

THE DISOWNED - VOLUME 5.

EDWARD BULWER-LYTTON*

CHAPTER XLIX.

Virtue is like precious odours, most fragrant when they are incensed or crushed; for prosperity doth best discover vice, but adversity doth best discover virtue.—BACON.

It is somewhat remarkable that while Talbot was bequeathing to Clarence, as the most valuable of legacies, the doctrines of a philosophy he had acquired, perhaps too late to practise, Glendower was carrying those very doctrines, so far as his limited sphere would allow, into the rule and exercise of his life.

Since the death of the bookseller, which we have before recorded, Glendower had been left utterly without resource. The others to whom he applied were indisposed to avail themselves of an unknown ability. The trade of bookmaking was not then as it is now, and if it had been, it would not have suggested itself to the high-spirited and unworldly student. Some publishers offered, it is true, a reward tempting enough for an immoral tale; others spoke of the value of an attack upon the Americans; one suggested an ode to the minister, and another hinted that a pension might possibly be granted to one who would prove extortion not tyranny. But these insinuations fell upon a dull ear, and the tribe of Barabbas were astonished to find that an author could imagine interest and principle not synonymous.

Struggling with want, which hourly grew more imperious and urgent; wasting his life on studies which brought fever to his pulse and disappointment to his ambition; gnawed to the very soul by the mortifications which his poverty gave to his pride; and watching with tearless eyes, but a maddening brain, the slender form of his wife, now waxing weaker and fainter, as the canker of disease fastened upon the core of her young but blighted life,—there was yet a high, though, alas! not constant consolation within him, whenever, from the troubles of this dim spot his thoughts could escape, like birds released from their cage, and lose themselves in the lustre and

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freedom of their native heaven.

"If," thought he, as he looked upon his secret and treasured work, "if the wind scatter or the rock receive these seeds, they were at least dispersed by a hand which asked no selfish return, and a heart which would have lavished the harvest of its labours upon those who know not the husbandman and trample his hopes into the dust."

But by degrees this comfort of a noble and generous nature, these whispers of a vanity rather to be termed holy than excusable, began to grow unfrequent and low. The cravings of a more engrossing and heavy want than those of the mind came eagerly and rapidly upon him; the fair cheek of his infant became pinched and hollow; his wife conquered nature itself by love, and starved herself in silence, and set bread before him with a smile and bade him eat.

"But you,—you?" he would ask inquiringly, and then pause.

"I have dined, dearest: I want nothing; eat, love, eat." But he ate not. The food robbed from her seemed to him more deadly than poison; and he would rise, and dash his hand to his brow, and go forth alone, with nature unsatisfied, to look upon this luxurious world and learn content.

It was after such a scene that, one day, he wandered forth into the streets, desperate and confused in mind, and fainting with hunger, and half insane with fiery and wrong thoughts, which dashed over his barren and gloomy soul, and desolated, but conquered not! It was evening: he stood (for he had strode on so rapidly, at first, that his strength was now exhausted, and he was forced to pause) leaning against the railed area of a house in a lone and unfrequented street. No passenger shared this dull and obscure thoroughfare. He stood, literally, in scene as in heart, solitary amidst the great city, and wherever he looked, lo, there were none!

"Two days," said he, slowly and faintly, "two days, and bread has only once passed my lips; and that was snatched from her,—from those lips which I have fed with sweet and holy kisses, and whence my sole comfort in this weary life has been drawn. And she,—ay, she starves,—and my child too. They complain not; they murmur not: but they lift up their eyes to me and ask for—Merciful God! Thou didst make man in benevolence; Thou dost survey this world with a pitying and paternal eye: save, comfort, cherish them, and crush me if Thou wilt!"

At that moment a man darted suddenly from an obscure alley, and passed Glendower at full speed; presently came a cry, and a shout, and a rapid trampling of feet, and, in another moment, an eager and breathless crowd rushed upon the solitude of the street.

"Where is he?" cried a hundred voices to Glendower,—"where,—which road did the robber take?" But Glendower could not answer: his nerves were unstrung, and his dizzy brain swam and reeled; and the faces which peered upon him, and the voices which shrieked and yelled in his ear, were to him as the forms and sounds of a ghastly and phantasmal world. His head drooped upon his bosom; he clung to the area for support: the crowd passed on; they were in pursuit of guilt; they were thirsting after blood; they were going to fill the dungeon and feed the gibbet; what to them was the virtue they could have supported, or the famine they could have relieved? But they knew not his distress, nor the extent of his weakness, or some would have tarried and aided: for there is, after all, as much kindness as cruelty in our nature; perhaps they thought it was only some intoxicated and maudlin idler; or, perhaps, in the heat of their pursuit, they thought not at all.

So they rolled on, and their voices died away, and their steps were hushed, and Glendower, insensible and cold as the iron he clung to, was once more alone. Slowly he revived; he opened his dim and glazing eyes, and saw the evening star break from its chamber, and, though sullied by the thick and foggy air, scatter its holy smiles upon the polluted city.

He looked quietly on the still night, and its first watcher among the hosts of heaven, and felt something of balm sink into his soul; not, indeed, that vague and delicious calm which, in his boyhood of poesy and romance, he had drunk in, by green solitudes, from the mellow twilight: but a quiet, sad and sober, circling gradually over his mind, and bringing it back from its confused and disordered visions and darkness to the recollection and reality of his bitter life.

By degrees the scene he had so imperfectly witnessed, the fight of the robber and the eager pursuit of the mob, grew over him: a dark and guilty thought burst upon his mind.

"I am a man like that criminal," said he, fiercely. "I have nerves, sinews, muscles, flesh; I feel hunger, thirst, pain, as acutely: why should I endure more than he can? Perhaps he had a wife, a child, and he saw them starving inch by inch, and he felt that he ought to be their protector; and so he sinned. And I—I—can I not sin too for mine? can I not dare what the wild beast, and the vulture, and the fierce hearts of my brethren dare for their mates and young? One gripe from this hand, one cry from this voice, and my board might be heaped with plenty, and my child fed, and she smile as she was wont to smile,—for one night at least."

