wicked man!"

Sarah was startled from her indignation by Fanny's rising suddenly and standing before her in the flickering twilight, almost like a shape transformed,—so tall did she seem, so stately, so dignified.

"Is it of *him* that you are speaking?" said she, in a voice of calm but deep resentment—"of him!—If so, Sarah, we two can live no more in the same house."

And these words were said with a propriety and collectedness that even, through all her terror, showed at once to Sarah how much they now wronged Fanny who had suffered their lips to repeat the parrot-cry of the "idiot girl!"

"O! gracious me!—miss—ma'am—I am so sorry—I'd rather bite out my tongue than say a word to offend you; it was only my love for you, dear innocent creature that you are!" and the honest woman sobbed with real passion as she clasped Fanny's hand. "There have been so many young persons, good and harmless, yes, even as you are, ruined. But you don't understand me. Miss Fanny! hear me; I must try and say what I would say. That man, that gentleman—so proud, so well-dressed, so grandlike, will never marry *you*, never—never. And if ever he says he does love you, and you say you loves him, and you two *don't* marry, you will be ruined and wicked, and die—die of a broken heart!"

The earnestness of Sarah's manner subdued and almost awed Fanny. She sunk down again in her chair, and suffered the old woman to caress and weep over her hand for some moments, in a silence that concealed the darkest and most agitated feelings Fanny's life had hitherto known. At length, she said—

"Why may he not marry me if he loves me?—he is not my brother,—indeed he is not! I'll never call him so again."

"He cannot marry you," said Sarah, resolved, with a sort of rude nobleness, to persevere in what she felt to be a duty; "I don't say anything about money, because that does not always signify. But he cannot marry you, because—because people who are hedicated one way never marry those who are hedicated and brought up in another. A gentleman of that kind requires a wife to know—oh—to know ever so much; and *you*——"

"Sarah," interrupted Fanny, rising again, but this time with a smile on her face, "don't say anything more about it; I forgive you, if you promise never to speak unkindly of him again—never—never—never, Sarah!"

"But may I just tell him that—that——"

"That what?"

"That you are so young and innocent, and has no pertector like; and that if you were to love him it would be a shame in him—that it would!"

And then (oh! no, Fanny, there was nothing clouded

now in your reason!)—and then the woman's alarm, the modesty, the instinct, the terror came upon her;—

"Never! never! I will not love him,—I do not love him, indeed, Sarah. If you speak to him, I will never look you in the face again. It is all past—all, dear Sarah!"

She kissed the old woman; and Sarah, fancying that her sagacity and counsel had prevailed, promised all she was asked; so they went up-stairs together—friends.

CHAPTER VIII.

> As the wind
> Sobs, an uncertain sweetness comes from out
> The orange-trees.
> . . . .
> Rise up, Olympia.—She sleeps soundly. Ho!
> Stirring at last.—BARRY CORNWALL.

THE next day Fanny was seen by Sarah counting the little hoard that she had so long and so painfully saved for her benefactor's tomb. The money was no longer wanted for *that* object. Fanny had found another; she said nothing to Sarah or to Simon. But there was a strange complacent smile upon her lip, as she busied herself in her work, that puzzled the old woman. Late at noon came the postman's unwonted knock at the door. A letter! — a letter for Miss Fanny. A letter!—the first she had ever received in her life! And it was from *him!*—and it began with "Dear Fanny." Vaudemont had called her "dear Fanny" a hundred times, and the expression had become a matter of course. But "Dear Fanny" seemed so very different when it was *written.* The letter could not well be shorter, nor, all things considered, colder. But the girl found no fault with it. It began with "Dear Fanny," and it ended with "yours truly."

"Yours truly—*mine* truly—and how kind to write at all!" Now it so happened that Vaudemont, having never merged the art of the penman into that rapid scrawl into which people, who are compelled to write hurriedly and constantly, degenerate, wrote a remarkably good hand,—bold, clear, symmetrical—almost too good a hand for one who was not to make money by caligraphy. And after Fanny had got the words by heart, she stole gently to a cupboard and took forth some specimens of her own hand, in the shape of house and work memoranda, and extracts which, the better to help her memory, she had made from the poem-book Vaudemont had given her. She gravely laid his letter by the side of these specimens, and blushed at the contrast; yet, after all, her own writing, though trembling and irresolute, was far from a bad or vulgar hand. But emulation was now fairly roused within her. Vaudemont, preoccupied by more engrossing thoughts, and, indeed, forgetting a danger which had seemed so thoroughly to have passed away, did not in his letter caution Fanny against going out alone. She remarked this; and having completely recovered her own alarm at the attempt that had been made on her liberty, she thought she was now released from her promise to guard against a past and imaginary peril. So after dinner she slipped out alone, and went to the mistress of the school where she had received her elementary education. She had ever since continued her acquaintance with that lady, who, kindhearted, and touched by her situation, often employed

her industry, and was far from blind to the improvement that had for some time been silently working in the mind of her old pupil.

Fanny had a long conversation with this lady, and she brought back a bundle of books. The light might have been seen that night, and many nights after, burning long and late from her little window. And having recovered her old freedom of habits—which Simon, poor man, did not notice, and which Sarah, thinking that anything was better than moping at home, did not remonstrate against—Fanny went out regularly for two hours, or sometimes for even a longer period, every evening after old Simon had composed himself to the nap that filled up the interval between dinner and tea.

In a very short time—a time that with ordinary stimulants would have seemed marvellously short—Fanny's handwriting was not the same thing; her manner of talking became different; she no longer called herself "Fanny" when she spoke; the music of her voice was more quiet and settled; her sweet expression of face was more thoughtful; the eyes seemed to have deepened in their very colour; she was no longer heard chanting to herself as she tripped along. The books that she nightly fed on had passed into her mind; the poetry that had ever unconsciously sported round her young years began now to create poetry in herself. Nay, it might almost have seemed as if that restless disorder of the intellect, which the dullards had called Idiocy, had been the wild efforts,

not of Folly, but of GENIUS seeking to find its path and outlet from the cold and dreary solitude to which the circumstances of her early life had compelled it.

Days, even weeks, passed—she never spoke of Vaudemont. And once, when Sarah, astonished and bewildered by the change in her young mistress, asked,—

"When does the gentleman come back?"

Fanny answered, with a mysterious smile, "Not yet, I *hope*—not quite yet!"

CHAPTER IX.

Thierry.—I do begin
To feel an alteration in my nature,
And in his full-sailed confidence a shower
Of gentle rain, that falling on the fire
Hath quenched it.

. . . .

How is my heart divided
Between the duty of a son and love!

BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER, *Thierry and Theodoret.*

VAUDEMONT had now been a month at Beaufort Court. The scene of a country-house, with the sports that enliven it, and the accomplishments it calls forth, was one in which he was well fitted to shine. He had been an excellent shot as a boy; and, though long unused to the fowling-piece, had, in India, acquired a deadly precision with the rifle; so that a very few days of practice in the stubbles and covers of Beaufort Court made his skill the theme of the guests and the admiration of the keepers. Hunting began, and — this pursuit, always so strong a passion in the active man, and which, to the turbulence and agitation of his half-tamed breast, now excited by a kind of frenzy of hope and fear, gave a vent and release—was a sport in which he was yet more fitted to excel. His horsemanship, his daring, the

stone walls he leaped, and the floods through which he dashed, furnished his companions with wondering tale and comment on their return home. Mr Marsden, who, with some other of Arthur's early friends, had been invited to Beaufort Court, in order to welcome its expected heir, and who retained all the prudence which had distinguished him of yore, when having ridden over old Simon, he dismounted to examine the knees of his horse;—Mr Marsden, a skilful huntsman, who rode the most experienced horses in the world, and who generally contrived to be in at the death, without having leaped over anything higher than a hurdle, suffering the bolder quadruped (in case what is called the "knowledge of the country"—that is, the knowledge of gaps and gates—failed him) to perform the more dangerous feats alone, as he quietly scrambled over, or scrambled through, upon foot, and remounted the well-taught animal when it halted after the exploit, safe and sound;—Mr Marsden declared that he never saw a rider with so little judgment as Monsieur de Vaudemont, and that the devil was certainly in him.

This sort of reputation, commonplace and merely physical as it was in itself, had a certain effect upon Camilla; it might be an effect of fear. I do not say, for I do not know, what her feelings towards Vaudemont exactly were. As the calmest natures are often those the most hurried away by their contraries, so, perhaps, he awed and dazzled rather than pleased her;—at least, he certainly forced himself on her interest.

Still she would have started in terror if any one had said to her, "Do you love your betrothed less than when you met by that happy lake?"—and her heart would have indignantly rebuked the questioner. The letters of her lover were still long and frequent; hers were briefer and more subdued. But then there was constraint in the correspondence—it was submitted to her mother.

Whatever might be Vaudemont's manner to Camilla whenever occasion threw them alone together, he certainly did not make his attentions glaring enough to be remarked. His eye watched her rather than his lip addressed; he kept as much aloof as possible from the rest of her family, and his customary bearing was silent even to gloom. But there were moments when he indulged in a fitful exuberance of spirits, which had something strained and unnatural. He had outlived Lord Lilburne's short liking; for since he had resolved no longer to keep watch on that noble gamester's method of play, he played but little himself; and Lord Lilburne saw that he had no chance of ruining him — there was, therefore, no longer any reason to like him. But this was not all; when Vaudemont had been at the house somewhat more than two weeks, Lilburne, petulant and impatient, whether at his refusals to join the card-table, or at the moderation with which, when he did, he confined his ill-luck to petty losses, one day limped up to him, as he stood at the embrasure of the window, gazing on the wide lands beyond, and said,—

"Vaudemont, you are bolder in hunting, they tell me, than you are at whist."

"Honours don't tell against one—over a hedge!"

"What do you mean?" said Lilburne, rather haughtily.

Vaudemont was, at that moment, in one of those bitter moods when the sense of his situation, the sight of the usurper in his home, often swept away the gentler thoughts inspired by his fatal passion. And the tone of Lord Lilburne, and his loathing to the man, were too much for his temper.

"Lord Lilburne," he said, and his lip curled, "if you had been born poor, you would have made a great fortune—you play luckily."

"How am I to take this, sir?"

"As you please," answered Vaudemont, calmly, but with an eye of fire. And he turned away.

Lilburne remained on the spot very thoughtful—"Hum! he suspects me. I cannot quarrel on such ground—the suspicion itself dishonours me—I must seek another."

The next day, Lilburne, who was familiar with Mr Marsden (though the latter gentleman never played at the same table), asked that prudent person after breakfast, if he happened to have his pistols with him.

"Yes; I always take them into the country—one may as well practise when one has the opportunity. Besides, sportsmen are often quarrelsome; and if it is known that one shoots well,—it keeps one out of quarrels!"

"Very true," said Lilburne, rather admiringly; "I have made the same remark myself when I was younger. I have not shot with a pistol for some years. I am well enough now to walk out with the help of a stick. Suppose we practise for half an hour or so."

"With all my heart," said Mr Marsden.

The pistols were brought, and they strolled forth; Lord Lilburne found his hand out.

"As I never hunt now," said the peer, and he gnashed his teeth, and glanced at his maimed limb; "for though lameness would not prevent my keeping my seat, violent exercise hurts my leg; and Brodie says any fresh accident might bring on tic douloureux:—and as my gout does not permit me to join the shooting-parties at present, it would be a kindness in you to lend me your pistols—it would while away an hour or so; though, thank Heaven, my duelling days are over!"

"Certainly," said Mr Marsden; and the pistols were consigned to Lord Lilburne.

Four days from the date, as Mr Marsden, Vaudemont, and some other gentlemen, were making for the covers, they came upon Lord Lilburne, who, in a part of the park not within sight or sound of the house, was amusing himself with Mr Marsden's pistols, which Dykeman was at hand to load for him. He turned round, not at all disconcerted by the interruption.

"You have no idea how I'm improved, Marsden:—just see!" and he pointed to a glove nailed to a tree. "I've hit that mark twice in five times; and every

time I have gone straight enough along the line to have killed my man."

"Ay, the mark itself does not so much signify," said Mr Marsden: at least, not in actual duelling—the great thing is to be in the line."

While he spoke, Lord Lilburne's ball went a third time through the glove. His cold bright eye turned on Vaudemont, as he said, with a smile,—

"They tell me you shoot well with a fowling-piece, my dear Vaudemont—are you equally adroit with a pistol?"

"You may see, if you like; but *you take aim*, Lord Lilburne; that would be of no use in English duelling. Permit me."

He walked to the glove, and tore from it one of the fingers, which he fastened separately to the tree, took the pistol from Dykeman as he walked past him, gained the spot whence to fire, turned at once round, without apparent aim, and the finger fell to the ground.

Lilburne stood aghast.

"That's wonderful!" said Marsden;—"quite wonderful. Where the devil did you get such a knack?—for it is only knack after all!"

"I lived for many years in a country where the practice was constant, where all that belongs to rifle-shooting was a necessary accomplishment—a country in which man had often to contend against the wild beast. In civilised states, man himself supplies the place of the wild beast—but we don't hunt *him!*—Lord Lilburne"—and this was added with a smiling and disdainful whisper—"you must practise a little more."

But disregardful of the advice, from that day Lord Lilburne's morning occupation was gone. He thought no longer of a duel with Vaudemont. As soon as the sportsman had left him, he bade Dykeman take up the pistols, and walked straight home into the library, where Robert Beaufort, who was no sportsman, generally spent his mornings.

He flung himself into an arm-chair, and said, as he stirred the fire with unusual vehemence,—

"Beaufort, I'm very sorry I asked you to invite Vaudemont. He's a very ill-bred, disagreeable fellow!"

Beaufort threw down his steward's account-book, on which he was employed, and replied,—

"Lilburne, I have never had an easy moment since that man has been in the house. As he was your guest I did not like to speak before, but don't you observe—you *must* observe—how like he is to the old family portraits? The more I have examined him the more another resemblance grows upon me. In a word," said Robert, pausing and breathing hard, "if his name were not Vaudemont—if his history were not, apparently, so well known, I should say—I should swear, that it is Philip Morton who sleeps under this roof!"

"Ha!" said Lilburne, with an earnestness that surprised Beaufort, who expected to have heard his brother-in-law's sneering sarcasm at his fears; "the likeness you speak of to the old portraits did strike me; it struck Marsden, too, the other day, as we were passing through the picture-gallery; and Marsden re-

marked it aloud to Vaudemont. I remember now that he changed countenance and made no answer. Hush! hush! hold your tongue, let me think—let me think. This Philip—yes—yes—I and Arthur saw him with—with Gawtrey—in Paris——"

"Gawtrey! was that the name of the rogue he was said to——"

"Yes—yes—yes. Ah! now I guess the meaning of those looks—those words," muttered Lilburne, between his teeth. "This pretension to the name of Vaudemont was always apocryphal—the story always but half believed—the invention of a woman in love with him—the claim on your property is made at the very time he appears in England—Ha! have you a newspaper there? give it me. No! 'tis not in this paper. Ring the bell for the file!"

"What's the matter? you terrify me!" gasped out Mr Beaufort, as he rang the bell.

"Why! have you not seen an advertisement repeated several times within the last month?"

"I never read advertisements, except in the county paper if land is to be sold."

"Nor I often; but this caught my eye. John"—here the servant entered—"bring the file of the newspapers. The name of the witness whom Mrs Morton appealed to was Smith, the same name as the captain; what was the Christian name?"

"I don't remember."

"Here are the papers—shut the door—and here is the advertisement: 'If Mr William Smith, son of

Jeremiah Smith, who formerly rented the farm of Shipdale-Bury, under the late Right Hon. Charles Leopold Beaufort"—that's your uncle—"and who emigrated in the year 18— to Australia, will apply to Mr Barlow, Solicitor, Essex Street, Strand, he will hear of something to his advantage.'"

"Good Heavens! why did not you mention this to me before?"

"Because I did not think it of any importance. In the first place, there might be some legacy left to the man, quite distinct from your business. Indeed, *that* was the probable supposition:—or even if connected with the claim, such an advertisement might be but a despicable attempt to frighten you. Never mind—don't look so pale—after all, this is a proof that the witness is not found—that Captain Smith is neither *the* Smith, nor has discovered where *the* Smith is!"

"True!" observed Mr Beaufort: "true—very true!"

"Humph!" said Lord Lilburne, who was still rapidly glancing over the file,—"here is another advertisement which I never saw before: this looks suspicious: 'If the person who called on the — of September on Mr Morton, linendraper, &c., of N——, will renew his application personally or by letter, he may now obtain the information he sought for.'"

"Morton!—the woman's brother! their uncle! it is too clear!"

"But what brings this man, if he be really Philip Morton, what brings him here?—to spy or to threaten?"

"I will get him out of the house this day."

"No—no; turn the watch upon *himself*. I see now; he is attracted by your daughter; sound her quietly; don't tell her to discourage his confidences; find out, if he ever speaks of these Mortons. Ha! I recollect—he has spoken to *me* of the Mortons, but vaguely—I forget what. Humph! this is a man of spirit and daring—watch him, I say,—watch him! When *does* Arthur come back?"

"He has been travelling so slowly, for he still complains of his health, and has had relapses: but he ought to be in Paris this week, perhaps he is there now. Good Heavens! he must not meet this man!"

"Do what I tell you! get out all from your daughter. Never fear: he can do nothing against you except by law. But if he really like Camilla——"

"He!—Philip Morton—the adventurer—the——"

"He is the eldest son: remember, you thought even of accepting the second. He *may* find the witness—he *may* win his suit; if he like Camilla, there *may* be a compromise."

Mr Beaufort felt as if turned to ice.

"You think him likely to win this infamous suit, then?" he faltered.

"Did not you guard against the possibility by securing the brother? more worth while to do it with this man. Hark ye! the politics of private are like those of public life,—when the state can't crush a demagogue, it should entice him over. If you *can* ruin this dog"—and Lilburne stamped his foot fiercely, forgetful of the gout—"ruin him! hang him! If you can't"—and

here with a wry face he caressed the injured foot—"if you can't ('sdeath, what a twinge!) and he can ruin *you*,—bring him into the family, and make *his* secret *ours!* I must go and lie down—I have over-excited myself."

In great perplexity Beaufort repaired at once to Camilla. His nervous agitation betrayed itself, though he smiled a ghastly smile, and intended to be exceeding cool and collected. His questions, which confused and alarmed her, soon drew out the fact, that the very first time Vaudemont had been introduced to her, he *had* spoken of the Mortons; and that he had often afterwards alluded to the subject, and seemed at first strongly impressed with the notion that the younger brother was under Beaufort's protection; though at last he appeared reluctantly convinced of the contrary. Robert, however agitated, preserved at least enough of his natural slyness not to let out that he suspected Vaudemont to be Philip Morton himself, for he feared lest his daughter should betray that suspicion to its object.

"But," he said, with a look meant to win confidence, "I dare say he knows these young men. I should like myself to know more about them. Learn all you can, and tell me; and, I say—I say, Camilla,—he! he! he!—you have made a conquest, you little flirt, you! Did he, this Vaudemont, ever say how much he admired you?"

"He?—never!" said Camilla, blushing, and then turning pale.

"But he looks it. Ah! you say nothing, then.

Well, well, don't discourage him ; that is to say,—yes, don't discourage him. Talk to him as much as you can,—ask him about his own early life. I've a particular wish to know—'tis of great importance to me."

"But, my dear father," said Camilla, trembling, and thoroughly bewildered, "I fear this man,—I fear—I fear——"

Was she going to add, "I fear *myself?*" I know not; but she stopped short, and burst into tears.

"Hang these girls!" muttered Mr Beaufort, "always crying when they ought to be of use to one. Go down, dry your eyes, do as I tell you,—get all you can from him. Fear him!—yes, I dare say she does!" muttered the poor man, as he closed the door.

From that time what wonder that Camilla's manner to Vaudemont was yet more embarrassed than ever: what wonder that he put his own heart's interpretation on that confusion. Beaufort took care to thrust her more often than before in his way; he suddenly affected a creeping, fawning civility to Vaudemont; he was sure he was fond of music; what *did* he think of that new air Camilla was so fond of? He must be a judge of scenery, he who had seen so much: there were beautiful landscapes in the neighbourhood, and if he would forego his sports, Camilla drew prettily, had an eye for that sort of thing, and was so fond of riding.