And as these thoughts broke upon him, Glendower rose, and with a step firm, even in weakness, he strode unconsciously onward.

A figure appeared; Glendower's heart beat thick. He slouched his hat over his brows, and for one moment wrestled with his pride and his

stern virtue: the virtue conquered, but not the pride; the virtue forbade him to be the robber; the pride submitted to be the suppliant. He sprang forward, extended his hands towards the stranger, and cried in a sharp voice, the agony of which rang through the long dull street with a sudden and echoless sound, "Charity! food!"

The stranger paused; one of the boldest of men in his own line, he was as timid as a woman in any other. Mistaking the meaning of the petitioner, and terrified by the vehemence of his gesture, he said, in a trembling tone, as he hastily pulled out his purse,—

"There, there! do not hurt me; take it; take all!" Glendower knew the voice, as a sound not unfamiliar to him; his pride returned in full force. "None," thought he, "who know me, shall know my full degradation also." And he turned away; but the stranger, mistaking this motion, extended his hand to him, saying, "Take this, my friend: you will have no need of violence!" and as he advanced nearer to his supposed assailant, he beheld, by the pale lamplight, and instantly recognized, his features.

"Ah!" cried he, in astonishment, but with internal rejoicing, "ah! is it you who are thus reduced?"

"You say right, Crauford," said Glendower, sullenly, and drawing himself up to his full height, "it is I: but you are mistaken; I am a beggar, not a ruffian!"

"Good heavens!" answered Crauford; "how fortunate that we should meet! Providence watches over us unceasingly! I have long sought you in vain. But" (and here the wayward malignity, sometimes, though not always, the characteristic of Crauford's nature, irresistibly broke out), "but that you, of all men, should suffer so,—you, proud, susceptible, virtuous beyond human virtue,—you, whose fibres are as acute as the naked eye,—that you should bear this and wince not!"

"You do my humanity wrong!" said Glendower, with a bitter and almost ghastly smile; "I do worse than wince!"

"Ay, is it so?" said Crauford; "have you awakened at last? Has your philosophy taken a more impassioned dye?"

"Mock me not!" cried Glendower; and his eye, usually soft in its deep thoughtfulness, glared wild and savage upon the hypocrite, who stood trembling, yet half sneering, at the storm he had raised; "my passions are even now beyond my mastery; loose them not upon you!"

"Nay," said Crauford, gently, "I meant not to vex or wound you. I have sought you several times since the last night we met, but in vain; you had left your lodgings, and none knew whither. I would fain talk with you. I have a scheme to propose to you which will make you

rich forever,—rich,—literally rich! not merely above poverty, but high in affluence!”

Glendower looked incredulously at the speaker, who continued,—

”The scheme has danger: that you can dare!”

Glendower was still silent; but his set and stern countenance was sufficient reply. ”Some sacrifice of your pride,” continued Crauford: ”that also you can bear?” and the tempter almost grinned with pleasure as he asked the question.

”He who is poor,” said Glendower, speaking at last, ”has a right to pride. He who starves has it too; but he who sees those whom he loves famish, and cannot aid, has it not!”

”Come home with me, then,” said Crauford; ”you seem faint and weak: nature craves food; come and partake of mine; we will then talk over this scheme, and arrange its completion.”

”I cannot,” answered Glendower, quietly. ”And why?”

”Because they starve at home!”

”Heavens!” said Crauford, affected for a moment into sincerity; ”it is indeed fortunate that business should have led me here: but meanwhile you will not refuse this trifle,—as a loan merely. By and by our scheme will make you so rich that I must be the borrower.”

Glendower did hesitate for a moment; he did swallow a bitter rising of the heart: but he thought of those at home and the struggle was over.

”I thank you,” said he; ”I thank you for their sake: the time may come,”—and the proud gentleman stopped short, for his desolate fortunes rose before him and forbade all hope of the future.

”Yes!” cried Crauford, ”the time may come when you will repay me this money a hundredfold. But where do you live? You are silent. Well, you will not inform me: I understand you. Meet me, then, here, on this very spot, three nights hence: you will not fail?”

”I will not,” said Glendower; and pressing Crauford’s hand with a generous and grateful warmth, which might have softened a heart less obdurate, he turned away.

Folding his arms, while a bitter yet joyous expression crossed his countenance, Crauford stood still, gazing upon the retreating form of the noble and unfortunate man whom he had marked for destruction.

"Now," said he, "this virtue is a fine thing, a very fine thing to talk so loftily about. A little craving of the gastric juices, a little pinching of this vile body, as your philosophers and saints call our better part, and, lo! virtue oozes out like water through a leaky vessel,—and the vessel sinks! No, no; virtue is a weak game, and a poor game, and a losing game. Why, there is that man, the very pink of integrity and rectitude, he is now only wanting temptation to fall; and he will fall, in a fine phrase, too, I'll be sworn! And then, having once fallen, there will be no medium: he will become utterly corrupt; while I, honest Dick Crauford, doing as other wise men do, cheat a trick or two, in playing with fortune, without being a whit the worse for it. Do I not subscribe to charities? am I not constant at church, ay, and meeting to boot? kind to my servants, obliging to my friends, loyal to my king? 'Gad, if I were less loving to myself, I should have been far less useful to my country! And now, now let me see what has brought me to these filthy suburbs. Ah, Madame H—-. Woman, incomparable woman! On, Richard Crauford, thou hast made a good night's work of it hitherto!—business seasons pleasures!" and the villain upon system moved away.

Glendower hastened to his home; it was miserably changed, even from the humble abode in which we last saw him. The unfortunate pair had chosen their present residence from a melancholy refinement in luxury; they had chosen it because none else shared it with them, and their famine and pride and struggles and despair were without witness or pity.

With a heavy step Glendower entered the chamber where his wife sat. When at a distance he had heard a faint moan, but as he had approached it ceased; for she from whom it came knew his step, and hushed her grief and pain that they might not add to his own. The peevishness, the querulous and stinging irritations of want, came not to that affectionate and kindly heart; nor could all those biting and bitter evils of fate which turn the love that is born of luxury into rancour and gall scathe the beautiful and holy passion which had knit into one those two unearthly natures. They rather clung the closer to each other, as all things in heaven and earth spoke in tempest or in gloom around them, and coined their sorrows into endearment, and their looks into smiles, and strove each from the depth of despair to pluck hope and comfort for the other.

This, it is true, was more striking and constant in her than in Glendower; for in love, man, be he ever so generous, is always outdone. Yet even when in moments of extreme passion and conflict the strife broke from his breast into words, never once was his discontent vented upon her, nor his reproaches lavished on any but fortune or himself, nor his murmurs mingled with a single breath wounding to her tenderness or detracting from his love.

He threw open the door; the wretched light cast its sickly beams over,

the squalid walls, foul with green damp, and the miserable yet clean bed, and the fireless hearth, and the empty board, and the pale cheek of the wife, as she rose and flung her arms round his neck, and murmured out her joy and welcome. "There," said he, as he extricated himself from her, and flung the money upon the table, "there, love, pine no more, feed yourself and our daughter, and then let us sleep and be happy in our dreams."

A writer, one of the most gifted of the present day, has told the narrator of this history that no interest of a high nature can be given to extreme poverty. I know not if this be true yet if I mistake not our human feelings, there is nothing so exalted, or so divine, as a great and brave spirit working out its end through every earthly obstacle and evil; watching through the utter darkness, and steadily defying the phantoms which crowd around it; wrestling with the mighty allurements, and rejecting the fearful voice of that WANT which is the deadliest and surest of human tempters; nursing through all calamity the love of species, and the warmer and closer affections of private ties; sacrificing no duty, resisting all sin; and amidst every horror and every humiliation, feeding the still and bright light of that genius which, like the lamp of the fabulist, though it may waste itself for years amidst the depths of solitude, and the silence of the tomb, shall live and burn immortal and undimmed, when all around it is rottenness and decay!

And yet I confess that it is a painful and bitter task to record the humiliations, the wearing, petty, stinging humiliations, of Poverty; to count the drops as they slowly fall, one by one, upon the fretted and indignant heart; to particularize, with the scrupulous and nice hand of indifference, the fractional and divided movements in the dial-plate of Misery; to behold the refinement of birth, the masculine pride of blood, the dignities of intellect, the wealth of knowledge, the delicacy, and graces of womanhood,—all that ennobled and softened the stony mass of commonplaces which is our life frittered into atoms, trampled into the dust and mire of the meanest thoroughfares of distress; life and soul, the energies and aims of man, ground into one prostrating want, cramped into one levelling sympathy with the dregs and refuse of his kind, blistered into a single galling and festering sore: this is, I own, a painful and a bitter task; but it hath its redemption,—a pride even in debasement, a pleasure even in woe,—and it is therefore that, while I have abridged, I have not shunned it. There are some whom the lightning of fortune blasts, only to render holy. Amidst all that humbles and scathes; amidst all that shatters from their life its verdure, smites to the dust the pomp and summit of their pride, and in the very heart of existence writeth a sudden and "strange defeature,"—they stand erect,—riven, not uprooted,—a monument less of pity than of awe! There are some who pass through the Lazar-House of Misery with a step more august than a Caesar's in his hall. The very things which, seen alone, are despicable and vile, associated with them become almost venerable and divine; and one ray,

however dim and feeble, of that intense holiness which, in the INFANT GOD, shed majesty over the manger and the straw, not denied to those who in the depth of affliction cherish His patient image, flings over the meanest localities of earth an emanation from the glory of Heaven!

CHAPTER L.

Letters from divers hands, which will absolve
Ourselves from long narration.—Tanner of Tyburn.

One morning about a fortnight after Talbot's death, Clarence was sitting alone, thoughtful and melancholy, when the three following letters were put into his hand:

LETTER I.

FROM THE DUKE OF HAVERFIELD.

Let me, my dear Linden, be the first to congratulate you upon your accession of fortune: five thousand a year, Scarsdale, and 80,000 in the Funds, are very pretty foes to starvation! Ah, my dear fellow, if you had but shot that frosty Caucasus of humanity, that pillar of the state, made not to bend, that—but you know already whom I mean, and so I will spare you more of my lamentable metaphors: had you shot Lord Borodaile, your happiness would now be complete! Everybody talks of your luck. La Meronville tending on you with her white hands, the prettiest hands in the world: who would not be wounded even by Lord Borodaile, for such a nurse? And then Talbot's—yet, I will not speak of that, for you are very unlike the present generation; and who knows but you may have some gratitude, some affection, some natural feeling in you? I had once; but that was before I went to France: those Parisians, with their fine sentiments, and witty philosophy, play the devil with one's good old-fashioned feelings. So Lord Aspeden is to have an Italian ministry. By the by, shall you go with him, or will you not rather stay at home, and enjoy your new fortunes,—hunt, race, dine out, dance, vote in the House of Commons, and, in short, do all that an Englishman and a gentleman should do? Ornamento e splendor del secolo nostro. Write me a line whenever you have nothing better to do.

And believe me, Most truly yours, HAVERFIELD.

Will you sell your black mare, or will you buy my brown one? *Utrum horum mavis accipe*, the only piece of Latin I remember.

LETTER FROM LORD ASPEDEN.

My Dear Linden,—Suffer me to enter most fully into your feeling. Death, my friend, is common to all: we must submit to its dispensations. I heard accidentally of the great fortune left you by Mr. Talbot (your father, I suppose I may venture to call him). Indeed, though there is a silly prejudice against illegitimacy, yet as our immortal bard says,—

”Wherefore base?
When thy dimensions are as well compact,
Thy mind as generous and thy shape as true
As honest madam’s issue!”

For my part, my dear Linden, I say, on your behalf, that it is very likely that you are a natural son, for such are always the luckiest and the best.

You have probably heard of the honour his Majesty has conferred on me, in appointing to my administration the city of ——. As the choice of a secretary has been left to me, I need not say how happy I shall be to keep my promise to you. Indeed, as I told Lord — yesterday morning, I do not know anywhere a young man who has more talent, or who plays better on the flute.