Vaudemont was astonished at this change, but his delight was greater than the astonishment. He began to perceive that his identity was suspected; perhaps Beaufort, more generous than he had deemed him,

meant to repay every early wrong or harshness by one inestimable blessing. The generous interpret motives in extremes—ever too enthusiastic or too severe. Vaudemont felt as if he had wronged the wronger ; he began to conquer even his dislike to Robert Beaufort. For some days he was thus thrown much with Camilla ; the questions her father forced her to put to him, uttered tremulously and fearfully, seemed to him proofs of her interest *in* his fate. His feelings to Camilla, so sudden in their growth—so ripened and so favoured by the Sub-Ruler of the world—CIRCUMSTANCE—might not, perhaps, have the depth and the calm completeness of that One True Love, of which there are many counterfeits,—and which in man, at least, possibly requires the touch and mellowness, if not of time, at least of many memories—of perfect and tried conviction of the faith, the worth, the value, and the beauty of the heart to which it clings ;—but those feelings were, nevertheless, strong, ardent, and intense. He believed himself beloved—he was in Elysium. But he did not yet declare the passion that beamed in his eyes. No ! he would not *yet* claim the hand of Camilla Beaufort, for he imagined the time would soon come when he could claim it, not as the inferior or the suppliant, but as the lord of her father's fate.

CHAPTER X.

Here's something got amongst us!—*Knight of Malta.*

Two or three nights after his memorable conversation with Robert Beaufort, as Lord Lilburne was undressing, he said to his valet,—

"Dykeman, I am getting well."

"Indeed, my lord, I never saw your lordship look better."

"There you lie. I looked better last year—I looked better the year before—and I looked better and better every year back to the age of twenty-one! But I'm not talking of looks, no man with money wants looks. I am talking of feelings. I *feel* better. The gout is almost gone. I have been quiet now for a month—that's a long time—time wasted when, at my age, I have so little time to waste. Besides, as you know, I am very much in love!"

"In love, my lord? I thought that you told me never to speak of ——"

"Blockhead! what the deuce was the good of speaking about it when I was wrapped in flannels? I am never in love when I am ill—who is? I am well now,

or nearly so; and I've had things to vex me—things to make this place very disagreeable; I shall go to town, and before this day week perhaps, that charming face may enliven the solitude of Fernside. I shall look to it myself now. I see you're going to say something. Spare yourself the trouble! nothing ever goes wrong if *I* myself take it in hand."

The next day Lord Lilburne,—who, in truth, felt himself uncomfortable and *gêné* in the presence of Vaudemont—who had won as much as the guests at Beaufort Court seemed inclined to lose—and who made it the rule of his life to consult his own pleasure and amusement before anything else,—sent for his post-horses, and informed his brother-in-law of his departure.

"And you leave me alone with this man just when I am convinced that he is the person we suspected! My dear Lilburne, do stay till he goes."

"Impossible! I am between fifty and sixty—every moment is precious at that time of life. Besides, I've said all I can say; rest quiet—act on the defensive—entangle this cursed Vaudemont, or Morton, or whoever he be, in the mesh of your daughter's charms, and *then* get rid of him, not before. This can do no harm, let the matter turn out how it will. Read the papers; and send for Blackwell if you want advice on any new advertisements. I don't see that anything more is to be done at present. You can write to me; I shall be at Park Lane or Fernside. Take care of yourself. You're a lucky fellow—*you* never have the gout! Good-bye."

And in half an hour Lord Lilburne was on the road to London.

The departure of Lilburne was a signal to many others, especially and naturally to those he himself had invited. He had not announced to such visitors his intention of going till his carriage was at the door. This might be delicacy or carelessness, just as people chose to take it: and how they did take it, Lord Lilburne, much too selfish to be well-bred, did not care a rush. The next day, half at least of the guests were gone; and even Mr Marsden, who had been specially invited on Arthur's account, announced that he should go after dinner! he always travelled by night—he slept well on the road—a day was not lost by it.

"And it is so long since you saw Arthur," said Mr Beaufort, in remonstrance, "and I expect him every day."

"Very sorry—best fellow in the world—but the fact is, that I am not very well myself. I want a little sea air; I shall go to Dover or Brighton. But I suppose you will have the house full again about Christmas; in *that* case, I shall be delighted to repeat my visit."

The fact was, that Mr Marsden, without Lilburne's intellect on the one hand or vices on the other, was, like that noble sensualist, one of the broken pieces of the great looking-glass "SELF." He was noticed in society as always haunting the places where Lilburne played at cards, carefully choosing some other table, and as carefully betting upon Lilburne's side. The card-

tables were now broken up; Vaudemont's superiority in shooting, and the manner in which he engrossed the talk of the sportsmen, displeased him. He was bored —he wanted to be off—and off he went. Vaudemont felt that the time was come for him to depart, too; but Robert Beaufort—who felt in his society the painful fascination of the bird with the boa, who hated to see him there, and dreaded to see him depart, who had not yet extracted all the confirmation of his persuasions that he required, for Vaudemont easily enough parried the artless questions of Camilla—pressed him to stay with so eager an hospitality, and made Camilla herself falter out, against her will and even against her remonstrances (she never before had dared to remonstrate with either father or mother),—"Could not you stay a few days longer?"—that Vaudemont was too contented to yield to his own inclinations; and so, for some little time longer, he continued to move before the eyes of Mr Beaufort—stern, sinister, silent, mysterious—like one of the family pictures stepped down from its frame. Vaudemont wrote, however, to Fanny, to excuse his delay; and anxious to hear from her as to her own and Simon's health, bade her direct her letter to his lodging in London (of which he gave her the address), whence, if he still continued to defer his departure, it would be forwarded to him. He did not do this, however, till he had been at Beaufort Court several days after Lilburne's departure, and till, in fact, two days before the eventful one which closed his visit.

The party, now greatly diminished, were at breakfast, when the servant entered, as usual, with the letter-bag. Mr Beaufort, who was always important and pompous in the small ceremonials of life, unlocked the precious deposit with slow dignity, drew forth the newspapers, which he threw on the table, and which the gentlemen of the party eagerly seized; then, diving out one by one, jerked first a letter to Camilla, next a letter to Vaudemont, and, thirdly, seized a letter for himself.

"I beg that there may be no ceremony, Monsieur de Vaudemont: pray excuse me and follow my example: I see this letter is from my son;" and he broke the seal.

The letter ran thus:—

"My dear Father,—Almost as soon as you receive this I shall be with you. Ill as I am, I can have no peace till I see and consult you. The most startling, the most painful, intelligence has just been conveyed to me. It is of a nature not to bear any but personal communication.—Your affectionate Son,

"Arthur Beaufort.

"Boulogne.

"*P.S.*—This will go by the same packet-boat that I shall take myself, and can only reach you a few hours before I arrive."

Mr Beaufort's trembling hand dropped the letter—he grasped the elbow of the chair to save him from

falling. It was clear!—the same visitor who had persecuted himself had now sought his son! He grew sick, his son might have heard the witness—might be convinced. His son himself *now* appeared to him as a foe—for the father dreaded the son's honour! He glanced furtively round the table till his eye rested on Vaudemont, and his terror was redoubled—for Vaudemont's face, usually so calm, was animated to an extraordinary degree, as he now lifted it from the letter he had just read. Their eyes met. Robert Beaufort looked on him as a prisoner at the bar looks on the accusing counsel when he first commences his harangue.

"Mr Beaufort," said the guest, "the letter you have given me summons me to London on important business, and immediately. Suffer me to send for horses at your earliest convenience."

"What's the matter?" said the feeble and seldom-heard voice of Mrs Beaufort. "What's the matter, Robert?—is Arthur coming?"

"He comes to-day," said the father, with a deep sigh; and Vaudemont, at that moment rising from his half-finished breakfast, with a bow that included the group, and with a glance that lingered on Camilla, as she bent over her own unopened letter (a letter from Winandermere, the seal of which she dared not yet to break), quitted the room. He hastened to his own chamber, and strode to and fro with a stately step—the step of the *Master*—then, taking forth the letter, he again hurried over its contents. They ran thus:—

"Dear Sir,—At last the missing witness has applied to me. He proves to be, as you conjectured, the same person who had called on Mr Roger Morton; but as there are some circumstances on which I wish to take your instructions without a moment's delay, I shall leave London by the mail, and wait you at D—— (at the principal inn), which is, I understand, twenty miles, on the high-road, from Beaufort Court.—I have the honour to be, sir, yours, &c. John Barlow.

"Essex Street."

Vaudemont was yet lost in the emotions that this letter aroused, when they came to announce that his chaise was arrived. As he went down the stairs he met Camilla, who was on the way to her own room.

"Miss Beaufort," said he, in a low and tremulous voice, "in wishing you farewell I may not now say more. I leave you, and, strange to say, I do not regret it, for I go upon an errand that may entitle me to return again, and speak those thoughts which are uppermost in my soul, even at this moment."

He raised her hand to his lips as he spoke; and at that moment Mr Beaufort looked from the door of his own room and cried "Camilla." She was too glad to escape. Philip gazed after her light form for an instant, and then hurried down the stairs.

CHAPTER XI.

Longueville.—What! are you married, Beaufort?
Beaufort.—Ay, as fast
As words, and hands, and hearts, and priest,
Could make us.—BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER, *Noble Gentleman.*

IN the parlour of the inn at D—— sat Mr John Barlow. He had just finished his breakfast, and was writing letters and looking over papers connected with his various business, when the door was thrown open, and a gentleman entered abruptly.

"Mr Beaufort," said the lawyer, rising,—"Mr Philip Beaufort,—for such I now feel you are by right—though," he added, with his usual formal and quiet smile, "not yet by law; and much, very much, remains to be done to make the law and the right the same,—I congratulate you on having something at last to work on. I had begun to despair of finding up our witness, after a month's advertising; and had commenced other investigations, of which I will speak to you presently, when yesterday, on my return to town from an errand on your business, I had the pleasure of a visit from William Smith himself.—My dear sir, do not yet be too sanguine.—It seems that this poor fellow, having known misfortune, was in America when the first fruit-

less inquiries were made. Long after this he returned to the colony, and there met with a brother, who, as I drew from him was a convict. He helped the brother to escape. They both came to England. William learned from a distant relation, who lent him some little money, of the inquiry that had been set on foot for him; consulted his brother, who desired him to leave all to his management. The brother afterwards assured him that you and Mr Sidney were both dead; and it seems (for the witness is simple enough to allow me to extract all), this same brother then went to Mr Beaufort to hold out the threat of a lawsuit, and to offer the sale of the evidence yet existing——"

"And Mr Beaufort?"

"I am happy to say, seems to have spurned the offer. Meanwhile William, incredulous of his brother's report, proceeded to N——, —learned nothing from Mr Morton, met his brother again—and the brother (confessing that he had deceived him in the assertion that you and Mr Sidney were dead) told him that he had known you in earlier life, and set out to Paris to seek you——"

"Known me?—to Paris?"

"More of this presently. William returned to town, living hardly and penuriously on the little his brother bestowed on him, too melancholy and too poor for the luxury of a newspaper, and never saw our advertisement, till, as luck would have it, his money was out; he had heard nothing further of his brother, and he went for new assistance to the same relation who

had before aided him. This relation, to his surprise, received the poor man very kindly, lent him what he wanted, and then asked him if he had not seen our advertisement. The newspaper shown him contained both the advertisements—that relating to Mr Morton's visitor, that containing his own name. He coupled them both together—called on me at once. I was from town on your business. He returned to his own home; the next morning (yesterday morning) came a letter from his brother, which I obtained from him at last, and with promises that no harm should happen to the writer on account of it."

Vaudemont took the letter and read as follows:—

"DEAR WILLIAM,—No go about the youngster I went after: all researches in vane. Paris develish expensive. Never mind, I have sené the other—the young B——; different sort of fellow from his father—very ill—frightened out of his wits—will go off to the governor, take me with him as far as Bullone. I think we shall settel it now. Mind as I saide before, don't put *your* foot in it. I send you a Nap in the Seele—all I can spare.—Yours,

"JEREMIAH SMITH.

"Direct to me, Monsieur Smith—always a safe name—Ship Inn, Bullone."

"Jeremiah—Smith—Jeremiah!"

"Do you know the name, then?" said Mr Barlow. "Well; the poor man owns that he was frightened at

his brother—that he wished to do what is right—that he feared his brother would not let him—that your father was very kind to him—and so he came off at once to me; and I was very luckily at home to assure him that the heir was alive and prepared to assert his rights. Now then, Mr Beaufort, we have the witness, but will that suffice us? I fear not. Will the jury believe him with no other testimony at his back? Consider!—When he was gone I put myself in communication with some officers at Bow Street about this brother of his—a most notorious character, commonly called in the police slang *Dashing Jerry*——"

"Ah! Well, proceed!"

"Your one witness, then, is a very poor, penniless man—his brother a rogue, a convict: this witness, too, is the most timid, fluctuating, irresolute fellow I ever saw: I should tremble for his testimony against a sharp, bullying lawyer. And that, sir, is all at present we have to look to."

"I see—I see. It is dangerous—it is hazardous. But truth is truth; justice—justice! I will run the risk."

"Pardon me, if I ask, did you ever know this brother?—were you ever absolutely acquainted with him—in the same house?"

"Many years since—years of early hardship and trial—I *was* acquainted with him—what then?"

"I am sorry to hear it," and the lawyer looked grave. "Do you not see that if this witness is browbeat—is disbelieved, and if it can be shown that you,

the claimant, was—forgive my saying it—intimate with a brother of such a character, why the whole thing might be made to look like perjury and conspiracy. If we stop here it is an ugly business!"

"And is this all you have to say to me? The witness is found—the only surviving witness—the only proof I ever shall or ever can obtain, and you seek to terrify me—*me* too—from using the means for redress Providence itself vouchsafes me. Sir, I will not hear you!"

"Mr Beaufort, you are impatient—it is natural. But if we go to law—that is, should I have anything to do with it—wait,—wait till your case is good. And hear me yet. This is *not* the only proof—this is not the only witness: you forget that there was an examined copy of the register; we may yet find that copy, and the person who copied it may yet be alive to attest it. Occupied with this thought, and weary of waiting the result of our advertisement, I resolved to go into the neighbourhood of Fernside: luckily, there was a gentleman's seat to be sold in the village. I made the survey of this place my apparent business. After going over the house, I appeared anxious to see how far some alterations could be made—alterations to render it more like Lord Lilburne's villa. This led me to request a sight of that villa—a crown to the housekeeper got me admittance. The housekeeper had lived with your father, and been retained by his lordship. I soon, therefore, knew which were the rooms the late Mr Beaufort had

principally occupied; shown into his study, where it was probable he would keep his papers, I inquired if it were the same furniture (which seemed likely enough from its age and fashion) as in your father's time: it was so: Lord Lilburne had bought the house just as it stood, and, save a few additions in the drawing-room, the general equipment of the villa remained unaltered. You look impatient!—I'm coming to the point. My eye fell upon an old-fashioned bureau——"

"But we searched every drawer in that bureau!"

"Any secret drawers?"

"Secret drawers! No! there were no secret drawers that I ever heard of!"

Mr Barlow rubbed his hands and mused a moment.

"I was struck with that bureau; for *my* father had had one like it. It is not English—it is of Dutch manufacture."

"Yes, I have heard that my father bought it at a sale, three or four years after his marriage."

"I learned this from the housekeeper, who was flattered by my admiring it. I could not find out from her at what sale it had been purchased, but it was in the neighbourhood she was sure. I had now a date to go upon; I learned, by careless inquiries, what sales near Fernside had taken place in a certain year. A gentleman had died at that date, whose furniture was sold by auction. With great difficulty, I found that his widow was still alive, living far up the country: I paid her a visit; and, not to fatigue you with too long an account, I have only to say, that she not

only assured me that she perfectly remembered the bureau, but that it had secret drawers and wells, very curiously contrived; nay, she showed me the very catalogue in which the said receptacles are noticed in capitals, to arrest the eye of the bidder, and increase the price of the bidding. That your father should never have revealed where he stowed this document is natural enough, during the life of his uncle; his own life was not spared long enough to give him much opportunity to explain afterwards; but I feel perfectly persuaded in my own mind that, unless Mr Robert Beaufort discovered that paper amongst the others he examined, in one of those drawers will be found all we want to substantiate your claims. This is the more likely from your father never mentioning, even to your mother, apparently, the secret receptacles in the bureau. Why else such mystery? The probability is that he received the document either just before or at the time he purchased the bureau, or that he bought it for that very purpose:—and, having once deposited the paper in a place he deemed secure from curiosity—accident, carelessness, policy, perhaps, rather shame itself (pardon me) for the doubt of your mother's discretion, that his secrecy seemed to imply, kept him from ever alluding to the circumstance, even when the intimacy of after years made him more assured of your mother's self-sacrificing devotion to his interests. At his uncle's death he thought to repair all."

"And how, if that be true—if that Heaven which has delivered me hitherto from so many dangers has,

in the very secrecy of my poor father, saved my birthright from the gripe of the usurper — how, I say, is——"

"The bureau to pass into our possession? That *is* the difficulty. But we must contrive it somehow, if all else fail us; meanwhile, as I now feel sure that there has been a copy of that register made, I wish to know whether I should not immediately cross the country into Wales, and see if I can find any person in the neighbourhood of A——— who did examine the copy taken: for, mark you, the said copy is only of importance as leading us to the testimony of the actual witness who took it."

"Sir," said Vaudemont, heartily shaking Mr Barlow by the hand, "forgive my first petulance. I see in you the very man I desired and wanted—your acuteness surprises and encourages me. Go to Wales, and God speed you!"

"Very well! in five minutes I shall be off. Meanwhile, see the witness yourself; the sight of his benefactor's son will do more to keep him steady than anything else. There's his address, and take care not to give him money. And now I will order my chaise —the matter begins to look worth expense. Oh, I forgot to say that Monsieur Liancourt called on me yesterday about his own affairs. He wishes much to consult you. I told him you would probably be this evening in town, and he said he would wait you at your lodging."

"Yes—I will lose not a moment in going to London, and visiting our witness. And he saw my mother at

the altar! My poor mother—Ah, how could my father have doubted her!" and as he spoke, he blushed for the first time with shame, at that father's memory. He could not yet conceive that one so frank, one usually so bold and open, could for years have preserved from the woman who had sacrificed all to him, a secret to her so important! *That* was, in fact, the only blot on his father's honour—a foul and a grave blot it was. Heavily had the punishment fallen on those whom the father loved best! Alas! Philip had not yet learned what terrible corrupters are the Hope and the Fear of immense Wealth—ay, even to men reputed the most honourable, if they have been reared and pampered in the belief that wealth is the Arch blessing of life! Rightly considered, in Philip Beaufort's solitary meanness lay the vast moral of this world's darkest truth!

Mr Barlow was gone. Philip was about to enter his own chaise, when a dormeuse-and-four drove up to the inn-door to change horses. A young man was reclining, at his length, in the carriage, wrapped in cloaks, and with a ghastly paleness—the paleness of long and deep disease upon his cheeks. He turned his dim eye, with, perhaps, a glance of the sick man's envy, on that strong and athletic form, majestic with health and vigour, as it stood beside the more humble vehicle. Philip did not, however, notice the new arrival; he sprang into the chaise, it rattled on: and thus, unconsciously, Arthur Beaufort and his cousin had again met. To which was now the Night—to which the Morning?

CHAPTER XII.

> *Bakam.*—Let my men guard the walls.
> *Syana.*—And mine the *temple.*—*The Island Princess.*

WHILE thus eventfully the days and the weeks had passed for Philip, no less eventfully, so far as the inner life is concerned, had they glided away for Fanny. She had feasted in quiet and delighted thought on the consciousness that she was improving—that she was growing worthier of him—that *he* would perceive it on his return. Her manner was more thoughtful, more collected—less childish, in short, than it had been. And yet, with all the stir and flutter of the aroused intellect, the charm of her strange innocence was not scared away. She rejoiced in the ancient liberty she had regained of going out and coming back when she pleased; and as the weather was too cold ever to tempt Simon from his fireside, except, perhaps, for half an hour in the forenoon, so, the hours of dusk, when he least missed her, were those which she chiefly appropriated for stealing away to the good schoolmistress, and growing wiser and wiser every day in the ways of God and the learning of His creatures. The schoolmistress was not a brilliant woman. Nor

was it accomplishments of which Fanny stood in need, so much as the opening of her thoughts and mind by profitable books and rational conversation. Beautiful as were all her natural feelings, the schoolmistress had now little difficulty in educating feelings up to the dignity of principles.

At last, hitherto patient under the absence of one never absent from her heart, Fanny received from him the letter he had addressed to her two days before he quitted Beaufort Court;—another letter—a second letter—a letter to *excuse* himself for not coming before—a letter that gave her an address, that asked for a reply. It was a morning of unequalled delight, approaching to transport. And then the excitement of answering the letter—the pride of showing how she was improved, what an excellent hand she now wrote! She shut herself up in her room: she did not go out that day. She placed the paper before her, and, to her astonishment, all that she had to say vanished from her mind at once. How was she even to begin? She had always hitherto called him "Brother." Ever since her conversation with Sarah, she felt that she could not call him that name again for the world—no, never! But what *should* she call him—what *could* she call him? He signed himself "Philip." She knew that was his name. She thought it a musical name to utter, but to *write* it!—No! some instinct she could not account for seemed to whisper that it was improper, presumptuous, to call him "Dear Philip." Had Burns's songs—the songs that unthinkingly he had put into her hand, and told

her to read—songs that comprise the most beautiful love-poems in the world—had they helped to teach her some of the secrets of her own heart? And had timidity come with knowledge? Who shall say, who guess, what passed within her? Nor did Fanny herself, perhaps, know her own feelings: but write the words "*Dear Philip*" she could *not.* And the whole of that day, though she thought of nothing else, she could not even get through the first line to her satisfaction. The next morning she sat down again. It would be so unkind if she did not answer immediately: she must answer. She placed his letter before her—she resolutely began. But copy after copy was made and torn. And Simon wanted her—and Sarah wanted her—and there were bills to be paid; and dinner was over before her task was really begun. But after dinner she began in good earnest.

"How kind in you to write to me" (the difficulty of any name was dispensed with by adopting none), "and to wish to know about my dear grandfather! He is much the same, but hardly ever walks out now, and I have had a good deal of time to myself. I think something will surprise you, and make you smile, as you used to do at first, when you come back. You must not be angry with me that I have gone out by myself very often—every day, indeed. I have been so safe. Nobody has ever offered to be rude again to Fanny" (the word "*Fanny*" was here carefully scratched out with a penknife, and *me* substituted). "But you shall know all when you come. And are you sure *you* are

well—quite—quite well? Do you never have the headaches you complained of sometimes? Do say this! Do you walk out—every day? Is there any pretty churchyard near you now? Whom do you walk with?

"I have been so happy in putting the flowers on the two graves. But I still give yours the prettiest, though the other is so dear to me. I feel sad when I come to the last, but not when I look at the one I have looked at so long. Oh, how good you were! But you don't like me to thank you."

"This is very stupid!" cried Fanny, suddenly throwing down her pen; "and I don't think I am improved at all;" and she half cried with vexation. Suddenly a bright idea crossed her. In the little parlour where the schoolmistress privately received her, she had seen among the books, and thought at the time how useful it might be to her if ever she had to write to Philip, a little volume entitled 'The Complete Letter-Writer.' She knew by the title-page that it contained models for every description of letter—no doubt it would contain the precise thing that would suit the present occasion. She started up at the notion. She would go—she could be back to finish the letter before post-time. She put on her bonnet—left the letter, in her haste, open on the table—and, just looking into the parlour in her way to the street-door, to convince herself that Simon was asleep, and the wire-guard was on the fire, she hurried to the kind schoolmistress.

One of the fogs that in autumn gather sullenly over London and its suburbs covered the declining day with premature dimness. It grew darker and darker as she proceeded, but she reached the house in safety. She spent a quarter of an hour in timidly consulting her friend about all kind of letters except the identical one that she intended to write, and having had it strongly impressed on her mind that if the letter was to a gentleman at all genteel, she ought to begin "Dear Sir," and end with "I have the honour to remain;" and that he would be everlastingly offended if she did not in the address affix "Esquire" to his name (*that* was a great discovery)—she carried off the precious volume, and quitted the house. There was a wall that, bounding the demesnes of the school, ran for some short distance into the main street. The increasing fog here faintly struggled against the glimmer of a single lamp at some little distance. Just in this spot her eye was caught by a dark object in the road, which she could scarcely perceive to be a carriage, when her hand was seized, and a voice said in her ear,—

"Ah! you will not be so cruel to me, I hope, as you were to my messenger! I have come myself for you."

She turned in great alarm, but the darkness prevented her recognising the face of him who thus accosted her.

"Let me go!" she cried—"let me go!"

"Hush! hush! No—no! Come with me You shall have a house—carriage—servants! You shall

wear silk gowns and jewels! You shall be a great lady!"

As these various temptations succeeded in rapid course each new struggle of Fanny, a voice from the coach-box said in a low tone—

"Take care, my lord, I see somebody coming—perhaps a policeman!"

Fanny heard the caution, and screamed for rescue.

"Is it so?" muttered the molester. And suddenly Fanny felt her voice checked—her head mantled—her light form lifted from the ground. She clung—she struggled—it was in vain. It was the affair of a moment: she felt herself borne into the carriage—the door closed—the stranger was by her side, and his voice said—

"Drive on, Dykeman. Fast! fast!"

Two or three minutes, which seemed to her terror as ages, elapsed, when the gag and the mantle were gently removed, and the same voice (she still could not see her companion) said in a very mild tone—

"Do not alarm yourself; there is no cause—indeed there is not. I would not have adopted this plan had there been any other—any gentler one. But I could not call at your own house—I knew no other where to meet you. This was the only course left to me—indeed it was. I made myself acquainted with your movements. Do not blame me, then, for prying into your footsteps. I watched for you all last night—you did not come out. I was in despair. At last I find you. Do not be so terrified: I will not even touch your hand if you do not wish it."

As he spoke, however, he attempted to touch it, and was repulsed with an energy that rather disconcerted him. The poor girl recoiled from him into the farthest corner of that prison in speechless horror—in the darkest confusion of ideas. She did not weep—she did not sob—but her trembling seemed to shake the very carriage. The man continued to address, to expostulate, to pray, to soothe. His manner was respectful. His protestations that he would not harm her for the world were endless.

"Only just see the home I can give you; for two days—for one day. Only just hear how rich I can make you and your grandfather, and *then*, if you wish to leave me, you shall."

More, much more, to this effect, did he continue to pour forth, without extracting any sound from Fanny but gasps as for breath, and now and then a low murmur,—

"Let me go, let me go! My grandfather, my blind grandfather!"

And finally tears came to her relief, and she sobbed with a passion that alarmed, and perhaps even touched, her companion, cynical and icy as he was. Meanwhile the carriage seemed to fly. Fast as two horses, thorough-bred, and almost at full speed, could go, they were whirled along, till about an hour, or even less, from the time in which she had been thus captured, the carriage stopped.

"Are we here already?" said the man, putting his head out of the window. "Do then as I told you. Not to the front door; to my study."

In two minutes more the carriage halted again before a building, which looked white and ghostlike through the mist. The driver dismounted, opened with a latch-key a window-door, entered for a moment to light the candles in a solitary room from a fire that blazed on the hearth, reappeared, and opened the carriage-door. It was with a difficulty for which they were scarcely prepared that they were enabled to get Fanny from the carriage. No soft words, no whispered prayers could draw her forth; and it was with no trifling address, for her companion sought to be as gentle as the force necessary to employ would allow, that he disengaged her hands from the window-frame, the lining, the cushions, to which they clung; and at last bore her into the house. The driver closed the window again as he retreated, and they were alone. Fanny then cast a wild, scarce conscious glance over the apartment. It was small and simply furnished. Opposite to her was an old-fashioned bureau—one of those quaint, elaborate monuments of Dutch ingenuity, which, during the present century, the audacious spirit of curiosity-vendors has transplanted from their native receptacles, to contrast, with grotesque strangeness, the neat handiwork of Gillow and Seddon. It had a physiognomy and character of its own — this fantastic foreigner! Inlaid with mosaics, depicting landscapes and animals; graceless in form and fashion, but still picturesque, and winning admiration, when more closely observed, from the patient defiance of all rules of taste which had formed its cumbrous parts into one profusely ornamented and eccentric whole. It was the more notice-

able from its total want of harmony with the other appurtenances of the room, which bespoke the tastes of the plain English squire. Prints of horses and hunts, fishing-rods and fowling-pieces, carefully suspended, decorated the walls. Not, however, on this notable stranger from the sluggish land, rested the eye of Fanny. *That*, in her hurried survey, was arrested only by a portrait placed over the bureau—the portrait of a female in the bloom of life; a face so fair, a brow so candid, an eye so pure, a lip so rich in youth and joy, that as her look lingered on the features, Fanny felt comforted, felt as if some living protectress were there. The fire burned bright and merrily; a table, spread as for dinner, was drawn near it. To any other eye but Fanny's the place would have seemed a picture of English comfort. At last her looks rested on her companion. He had thrown himself, with a long sigh, partly of fatigue, partly of satisfaction, on one of the chairs, and was contemplating her as she thus stood and gazed, with an expression of mingled curiosity and admiration: she recognised at once her first, her only persecutor. She recoiled, and covered her face with her hands. The man approached her:—

"Do not hate me, Fanny,—do not turn away. Believe me, though I have acted thus violently, here all violence will cease. I love you, but I will not be satisfied till you love me in return. I am not young, and I am not handsome, but I am rich and great, and I can make those whom I love happy—so happy, Fanny!"

But Fanny had turned away, and was now busily

employed in trying to re-open the door at which she had entered. Failing in this, she suddenly darted away, opened the inner door, and rushed into the passage with a loud cry. Her persecutor stifled an oath, and sprang after and arrested her. He now spoke sternly, and with a smile and a frown at once :—

"This is folly ;—come back, or you will repent it! I have promised you, as a gentleman—as a nobleman, if you know what that is, to respect you. But neither will I myself be trifled with nor insulted. There must be no screams!"

His look and his voice awed Fanny in spite of her bewilderment and her loathing, and she suffered herself passively to be drawn into the room. He closed and bolted the door. She threw herself on the ground in one corner, and moaned low but piteously. He looked at her musingly for some moments, as he stood by the fire, and at last went to the door, opened it, and called "Harriet" in a low voice. Presently a young woman, of about thirty, appeared, neatly but plainly dressed, and of a countenance that, if not very winning, might certainly be called very handsome. He drew her aside for a few moments, and a whispered conference was exchanged. He then walked gravely up to Fanny :—

"My young friend," said he, "I see my presence is too much for you this evening. This young woman will attend you—will get you all you want. She can tell you, too, that I am not the terrible sort of person you seem to suppose. I shall see you to-morrow." So saying, he turned on his heel and walked out.

Fanny felt something like liberty, something like joy, again. She rose, and looked so pleadingly, so earnestly, so intently into the woman's face, that Harriet turned away her bold eyes abashed; and at this moment Dykeman himself looked into the room.

"You are to bring us in dinner here yourself, uncle; and then go to my lord in the drawing-room."

Dykeman looked pleased, and vanished. Then Harriet came up and took Fanny's hand, and said kindly,—

"Don't be frightened. I assure you half the girls in London would give I don't know what to be in your place. My lord never will force you to do anything you don't like—it's not his way; and he's the kindest and best man,—and so rich; he does not know what to do with his money!"

To all this Fanny made but one answer,—she threw herself suddenly upon the woman's breast, and sobbed out,—

"My grandfather is blind, he cannot do without me—he will die—die. Have you nobody you love, too? Let me go—let me out! What can they want with me?—I never did harm to any one."

"And no one will harm *you*;—I swear it!" said Harriet, earnestly. "I see you don't know my lord. But here's the dinner; come and take a bit of something, and a glass of wine."

Fanny could not touch anything except a glass of water, and that nearly choked her. But at last, as she recovered her senses, the absence of her tormentor—

the presence of a *woman*—the solemn assurances of Harriet that, if she did not like to stay there, after a day or two she should go back—tranquillised her in some measure. She did not heed the artful and lengthened eulogiums that the she-tempter then proceeded to pour forth upon the virtues, and the love, and the generosity, and, above all, the money of my lord. She only kept repeating to herself, "I shall go back in a day or two." At length, Harriet, having ate and drank as much as she could by her single self, and growing wearied with efforts from which so little resulted, proposed to Fanny to retire to rest. She opened a door to the right of the fireplace, and lighted her up a winding staircase to a pretty and comfortable chamber, where she offered to help her to undress. Fanny's complete innocence, and her utter ignorance of the precise nature of the danger that awaited her, though she fancied it must be very great and very awful, prevented her quite comprehending all that Harriet meant to convey by her solemn assurances that she should not be disturbed. But she understood, at least, that she was not to see her hateful jailer till the next morning; and when Harriet, wishing her "good night," showed her a bolt to her door, she was less terrified at the thought of being alone in that strange place. She listened till Harriet's footsteps had died away, and then, with a beating heart, tried to open the door; it was locked from without. She sighed heavily. The window?—alas! when she had removed the shut-

ter, there was another one barred from without, which precluded all hope there ; she had no help for it but to bolt her door, stand forlorn and amazed at her own condition, and, at last, falling on her knees, to pray, in her own simple fashion, which, since her recent visits to the schoolmistress, had become more intelligent and earnest, to Him from whom no bolts and no bars can exclude the voice of the human heart.

CHAPTER XIII.

In te omnis domus inclinata recumbit.*—VIRGIL.

LORD LILBURNE, seated before a tray in the drawing-room, was finishing his own solitary dinner, and Dykeman was standing close behind him, nervous and agitated. The confidence of many years between the master and the servant—the peculiar mind of Lilburne, which excluded him from all friendship with his own equals—had established between the two the kind of intimacy so common with the noble and the valet of the old French *régime;* and indeed in much, Lilburne more resembled the men of that day and land, than he did the nobler and statelier being which belongs to our own. But to the end of time, whatever is at once vicious, polished, and intellectual, will have a common likeness.

"But, my lord," said Dykeman, "just reflect. This girl is so well known in the place; she will be sure to be missed; and if any violence is done to her, it's a capital crime, my lord—a capital crime. I know they can't hang a great lord like you, but all concerned in it may——"

Lord Lilburne interrupted the speaker by—"Give

* On thee the whole house rests confidingly.

me some wine, and hold your tongue!" Then, when he had emptied his glass, he drew himself nearer to the fire, warmed his hands, mused a moment, and turned round to his confidant:—

"Dykeman," said he, "though you're an ass and a coward, and you don't deserve that I should be so condescending, I will relieve your fears at once. I know the law better than you can, for my whole life has been spent in doing exactly as I please, without ever putting myself in the power of LAW, which interferes with the pleasures of other men. You are right in saying violence would be a capital crime. Now the difference between vice and crime is this: Vice is what parsons write sermons against,—Crime is what we make laws against. I never committed a crime in all my life,—at an age between fifty and sixty I am not going to begin. Vices are safe things: I may have my vices like other men: but crimes are dangerous things—illegal things—things to be carefully avoided. Look you" (and here the speaker, fixing his puzzled listener with his eye, broke into a grin of sublime mockery), "let me suppose you to be the World—that cringing valet of valets, the WORLD! I should say to you this,—'My dear World, you and I understand each other well,—we are made for each other,—I never come in your way, nor you in mine. If I get drunk every day in my own room, that's vice, you can't touch me; if I take an extra glass for the first time in my life, and knock down the watchman, that's a crime which, if I am rich, costs me one pound—perhaps five

pounds; if I am poor, sends me to the treadmill. If I break the hearts of five hundred old fathers, by buying with gold or flattery the embraces of five hundred young daughters, that's vice,—your servant, Mr World! If one termagant wench scratches my face, makes a noise, and goes brazen-faced to the Old Bailey to swear to her shame, why that's crime, and my friend, Mr World, pulls a hemp-rope out of his pocket.' Now, do you understand? Yes, I repeat," he added with a change of voice, "I never committed a crime in my life. I have never even been accused of one,—never had an action of *crim. con.*—of seduction against me. I know how to manage such matters better. I was forced to carry off this girl, because I had no other means of courting her. To court her is all I mean to do now. I am perfectly aware that an Action for violence, as you call it, would be the more disagreeable, because of the very weakness of intellect which the girl is said to possess, and of which report I don't believe a word. I shall, most certainly, avoid every the remotest appearance that could be so construed. It is for that reason that no one in the house shall attend the girl except yourself and your niece. Your niece I can depend on, I know; I have been kind to her; I have got her a good husband: I shall get her husband a good place;—I shall be godfather to her first child. To be sure, the other servants will know there's a lady in the house, but to that they are accustomed; I don't set up for a Joseph. They need know no more, unless you choose to blab it out. Well, then, supposing that at the end of a few

days, more or less, without any rudeness on my part, a young woman, after seeing a few jewels, and fine dresses, and a pretty house, and being made very comfortable, and being convinced that her grandfather shall be taken care of without her slaving herself to death, chooses of her own accord to live with me, where's the crime, and who can interfere with it?"

"Certainly, my lord, that alters the case," said Dykeman, considerably relieved. "But still," he added, anxiously, "if the inquiry is made—if before all this is settled, it is found out where she is?"

"Why, then, no harm will be done—no violence will be committed. Her grandfather,—drivelling, and a miser, you say,—can be appeased by a little money, and it will be nobody's business, and no case can be made of it. Tush, man! I always look before I leap! People in this world are not so charitable as you suppose. What more natural than that a poor and pretty girl—not as wise as Queen Elizabeth—should be tempted to pay a visit to a rich lover! All they can say of the lover is, that he is a very gay man or a very bad man, and that's saying nothing new of me. But I don't think it *will* be found out. Just get me that stool; this has been a very troublesome piece of business—rather tired me. I am not so young as I was. Yes, Dykeman, something which that Frenchman Vaudemont, or Vaut-rien, or whatever his name is, said to me once, has a certain degree of truth. I felt it in the last fit of the gout, when my pretty niece was smoothing my pillows. A nurse, as we grow older,

may be of use to one. I wish to make this girl like me, or be grateful to me. I am meditating a longer and more serious attachment than usual,—a companion!"

"A companion, my lord, in that poor creature!—so ignorant—so uneducated!"

"So much the better. This world palls upon me," said Lilburne, almost gloomily. "I grow sick of the miserable quackeries—of the piteous conceits that men, women, and children, call 'knowledge.' I wish to catch a glimpse of nature before I die. This creature interests me, and that is something in this life. Clear those things away, and leave me."

"Ay!" muttered Lilburne, as he bent over the fire alone, "when I first heard that that girl was the granddaughter of Simon Gawtrey, and, therefore, the child of the man whom I am to thank that I am a cripple, I felt as if love to her were a part of that hate which I owe to him; a segment in the circle of my vengeance. But *now*, poor child! I forget all this. I feel for her, not passion, but what I never felt before, *affection*. I feel that if I had such a child, I could understand what men mean when they talk of the tenderness of a father. I have not one impure thought for that girl—not one. But I would give thousands if she could love me. Strange! strange! in all this I do not recognise myself!"

Lord Lilburne retired to rest betimes that night; he slept sound; rose refreshed at an earlier hour than usual; and what he considered a fit of vapours of the

previous night was passed away. He looked with eagerness to an interview with Fanny. Proud of his intellect, pleased in any of those sinister exercises of it, which the code and habits of his life so long permitted to him, he regarded the conquest of his fair adversary with the interest of a scientific game. Harriet went to Fanny's room to prepare her to receive her host; and Lord Lilburne now resolved to make his own visit the less unwelcome, by reserving for his especial gift some showy, if not valuable, trinkets, which for similar purposes never failed the depositories of the villa he had purchased for his pleasures. He recollected that these gewgaws were placed in the bureau in the study; in which, as having a lock of foreign and intricate workmanship, he usually kept whatever might tempt cupidity in those frequent absences when the house was left guarded but by two women servants. Finding that Fanny had not yet quitted her own chamber, while Harriet went up to attend and reason with her, he himself limped into the study below, unlocked the bureau, and was searching in the drawers, when he heard the voice of Fanny above, raised a little as if in remonstrance or entreaty; and he paused to listen. He could not, however, distinguish what was said; and in the meanwhile, without attending much to what he was about, his hands were still employed in opening and shutting the drawers, passing through the pigeonholes, and feeling for a topaz brooch, which he thought could not fail of pleasing the unsophisticated eyes of Fanny. One of the recesses was deeper than the rest;

he fancied the brooch was there; he stretched his hand into the recess; and, as the room was partially darkened by the lower shutters from without, which were still closed to prevent any attempted escape of his captive, he had only the sense of touch to depend on; not finding the brooch, he stretched on till he came to the extremity of the recess, and was suddenly sensible of a sharp pain; the flesh seemed caught as in a trap; he drew back his finger with sudden force and a half-suppressed exclamation, and he perceived the bottom or floor of the pigeon-hole recede, as if sliding back. His curiosity was aroused; he again felt warily and cautiously, and discovered a very slight inequality and roughness at the extremity of the recess. He was aware instantly that there was some secret spring; he pressed with some force on the spot, and he felt the board give way; he pushed it back towards him, and it slid suddenly with a whirring noise, and left a cavity below exposed to his sight. He peered in, and drew forth a paper; he opened it at first carelessly, for he was still trying to listen to Fanny. His eye ran rapidly over a few preliminary lines till it rested on what follows:—

"*Marriage. The year* 18—.

"No. 83, page 21.

"Philip Beaufort, of this parish of A——, and Catherine Morton, of the parish of St Botolph, Aldgate, London, were married in this church by banns,

this 12th day of November, in the year one thousand eight hundred and ——,* by me,

"CALEB PRICE, Vicar.

"This marriage was solemnised between us,

"PHILIP BEAUFORT.

"CATHERINE MORTON.

"In the presence of

"DAVID APREECE.

"WILLIAM SMITH.

"The above is a true copy, taken from the registry of marriages in A—— parish, this 19th day of March 18—, by me,

"MORGAN JONES, Curate of C——."