Adieu, my dear young friend, and believe me, Very truly yours,
ASPEDEN.

LETTER FROM MADAME DE LA MERONVILLE. (Translated.)

You have done me wrong,—great wrong. I loved you,—I waited on you, tended you, nursed you, gave all up for you; and you forsook me,—forsook me without a word. True, that you have been engaged in a melancholy duty, but, at least, you had time to write a line, to cast a thought, to one who had shown for you the love that I have done. But we will pass over all this: I will not reproach you; it is beneath me. The vicious upbraid: the virtuous forgive! I have for several days left your house. I should never have come to it, had you not been wounded, and, as I fondly imagined, for my sake. Return when you will, I shall no longer be there to persecute and torment you.

Pardon this letter. I have said too much for myself,—a hundred times too much to you; but I shall not sin again. This intrusion is my last. CECILE DE LA MERONVILLE.

These letters will probably suffice to clear up that part of Clarence’s history which had not hitherto been touched upon; they will show that Talbot’s will (after several legacies to his old servants, his nearest connections, and two charitable institutions, which he had founded, and for some years supported) had bequeathed the bulk of his property to Clarence. The words in which the bequest was made were

kind, and somewhat remarkable. "To my relation and friend, commonly known by the name of Clarence Linden, to whom I am bound alike by blood and affection," etc. These expressions, joined to the magnitude of the bequest, the apparently unaccountable attachment of the old man to his heir, and the mystery which wrapped the origin of the latter, all concurred to give rise to an opinion, easily received, and soon universally accredited, that Clarence was a natural son of the deceased; and so strong in England is the aristocratic aversion to an unknown lineage, that this belief, unflattering as it was, procured for Linden a much higher consideration, on the score of birth, than he might otherwise have enjoyed. Furthermore will the above correspondence testify the general eclat of Madame la Meronville's attachment, and the construction naturally put upon it. Nor do we see much left for us to explain, with regard to the Frenchwoman herself, which cannot equally well be gleaned by any judicious and intelligent reader, from the epistle last honoured by his perusal. Clarence's sense of gallantry did, indeed, smite him severely, for his negligence and ill requital to one who, whatever her faults or follies, had at least done nothing with which he had a right to reproach her. It must, however, be considered in his defence that the fatal event which had so lately occurred, the relapse which Clarence had suffered in consequence, and the melancholy confusion and bustle in which the last week or ten days had been passed, were quite sufficient to banish her from his remembrance. Still she was a woman, and had loved, or seemed to love; and Clarence, as he wrote to her a long, kind, and almost brotherly letter, in return for her own, felt that, in giving pain to another, one often suffers almost as much for avoiding as for committing a sin.

We have said his letter was kind; it was also frank, and yet prudent. In it he said that he had long loved another, which love alone could have rendered him insensible to her attachment; that he, nevertheless, should always recall her memory with equal interest and admiration; and then, with a tact of flattery which the nature of the correspondence and the sex of the person addressed rendered excusable, he endeavoured, as far as he was able, to soothe and please the vanity which the candour of his avowal was calculated to wound.

When he had finished this letter he despatched another to Lord Aspeden, claiming a reprieve of some days before he answered the proposal of the diplomatist. After these epistolary efforts, he summoned his valet, and told him, apparently in a careless tone, to find out if Lady Westborough was still in town. Then throwing himself on the couch, he wrestled with the grief and melancholy which the death of a friend, and more than a father, might well cause in a mind less susceptible than his, and counted the dull hours crawl onward till his servant returned. Lady Westborough and all the family had been gone a week to their seat in —.

"Well," thought Clarence, "had he been alive, I could have intrusted

my cause to a mediator; as it is, I will plead, or rather assert it, myself. Harrison," said he aloud, "see that my black mare is ready by sunrise to-morrow: I shall leave town for some days."

"Not in your present state of health, sir, surely?" said Harrison, with the license of one who had been a nurse.

"My health requires it: no more words, my good Harrison, see that I am obeyed." And Harrison, shaking his head doubtfully, left the room.

"Rich, independent, free to aspire to the heights which in England are only accessible to those who join wealth to ambition, I have at least," said Clarence, proudly, "no unworthy pretensions even to the hand of Lady Flora Ardenne. If she can love me for myself, if she can trust to my honour, rely on my love, feel proud in my pride, and aspiring in my ambition, then, indeed, this wealth will be welcome to me, and the disguised name which has cost me so many mortifications become grateful, since she will not disdain to share it."

CHAPTER LI.

A little druid wight
Of withered aspect; but his eye was keen
With sweetness mixed,—a russet brown bedight.
THOMSON: Castle of Indolence.

Thus holding high discourse, they came to where
The cursed carle was at his wonted trade,
Still tempting heedless men into his snare,
In witching wise, as I before have said.—Ibid.

It was a fine, joyous summer morning when Clarence set out, alone and on horseback, upon his enterprise of love and adventure. If there be anything on earth more reviving and inspiriting than another, it is, to my taste, a bright day,—a free horse, a journey of excitement before one, and loneliness! Rousseau—in his own way, a great though rather a morbid epicure of this world's enjoyments—talks with rapture of his pedestrian rambles when in his first youth. But what are your foot-ploddings to the joy which lifts you into air with the bound of your mettled steed?

But there are times when an iron and stern sadness locks, as it were, within itself our capacities of enjoyment; and the song of the birds, and the green freshness of the summer morning, and the glad motion of the eager horse, brought neither relief nor change to the musings of the young adventurer.

He rode on for several miles without noticing anything on his road, and only now and then testifying the nature of his thoughts and his consciousness of solitude by brief and abrupt exclamations and sentences, which proclaimed the melancholy yet exciting subjects of his meditations. During the heat of the noon, he rested at a small public-house about — miles from town; and resolving to take his horse at least ten miles farther before his day's journey ceased, he remounted towards the evening and slowly resumed his way.