Lord Lilburne again cast his eye over the lines prefixed to this startling document, which, being those written at Caleb's desire by Mr Jones to Philip Beaufort, we need not here transcribe to the reader.† At that instant, Harriet descended the stairs, and came into the room; she crept up on tiptoe to Lilburne, and whispered—

"She is coming down, I think; she does not know you are here."

"Very well—go!" said Lord Lilburne. And scarce had Harriet left the room, when a carriage drove furiously to the door, and Robert Beaufort rushed into the study.

* This is according to the form customary at the date at which the copy was made. There has since been an alteration.

† See vol. i., page 21.

CHAPTER XIV.

Gone, and none know it.

. . . .

How now ?—What news, what hopes and steps discovered ?

BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER, *The Pilgrim.*

WHEN Philip arrived at his lodgings in town it was very late, but he still found Liancourt waiting the chance of his arrival. The Frenchman was full of his own schemes and projects. He was a man of high repute and connections; negotiations for his recall to Paris had been entered into; he was divided between a Quixotic loyalty and a rational prudence; he brought his doubts to Vaudemont. Occupied as he was with thoughts of so important and personal a nature, Philip could yet listen patiently to his friend, and weigh with him the *pros* and *cons.* And after having mutually agreed that loyalty and prudence would both be best consulted by waiting a little, to see if the nation, as the Carlists yet fondly trusted, would soon, after its first fever, offer once more the throne and the purple to the descendant of St Louis, Liancourt, as he lighted his cigar to walk home, said—" A thousand thanks to you, my dear friend: and how have you enjoyed yourself in your visit? I am not surprised or jealous that

Lilburne did not invite me, as I do not play at cards, and as I have said some sharp things to him."

"I fancy I shall have the same disqualifications for another invitation," said Vaudemont, with a severe smile. "I may have much to disclose to you in a few days. At present my news is still unripe. And have you seen anything of Lilburne? he left us some days since. Is he in London?"

"Yes; I was riding with our friend Henri, who wished to try a new horse off the stones, a little way into the country yesterday. We went through ——— and H——. Pretty places, those. Do you know them?"

"Yes; I know H——."

"And just at dusk, as we were spurring back to town, whom should I see walking on the path of the highroad but Lord Lilburne himself! I could hardly believe my eyes. I stopped, and, after asking him about you, I could not help expressing my surprise to see him on foot at such a place. You know the man's sneer. 'A Frenchman so gallant as Monsieur de Liancourt,' said he, 'need not be surprised at much greater miracles; the iron moves to the magnet: I have a little adventure here. Pardon me, if I ask you to ride on.' Of course, I wished him good-day; and a little farther up the road I saw a dark plain chariot, no coronet, no arms, no footman—only the man on the box, but the beauty of the horses assured me it must belong to Lilburne. Can you conceive such absurdity in a man of that age—and a very clever fellow, too? Yet, how is it that one does not ridicule it in Lil-

burne, as one would in another man between fifty and sixty?"

"Because one does not ridicule—one loathes—him."

"No; that's not it. The fact is, that one can't fancy Lilburne old. His manner is young—his eye is young. I never saw any one with so much vitality. 'The bad heart and the good digestion'—the twin secrets for wearing well, eh?"

"Where did you meet him—not near H——?"

"Yes; close by. Why? Have *you* any adventure there, too? Nay, forgive me; it was but a jest. Good night!"

Vaudemont fell into an uneasy reverie; he could not divine exactly why he should be alarmed; but he *was* alarmed at Lilburne being in the neighbourhood of H——. It was the foot of the profane violating the sanctuary. An undefined thrill shot through him, as his mind coupled together the associations of Lilburne and Fanny; but there was no ground for forebodings. Fanny did not stir out alone. An adventure, too—pooh! Lord Lilburne must be awaiting a willing and voluntary appointment, most probably from some one of the fair but decorous frailties in London. Lord Lilburne's more recent conquests were said to be among those of his own rank; suburbs are useful for such assignations. Any other thought was too horrible to be contemplated. He glanced to the clock; it was three in the morning. He would go to H—— early, even before he sought out Mr William Smith. With that resolution, and even his hardy frame worn out by

the excitement of the day, he threw himself on his bed and fell asleep.

He did not wake till near nine; and had just dressed, and hurried over his abstemious breakfast, when the servant of the house came to tell him that an old woman, apparently in great agitation, wished to see him. His head was still full of witnesses and law-suits; and he was vaguely expecting some visitor connected with his primary objects, when Sarah broke into the room. She cast a hurried, suspicious look round her, and then, throwing herself on her knees to him, "Oh!" she cried, "if you have taken that poor young thing away, God forgive you! Let her come back again. It shall be all hushed up. Don't ruin her! don't! that's a dear, good gentleman!"

"Speak plainly, woman—what do you mean?" cried Philip, turning pale.

A very few words sufficed for an explanation: Fanny's disappearance the previous night; the alarm of Sarah at her non-return; the apathy of old Simon, who did not comprehend what had happened, and quietly went to bed; the search Sarah had made during half the night; the intelligence she had picked up, that the policeman, going his rounds, had heard a female shriek near the school, but that all he could perceive through the mist was a carriage driving rapidly past him; Sarah's suspicions of Vaudemont, confirmed in the morning, when, entering Fanny's room, she perceived the poor girl's unfinished letter with his own; the clue to his address that the latter gave her;—all this, ere she

well understood what she herself was talking about, Vaudemont's alarm seized, and the reflection of a moment construed: The carriage; Lilburne seen lurking in the neighbourhood the previous day; the former attempt;—all flashed on him with an intolerable glare. While Sarah was yet speaking, he rushed from the house, he flew to Lord Lilburne's in Park Lane, he composed his manner, he inquired calmly. His lordship had slept from home; he was, they believed, at Fernside: Fernside! H—— was on the direct way to that villa! Scarcely ten minutes had elapsed since he heard the story ere he was on the road, with such speed as the promise of a guinea a-mile could extract from the spurs of a young post-boy applied to the flanks of London post-horses.

CHAPTER XV.

Ex humili magna ad fastigia rerum
Extollit.*—JUVENAL.

WHEN Harriet had quitted Fanny, the waiting-woman, craftily wishing to lure her into Lilburne's presence, had told her that the room below was empty; and the captive's mind naturally and instantly seized on the thought of escape. After a brief breathing pause, she crept noiselessly down the stairs, and gently opened the door; and at the very instant she did so, Robert Beaufort entered from the other door; she drew back in terror, when, what was her astonishment in hearing a name uttered that spell-bound her—the last name she could have expected to hear; for Lilburne, the instant he saw Beaufort pale, haggard, agitated, rush into the room, and bang the door after him, could only suppose that something of extraordinary moment had occurred with regard to the dreaded guest, and cried: "You come about Vaudemont! Something has happened about Vaudemont! about Philip! What is it? Calm yourself."

* Fortune raises men from low estate to the very summit of prosperity.

Fanny, as the name was thus abruptly uttered, actually thrust her face through the door; but she again drew back, and, all her senses preternaturally quickened at that name, while she held the door almost closed, listened with her whole soul in her ears.

The faces of both the men were turned from her, and her partial entry had not been perceived.

"Yes," said Robert Beaufort, leaning his weight, as if ready to sink to the ground, upon Lilburne's shoulder,—"yes: Vaudemont, or Philip, for they *are* one,—yes, it *is* about that man I have come to consult you. Arthur has arrived."

"Well?"

"And Arthur has seen the wretch who visited us, and the rascal's manner has so imposed on him, so convinced him that Philip is the heir to all our property, that he has come over—ill, ill—I fear," added Beaufort, in a hollow voice, "*dying*, to—to——"

"To guard against their machinations?"

"No, no, no—to say that if such be the case, neither honour nor conscience will allow us to resist his rights. He is so obstinate in this matter, his nerves so ill bear reasoning and contradiction, that I know not what to do——"

"Take breath—go on."

"Well, it seems that this man found out Arthur almost as soon as my son arrived at Paris—that he has persuaded Arthur that he has it in his power to prove the marriage—that he pretended to be very impatient

for a decision—that Arthur, in order to gain time to see me, affected irresolution—took him to Boulogne, for the rascal does not dare to return to England—left him there; and now comes back, my own son, as my worst enemy, to conspire against me for my property! I could not have kept my temper if I had stayed.—But that's not all—that's not the worst: Vaudemont left me suddenly in the morning on the receipt of a letter. In taking leave of Camilla, he let fall hints which fill me with fear.—Well, I inquired his movements as I came along; he had stopped at D——, had been closeted for above an hour with a man whose name the landlord of the inn knew, for it was on his carpet-bag—the name was *Barlow.* You remember the advertisements! Good Heavens! what is to be done? I would not do anything unhandsome or dishonest. But there never was a marriage. I never will believe there was a marriage—never!"

"There *was* a marriage, Robert Beaufort," said Lord Lilburne, almost enjoying the torture he was about to inflict; "and I hold here a paper that Philip Vaudemont—for so we will yet call him—would give his right hand to clutch for a moment. I have but just found it in a secret cavity in that bureau. Robert, on this paper may depend the fate, the fortune, the prosperity, the greatness of Philip Vaudemont;—or his poverty, his exile, his ruin!—See!"

Robert Beaufort glanced over the paper held out to him—dropped it on the floor—and staggered to a seat. Lilburne coolly replaced the document in the bureau,

and, limping to his brother-in-law, said with a smile,— "But the paper is in my possession—I will not destroy it. No; I have no right to destroy it. Besides, it would be a crime; but *if I give it* to you, *you* can do with it as you please."

"O Lilburne, spare me—spare me. I meant to be an honest man. I—I——" And Robert Beaufort sobbed.

Lilburne looked at him in scornful surprise.

"Do not fear that *I* shall ever think worse of you; and who else will know it? Do not fear *me*. No;— I, too, have reasons to hate and to fear this Philip Vaudemont; for Vaudemont shall be his name, and not Beaufort, in spite of fifty such scraps of paper! He has known a man—my worst foe—he has secrets of mine—of my past—perhaps of my present: but I laugh at his knowledge while he is a wandering adventurer;—I should tremble at that knowledge if he could thunder it out to the world as Philip Beaufort of Beaufort Court! There, I am candid with you. Now hear my plan. Prove to Arthur that his visitor is a convicted felon, by sending the officers of justice after him instantly—off with him again to the Settlements. Defy a single witness—entrap Vaudemont back to France, and prove him (I think I will prove him such—I think so—with a little money and a little pains)—prove him the accomplice of William Gawtrey, a coiner and a murderer! Pshaw! take yon paper. Do with it as you will—keep it—give it to Arthur— let Philip Vaudemont have it, and Philip Vaudemont

will be rich and great, the happiest man between earth and paradise! On the other hand, come and tell me that you have lost it, or that I never gave you such a paper, or that no such paper ever existed; and Philip Vaudemont may live a pauper, and die, perhaps a slave at the galleys! Lose it, I say—*lose it*,—and advise with me upon the rest."

Horror-struck, bewildered, the weak man gazed upon the calm face of the Master-villain, as the scholar of the old fables might have gazed on the fiend who put before him worldly prosperity here and the loss of his soul hereafter. He had never hitherto regarded Lilburne in his true light. He was appalled by the black heart that lay bare before him.

"I can't destroy it—I can't," he faltered out; "and *if* I did, out of love for Arthur,—don't talk of galleys,—of vengeance—I—I——"

"The arrears of the rents you have enjoyed will send you to jail for your life. No, no; *don't* destroy the paper!"

Beaufort rose with a desperate effort; he moved to the bureau. Fanny's heart was on her lips;—of this long conference she had understood only the one broad point on which Lilburne had insisted with an emphasis that could have enlightened an infant; and he looked on Beaufort as an infant then;—*On that paper rested Philip Vaudemont's fate—happiness if saved, ruin if destroyed; Philip—her Philip!* And Philip himself had said to her once—when had she ever forgotten his words? and now how those words flashed

across her — Philip himself had said to her once, "Upon a scrap of paper, if I could but find it, may depend my whole fortune, my whole happiness, all that I care for in life."—Robert Beaufort moved to the bureau—he seized the document—he looked over it again, hurriedly—and ere Lilburne, who by no means wished to have it destroyed in *his own* presence, was aware of his intention, he hastened with tottering steps to the hearth, averted his eyes, and cast it on the fire. At that instant, something white—he scarce knew what, it seemed to him as a spirit, as a ghost—darted by him, and snatched the paper, as yet uninjured, from the embers! There was a pause for the hundredth part of a moment:—a gurgling sound of astonishment and horror from Beaufort—an exclamation from Lilburne—a laugh from Fanny, as, her eyes flashing light, with a proud dilation of stature, with the paper clasped tightly to her bosom, she turned her looks of triumph from one to the other. The two men were both too amazed, at the instant, for rapid measures. But Lilburne, recovering himself first, hastened to her; she eluded his grasp—she made towards the door to the passage; when Lilburne, seriously alarmed, seized her arm;—

"Foolish child!—give me that paper!"

"Never but with my life!" And Fanny's cry for help rang through the house.

"Then——" the speech died on his lips, for at that instant a rapid stride was heard without—a momentary scuffle—voices in altercation;—the door gave way

as if a battering-ram had forced it;—not so much thrown forward, as actually hurled into the room, the body of Dykeman fell heavily, like a dead man's, at the very feet of Lord Lilburne—and Philip Vaudemont stood in the doorway!

The grasp of Lilburne on Fanny's arm relaxed, and the girl, with one bound, sprang to Philip's breast. "Here, here!" she cried; "take it—take it!" and she thrust the paper into his hand. "Don't let them have it—read it—see it—never mind *me!*" But Philip, though his hand unconsciously closed on the precious document, did mind Fanny; and in that moment her cause was the only one in the world to him.

"Foul villain!" he said, as he strode to Lilburne, while Fanny still clung to his breast: "Speak!—speak!—is—she—is she?—man—man, speak!—you know what I would say!—She is the child of your own daughter—the grandchild of that Mary whom you dishonoured—the child of the woman whom William Gawtrey saved from pollution! Before he died, Gawtrey commended her to my care!—O God of Heaven!—speak!—I am *not* too late!"

The manner, the words, the face of Philip left Lilburne terror-stricken with conviction. But the man's crafty ability, debased as it was, triumphed even over remorse for the dread guilt meditated—over gratitude for the dread guilt spared. He glanced at Beaufort—at Dykeman, who now, slowly recovering, gazed at him with eyes that seemed starting from their sockets; and lastly fixed his look on Philip himself. There

were three witnesses—presence of mind was his great attribute!

"And if, Monsieur de Vaudemont, I knew, or at least had the firmest persuasion, that Fanny *was* my grandchild, what then? Why else should she be here?—Pooh, sir! I am an old man."

Philip recoiled a step in wonder; his plain sense was baffled by the calm lie. He looked down at Fanny, who, comprehending nothing of what was spoken, for all her faculties, even her very sense of sight and hearing, were absorbed in her impatient anxiety for him, cried out,—

"No harm has come to Fanny—none: only frightened. Read!—Read!—Save that paper!—You know what you once said about a mere scrap of paper! Come away!—Come!"

He did now cast his eyes on the paper he held! That was an awful moment for Robert Beaufort—even for Lilburne! To snatch the fatal document from *that* gripe! They would as soon have snatched it from a tiger! He lifted his eyes—they rested on his mother's picture! Her lips smiled on him! He turned to Beaufort in a state of emotion too exulting, too blest for vulgar vengeance—for vulgar triumph—almost for words.

"Look yonder, Robert Beaufort—look!" and he pointed to the picture. "*Her* name is spotless! I stand again beneath a roof that was my father's—the Heir of Beaufort! We shall meet before the justice of our country. For you, Lord Lilburne, I will be-

lieve you: it is too horrible to doubt even your intentions. If wrong had chanced to her, I would have rent you where you stand, limb from limb. And thank *her*"—(for Lilburne recovered at this language the daring of his youth, before calculation, indolence, and excess had dulled the edge of his nerves; and, unawed by the height, and manhood, and strength of his menacer, stalked haughtily up to him)—"and thank your relationship to her," said Philip, sinking his voice into a whisper, "that I do not brand you as a pilferer and a cheat! Hush, knave! Hush, pupil of George Gawtrey!—there are no duels for me but with men of honour!"

Lilburne *now* turned white, and the big word stuck in his throat. In another instant, Fanny and her guardian had quitted the house.

"Dykeman," said Lord Lilburne, after a long silence, "I shall ask you another time how you came to admit that impertinent person. At present, go and order breakfast for Mr Beaufort."

As soon as Dykeman, more astounded, perhaps, by his lord's coolness, than even by the preceding circumstances, had left the study, Lilburne came up to Beaufort—who seemed absolutely stricken as if by palsy—and touching him impatiently and rudely, said,

"'Sdeath, man!—rouse yourself! There is not a moment to be lost! I have already decided on what you are to do. This paper is not worth a rush, unless the curate who examined it will depose to that fact. He *is* a curate—a Welsh curate;—you are yet

Mr Beaufort, a rich and a great man. The curate, properly managed, *may* depose to the contrary; and then we will indict them all for forgery and conspiracy. At the worst, you can, no doubt, get the parson to *forget* all about it—to stay away. His address was on the certificate—C——. Go yourself into Wales, without an instant's delay. Then, having arranged with Mr Jones, hurry back, cross to Boulogne, and buy this convict and his witness—yes, *buy* them! *That*, now, is the only thing. Quick!—quick!—quick! Zounds, man! if it were *my* affair, *my* estate, I would not care a pin for that fragment of paper; I should rather rejoice at it. I see how it could be turned against them! Go!"

"No, no; I am not equal to it! Will *you* manage it?—will *you?* Half my estate! All! Take it: but save——"

"Tut!" interrupted Lord Lilburne, in great disdain. "I am as rich as I want to be. *Money* does not bribe *me*. *I* manage this! *I!* Lord Lilburne! *I!* Why, if found out, it is subornation of witnesses. It is exposure—it is dishonour—it is ruin. What then? *You* should take the risk—for *you* must meet ruin if you do not. *I* cannot. *I* have nothing to gain!"

"I dare not!—I dare not!" murmured Beaufort, quite spirit-broken. "Subornation, dishonour, exposure!—and I, so respectable—my character!—and my son against me, too!—my son, in whom I lived again! no, no; let them take all!—Let them take it! Ha! ha! let them take it! Good-day to you."

"Where are you going?"

"I shall consult Mr Blackwell, and I'll let you know."

And Beaufort walked tremulously back to his carriage.

"Go to his lawyer!" growled Lilburne. "Yes, if his *lawyer* can help him to defraud men lawfully, he'll defraud them fast enough. *That* will be the respectable way of doing it! Um!—This may be an ugly business for me—the paper found here—if the girl can depose to what she heard, and she must have heard something. No, I think the laws of real property will hardly allow her evidence; and if they do—Um!—my grand-daughter!—is it possible? And Gawtrey rescued her mother, *my* child, from her own mother's vices! I thought my liking to that girl different from any other I have ever felt: it *was* pure—it *was!*—it *was* pity—affection. And I must never see her again—must forget the whole thing! And I am growing old—and I am childless—and alone!" He paused, almost with a groan: and then the expression of his face changing to rage, he cried out—"The man threatened me, and I was a coward! What to do?—Nothing! The defensive is my line. I shall play no more. I attack no one. Who will accuse Lord Lilburne? Still, Robert is a fool. I must not leave him to himself. Ho! there! Dykeman!—the carriage! I shall go to London."

Fortunate, no doubt, it was for Philip, that Mr Beaufort was not Lord Lilburne. For all history

teaches us—public and private history—conquerors—statesmen—sharp hypocrites, and brave designers—yes, they all teach us how mighty one man of great intellect and no scruple is against the justice of millions! The One Man *moves*—the Mass is inert. Justice sits on a throne. Roguery never rests—Activity is the lever of Archimedes.

CHAPTER XVI.

Quam multa injusta ac prava fiunt moribus.*—TULL.

Volat ambiguis
Mobilis alis Hora.†—SENECA.

MR ROBERT BEAUFORT sought Mr Blackwell, and long, rambling, and disjointed was his narrative. Mr Blackwell, after some consideration, proposed to *set about doing* the very things that Lilburne had proposed at once to *do*. But the lawyer expressed himself legally and covertly, so that it did not seem to the sober sense of Mr Beaufort at all the same plan. He was not the least alarmed at what Mr Blackwell proposed, though so shocked at what Lilburne dictated. Blackwell would go the next day into Wales—he would find out Mr Jones—he would *sound* him! Nothing was more common, with people of the nicest honour, than *just* to get a witness out of the way! Done in election petitions, for instance, every day.

"True," said Mr Beaufort, much relieved.

Then, after having done that, Mr Blackwell would

* How many unjust and vicious actions are perpetrated under the name of morals.