He was now entering the same county in which he first made his appearance in this history. Although several miles from the spot on which the memorable night with the gypsies had been passed, his thoughts reverted to its remembrance, and he sighed as he recalled the ardent hopes which then fed and animated his heart. While thus musing, he heard the sound of hoofs behind him, and presently came by a sober-looking man, on a rough, strong pony, laden (besides its master's weight) with saddle-bags of uncommon size, and to all appearance substantially and artfully filled.

Clarence looked, and, after a second survey, recognized the person of his old acquaintance, Mr. Morris Brown.

Not equally reminiscent was the worshipful itinerant, who, in the great variety of forms and faces which it was his professional lot to encounter, could not be expected to preserve a very nice or distinguishing recollection of each.

"Your servant, sir, your servant," said Mr. Brown, as he rode his pony alongside of our traveller. "Are you going as far as W— this evening?"

"I hardly know yet," answered Clarence; "the length of my ride depends upon my horse rather than myself."

"Oh, well, very well," said Mr. Brown; "but you will allow me, perhaps, sir, the honour of riding with you as far as you go."

"You give me much gratification by your proposal, Mr. Brown!" said Clarence.

The broker looked in surprise at his companion. "So you know me, sir?"

"I do," replied Clarence. "I am surprised that you have forgotten me."

Slowly Mr. Brown gazed, till at last his memory began to give itself the rousing shake. "God bless me, sir, I beg you a thousand pardons: I now remember you perfectly; Mr. Linden, the nephew of my old

patroness, Mrs. Minden. Dear, dear, how could I be so forgetful! I hope, by the by, sir, that the shirts wore well? I am thinking you will want some more. I have some capital cambric of curiously fine quality and texture, from the wardrobe of the late Lady Waddilove."

"What, Lady Waddilove still!" cried Clarence. "Why, my good friend, you will offer next to furnish me with pantaloons from her ladyship's wardrobe."

"Why, really, sir, I see you preserve your fine spirits; but I do think I have one or two pair of plum-coloured velvet inexpressibles, that passed into my possession when her ladyship's husband died, which might, perhaps, with a leetle alteration, fit you, and, at all events, would be a very elegant present from a gentleman to his valet."

"Well, Mr. Brown, whenever I or my valet wear plum-coloured velvet breeches, I will certainly purchase those in your possession; but to change the subject, can you inform me what has become of my old host and hostess, the Copperases, of Copperas Bower?"

"Oh, sir, they are the same as ever; nice, genteel people they are, too. Master Adolphus has grown into a fine young gentleman, very nearly as tall as you and I are. His worthy father preserves his jovial vein, and is very merry whenever I call there. Indeed it was but last week that he made an admirable witticism. 'Bob,' said he (Tom,—you remember Tom, or De Warens, as Mrs. Copperas was pleased to call him,—Tom is gone), 'Bob, have you stopped the coach?' 'Yes, sir,' said Bob. 'And what coach is it?' asked Mr. Copperas. 'It be the Swallow, sir,' said the boy. 'The Swallow! oh, very well,' cried Mr. Copperas; 'then, now, having swallowed in the roll, I will e'en roll in the swallow! 'Ha! ha! ha! sir, very facetious, was it not?'"

"Very, indeed," said Clarence; "and so Mr. de Warens has gone; how came that?"

"Why, sir, you see, the boy was always of a gay turn, and he took to frisking about, as he called it, of a night, and so he was taken up for thrashing a watchman, and appeared before Sir John, the magistrate, the next morning."

"Caractacus before Caesar!" observed Linden; "and what said Caesar?"

"Sir?" said Mr. Brown.

"I mean, what said Sir John?"

"Oh! he asked him his name, and Tom, whose head Mrs. Copperas (poor good woman!) had crammed with pride enough for fifty foot-boys, replied, 'De Warens,' with all the air of a man of independence. 'De Warens!' cried Sir John, amazed, 'we'll have no De's here: take him to

Bridewell!’ and so, Mrs. Copperas, being without a foot-boy, sent for me, and I supplied her—with Bob!”

”Out of the late Lady Waddilove’s wardrobe too?” said Clarence.

”Ha, ha! that’s well, very well, sir. No, not exactly; but he was a son of her late ladyship’s coachman. Mr. Copperas has had two other servants of the name of Bob before, but this is the biggest of all, so he humorously calls him ’Triple Bob Major!’ You observe that road to the right, sir: it leads to the mansion of an old customer of mine, General Cornelius St. Leger; many a good bargain have I sold to his sister. Heaven rest her! when she died I lost a good friend, though she was a little hot or so, to be sure. But she had a relation, a young lady; such a lovely, noble-looking creature: it did one’s heart, ay, and one’s eyes also, good to look at her; and she’s gone too; well, well, one loses one’s customers sadly; it makes me feel old and comfortless to think of it. Now, yonder, as far as you can see among those distant woods, lived another friend of mine, to whom I offered to make some very valuable presents upon his marriage with the young lady I spoke of just now, but, poor gentleman, he had not time to accept them; he lost his property by a lawsuit, a few months after he was married, and a very different person now has Mordaunt Court.”

”Mordaunt Court!” cried Clarence; ”do you mean to say that Mr. Mordaunt has lost that property?”

”Why, sir, one Mr. Mordaunt has lost it, and another has gained it: but the real Mr. Mordaunt has not an acre in this county or elsewhere, I fear, poor gentleman. He is universally regretted, for he was very good and very generous, though they say he was also mighty proud and reserved; but for my part I never perceived it. If one is not proud one’s self, Mr. Linden, one is very little apt to be hurt by pride in other people.”

”And where is Mr. Algernon Mordaunt?” asked Clarence, as he recalled his interview with that person, and the interest with which Algernon then inspired him.

”That, sir, is more than any of us can say. He has disappeared altogether. Some declare that he has gone abroad, others that he is living in Wales in the greatest poverty. However, wherever he is, I am sure that he cannot be rich; for the lawsuit quite ruined him, and the young lady he married had not a farthing.”

”Poor Mordaunt!” said Clarence, musingly.