† The hour flies moving with doubtful wings.

return to town, and cross over to Boulogne to see this very impudent person whom Arthur (young men were so apt to be taken in!) had actually believed. He had no doubt he could settle it all. Robert Beaufort returned to Berkeley Square actually in spirits.

There he found Lilburne, who, on reflection, seeing that Blackwell was at all events more up to the business than his brother, assented to the propriety of the arrangement.

Mr Blackwell accordingly did set off the next day. *That next* day, perhaps, made all the difference. Within two hours from his gaining the document so important, Philip, without any subtler exertion of intellect than the decision of a plain, bold sense, had already forestalled both the peer and the lawyer. He had sent down Mr Barlow's head clerk to his master in Wales with the document, and a short account of the manner in which it had been discovered. And fortunate, indeed, was it that the copy had been found; for all the inquiries of Mr Barlow at A—— had failed, and probably would have failed, without such a clue, in fastening upon any one probable person to have officiated as Caleb Price's amanuensis. The sixteen hours' start Mr Barlow gained over Blackwell enabled the former to see Mr Jones—to show him his own handwriting—to get a written and witnessed attestation from which the curate, however poor, and however tempted, could never well have escaped (even had he been dishonest, which he was not), of his perfect recollection of the fact of making an extract from the

registry at Caleb's desire, though he owned he had quite forgotten the names he extracted till they were again placed before him. Barlow took care to arouse Mr Jones's interest in the case—quitted Wales—hastened over to Boulogne—saw Captain Smith, and without bribes, without threats, but by plainly proving to that worthy person that he could not return to England nor see his brother without being immediately arrested; that his brother's evidence was *already pledged* on the side of truth; and that by the acquisition of new testimony there could be no doubt that the suit would be successful — he diverted the captain from all disposition towards perfidy, convinced him on which side his interest lay, and saw him return to Paris, where very shortly afterwards he disappeared for ever from this world, being forced into a duel, much against his will (with a Frenchman whom he had attempted to defraud), and shot through the lungs :—Thus verifying a favourite maxim of Lord Lilburne's—viz., that it does not do, on the long run, for little men to play the Great Game !

On the same day that Blackwell returned, frustrated in his half-and-half attempts to corrupt Mr Jones, and not having been able even to discover Mr Smith, Mr Robert Beaufort received notice of an Action for Ejectment to be brought by Philip Beaufort at the next Assizes. And, to add to his afflictions, Arthur, whom he had hitherto endeavoured to amuse by a sort of ambiguous shilly-shally correspondence, became so alarmingly worse, that his mother brought him up to

town for advice. Lord Lilburne was, of course, sent for; and on learning all, his counsel was prompt.

"I told you before that this man loves your daughter. See if you can effect a compromise. The lawsuit will be ugly, and probably ruinous. He has a right to claim six years' arrears—that is above £100,000. Make yourself his father-in-law, and me his uncle-in-law; and, since we can't kill the wasp, we may at least soften the venom of his sting."

Beaufort, still perplexed, irresolute, sought his son; and, for the first time, spoke to him frankly—that is, frankly for Robert Beaufort! He owned that the copy of the register had been found by Lilburne in a secret drawer. He made the best of the story Lilburne himself furnished him with (adhering, of course, to the assertion uttered or insinuated to Philip) in regard to Fanny's abduction and interposition; he said nothing of his attempt to destroy the paper. Why should he? By admitting the copy in court—if so advised—he could get rid of Fanny's evidence altogether; even without such concession, her evidence might possibly be objected to or eluded. He confessed that he feared the witness who copied the register and the witness to the marriage were alive. And then he talked pathetically of his desire to do what was right, his dread of slander and misinterpretation. He said nothing of Sidney, and his belief that Sidney and Charles Spencer were the same; because, if his daughter were to be the instrument for effecting a compromise, it was clear that her engagement with Spencer must be cancelled and

concealed. And luckily Arthur's illness and Camilla's timidity, joined now to her father's injunctions not to excite Arthur in his present state with any additional causes of anxiety, prevented the confidence that might otherwise have ensued between the brother and sister. And Camilla, indeed, had no heart for such a conference. How, when she looked on Arthur's glassy eye, and listened to his hectic cough, could she talk to him of love and marriage? As to the automaton, Mrs Beaufort, Robert made sure of *her* discretion.

Arthur listened attentively to his father's communication, and the result of that interview was the following letter from Arthur to his cousin :—

"I write to you without fear of misconstruction ; for I write to you unknown to all my family, and I am the only one of them who can have no personal interest in the struggle about to take place between my father and yourself. Before the law can decide between you, I shall be in my grave. I write this from the Bed of Death. Philip, I write this—*I*, who stood beside a deathbed more sacred to you than mine—I, who received your mother's last sigh. And with that sigh there was a smile that lasted when the sigh was gone : for I promised to befriend her children. Heaven knows how anxiously I sought to fulfil that solemn vow! Feeble and sick myself, I followed you and your brother with no aim, no prayer, but this,—to embrace you and say, 'Accept a new brother in me.' I spare you the humiliation—for it is yours, not mine —of recalling what passed between us when at last we

met. Yet I still sought to save, at least, Sidney,—more especially confided to my care by his dying mother. He mysteriously eluded our search; but we had reason, by a letter received from some unknown hand, to believe him saved and provided for. Again I met you at Paris. I saw you were poor. Judging from your associate, I might, with justice, think you depraved. Mindful of your declaration never to accept bounty from a Beaufort, and remembering with natural resentment the outrage I had before received from you, I judged it vain to seek and remonstrate with you, but I did not judge it vain to aid. I sent you, anonymously, what at least would suffice, if absolute poverty had subjected you to evil courses, to rescue you from them if your heart were so disposed. Perhaps that sum, trifling as it was, may have smoothed your path and assisted your career. And why tell you all this now? To dissuade from asserting rights you conceive to be just?—Heaven forbid! If justice is with you, so also is the duty due to your mother's name. But simply for this: that in asserting such rights, you content yourself with justice, not revenge—that in righting yourself, you do not wrong others. If the law should decide for you, the arrears you could demand would leave my father and sister beggars. This may be law—it would not be justice; for my father solemnly believed himself, and had every apparent probability in his favour, the true heir of the wealth that devolved upon him. This is not all. There may be circum-

stances connected with the discovery of a certain document that, if authentic—and I do not presume to question it—may decide the contest so far as it rests on truth; circumstances which might seem to bear hard upon my father's good name and faith. I do not know sufficiently of law to say how far these could be publicly urged, or, if urged, exaggerated and tortured by an advocate's calumnious ingenuity. But again I say, justice, and not revenge! And with this I conclude, enclosing to you these lines, written in your own hand, and leaving you the arbiter of their value.

"ARTHUR BEAUFORT."

The lines enclosed were these, a second time placed before the reader:—

"I cannot guess who you are. They say that you call yourself a relation; that must be some mistake. I knew not that my poor mother had relations so kind. But, whoever you be, you soothed her last hours—she died in your arms; and if ever—years, long years, hence—we should chance to meet, and I can do anything to aid another, my blood, and my life, and my heart, and my soul, all are slaves to your will! If you be really of her kindred, I commend to you my brother; he is at —— with Mr Morton. If you can serve him, my mother's soul will watch over you as a guardian angel. As for me, I ask no help from any one; I go into the world, and will carve out my own way. So much do I shrink from the thought of charity from

others, that I do not believe I could bless you as I do now, if your kindness to me did not close with the stone upon my mother's grave. PHILIP."

This letter was sent to the only address of Monsieur de Vaudemont which the Beauforts knew—viz., his apartments in town—and he did not receive it the day it was sent.

Meanwhile Arthur Beaufort's malady continued to gain ground rapidly. His father, absorbed in his own more selfish fears (though, at the first sight of Arthur, overcome by the alteration of his appearance), had ceased to consider his illness fatal. In fact, his affection for Arthur was rather one of pride than love; long absence had weakened the ties of early custom. He prized him as an heir rather than treasured him as a son. It almost seemed that, as the Heritage was in danger, so the Heir became less dear: this was only because he was less thought of. Poor Mrs Beaufort, yet but partially acquainted with the terrors of her husband, still clung to hope for Arthur. Her affection for him brought out from the depths of her cold and insignificant character qualities that had never before been apparent. She watched—she nursed—she tended him. The fine lady was gone; nothing but the mother was left behind.

With a delicate constitution, and with an easy temper, which yielded to the influence of companions inferior to himself, except in bodily vigour and more sturdy will, Arthur Beaufort had been ruined by pros-

perity. His talents and acquirements, if not first-rate, at least far above mediocrity, had only served to refine his tastes, not to strengthen his mind. His amiable impulses, his charming disposition, and sweet temper, had only served to make him the dupe of the parasites that feasted on the lavish heir. His heart, frittered away in the usual round of light intrigues and hollow pleasures, had become too sated and exhausted for the redeeming blessings of a deep and noble love. He had so lived for Pleasure that he had never known Happiness. His frame broken by excesses in which his better nature never took delight, he came home—to hear of ruin and to die!

It was evening in the sick-room. Arthur had risen from the bed to which, for some days, he had voluntarily taken, and was stretched on the sofa before the fire. Camilla was leaning over him, keeping in the shade, that he might not see the tears which she could not suppress. His mother had been endeavouring to amuse him, as she would have amused herself, by reading aloud one of the light novels of the Hour; novels that paint the life of the higher classes as one gorgeous holiday.

"My dear mother," said the patient, querulously, "I have no interest in these false descriptions of the life I have led. I know that life's worth. Ah! had I been trained to some employment, some profession! had I—well—it is weak to repine. Mother, tell me, you have seen Monsieur de Vaudemont; *is he strong and healthy?*"

"Yes; too much so. He has not your elegance, dear Arthur."

"And do you admire him, Camilla? Has no other caught your heart or your fancy?"

"My dear Arthur," interrupted Mrs Beaufort, "you forget that Camilla is scarcely out; and of course a young girl's affections, if she's well brought up, are regulated by the experience of her parents. It is time to take the medicine: it certainly agrees with you; you have more colour to-day, my dear, dear son."

While Mrs Beaufort was pouring out the medicine, the door gently opened, and Mr Robert Beaufort appeared; behind him there rose a taller and a statelier form, but one which seemed more bent, more humbled, more agitated. Beaufort advanced. Camilla looked up and turned pale. The visitor escaped from Mr Beaufort's grasp on his arm; he came forward, trembling; he fell on his knees beside Arthur, and, seizing his hand, bent over it in silence: but silence so stormy! silence more impressive than all words: his breast heaved, his whole frame shook. Arthur guessed at once whom he saw, and bent down gently, as if to raise his visitor.

"Oh! Arthur! Arthur!" then cried Philip; "forgive me! My mother's comforter—my cousin—my brother! Oh! *brother*, forgive me!"

And as he half-rose, Arthur stretched out his arms, and Philip clasped him to his breast.

It is in vain to describe the different feelings that agitated those who beheld; the selfish congratulations of Robert, mingled with a better and purer feeling;

the stupor of the mother; the emotions that she herself could not unravel, which rooted Camilla to the spot.

"You own me, then,—you own me!" cried Philip. "You accept the brotherhood that my mad passions once rejected! And you, too—you Camilla—you who once knelt by my side, under this very roof—do you remember me *now?* Oh, Arthur! that letter—that letter!—yes, indeed, that aid, which I ascribed to any one rather than to you, made the date of a fairer fortune. I may have owed to that aid the very fate that has preserved me till now—the very name which I have not discredited. No, no; do not think you can ask *me* a favour; you can but claim your due. Brother! my dear brother!"

CHAPTER XVII.

Warwick.—Exceeding well! his cares are now all over.—*Henry IV.*

The excitement of this interview soon overpowering Arthur, Philip, in quitting the room with Mr Beaufort, asked a conference with that gentleman; and they went into the very parlour from which the rich man had once threatened to expel the haggard suppliant. Philip glanced round the room, and the whole scene came again before him. After a pause, he thus began,—

"Mr Beaufort, let the Past be forgotten. We may have need of mutual forgiveness, and I, who have so wronged your noble son, am willing to suppose that I misjudged you. I cannot, it is true, forego this lawsuit."

Mr Beaufort's face fell.

"I have no right to do so. I am the trustee of my father's honour, and my mother's name: I must vindicate both: I cannot forego this lawsuit. But when I once bowed myself to enter your house—then only with a hope, where now I have the certainty, of obtaining my heritage—it was with the resolve to bury in oblivion every sentiment that would transgress the most temperate justice. *Now*, I will do more. If the

law decide *against* me, we are as we were ; if *with* me, —listen : I will leave you the lands of Beaufort, for your life and your son's. I ask but for me and for mine such a deduction from your wealth as will enable me, should my brother be yet living, to provide for him ; and (if you approve the choice, which out of all earth I would desire to make) to give whatever belongs to more refined or graceful existence than I myself care for to her whom I would call my wife. Robert Beaufort, in this room I once asked you to restore to me the only being I then loved : I am now again your suppliant ; and this time you have it in your power to grant my prayer. Let Arthur be, in truth, my brother : give me, if I prove myself, as I feel assured, entitled to hold the name my father bore, give me your daughter as my wife ; give me Camilla, and I will not envy you the lands I am willing for myself to resign ; and if they pass to *my* children, those children will be your daughter's !"

The first impulse of Mr Beaufort was to grasp the hand held out to him—to pour forth an incoherent torrent of praise and protestation, of assurances that he could not hear of such generosity, that what was right was right, that he should be proud of such a son-in-law, and much more to the same key. And in the midst of this it suddenly occurred to Mr Beaufort that if Philip's case were really as good as he said it was, he could not talk so coolly of resigning the property it would secure him for the term of a life (Mr Beaufort thought of *his own*) so uncommonly good, to say nothing of Arthur's.

At this notion, he thought it best not to commit himself too far; drew in as artfully as he could, until he could consult Lord Lilburne and his lawyer; and, recollecting also that he had a great deal to manage with respect to Camilla and her prior attachment, he began to talk of his distress for Arthur, of the necessity of waiting a little before Camilla was spoken to, while so agitated about her brother, of the exceedingly strong case which his lawyer advised him he possessed—not but what he would rather rest the matter on justice than law—and that if the law *should* be with him, he would not the less (provided he did not force his daughter's inclinations, of which, indeed, he had no fear) be most happy to bestow her hand on his brother's nephew, with such a portion as would be most handsome to all parties.

It often happens to us in this world, that when we come with our heart in our hands to some person or other,—when we pour out some generous burst of feeling so enthusiastic and self-sacrificing, that a bystander would call us fool and Quixote;—it often, I say, happens to us to find our warm self suddenly thrown back upon our cold self; to discover that we are utterly uncomprehended, and that the swine who would have munched up the acorn does not know what to make of the pearl. That sudden ice which then freezes over us, that supreme disgust and despair almost of the whole world, which for the moment we confound with the one worldling—they who have felt may reasonably ascribe to Philip. He listened to Mr

Beaufort in utter and contemptuous silence, and then replied only,—

"Sir, at all events, this is a question for law to decide. If it decide as you think, it is for you to act; if as I think, it is for me. Till then, I will speak to you no more of your daughter, or my intentions. Meanwhile, all I ask is the liberty to visit your son. I would not be banished from his sick-room!"

"My dear nephew!" cried Mr Beaufort, again alarmed, "consider this house as your home."

Philip bowed and retreated to the door, followed obsequiously by his uncle.

It chanced that both Lord Lilburne and Mr Blackwell were of the same mind as to the course advisable for Mr Beaufort now to pursue. Lord Lilburne was not only anxious to exchange a hostile litigation for an amicable lawsuit, but he was really eager to put the seal of relationship upon any secret with regard to himself, that a man who might inherit £20,000 a-year—a dead shot—and a bold tongue—might think fit to disclose. This made him more earnest than he otherwise might have been in advice as to other people's affairs. He spoke to Beaufort as a man of the world—to Blackwell as a lawyer.

"Pin the man down to his generosity," said Lilburne, "before he gets the property. Possession makes a great change in a man's value of money. After all, you can't enjoy the property when you're dead: he gives it next to Arthur, who is not married; and if anything happen to Arthur, poor fellow, why

in devolving on your daughter's husband and children, it goes in the right line. Pin him down at once: get credit with the world for the most noble and disinterested conduct, by letting your counsel state that the instant you discovered the lost document, you wished to throw no obstacle in the way of proving the marriage, and that the only thing to consider is, if the marriage be proved; if so, you will be the first to rejoice, &c., &c. You know all that sort of humbug as well as any man!"

Mr Blackwell suggested the same advice, though in different words—after taking the opinions of three eminent members of the bar; those opinions, indeed, were not all alike—one was adverse to Mr Robert Beaufort's chance of success, one was doubtful of it, the third maintained that he had nothing to fear from the action—except, possibly, the ill-natured construction of the world. Mr Robert Beaufort disliked the idea of the world's ill-nature, almost as much as he did that of losing his property. And when even this last and more encouraging authority, learning privately from Mr Blackwell, that Arthur's illness was of a nature to terminate fatally, observed, "that a compromise with a claimant, who was at all events Mr Beaufort's nephew, by which Mr Beaufort could secure the enjoyment of the estates to himself for life, and to his son for life also, should not (whatever his probabilities of legal success) be hastily rejected—unless he had a peculiar affection for a very distant relation—who, failing Mr Beaufort's male issue and Philip's claim,

would be heir-at-law, but whose rights would cease if Arthur liked to cut off the entail,"—Mr Beaufort at once decided. He had a personal dislike to that distant heir-at-law; he had a strong desire to retain the esteem of the world; he had an intimate conviction of the justice of Philip's claim; he had a remorseful recollection of his brother's generous kindness to himself; he preferred to have for his heir, in case of Arthur's decease, a nephew who would marry his daughter, than a remote kinsman. And should, after all, the lawsuit fail to prove Philip's right, he was not sorry to have the estate in his own power by Arthur's act in cutting off the entail. Brief; all these reasons decided him. He saw Philip—he spoke to Arthur—and all the preliminaries, as suggested above, were arranged between the parties. The entail was cut off, and Arthur secretly prevailed upon his father, to whom, for the present, the fee-simple thus belonged, to make a will, by which he bequeathed the estates to Philip, without reference to the question of his legitimacy. Mr Beaufort felt his conscience greatly eased after this action—which, too, he could always retract if he pleased; and henceforth the lawsuit became but a matter of form so far as the property it involved was concerned.

While these negotiations went on, Arthur continued gradually to decline. Philip was with him always. The sufferer took a strange liking to this long-dreaded relation, this man of iron frame and thews. In Philip there was so much of life, that Arthur almost felt as if in his presence itself there was an antagonism to death.

And Camilla saw thus her cousin, day by day, hour by hour, in that sick-chamber, lending himself, with the gentle tenderness of a woman, to soften the pang, to arouse the weariness, to cheer the dejection. Philip never spoke to her of love: in such a scene that had been impossible. She overcame in their mutual cares the embarrassment she had before felt in his presence; whatever her other feelings, she could not, at least, but be grateful to one so tender to her brother. Three letters of Charles Spencer's had been, in the afflictions of the house, only answered by a brief line. She now took the occasion of a momentary and delusive amelioration in Arthur's disease to write to him more at length. She was carrying, as usual, the letter to her mother, when Mr Beaufort met her, and took the letter from her hand. He looked embarrassed for a moment, and bade her follow him into his study. It was then that Camilla learned, for the first time distinctly, the claims and rights of her cousin; then she learned also at what price those rights were to be enforced with the least possible injury to her father. Mr Beaufort naturally put the case before her in the strongest point of the dilemma. He was to be ruined—utterly ruined; a pauper, a beggar, if Camilla did not save him. The master of his fate demanded his daughter's hand. Habitually subservient to even a whim of her parents, this intelligence, the entreaty, the command with which it was accompanied, overwhelmed her. She answered but by tears; and Mr Beaufort, assured of her submission, left her, to consider of the tone of the letter he

himself should write to Mr Spencer. He had sat down to this very task when he was summoned to Arthur's room. His son was suddenly taken worse: spasms that threatened immediate danger, convulsed and exhausted him; and when these were allayed, he continued for three days so feeble that Mr Beaufort, his eyes now thoroughly open to the loss that awaited him, had no thoughts even for worldly interests.

On the night of the third day, Philip, Robert Beaufort, his wife, his daughter, were grouped round the deathbed of Arthur. The sufferer had just wakened from sleep, and he motioned to Philip to raise him. Mr Beaufort started, as by the dim light he saw *his* son in the arms of *Catherine's!* and another Chamber of Death seemed, shadow-like, to replace the one before him. Words, long since uttered, knelled in his ear—"There shall be a deathbed yet beside which you shall see the spectre of her, now so calm, rising for retribution from the grave!" His blood froze, his hair stood erect; he cast a hurried, shrinking glance round the twilight of the darkened room; and, with a feeble cry, covered his white face with his trembling hands! But on Arthur's lips there was a serene smile; he turned his eyes from Philip to Camilla, and murmured, "*She* will repay you!" A pause, and the mother's shriek rang through the room! Robert Beaufort raised his face from his hands. His son was dead!