”I think, sir, that the squire would not be best pleased if he heard you pity him. I don’t know why, but he certainly looked, walked, and moved like one whom you felt it very hard to pity. But I am thinking that it is a great shame that the general should not do anything for

Mr. Mordaunt's wife, for she was his own flesh and blood; and I am sure he had no cause to be angry at her marrying a gentleman of such old family as Mr. Mordaunt. I am a great stickler for birth, sir; I learned that from the late Lady W. 'Brown,' she said, and I shall never forget her ladyship's air when she did say it, 'Brown, respect your superiors, and never fall into the hands of the republicans and atheists'!"

"And why," said Clarence, who was much interested in Mordaunt's fate, "did General St. Leger withhold his consent?"

"That we don't exactly know, sir; but some say that Mr. Mordaunt was very high and proud with the general, and the general was to the full as fond of his purse as Mr. Mordaunt could be of his pedigree; and so, I suppose, one pride clashed against the other, and made a quarrel between them."

"Would not the general, then, relent after the marriage?"

"Oh! no, sir; for it was a runaway affair. Miss Diana St. Leger, his sister, was as hot as ginger upon it, and fretted and worried the poor general, who was never of the mildest, about the match, till at last he forbade the poor young lady's very name to be mentioned. And when Miss Diana died about two years ago, he suddenly introduced a tawny sort of creature, whom they call a mulatto or creole, or some such thing, into the house; and it seems that he has had several children by her, whom he never durst own during Miss Diana's life, but whom he now declares to be his heirs. Well, they rule him with a rod of iron, and suck him as dry as an orange. They are a bad, griping set, all of them; and, I am sure, I don't say so from any selfish feeling, Mr. Linden, though they have forbid me the house, and called me, to my very face, an old cheating Jew. Think of that, sir!—I, whom the late Lady W. in her exceeding friendship used to call 'honest Brown,'—I whom your worthy—"

"And who," uncourteously interrupted Clarence, "has Mordaunt Court now?"

"Why, a distant relation of the last squire's, an elderly gentleman who calls himself Mr. Vavasour Mordaunt. I am going there to-morrow morning, for I still keep up a connection with the family. Indeed the old gentleman bought a lovely little ape of me, which I did intend as a present to the late (as I may call him) Mr. Mordaunt; so, though I will not say I exactly like him,—he is a hard hand at a bargain,—yet at least I will not deny him his due."

"What sort of a person is he? What character does he bear?" asked Clarence.

"I really find it hard to answer that question," said the gossiping

Mr. Brown. "In great things he is very lavish and ostentatious, but in small things he is very penurious and saving, and miser-like; and all for one son, who is deformed and very sickly. He seems to dote on that boy; and now I have got two or three little presents in these bags for Mr. Henry. Heaven forgive me, but when I look at the poor creature, with his face all drawn up, and his sour, ill-tempered voice, and his limbs crippled, I almost think it would be better if he were in his grave, and the rightful Mr. Mordaunt, who would then be the next of kin, in his place."

"So then, there is only this unhappy cripple between Mr. Mordaunt and the property?" said Clarence.

"Exactly so, sir. But will you let me ask where you shall put up at W—? I will wait upon you, if you will give me leave, with some very curious and valuable articles, highly desirable either for yourself or for little presents to your friends."

"I thank you," said Clarence, "I shall make no stay at W—, but I shall be glad to see you in town next week. Favour me, meanwhile, by accepting this trifle."

"Nay, nay, sir," said Mr. Brown, pocketing the money, "I really cannot accept this; anything in the way of exchange,—a ring, or a seal, or—"

"No, no, not at present," said Clarence; "the night is coming on, and I shall make the best of my way. Good-by, Mr. Brown;" and Clarence trotted off: but he had scarce got sixty yards before he heard the itinerant merchant cry out, "Mr. Linden, Mr. Linden!" and looking back, he beheld the honest Brown putting his shaggy pony at full speed, in order to overtake him; so he pulled up.

"Well, Mr. Brown, what do you want?"

"Why, you see, sir, you gave me no exact answer about the plum-colored velvet inexpressibles," said Mr. Brown.

CHAPTER LII.

Are we contemned?—The Double Marriage.

It was dusk when Clarence arrived at the very same inn at which, more than five years ago, he had assumed his present name. As he recalled the note addressed to him, and the sum (his whole fortune) which it contained, he could not help smiling at the change his lot had since

then undergone; but the smile soon withered when he thought of the kind and paternal hand from which that change had proceeded, and knew that his gratitude was no longer availing, and that that hand, in pouring its last favours upon him, had become cold. He was ushered into No. 4, and left to his meditations till bed-time.

The next day he recommenced his journey. Westborough Park, was, though in another county, within a short ride of W—; but, as he approached it, the character of the scenery became essentially changed. Bare, bold, and meagre, the features of the country bore somewhat of a Scottish character. On the right side of the road was a precipitous and perilous descent, and some workmen were placing posts along a path for foot-passengers on that side nearest the carriage-road, probably with a view to preserve unwary coachmen or equestrians from the dangerous vicinity of the descent, which a dark night might cause them to incur. As Clarence looked idly on the workmen, and painfully on the crumbling and fearful descent I have described, he little thought that that spot would, a few years after, become the scene of a catastrophe affecting in the most powerful degree the interests of his future life. Our young traveller put up his horse at a small inn, bearing the Westborough arms, and situated at a short distance from the park gates. Now that he was so near his mistress—now that less than an hour, nay, than the fourth part of an hour, might place him before her, and decide his fate—his heart, which had hitherto sustained him, grew faint, and presented, first fear, then anxiety, and, at last, despondency to his imagination and forebodings.

”At all events,” said he, ”I will see her alone before I will confer with her artful and proud mother or her cipher of a father. I will then tell her all my history, and open to her all my secrets: I will only conceal from her my present fortunes; for even if rumour should have informed her of them, it will be easy to give the report no sanction; I have a right to that trial. When she is convinced that, at least, neither my birth nor character can disgrace her, I shall see if her love can enable her to overlook my supposed poverty and to share my uncertain lot. If so, there will be some triumph in undeceiving her error and rewarding her generosity; if not, I shall be saved from involving my happiness with that of one who looks only to my worldly possessions. I owe it to her, it is true, to show her that I am no low-born pretender: but I owe it also to myself to ascertain if my own individual qualities are sufficient to gain her hand.”

Fraught with these ideas, which were natural enough to a man whose peculiar circumstances were well calculated to make him feel rather soured and suspicious, and whose pride had been severely wounded by the contempt with which his letter had been treated, Clarence walked into the park, and, hovering around the house, watched and waited that opportunity of addressing Lady Flora, which he trusted her habits of walking would afford him; but hours rolled away, the evening set in, and Lady Flora had not once quitted the house.

More disappointed and sick at heart than he liked to confess, Clarence returned to his inn, took his solitary meal, and strolling once more into the park, watched beneath the windows till midnight, endeavouring to guess which were the casements of her apartments, and feeling his heart beat high at every light which flashed forth and disappeared, and every form which flitted across the windows of the great staircase. Little did Lady Flora, as she sat in her room alone, and, in tears, mused over Clarence's fancied worthlessness and infidelity, and told her heart again and again that she loved no more,—little did she know whose eye kept vigils without, or whose feet brushed away the rank dews beneath her windows, or whose thoughts, though not altogether unmingled with reproach, were riveted with all the ardour of a young and first love upon her.

It was unfortunate for Linden that he had no opportunity of personally pleading his suit; his altered form and faded countenance would at least have insured a hearing and an interest for his honest though somewhat haughty sincerity: but though that day, and the next, and the next, were passed in the most anxious and unremitting vigilance, Clarence only once caught a glimpse of Lady Flora, and then she was one amidst a large party; and Clarence, fearful of a premature and untimely discovery, was forced to retire into the thickensses of the park, and lose the solitary reward of his watches almost as soon as he had won it.

Wearied and racked by his suspense, and despairing of obtaining any favourable opportunity for an interview without such a request, Clarence at last resolved to write to Lady Flora, entreating her assent to a meeting, in which he pledged himself to clear up all that had hitherto seemed doubtful in his conduct or mysterious in his character. Though respectful, urgent, and bearing the impress of truth and feeling, the tone of the letter was certainly that of a man who conceived he had a right to a little resentment for the past and a little confidence for the future. It was what might well be written by one who imagined his affection had once been returned, but would as certainly have been deemed very presumptuous by a lady who thought that the affection itself was a liberty.

Having penned this epistle, the next care was how to convey it. After much deliberation it was at last committed to the care of a little girl, the daughter of the lodge-keeper, whom Lady Flora thrice a week personally instructed in the mysteries of spelling, reading, and calligraphy. With many injunctions to deliver the letter only to the hands of the beautiful teacher, Clarence trusted his despatches to the little scholar, and, with a trembling frame and wistful eye, watched Susan take her road, with her green satchel and her shining cheeks, to the great house.

One hour, two hours, three hours, passed, and the messenger had not

returned. Restless and impatient, Clarence walked back to his inn, and had not been there many minutes before a servant, in the Westborough livery, appeared at the door of the humble hostelry, and left the following letter for his perusal and gratification:—

WESTBOROUGH PASS.

Sir,—The letter intended for my daughter has just been given to me by Lady Westborough. I know not what gave rise to the language, or the very extraordinary request for a clandestine meeting, which you have thought proper to address to Lady Flora Ardenne; but you will allow me to observe that, if you intend to confer upon my daughter the honour of a matrimonial proposal, she fully concurs with me and her mother in the negative which I feel necessitated to put upon your obliging offer.

I need not add that all correspondence with my daughter must close here. I have the honour to be, sir,

Your very obedient servant, WESTBOROUGH.

TO CLARENCE LINDEN, Esq.

Had Clarence's blood been turned to fire, his veins could not have swelled and burned with a fiercer heat than they did, as he read the above letter,—a masterpiece, perhaps, in the line of what may be termed the "d-d civil" of epistolary favours. "Insufferable arrogance!" he muttered within his teeth. "I will live to repay it. Perfidious, unfeeling woman: what an escape I have had of her! Now, now, I am on the world, and alone, thank Heaven. I will accept Aspeden's offer, and leave this country; when I return, it shall not be as a humble suitor to Lady Flora Ardenne. Pish! how the name sickens me: but come, I have a father; at least a nominal one. He is old and weak, and may die before I return. I will see him once more, and then, hey for Italy! Oh! I am so happy,—so happy at my freedom and escape. What, ho! waiter! my horse instantly!"

CHAPTER LIII.

Lucr.—What has thy father done?

Beat.—What have I done? Am I not innocent?—The Cenci.

Tam twilight was darkening slowly over a room of noble dimensions and costly fashion. Although it was the height of summer, a low fire burned in the grate; and, stretching his hands over the feeble flame, an old man of about sixty sat in an armchair curiously carved with

armorial bearings. The dim yet fitful flame cast its upward light upon a countenance, stern, haughty, and repellent, where the passions of youth and manhood had dug themselves graves in many an iron line and deep furrow: the forehead, though high, was narrow and compressed; the brows sullenly overhung the eyes; and the nose, which was singularly prominent and decided, age had sharpened, and brought out, as it were, till it gave a stubborn and very forbidding expression to the more sunken features over which it rose with exaggerated dignity. Two bottles of wine, a few dried preserves, and a water glass, richly chased, and ornamented with gold, showed that the inmate of the apartment had passed the hour of the principal repast, and his loneliness at a time usually social seemed to indicate that few olive branches were accustomed to overshadow his table.

The windows of the dining-room reached to the ground, and without the closing light just enabled one to see a thick copse of wood, which, at a very brief interval of turf, darkened immediately opposite the house. While the old man was thus bending over the fire and conning his evening contemplations, a figure stole from the copse I have mentioned, and, approaching the window, looked pryingly into the apartment; then with a noiseless hand it opened the spring of the casement, which was framed on a peculiar and old-fashioned construction, that required a practised and familiar touch, entered the apartment, and crept on, silent and unperceived by the inhabitant of the room, till it paused and stood motionless, with folded arms, scarce three steps behind the high back of the old man's chair.