CHAPTER XVIII.

Jul.—And what reward do you propose?
It must be my love.—*The Double Marriage.*

While these events, dark, hurried, and stormy, had befallen the family of his betrothed, Sidney had continued his calm life by the banks of the lovely lake. After a few weeks, his confidence in Camilla's fidelity overbore all his apprehensions and forebodings. Her letters, though constrained by the inspection to which they were submitted, gave him inexpressible consolation and delight. He began, however, early to fancy that there was a change in their tone. The letters seemed to shun the one subject to which all others were as nought; they turned rather upon the guests assembled at Beaufort Court; and why I know not—for there was nothing in them to authorise jealousy—the brief words devoted to Monsieur de Vaudemont filled him with uneasy and terrible suspicion. He gave vent to these feelings, as fully as he dared do, under the knowledge that his letter would be seen; and Camilla never again even mentioned the name of Vaudemont. Then there was a long pause; then her brother's arrival and illness were announced; then, at intervals, but a few hurried lines; then a complete,

long, dreadful silence; and lastly, with a deep black border and a solemn black seal, came the following letter from Mr Beaufort:—

"My dear Sir,—I have the unutterable grief to announce to you and your worthy uncle the irreparable loss I have sustained in the death of my only son. It is a month to-day since he departed this life. He died, sir, as a Christian *should* die—humbly, penitently—exaggerating the few faults of his short life, but" (and here the writer's hypocrisy, though so natural to him—*was it, that he knew not that he was hypocritical?*—fairly gave way before the real and human anguish, for which there is no dictionary!)—"but I cannot pursue this theme!

"Slowly now awakening to the duties yet left me to discharge, I cannot but be sensible of the material difference in the prospects of my remaining child. Miss Beaufort is now the heiress to an ancient name and a large fortune. She subscribes with me to the necessity of consulting those new considerations which so melancholy an event forces upon her mind. The little fancy — or liking (the acquaintance was too short for more) that might naturally spring up between two amiable young persons thrown together in the country, must be banished from our thoughts. As a friend, I shall be always happy to hear of your welfare; and should you ever think of a profession in which I can serve you, you may command my utmost interest and exertions. I know, my young friend,

what you will feel at first, and how disposed you will be to call me mercenary and selfish. Heaven knows if *that* be really my character! But at your age, impressions are easily effaced; and any experienced friend of the world will assure you, that, in the altered circumstances of the case, I have no option. All intercourse and correspondence, of course, cease with this letter,—until, at least, we may all meet, with no sentiments but those of friendship and esteem. I desire my compliments to your worthy uncle, in which Mrs and Miss Beaufort join; and I am sure you will be happy to hear that my wife and daughter, though still in great affliction, have suffered less in health than I could have ventured to anticipate.—Believe me, dear Sir, yours sincerely, ROBERT BEAUFORT.

"To C. SPENCER, Esq., Jun."

When Sidney received this letter, he was with Mr Spencer, and the latter read it over the young man's shoulder, on which he leant affectionately. When they came to the concluding words, Sidney turned round with a vacant look and a hollow smile. "You see, sir," he said, "you see——"

"My boy—my son—you bear this as you ought. Contempt will soon efface——"

Sidney started to his feet, and his whole countenance was changed.

"Contempt!—yes, for *him!* But for *her*—*she* knows it not—she is no party to this—I cannot be-

lieve it—I will not! I—I——" and he rushed out of the room. He was absent till nightfall, and when he returned, he endeavoured to appear calm—but it was in vain.

The next day brought him a letter from Camilla, written unknown to her parents,—short, it is true (confirming the sentence of separation contained in her father's), and imploring him not to reply to it,—but still so full of gentle and of sorrowful feeling, so evidently worded in the wish to soften the anguish she inflicted, that it did more than soothe—it even administered hope.

Now, when Mr Robert Beaufort had recovered the ordinary tone of his mind, sufficiently to indite the letter Sidney had just read, he had become fully sensible of the necessity of concluding the marriage between Philip and Camilla, before the publicity of the lawsuit. The action for the ejectment could not take place before the ensuing March or April. He would waive the ordinary etiquette of time and mourning to arrange all before. Indeed he lived in hourly fear lest Philip should discover that he had a rival in his brother, and break off the marriage, with its contingent advantages. The first announcement of such a suit in the newspapers might reach the Spencers; and if the young man were, as he doubted not, Sidney Beaufort, would necessarily bring him forward, and ensure the dreaded explanation. Thus apprehensive and ever scheming, Robert Beaufort spoke to Philip so much, and with such apparent feeling, of his wish

to gratify, at the earliest possible period, the last wish of his son, in the union now arranged—he spoke, with such seeming consideration and good sense, of the avoidance of all scandal and misinterpretation in the suit itself, which suit a previous marriage between the claimant and his daughter would show at once to be of so amicable a nature,—that Philip, ardently in love as he was, could not but assent to any hastening of his expected happiness compatible with decorum. As to any previous publicity by way of newspaper comment, he agreed with Mr Beaufort in deprecating it. But then came the question, What name was he to bear in the interval?

"As to that," said Philip, somewhat proudly, "when, after my mother's suit in her own behalf, I persuaded her not to bear the name of Beaufort, though her due,—and for my own part, I prized her own modest name, which under such dark appearances was in reality spotless—as much as the loftier one which you bear and my father bore;—so, I shall not resume the name the law denies me till the law restores it to me. Law alone can efface the wrong which law has done me."

Mr Beaufort was pleased with this reasoning (erroneous though it was), and he now hoped that all would be safely arranged.

That a girl so situated as Camilla, and of a character not energetic or profound, but submissive, dutiful, and timid, shonld yield to the arguments of her father, the desire of her dying brother—that she should not dare

to refuse to become the instrument of peace to a divided family, the saving sacrifice to her father's endangered fortunes—that, in fine, when nearly a month after Arthur's death, her father, leading her into the room where Philip waited her footstep with a beating heart, placed her hand in his—and Philip, falling on his knees, said, "May I hope to retain this hand for life?"—she should falter out such words as he might construe into not reluctant acquiescence; that all this should happen is so natural that the reader is already prepared for it. But still she thought with bitter and remorseful feelings of him thus deliberately and faithlessly renounced. She felt how deeply he had loved her—she knew how fearful would be his grief. She looked sad and thoughtful; but her brother's death was sufficient in Philip's eyes to account for that. The praises and gratitude of her father, to whom she suddenly seemed to become an object of even greater pride and affection than ever Arthur had been—the comfort of a generous heart, that takes pleasure in the very sacrifice it makes—the acquittal of her conscience as to the motives of her conduct—began, however, to produce their effect. Nor, as she had lately seen more of Philip, could she be insensible of his attachment—of his many noble qualities—of the pride which most women might have felt in his addresses, when his rank was once made clear; and as she had ever been of a character more regulated by duty than passion, so one who could have seen what was passing in her mind would have had little fear for Philip's future happi-

ness in her keeping—little fear but that, when once married to him, her affections would have gone along with her duties; and that if the first love were yet recalled, it would be with a sigh due rather to some romantic recollection than some continued regret. Few of either sex are ever united to their first love; yet married people jog on, and call each other "my dear" and "my darling" all the same! It might be, it is true, that Philip would be scarcely loved with the intenseness with which he loved; but if Camilla's feelings were capable of corresponding to the ardent and impassioned ones of that strong and vehement nature, such feelings were not yet developed in her: —the heart of the woman might still be half concealed in the veil of the virgin innocence. Philip himself was satisfied—he believed that he was beloved; for it is the property of love, in a large and noble heart, to reflect itself, and to see its own image in the eyes on which it looks. As the poet gives ideal beauty and excellence to some ordinary child of Eve, worshipping less the being that is, than the being he imagines and conceives—so, Love, which makes us all poets for a while, throws its own divine light over a heart perhaps really cold, and becomes dazzled into the joy of a false belief by the very lustre with which it surrounds its object.

The more, however, Camilla saw of Philip, the more (gradually overcoming her former mysterious and superstitious awe of him) she grew familiarised to his peculiar cast of character and thought; so the more

she began to distrust her father's assertion that he had insisted on her hand as a price—a bargain—an equivalent for the sacrifice of a dire revenge. And with this thought came another. Was she worthy of this man?—was she not deceiving him? ought she not to say, at least, that she *had* known a previous attachment, however determined she might be to subdue it? Often the desire for this just and honourable confession trembled on her lips, and as often was it checked by some chance circumstance or some maiden fear. Despite their connection, there was not yet between them that delicious intimacy which ought to accompany the affiance of two hearts and souls. The gloom of the house; the restraint on the very language of love imposed by a death so recent, and so deplored, accounted in much for this reserve. And for the rest, Robert Beaufort prudently left them very few and very brief opportunities to be alone.

In the mean-time, Philip (now persuaded that the Beauforts were ignorant of his brother's fate) had set Mr Barlow's activity in search of Sidney; and his painful anxiety to discover one so dear and so mysteriously lost, was the only cause of uneasiness apparent in the brightening Future. While these researches, hitherto fruitless, were being made, it so happened, as London began now to refill, and gossip began now to revive, that a report got abroad, no one knew how (probably from the servants), that Monsieur de Vaudemont, a distinguished French officer, was shortly to lead the daughter and sole heiress of Robert Beaufort,

Esq., M.P., to the hymeneal altar; and that report very quickly found its way into the London papers: from the London papers it spread to the Provincial—it reached the eyes of Sidney in his now gloomy and despairing solitude. The day that he read it, he disappeared.

CHAPTER XIX.

> *Jul.*—Good lady, love him!
> You have a noble and an honest gentleman.
> I ever found him so.
> Love him no less than I have done, and serve him,
> And heaven shall bless you—you shall bless my ashes.
>
> BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER: *The Double Marriage.*

WE have been too long absent from Fanny; it is time to return to her. The delight she experienced when Philip made her understand all the benefits, the blessings, that her courage, nay, her *intellect*, had bestowed upon him, the blushing ecstasy with which she heard (as they returned to H——, the eventful morning of her deliverance, side by side, her hand clasped in his, and often pressed to his grateful lips) his praises, his thanks, his fear for her safety, his joy at regaining her—all this amounted to a bliss, which, till then, she could not have conceived that life was capable of bestowing. And when he left her at H——, to hurry to his lawyer's with the recovered document, it was but for an hour. He returned, and did not quit her for several days. And in that time he became sensible of her astonishing, and, to him, it seemed miraculous, improvement in all that renders Mind the equál to Mind; miraculous, for he guessed not the Influence

that makes miracles its commonplace. And now he listened attentively to her when she conversed; he read with her (though reading was never much in his vocation), his unfastidious ear was charmed with her voice, when it sang those simple songs; and his manner (impressed alike by gratitude for the signal service rendered to him, and by the discovery that Fanny was no longer a child, whether in mind or years), though not less gentle than before, was less familiar, less superior, more respectful, and more earnest. It was a change which raised her in her own self-esteem. Ah, those were rosy days for Fanny!

A less sagacious judge of character than Lilburne would have formed doubts perhaps of the nature of Philip's interest in Fanny. But he comprehended at once the fraternal interest which a man like Philip might well take in a creature like Fanny, if commended to his care by a protector whose doom was so awful as that which had engulfed the life of William Gawtrey. Lilburne had some thoughts at first of claiming her; but as he had no power to compel her residence with him, he did not wish, on consideration, to come again in contact with Philip upon ground so full of humbling recollections as that still overshadowed by the images of Gawtrey and Mary. He contented himself with writing an artful letter to Simon, stating that from Fanny's residence with Mr Gawtrey, and from her likeness to her mother, whom he had only seen as a child, he had conjectured the relationship she bore to himself; and having obtained other evi-

dence of that fact (he did not say what or where), he had not scrupled to remove her to his roof, meaning to explain all to Mr Simon Gawtrey the next day. This letter was accompanied by one from a lawyer, informing Simon Gawtrey that Lord Lilburne would pay £200 a-year, in quarterly payments, to his order; and that he was requested to add, that when the young lady he had so benevolently reared came of age, or married, an adequate provision would be made for her. Simon's mind blazed up at this last intelligence, when read to him, though he neither comprehended nor sought to know why Lord Lilburne should be so generous, or what that noble person's letter to himself was intended to convey. For two days, he seemed restored to vigorous sense; but when he had once clutched the first payment made in advance, the touch of the money seemed to numb him back to his lethargy; the excitement of desire died in the dull sense of possession.

And just at that time Fanny's happiness came to a close. Philip received Arthur Beaufort's letter; and now ensued long and frequent absences; and on his return, for about an hour or so at a time, he spoke of sorrow and death; and the books were closed and the songs silenced. All fear for Fanny's safety was, of course, over: all necessity for her work; their little establishment was increased. She never stirred out without Sarah; yet she would rather that there had been some danger on her account for *him* to-guard against, or some trial that his smile might soothe.

His prolonged absences began to prey upon her—the books ceased to interest—no study filled up the dreary gap—her step grew listless—her cheek pale—she was sensible at last that his presence had become necessary to her very life. One day, he came to the house earlier than usual, and with a much happier and serener expression of countenance than he had worn of late.

Simon was dozing in his chair, with his old dog, now scarce vigorous enough to bark, curled up at his feet. Neither man nor dog was more as a witness to what was spoken than the leathern chair or the hearth-rug on which they severally reposed.

There was something which, in actual life, greatly contributed to the interest of Fanny's strange lot, but which in narration, I feel I cannot make sufficiently clear to the reader. And this was her connection and residence with that old man. *Her* character forming, as *his* was completely gone; here, the blank becoming filled—there, the page fading to a blank. It was the utter, total Deathliness-in-Life of Simon, that, while so impressive to see, renders it impossible to bring him before the reader, in his full force of contrast to the young Psyche. He seldom spoke—often, not from morning till night; he now seldom stirred. It is in vain to describe the indescribable : let the reader draw the picture for himself. And whenever (as I sometimes think he will, after he has closed this book) he conjures up the idea he attaches to the name of its heroine, let him see before her, as she glides through the humble room—as she listens to the voice of him

she loves—as she sits musing by the window, with the church spire just visible—as day by day the soul brightens and expands within her—still let the reader see within the same walls, grey-haired, blind, dull to all feeling, frozen to all life, that stony image of Time and Death! Perhaps then he may understand why they who beheld the real and the living Fanny blooming under that chill and mass of shadow, felt that her grace, her simplicity, her charming beauty, were raised by the contrast, till they grew associated with thoughts and images, mysterious and profound, belonging not more to the lovely than to the sublime.

So there sat the old man; and Philip, though aware of his presence, speaking as if he were alone with Fanny, after touching on more casual topics, thus addressed her:—

"My true and my dear friend, it is to you that I shall owe, not only my rights and fortune, but the vindication of my mother's memory. You have not only placed flowers upon that gravestone, but it is owing to you, under Providence, that it will be inscribed at last with the name which refutes all calumny. Young and innocent as you now are, my gentle and beloved benefactress, you cannot as yet know what a blessing it will be to me to engrave that name upon that simple stone. Hereafter, when you yourself are a wife, a mother, you will comprehend the service you have rendered to the living and the dead!"

He stopped—struggling with the rush of emotions that overflowed his heart. Alas THE DEAD! what ser-

vice can we render to them?—what availed it now, either to the dust below, or to the immortality above, that the fools and knaves of this world should mention the Catherine whose life was gone, whose ears were deaf, with more or less respect? There is in calumny that poison that, even when the character throws off the slander, the heart remains diseased beneath the effect. They say that truth comes sooner or later; but it seldom comes before the soul, passing from agony to contempt, has grown callous to men's judgments. Calumniate a human being in youth—adulate that being in age;—what has been the interval? Will the adulation atone either for the torture, or the hardness which the torture leaves at last? And if, as in Catherine's case (a case, how common!), the truth come *too late*—if the tomb is closed—if the heart you have wrung can be wrung no more—why the truth is as valueless as the epitaph on a forgotten name! Some such conviction of the hollowness of his own words, when he spoke of service to the dead, smote upon Philip's heart, and stopped the flow of his words.

Fanny, conscious only of his praise, his thanks, and the tender affection of his voice, stood still silent, her eyes downcast, her breast heaving.

Philip resumed,—

"And now, Fanny, my honoured sister, I would thank you for more, were it possible, even than this. I shall owe to you not only name and fortune, but happiness. It is from the rights to which you have assisted me and which will shortly be made clear, that

I am enabled to demand a hand I have long coveted—the hand of one as dear to me as you are. In a word, the time has, this day, been fixed, when I shall have a home to offer to you and to this old man—when I can present to you a sister who will prize you as I do: for I love you so dearly—I owe you so much—that even that home would lose half its smiles if you were not there. Do you understand me, Fanny? The sister I speak of will be my wife!"

The poor girl who heard this speech of most cruel tenderness, did not fall, or faint, or evince any outward emotion, except in a deadly paleness. She seemed like one turned to stone. Her very breath forsook her for some moments, and then came back with a long deep sigh, she laid her hand lightly upon his arm, and said, calmly,—

"Yes—I understand. We once saw a wedding. You are to be married—I shall see *yours!*"

"You shall; and, later, perhaps, I may see your own. I have a brother. Ah! if I could but find him—younger than I am—beautiful almost as you!"

"You will be happy," said Fanny, still calmly.

"I have long placed my hopes of happiness in such a union! Stay, where are you going?"

"To pray for you," said Fanny, with a smile, in which there was something of the old vacancy; and she walked gently from the room. Philip followed her with moistened eyes. Her manner might have deceived one more vain. He soon after quitted the house, and returned to town.

Three hours after, Sarah found Fanny stretched on the floor of her own room—so still—so white—that, for some moments, the old woman thought life was gone. She recovered, however, by degrees; and, after putting her hands to her eyes, and muttering some moments, seemed much as usual, except that she was more silent, and that her lips remained colourless, and her hands cold like stone.

CHAPTER XX.

Vec.—Ye see what follows.
Duke.—O, gentle sir! this shape again!—*The Chances.*

THAT evening Sidney Beaufort arrived in London. It is the nature of solitude to make the passions calm on the surface—agitated in the deeps. Sidney had placed his whole existence in one object. When the letter arrived that told him to hope no more, he was at first rather sensible of the terrible and dismal blank—the "void abyss"—to which all his future was suddenly changed, than roused to vehement and turbulent emotion. But Camilla's letter had, as we have seen, raised his courage and animated his heart. To the idea of her faith he still clung with the instinct of hope in the midst of despair. The tidings that she was absolutely betrothed to another, and in so short a time since her rejection of him, let loose from all restraint his darker and more tempestuous passions. In a state of mind bordering upon frenzy, he hurried to London—to seek her—to see her; with what intent—what hope, if hope there were—he himself could scarcely tell. But what man who has loved with fervour and trust, will be contented to receive the sentence of eternal separation

except from the very lips of the one thus worshipped and thus forsworn?

The day had been intensely cold. Towards evening the snow fell fast and heavily. Sidney had not, since a child, been before in London; and the immense City, covered with a wintry and icy mist, through which the hurrying passengers and the slow-moving vehicles passed, spectre-like, along the dismal and slippery streets —opened to the stranger no hospitable arms. He knew not a step of the way—he was pushed to and fro—his scarce intelligible questions impatiently answered—the snow covered him—the frost pierced to his veins. At length a man, more kindly than the rest, seeing that he was a stranger to London, procured him a hackney-coach, and directed the driver to the distant quarter of Berkeley Square. The snow balled under the hoofs of the horses—the groaning vehicle proceeded at the pace of a hearse. At length, and after a period of such suspense, and such emotion, as Sidney never in after-life could recall without a shudder, the coach stopped—the benumbed driver heavily descended—the sound of the knocker knelled loud through the muffled air—and the light from Mr Beaufort's hall glared full upon the dizzy eyes of the visitor. He pushed aside the porter, and sprung into the hall. Luckily, one of the footmen who had attended Mrs Beaufort to the lakes recognised him; and, in answer to his breathless inquiry, said,—

"Why, indeed, Mr Spencer, Miss Beaufort *is* at home—upstairs in the drawing-room, with master and mistress, and Monsieur de Vaudemont; but——"

Sidney waited no more. He bounded up the stairs—he opened the first door that presented itself to him, and burst unannounced and unlooked for upon the eyes of the group seated within. He saw not the terrified start of Mr Robert Beaufort—he heeded not the faint, nervous exclamation of the mother—he caught not the dark and wondering glance of the stranger seated beside Camilla—he saw but Camilla herself, and in a moment he was at her feet.

"Camilla, I am here!—I, who love you so—I, who have nothing in the world but you! I am here—to learn from you, and you alone, if I am indeed abandoned—if you are indeed to be another's!"

He had dashed his hat from his brow as he sprang forward; his long fair hair, damp with the snows, fell disordered over his forehead; his eyes were fixed, as for life and death, upon the pale face and trembling lips of Camilla. Robert Beaufort, in great alarm, and well aware of the fierce temper of Philip, anticipative of some rash and violent impulse, turned his glance upon his destined son-in-law. But there was no angry pride in the countenance he there beheld. Philip had risen, but his frame was bent—his knees knocked together—his lips were parted—his eyes were staring full upon the face of the kneeling man.

Suddenly Camilla, sharing her father's fear, herself half rose, and with an unconscious pathos, stretched one hand, as if to shelter, over Sidney's head, and looked to Philip. Sidney's eyes followed hers. He sprang to his feet.

"What, then, it *is* true! And this is the man for whom I am abandoned! But unless you—*you*, with your own lips, tell me that you love me no more—that you love another—I will not yield you but with life."

He stalked sternly and impetuously up to Philip, who recoiled as his rival advanced. The characters of the two men seemed suddenly changed. The timid dreamer seemed dilated into the fearless soldier: the soldier seemed shrinking—quailing—into nameless terror. Sidney grasped that strong arm, as Philip still retreated, with his slight and delicate fingers, grasped it with violence and menace; and frowning into the face from which the swarthy blood was scared away, said, in a hollow whisper,

"Do you hear me? Do you comprehend me? I say that she shall not be forced into a marriage at which I yet believe her heart rebels. My claim is holier than yours. Renounce her, or win her but with my blood."

Philip did not apparently hear the words thus addressed to him. His whole senses seemed absorbed in the one sense of sight. He continued to gaze upon the speaker, till his eye dropped on the hand that yet griped his arm. And as he thus looked, he uttered an inarticulate cry. He caught the hand in his own, and pointed to a ring on the finger, but remained speechless. Mr Beaufort approached, and began some stammered words of soothing to Sidney; but Philip motioned him to be silent; and at last, as if by a

violent effort, gasped forth, not to Sidney, but to Beaufort,

"His name?—his name?"

"It is Mr Spencer—Mr Charles Spencer," cried Beaufort. "Listen to me, I will explain all—I——"

"Hush, hush!" cried Philip; and turning to Sidney, he put his hand on his shoulder, and looking him full in the face, said,

"Have you not known another name? Are you not—yes, it is so—it is—it is! Follow me—follow!"

And still retaining his grasp, and leading Sidney, who was now subdued, awed, and a prey to new and wild suspicions, he moved on gently, stride by stride—his eyes fixed on that fair face—his lips muttering—till the closing door shut both forms from the eyes of the three there left.

It was the adjoining room into which Philip led his rival. It was lit but by a small reading-lamp, and the bright, steady blaze of the fire; and by this light they both continued to gaze on each other, as if spell-bound, in complete silence. At last, Philip, by an irresistible impulse, fell upon Sidney's bosom, and clasping him with convulsive energy, gasped out,

"Sidney!—Sidney!—my mother's son!"

"What!" exclaimed Sidney, struggling from the embrace, and at last freeing himself, "it *is* you, then! —you, my own brother! You, who have been hitherto the thorn in my path, the cloud in my fate! You, who are now come to make me a wretch for life! I

love that woman, and you tear her from me! You, who subjected my infancy to hardship, and, but for Providence, might have degraded my youth, by your example, into shame and guilt!"

"Forbear!—forbear!" cried Philip, with a voice so shrill in its agony, that it smote the hearts of those in the adjoining chamber like the shriek of some despairing soul. They looked at each other, but not one had the courage to break upon the interview.

Sidney himself was appalled by the sound. He threw himself on a seat, and, overcome by passions so new to him, by excitement so strange, hid his face, and sobbed as a child.

Philip walked rapidly to and fro the room for some moments; at length he paused opposite to Sidney and said, with the deep calmness of a wronged and goaded spirit,

"Sidney Beaufort, hear me! When my mother died, she confided you to my care, my love, and my protection. In the last lines that her hand traced, she bade me think less of myself than of you; to be to you as a father, as well as brother. The hour that I read that letter I fell on my knees and vowed that I would fulfil that injunction—that I would sacrifice my very self, if I could give fortune or happiness to you. And this not for your sake alone, Sidney; no! but as my mother — our wronged, our belied, our broken-hearted mother!——O Sidney, Sidney! have you no tears for *her*, too?" He passed his hand over his own eyes for a moment, and resumed:—"But as our mother,

in that last letter, said to me, 'Let *my* love pass into your breast for him,' so, Sidney, so, in all that I could do for you, I fancied that my mother's smile looked down upon me, and that in serving you it was my mother whom I obeyed. Perhaps, hereafter, Sidney, when we talk over that period of my earlier life when I worked for you, when the degradation you speak of (there was no crime in it!) was borne cheerfully for your sake, and yours the holiday though mine the task—perhaps, hereafter, you will do me more justice. You left me, or were reft from me, and I gave all the little fortune that my mother had bequeathed us, to get some tidings from you. I received your letter—that bitter letter—and I cared not then that I was a beggar, since I was alone. You talk of what I have cost you—*you* talk!—and you now ask me to—to——merciful Heaven! let me understand you—do you love Camilla? Does she love you? Speak—speak—explain—what new agony awaits me?"

It was then that Sidney, affected and humbled, amidst all his more selfish sorrows, by his brother's language and manner, related, as succinctly as he could, the history of his affection for Camilla, the circumstances of their engagement, and ended by placing before him the letter he had received from Mr Beaufort.

In spite of all his efforts for self-control, Philip's anguish was so great, so visible, that Sidney, after looking at his working features, his trembling hands, for a moment, felt all the earthlier parts of his nature melt in a flow of generous sympathy and remorse. He

flung himself on the breast from which he had shrunk before, and cried,

"Brother, brother! forgive me; I see how I have wronged you. If she has forgotten me, if she love you, *take* her, and be happy!"

Philip returned his embrace, but without warmth, and then moved away; and again, in great disorder, paced the room. His brother only heard disjointed exclamations that seemed to escape him unawares: "They said she loved *me!* Heaven give me strength! Mother—mother! let me fulfil my vow! Oh, that I had died ere this!" He stopped at last, and the large dews rolled down his forehead.

"Sidney!" said he, "there is a mystery here that I comprehend not. But my mind now is very confused. If she loves you—*if!*—is it possible for a woman to love *two?* Well, well, I go to solve the riddle: wait here!"

He vanished into the next room, and for nearly half an hour Sidney was alone. He heard through the partition murmured voices; he caught more clearly the sound of Camilla's sobs. The particulars of that interview between Philip and Camilla, alone at first (afterwards Mr Robert Beaufort was re-admitted), Philip never disclosed; nor could Sidney himself ever obtain a clear account from Camilla, who could not recall it, even years after, without great emotion. But at last the door was opened, and Philip entered, leading Camilla by the hand. His face was calm, and there was a smile on his lips; a greater dignity than

even that habitual to him, was diffused over his whole person. Camilla was holding her handkerchief to her eyes, and weeping passionately. Mr Beaufort followed them with a mortified and slinking air.

"Sidney," said Philip, "it is past. All is arranged. I yield to your earlier, and therefore better claim. Mr Beaufort consents to your union. He will tell you, at some fitter time, that our birthright is at last made clear, and that there is no blot on the name we shall hereafter bear. Sidney, embrace your bride!"

Amazed, delighted, and still half-incredulous, Sidney seized and kissed the hand of Camilla; and as he then drew her to his breast, she said, as she pointed to Philip,

"Oh! if you do love me as you say, see in him the generous, the noble——" Fresh sobs broke off her speech, but as Sidney sought again to take her hand, she whispered, with a touching and womanly sentiment, "Ah! respect *him:* see!——" and Sidney, looking then at his brother, saw, that though he still attempted to smile, his lip writhed, and his features were drawn together, as one whose frame is wrung by torture, but who struggles not to groan.

He flew to Philip, who, grasping his hand, held him back, and said,

"I have fulfilled my vow! I have given you up the only blessing my life has known. Enough! you are happy, and I shall be so too, when God pleases to soften this blow. And now you must not wonder or blame me, if, though so lately found, I leave you for a

while. Do me one kindness,—you, Sidney—you, Mr Beaufort. Let the marriage take place at H——, in the village church by which my mother sleeps; let it be delayed till the suit is terminated; by that time I shall hope to meet you all—to meet *you*, Camilla, as I ought to meet my brother's wife: till then, my presence will not sadden your happiness. Do not seek to see me; do not expect to hear from me. Hist! be silent, all of you; my heart is yet bruised and sore. O Thou," and here, deepening his voice, he raised his arms, "Thou, who hast preserved my youth from such snares and such peril, who hast guided my steps from the abyss to which they wandered, and beneath whose hand I now bow, grateful if chastened, receive this offering, and bless that union! Fare ye well."

CHAPTER XXI.

> Heaven's airs amid the harpstrings dwell;
> And we wish they ne'er may fade;
> They cease; and the soul is a silent cell,
> Where music never played.
> Dream follows dream through the long night-hours.
>
> WILSON, *The Past: a poem.*

THE self-command which Philip had obtained for a while, deserted him when he was without the house. His mind felt broken up into chaos; he hurried on mechanically on foot; he passed street upon street, now solitary and deserted, as the lamps gleamed upon the thick snow. The city was left behind him. He paused not till, breathless, and exhausted in spirit if not in frame, he reached the churchyard where Catherine's dust reposed. The snow had ceased to fall, but it lay deep over the graves; the yew-trees, clad in their white shrouds, gleamed ghost-like through the dimness. Upon the rail that fenced the tomb yet hung a wreath that Fanny's hand had placed there. But the flowers were hid; it was a wreath of snow! Through the intervals of the huge and still clouds, there gleamed a few melancholy stars. The very calm of the holy spot seemed unutterably sad. The Death of the year overhung the Death of man. And as

Philip bent over the tomb, within and without all was ICE and NIGHT!

For hours he remained on that spot, alone with his grief and absorbed in his prayer. Long past midnight Fanny heard his step on the stairs, and the door of his chamber close with unwonted violence. She heard, too, for some time, his heavy tread on the floor, till suddenly all was silent. The next morning when, at the usual hour, Sarah entered to unclose the shutters and light the fire, she was startled by wild exclamations and wilder laughter. The fever had mounted to the brain—he was delirious.

For several weeks Philip Beaufort was in imminent danger; for a considerable part of that time he was unconscious; and when the peril was past, his recovery was slow and gradual. It was the only illness to which his vigorous frame had ever been subjected: and the fever had perhaps exhausted him more than it might have done one in whose constitution the disease had encountered less resistance. His brother, imagining he had gone abroad, was unacquainted with his danger. None tended his sick-bed save the hireling nurse, the fee'd physician, and the unpurchasable heart of the only being to whom the wealth and rank of the Heir of Beaufort Court were as nothing. Here was reserved for him Fate's crowning lesson, in the vanity of those human wishes which anchor in gold and power. For how many years had the exile and the outcast pined indignantly for his birthright! Lo! it was won; and with it came the crushed heart and the smitten frame.

As he slowly recovered sense and reasoning, these thoughts struck him forcibly. He felt as if he were rightly punished in having disdained, during his earlier youth, the enjoyments within his reach. Was there nothing in the glorious health — the unconquerable hope—the heart, if wrung, and chafed, and sorely tried, free at least from the direst anguish of the passions, disappointed and jealous love? Though now certain, if spared to the future, to be rich, powerful, righted in name and honour, might he not from that sick-bed envy his earlier past? even when with his brother orphan he wandered through the solitary fields, and felt with what energies we are gifted when we have something to protect; or when loving and beloved, he saw life smile out to him in the eyes of Eugénie; or when, after that melancholy loss, he wrestled boldly, and breast to breast with Fortune, in a far land, for honour and independence? There is something in severe illness, especially if it be in violent contrast to the usual strength of the body, which has often the most salutary effect upon the mind; which often, by the affliction of the frame, roughly wins us from the too morbid pains of the heart; which makes us feel that, in mere LIFE, enjoyed as the robust enjoy it, God's Great Principle of Good breathes and moves. We rise thus from the sick-bed softened and humbled, and more disposed to look around us for such blessings as we may yet command.

The return of Philip, his danger, the necessity of exertion, of tending him, had roused Fanny from a

state which might otherwise have been permanently dangerous to the intellect so lately ripened within her. With what patience, with what fortitude, with what unutterable thought and devotion, she fulfilled that best and holiest woman's duty, let the man whose struggle with life and death has been blessed with the vigil that wakes and saves, imagine to himself. And in all her anxiety and terror, she had glimpses of a happiness which it seemed to her almost criminal to acknowledge. For, even in his delirium, her voice seemed to have some soothing influence over him, and he was calmer while she was by. And when at last he was conscious, her face was the first he saw, and her name the first which his lips uttered. As then he grew gradually stronger, and the bed was deserted for the sofa, he took more than the old pleasure in hearing her read to him; which she did with a feeling that lecturers cannot teach. And once, in a pause from this occupation, he spoke to her frankly,—he sketched his past history—his last sacrifice. And Fanny, as she wept, learned that he was no more another's!

It has been said that this man, naturally of an active and impatient temperament, had been little accustomed to seek those resources which are found in books. But somehow in that sick chamber—it was Fanny's voice —the voice of *her* over whose mind he had once so haughtily lamented, that taught him how much of aid and solace the Herd of Men derive from the Everlasting Genius of the Few.

Gradually, and interval by interval, moment by

moment, thus drawn together, all thought beyond shut out (for, however crushing for the time the blow that had stricken Philip from health and reason, he was not that slave to a guilty fancy, that he could voluntarily indulge—that he would not earnestly seek to shun—all sentiments that yet turned with unholy yearning towards the betrothed of his brother);—gradually, I say, and slowly, came those progressive and delicious epochs which mark a revolution in the affections:—unspeakable gratitude, brotherly tenderness, the united strength of compassion and respect that he had felt for Fanny seemed, as he gained health, to mellow into feelings yet more exquisite and deep. He could no longer delude himself with a vain and imperious belief that it was a defective mind that his heart protected; he began again to be sensible to the rare beauty of that tender face — more lovely, perhaps, for the paleness that had replaced its bloom. The fancy that he had so imperiously checked before—before he saw Camilla—returned to him, and neither pride nor honour had now the right to chase the soft wings away. One evening, fancying himself alone, he fell into a profound reverie; he awoke with a start, and the exclamation, "Was it true love that I ever felt for Camilla, or a passion, a frenzy, a delusion?"

His exclamation was answered by a sound that seemed both of joy and grief. He looked up, and saw Fanny before him; the light of the moon, just risen, fell full on her form, but her hands were clasped before her face; he heard her sob.

"Fanny, dear Fanny!" he cried, and sought to throw himself from the sofa to her feet. But she drew herself away, and fled from the chamber silent as a dream.

Philip rose, and, for the first time since his illness, walked, but with feeble steps, to and fro the room. With what different emotions from those in which last, in fierce and intolerable agony, he had paced that narrow boundary! Returning health crept through his veins—a serene, a kindly, a celestial joy circumfused his heart. Had the time yet come when the old Florimel had melted into snow; when the new and the true one, with its warm life, its tender beauty, its maiden wealth of love, had risen before his hopes? He paused before the window; the spot within seemed so confined, the night without so calm and lovely, that he forgot his still-clinging malady, and unclosed the casement: the air came soft and fresh upon his temples, and the church-tower and spire, for the first time, did not seem to him to rise in gloom against the heavens. Even the gravestone of Catherine, half in moonlight, half in shadow, appeared to him to wear a smile. His mother's memory was become linked with the living Fanny.

"Thou art vindicated — thy Sidney is happy," he murmured: "to *her* the thanks!"

Fair hopes, and soft thoughts busy within him, he remained at the casement till the increasing chill warned him of the danger he incurred.

The next day, when the physician visited him, he

found the fever had returned. For many days, Philip was again in danger—dull, unconscious even of the step and voice of Fanny.

He woke at last as from a long and profound sleep;—woke so refreshed, so revived, that he felt at once that some great crisis had been passed, and that at length he had struggled back to the sunny shores of Life.

By his bedside sat Liancourt, who, long alarmed at his disappearance, had at last contrived, with the help of Mr Barlow, to trace him to Gawtrey's house, and had for several days taken share in the vigils of poor Fanny.

While he was yet explaining all this to Philip, and congratulating him on his evident recovery, the physician entered to confirm the congratulation. In a few days the invalid was able to quit his room, and nothing but change of air seemed necessary for his convalescence. It was then that Liancourt, who had for two days seemed impatient to unburden himself of some communication, thus addressed him:—

"My dear friend, I have learned, now, your story from Barlow, who called several times during your relapse; and who is the more anxious about you, as the time for the decision of your case now draws near. The sooner you quit this house the better."

"Quit this house! and why? Is there not one in this house to whom I owe my fortune and my life?"

"Yes; and for that reason I say, 'Go hence:' it is the only return you can make her."

"Pshaw!—speak intelligibly."

"I will," said Liancourt, gravely. "I have been a watcher with her by your sick-bed, and I know what you must feel already :—nay, I must confess that even the old servant has ventured to speak to me. You have inspired that poor girl with feelings dangerous to her peace."

"Ha!" cried Philip, with such joy that Liancourt frowned, and said, "Hitherto I have believed you too honourable to——"

"So you think she loves me?" interrupted Philip.

"Yes; what then? You, the heir of Beaufort Court —of a rental of £20,000 a-year—of an historical name, —you cannot marry this poor girl?"

"Well!—I will consider what you say, and, at all events, I will leave the house to attend the result of the trial. Let us talk no more on the subject now."

Philip had the penetration to perceive that Liancourt, who was greatly moved by the beauty, the innocence, and the unprotected position of Fanny, had not confined caution to himself; that with his characteristic well-meaning bluntness, and with the licence of a man somewhat advanced in years, he had spoken to Fanny herself: for Fanny now seemed to shun Philip,—her eyes were heavy, her manner was embarrassed. He saw the change, but it did not grieve him; he hailed the omens which he drew from it.

And at last he and Liancourt went. He was absent three weeks, during which time the formality of the friendly lawsuit was decided in the plaintiff's favour;

and the public were in ecstasies at the noble and sublime conduct of Mr Robert Beaufort, who, the moment he had discovered a document which he might so easily have buried for ever in oblivion, voluntarily agreed to dispossess himself of estates he had so long enjoyed, preferring conscience to lucre. Some persons observed that it was reported that Mr Philip Beaufort had also been generous — that he had agreed to give up the estates for his uncle's life, and was only in the meanwhile to receive a fourth of the revenues. But the universal comment was, "He could not have done less!" Mr Robert Beaufort was, as Lord Lilburne had once observed, a man who was born, made, and reared to be spoken well of by the world; and it *was* a comfort to him now, poor man! to feel that his character was so highly estimated. If Philip should live to the age of one hundred, he will never become so respectable and popular a man with the crowd as his worthy uncle. But does it much matter?

Philip returned to H—— the eve before the day fixed for the marriage of his brother and Camilla.

CHAPTER XXII.

Νυκτος, Αιθηρ τε και ʽΗμερα εξεγενοντο.*—Hes.

The sun of early May shone cheerfully over the quiet suburb of H——. In the thoroughfares life was astir. It was the hour of noon—the hour at which commerce is busy and streets are full. The old retired trader, eyeing wistfully the rolling coach or the oft-passing omnibus, was breathing the fresh and scented air in the broadest and most crowded road, from which, afar in the distance, rose the spires of the metropolis. The boy let loose from the day-school was hurrying home to dinner, his satchel on his back; the ballad-singer was sending her cracked whine through the obscurer alleys, where the baker's boy, with puddings on his tray, and the smart maid-servant, despatched for porter, paused to listen. And round the shops where cheap shawls and cottons tempted the female eye, many a loitering girl detained her impatient mother, and eyed the tickets and calculated her hard-gained savings for the Sunday gear. And in the corners of the streets steamed the itinerant kitchens of the piemen, and rose the sharp cry, "All hot! all hot!" in the ear of infant

* From Night, Sunshine and Day arose!

and ragged Hunger. And amidst them all rolled on some lazy coach of ancient merchant or withered maiden, unconscious of any life but that creeping through their own languid veins. And before the house in which Catherine died there loitered many stragglers, gossips of the hamlet, subscribers to the news-room hard by, to guess and speculate, and wonder why, from the church behind, there rose the merry peal of the marriage-bell!

At length, along the broad road leading from the great city, there were seen rapidly advancing three carriages of a very different fashion from those familiar to the suburb. On they came; swiftly they whirled round the angle that conducted to the church; the hoofs of the gay steeds ringing cheerily on the ground; the white favours of the servants gleaming in the sun. Happy is the bride the sun shines on! And when the carriages had thus vanished, the scattered groups melted into one crowd, and took their way to the church. They stood idling without in the burial-ground; many of them round the fence that guarded from their footsteps Catherine's lonely grave. All in nature was glad, exhilarating, and yet serene; a genial freshness breathed through the soft air; not a cloud was to be seen in the smiling azure; even the old dark yews seemed happy in their everlasting verdure. The bell ceased, and then even the crowd grew silent; and not a sound was heard in that solemn spot to whose demesnes are consecrated alike the Birth, the Marriage, and the Death.

At length there came forth from the church-door the goodly form of a rosy beadle. Approaching the groups, he whispered the better-dressed and commanded the ragged, remonstrated with the old and lifted his cane against the young; and the result of all was, that the churchyard, not without many a murmur and expostulation, was cleared, and the crowd fell back in the space behind the gates of the principal entrance, where they swayed and gaped and chattered round the carriages which were to bear away the bridal party.

Within the church, as the ceremony was now concluded, Philip Beaufort conducted, hand-in-hand, silently along the aisle, his brother's wife.

Leaning on his stick, his cold sneer upon his thin lip, Lord Lilburne limped, step by step with the pair, though a little apart from them, glancing from moment to moment at the face of Philip Beaufort, where he had hoped to read a grief that he could not detect. Lord Lilburne had carefully refrained from an interview with Philip till that day, and he now only came to the wedding as a surgeon goes to an hospital to examine a disease he had been told would be great and sore he: was disappointed. Close behind followed Sidney, radiant with joy and bloom and beauty; and his kind guardian, the tears rolling down his eyes, murmured blessings as he looked upon him. Mrs Beaufort had declined attending the ceremony—her nerves were too weak—but behind, at a longer interval, came Robert Beaufort, sober, staid, collected as ever to outward seeming; but a close observer might

have seen that his eye had lost its habitual complacent cunning, that his step was more heavy, his stoop more joyless. About his air there was a something crest-fallen. The consciousness of acres had passed away from his portly presence; he was no longer a possessor, but a pensioner. The rich man, who had decided as he pleased on the happiness of others, was a cipher; he had ceased to have any interest in anything. What to him the marriage of his daughter now? Her children would not be the heirs of Beaufort. As Camilla kindly turned round, and through happy tears waited for his approach, to clasp his hand, he forced a smile, but it was sickly and piteous. He longed to creep away, and be alone.

"My father!" said Camilla, in her sweet low voice; and she extricated herself from Philip, and threw herself on his breast.

"She is a good child," said Robert Beaufort, vacantly; and, turning his dry eyes to the group, he caught instinctively at his customary commonplaces; —"and, a good child, Mr Sidney, makes a good wife!"

The clergyman bowed as if the compliment were addressed to himself: he was the only man there whom Robert Beaufort could now deceive.

"My sister," said Philip Beaufort, as, once more leaning on his arm, they paused before the church-door, "may Sidney love and prize you as—as I would have done; and believe me, both of you, I have no regret, no memory that wounds me now."

He dropped the hand, and motioned to her father to

lead her to the carriage. Then winding his arm into Sidney's he said,—

"Wait till they are gone: I have one word yet with you. Go on, gentlemen."

The clergyman bowed, and walked through the churchyard; but Lilburne, pausing and surveying Philip Beaufort, said to him, whisperingly,—

"And so much for feeling—the folly! So much for generosity—the delusion! Happy man!"

"I *am* thoroughly happy, Lord Lilburne."

"Are you?—Then, it was neither feeling nor generosity; and we were taken in! Good-day." With that he limped slowly to the gate.

Philip answered not the sarcasm even by a look; for at that moment a loud shout was set up by the mob without—they had caught a glimpse of the bride.

"Come, Sidney, this way," he said; "I must not detain you long."

Arm in arm they passed out of the church, and turned to the spot hard by, where the flowers smiled up to them from the stone on their mother's grave.

The old inscription had been effaced, and the name of CATHERINE BEAUFORT was placed upon the stone.

"Brother," said Philip, "do not forget this grave: years hence, when children play around your own hearth. Observe, the name of Catherine Beaufort is fresher on the stone than the dates of birth and death—the name was only inscribed there to-day—*your* wedding-day! Brother, by this grave we are now indeed united."

"Oh, Philip!" cried Sidney, in deep emotion, clasping the hand stretched out to him; "I feel, I feel how noble, how great you are—that you have sacrificed more than I dreamed of——"

"Hush!" said Philip, with a smile. "No talk of this. I am happier than you deem me. Go back now—she waits you."

"And you?—leave you!—alone!"

"Not alone," said Philip, pointing to the grave.

Scarce had he spoken, when from the gate came the shrill, clear voice of Lord Lilburne,—

"We wait for Mr Sidney Beaufort."

Sidney passed his hand over his eyes, wrung the hand of his brother once more, and in a moment was by Camilla's side.

Another shout—the whirl of the wheels—the tramping of feet—the distant hum and murmur—and all was still.

The clerk returned to lock up the church—he did not observe where Philip stood in the shadow of the wall—and went home to talk of the gay wedding, and inquire at what hour the funeral of a young woman, his next-door neighbour, would take place the next day.

It might be a quarter of an hour after Philip was thus left—nor had he moved from the spot—when he felt his sleeve pulled gently. He turned round and saw before him the wistful face of Fanny!

"So you would not come to the wedding!" said he.

"No. But I fancied you might be here alone,—and sad."

"And you will not even wear the dress I gave you?"

"Another time. Tell me, are you unhappy?"

"Unhappy, Fanny! No; look around. The very burial-ground has a smile. See the laburnums clustering over the wall, listen to the birds on the dark yews above, and yonder see even the butterfly has settled upon *her* grave!—I am *not* unhappy." As he thus spoke, he looked at her earnestly, and, taking both her hands in his, drew her gently towards him, and continued:—"Fanny, do you remember that, leaning over that gate, I once spoke to you of the happiness of marriage where two hearts are united? Nay, Fanny, nay, I must go on. It was here, in this spot—it was here that I first saw you on my return to England. I came to seek the dead, and I have thought since, it was my mother's guardian spirit that drew me hither to find *yóu*—the living! And often afterwards, Fanny, you would come with me here, when, blinded and dull as I was, I came to brood and to repine, insensible of the treasures even then perhaps within my reach. But, best as it was; the ordeal through which I have passed has made me more grateful for the prize I now dare to hope for. On this grave your hand daily renewed the flowers. By this grave, the link between the Time and the Eternity, whose lessons we have read together, will you consent to record our vows? Fanny, dearest, fairest, tenderest, best, I love you, and at last as alone you *should* be loved!—I woo you as my wife! Mine, not for a season, but for ever—for ever, even when these graves are opened, and the world shrivels like a

scroll. Do you understand me?—do you heed me?—or have I dreamed that—that——"

He stopped short—a dismay seized him at her silence. Had he been mistaken in his divine belief?—the fear was momentary: for Fanny, who had recoiled as he spoke, now placing her hands to her temples, gazing on him, breathless, and with lips apart, as if, indeed, with great effort and struggle her modest spirit conceived the possibility of the happiness that broke upon it, advanced timidly, her face suffused in blushes, and, looking into his eyes as if she would read into his very soul, said, with an accent, the intenseness of which showed that her whole fate hung on his answer—

"But this is pity?—they have told you that I——in short, you are generous—you—you——Oh, deceive me not! Do you love her still?—Can you—do you love the humble, foolish Fanny?"

"As God shall judge me, sweet one, I am sincere! I have survived a passion—never so deep, so tender, so entire, as that I now feel for you! And oh, Fanny, hear this true confession! It was you—you to whom my heart turned before I saw Camilla!—against that impulse I struggled in the blindness of a haughty error!"

Fanny uttered a low and suppressed cry of delight and rapture. Philip passionately continued:—

"Fanny, make blessed the life you have saved. Fate destined us for each other. Fate for me has ripened your sweet mind. Fate for you has softened this rugged heart. We may have yet much to bear

and much to learn. We will console and teach each other!"

He drew her to his breast as he spoke—drew her trembling, blushing, confused, but no more reluctant; and there, by the GRAVE that had been so memorable a scene in their common history, were murmured those vows in which all this world knows of human happiness is treasured and recorded—love that takes the sting from grief, and faith that gives eternity to love. All silent, yet all serene around them! Above, the heaven—at their feet, the grave: For the love, the grave!—for the faith, the heaven!

CHAPTER THE LAST.

A labore reclinat otium.*—HORAT.

I FEEL that there is some justice in the affection the general reader entertains for the old-fashioned and now somewhat obsolete custom, of giving to him, at the close of a work, the latest news of those who sought his acquaintance through its progress.

The weak but well-meaning Smith, no more oppressed by the evil influence of his brother, has continued to pass his days in comfort and respectability on the income settled on him by Philip Beaufort. Mr and Mrs Roger Morton still live, and have just resigned their business to their eldest son; retiring themselves to a small villa adjoining the town in which they had made their fortune. Mrs Morton is very apt, when she goes out to tea, to talk of her dear deceased sister-in-law, the late Mrs Beaufort, and of her own remarkable kindness to her nephew when a little boy. She observes that, in fact, the young men owe everything to Mr Roger and herself; and indeed, though Sidney was never of a grateful disposition, and has not been near her since, yet the elder brother,—*the*

* Leisure unbends itself from labour.

Mr Beaufort, always evinces his respect to them by the yearly present of a fat buck. She then comments on the ups and downs of life, and observes that it is a pity her son Tom preferred the medical profession to the Church.—Their cousin, Mr Beaufort, has two livings. To all this Mr Roger says nothing, except an occasional "Thank heaven, I want no man's help! I am as well to do as my neighbours. But that's neither here nor there."

There are some readers—they who do not thoroughly consider the truths of this life—who will yet ask, "But how is Lord Lilburne punished?" Punished? ay and indeed, how? The world, and not the poet, must answer that question. Crime is punished from without. If Vice is punished, it must be from within. The Lilburnes of this hollow world are not to be pelted with the soft roses of poetical justice. They who ask why he is not punished, may be the first to doff the hat to the equipage in which my lord lolls through the streets! The only offence he habitually committed of a nature to bring the penalties of detection, he renounced the moment he perceived there was danger of discovery,—he gambled no more after Philip's hint. He was one of those, some years after, most bitter upon a certain nobleman charged with unfair play—one of those who took the accusation as proved, and whose authority settled all disputes thereon.

But if no thunderbolt falls on Lord Lilburne's head—if he is fated still to eat, and drink, and to die on his bed, he may yet taste the ashes of the Dead Sea

fruit which his hands have culled. He is grown old. His infirmities increase upon him; his sole resources of pleasure—the senses—are dried up. For him there is no longer savour in the viands, or sparkle in the wine—man delights him not, nor woman neither. He is alone with Old Age, and in sight of Death.

With the exception of Simon, who died in his chair not many days after Sidney's marriage, Robert Beaufort is the only one among the more important agents left at the last scene of this history who has passed from our mortal stage. After the marriage of his daughter he for some time moped and drooped.

But Philip learned from Mr Blackwell of the will that Robert had made previously to the lawsuit; and by which, had the lawsuit failed, his rights would yet have been preserved to him. Deeply moved by a generosity he could not have expected from his uncle, and not pausing to inquire too closely how far it was to be traced to the influence of Arthur, Philip so warmly expressed his gratitude, and so surrounded Mr Beaufort with affectionate attentions, that the poor man began to recover his self-respect—began even to regard the nephew he had so long dreaded, as a son—to forgive him for not marrying Camilla. And, perhaps, to his astonishment, an act in his life which the customs of the world (that never favour natural ties not previously sanctioned by the legal) would have rather censured than praised, became his consolation, and the memory he was most proud to recall. He gradually recovered his spirits; he was very fond of looking over

that will; he carefully preserved it; he even flattered himself that it was necessary to preserve Philip from all possible litigation hereafter; for if the estates were not legally Philip's, why, then, they were *his* to dispose of as he pleased. He was never more happy than when his successor was by his side; and was certainly a more cheerful, and, I doubt not, a better man, during the few years in which he survived the lawsuit, than ever he had been before. He died—still member for the county, and still quoted as a pattern to county members—in Philip's arms; and on his lips there was a smile that even Lilburne would have called sincere.

Mrs Beaufort, after her husband's death, established herself in London, and could never be persuaded to visit Beaufort Court. She took a companion, who more than replaced, in her eyes, the absence of Camilla.

And Camilla—Spencer—Sidney. They live still by the gentle Lake, happy in their own serene joys and graceful leisure; shunning alike ambition and its trials, action and its sharp vicissitudes; envying no one, covetous of nothing; making around them, in the working world, something of the old pastoral and golden holiday. If Camilla had at one time wavered in her allegiance to Sidney, her good and simple heart has long since been entirely regained by his devotion; and, as might be expected from her disposition, she loved him better after marriage than before.

Philip had gone through severer trials than Sidney. But had their earlier fates been reversed, and that spirit, in youth so haughty and self-willed, been lapped

in ease and luxury, would Philip now be a better or a happier man? Perhaps, too, for a less tranquil existence than his brother, Philip yet may be reserved; but in proportion to the uses of our destiny do we repose or toil: he who never knows pain, knows but the half of pleasure. The lot of whatever is most noble on the earth below, falls not amidst the rosy Gardens of the Epicurean. We may envy the man who enjoys and rests; but the smile of Heaven settles rather on the front of him who labours and aspires.

And did Philip ever regret the circumstances that had given him Fanny for the partner of his life? To some who take their notions of the Ideal from the conventional rules of romance, rather than from their own perceptions of what is true, this narrative would have been more pleasing had Philip never loved but Fanny. But all that had led to that love had only served to render it more enduring and concentred. Man's strongest and worthiest affection is his last—is the one that unites and embodies all his past dreams of what is excellent—the one from which Hope springs out the brighter from former disappointments—the one in which the MEMORIES are the most tender and the most abundant—the one which, replacing all others, nothing hereafter can replace.

And now, ere the scene closes, and the audience, whom, perhaps, the actors may have interested for a

while, disperse, to forget amidst the pursuits of actual life the Shadows that have amused an hour or beguiled a care, let the curtain fall on one happy picture :—

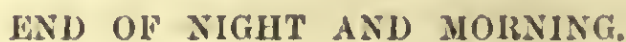
It is some years after the marriage of Philip and Fanny. It is a summer's morning. In a small old-fashioned room at Beaufort Court, with its casements open to the gardens, stood Philip, having just entered ; and near the window sat Fanny, his boy by her side. She was at the mother's hardest task—the first lessons to the first-born child ; and as the boy looked up at her sweet earnest face with a smile of intelligence on his own, you might have seen at a glance how well understood were the teacher and the pupil. Yes ; whatever might have been wanting in the Virgin to the full development of mind, the cares of the Mother had supplied. When a being was born to lean on her alone—dependent on her providence for life—then, hour after hour, step after step, in the progress of infant destinies, had the reason of the mother grown in the child's growth, adapting itself to each want that it must foresee, and taking its perfectness and completion from the breath of the New Love !

The child caught sight of Philip, and rushed to embrace him.

"See !" whispered Fanny, as she also hung upon him, and strange recollections of her own mysterious childhood crowded upon her—"see," whispered she, with a blush half of shame and half of pride, "the poor idiot girl is the teacher of your child !"

"And," answered Philip, "whether for child or mother, what teacher is like Love?"

Thus saying, he took the boy into his arms, and, as he bent over those rosy cheeks, Fanny saw, from the movement of his lips and the moisture in his eyes, that he blessed God. He looked up on the Mother's face, he glanced round on the flowers and foliage of the luxurious summer, and again he blessed God: And without and within, it was Light and MORNING!



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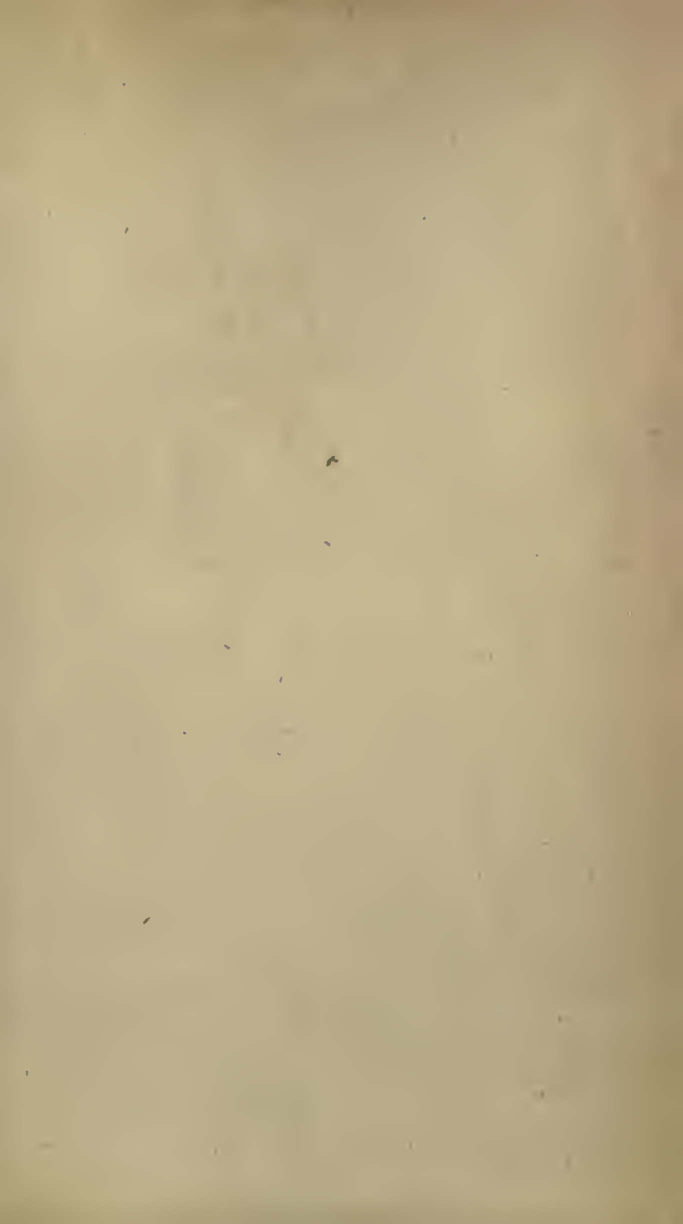

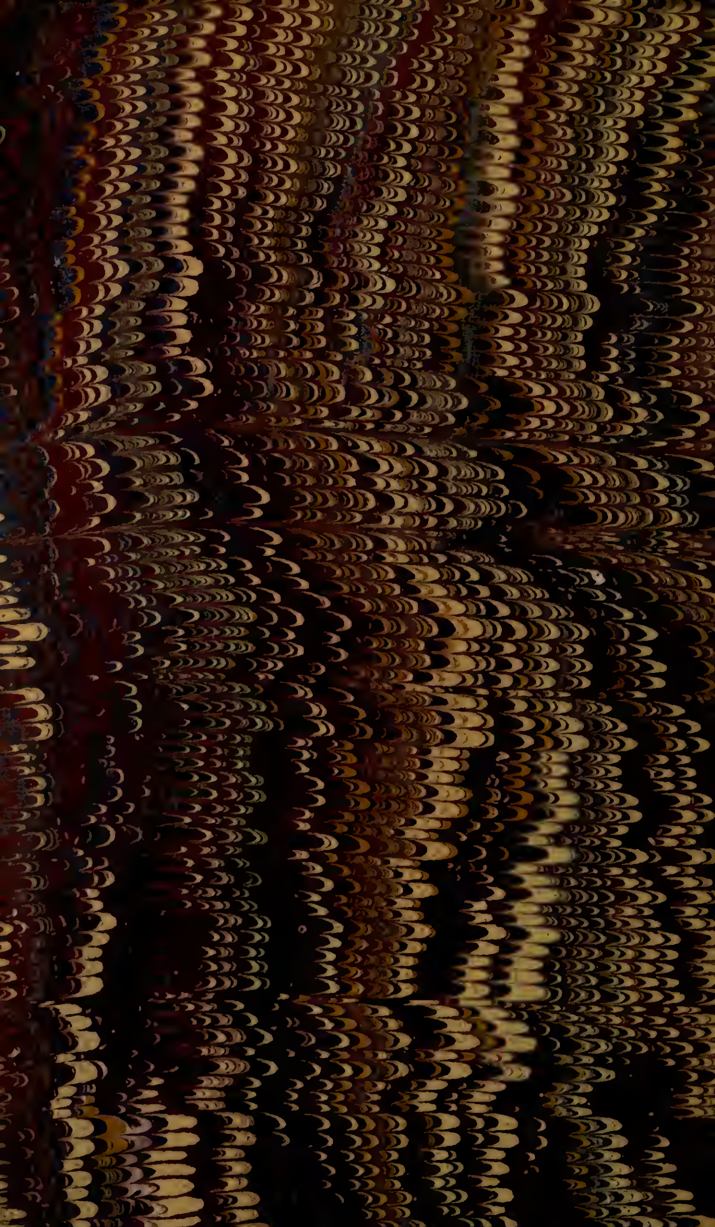

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