In a few minutes the latter moved from his position, and slowly rose; the abruptness with which he turned, brought the dark figure of the intruder full and suddenly before him: he started back, and cried in an alarmed tone, "Who is there?"

The stranger made no reply.

The old man, in a voice in which anger and pride mingled with fear, repeated the question. The figure advanced, dropped the cloak in which it was wrapped, and presenting the features of Clarence Linden, said, in a low but clear tone,—

"Your son."

The old man dropped his hold of the bell-rope, which he had just before seized, and leaned as if for support against the oak wainscot; Clarence approached.

"Yes!" said he, mournfully, "your unfortunate, your offending, but your guiltless son. More than five years I have been banished from your house; I have been thrown, while yet a boy, without friends, without guidance, without name, upon the wide world, and to the mercy of chance. I come now to you as a man, claiming no assistance, and

uttering no reproach, but to tell you that him whom an earthly father rejected God has preserved; that without one unworthy or debasing act I have won for myself the friends who support and the wealth which dignifies life,—since it renders it independent. Through all the disadvantages I have struggled against I have preserved unimpaired my honour, and unsullied my conscience; you have disowned, but you might have claimed me without shame. Father, these hands are clean!”

A strong and evident emotion shook the old man’s frame. He raised himself to his full height, which was still tall and commanding, and in a voice, the natural harshness of which was rendered yet more repellent by passion, replied, “Boy! your presumption is insufferable. What to me is your wretched fate? Go, go, go to your miserable mother: find her out; claim kindred there; live together, toil together, rot together, but come not to me! disgrace to my house, ask not admittance to my affections; the law may give you my name, but sooner would I be torn piecemeal than own your right to it. If you want money, name the sum, take it: cut up my fortune to shreds, seize my property, revel on it; but come not here. This house is sacred; pollute it not: I disown you; I discard you; I,—ay, I detest,—I loathe you!”

And with these words, which came forth as if heaved from the inmost heart of the speaker, who shook with the fury he endeavoured to stifle, he fell back into his chair, and fixed his eyes, which glared fearfully through the increasing darkness upon Linden, who stood high, erect, and sorrowfully before him.

“Alas, my lord!” said Clarence, with mournful bitterness, “have not the years which have seared your form and whitened your locks brought some meekness to your rancour, some mercy to your injustice, for one whose only crime against you seems to have been his birth. But I said I came not to reproach, nor do I. Many a bitter hour, many a pang of shame and mortification and misery, which have made scars in my heart that will never wear away, my wrongs have cost me; but let them pass. Let them not swell your future and last account whenever it be required. I am about to leave this country, with a heavy and foreboding heart; we may never meet again on earth. I have no longer any wish, any chance, of resuming the name you have deprived me of. I shall never thrust myself on your relationship or cross your view. Lavish your wealth upon him whom you have placed so immeasurably above me in your affections. But I have not deserved your curse, Father; give me your blessing, and let me depart in peace.”

“Peace! and what peace have I had? what respite from gnawing shame, the foulness and leprosy of humiliation and reproach, since—since—? But this is not your fault, you say: no, no,—it is another’s; and you are only the mark of my stigma; my disgrace, not its perpetrator. Ha! a nice distinction, truly. My blessing you say! Come, kneel; kneel, boy, and have it!”

Clarence approached, and stood bending and bareheaded before his father, but he knelt not.

"Why do you not kneel?" cried the old man, vehemently.

"It is the attitude of the injurer, not of the injured!" said Clarence, firmly.

"Injured! insolent reprobate, is it not I who am injured? Do you not read it in my brow,—here, here?" and the old man struck his clenched hand violently against his temples. "Was I not injured?" he continued, sinking his voice into a key unnaturally low; "did I not trust implicitly? did I not give up my heart without suspicion? was I not duped deliciously? was I not kind enough, blind enough, fool enough and was I not betrayed,—damnably, filthily betrayed? But that was no injury. Was not my old age turned into a sapless tree, a poisoned spring? Were not my days made a curse to me, and my nights a torture? Was I not, am I not, a mock and a by-word, and a miserable, impotent, unavenged old man? Injured! But this is no injury! Boy, boy, what are your wrongs to mine?"

"Father!" cried Clarence, deprecatingly, "I am not the cause of your wrongs: is it just that the innocent should suffer for the guilty?"

"Speak not in that voice!" cried the old man, "that voice!—fie, fie on it. Hence! away! away, boy! why tarry you? My son! and have that voice? Pooh, you are not my son. Ha! ha!—my son?"

"What am I, then?" said Clarence, soothingly: for he was shocked and grieved, rather than irritated by a wrath which partook so strongly of insanity.

"I will tell you," cried the father, "I will tell you what you are: you are my curse!"

"Farewell!" said Clarence, much agitated, and retiring to the window by which he had entered; "may your heart never smite you for your cruelty! Farewell! may the blessing you have withheld from me be with you!"

"Stop! stay!" cried the father; for his fury was checked for one moment, and his nature, fierce as it was, relented: but Clarence was already gone, and the miserable old man was left alone to darkness, and solitude, and the passions which can make a hell of the human heart!

CHAPTER LIV.

Sed quae praeclara et prospera tanti,
Ut rebus laetis par sit mensura malorum?—JUVENAL.

[“But what excellence or prosperity so great that there should be an equal measure of evils for our joys?”]

We are now transported to a father and a son of a very different stamp.

It was about the hour of one p.m., when the door of Mr. Vavasour Mordaunt’s study was thrown open, and the servant announced Mr. Brown.

“Your servant, sir; your servant, Mr. Henry,” said the itinerant, bowing low to the two gentlemen thus addressed. The former, Mr. Vavasour Mordaunt, might be about the same age as Linden’s father. A shrewd, sensible, ambitious man of the world, he had made his way from the state of a younger brother, with no fortune and very little interest, to considerable wealth, besides the property he had acquired by law, and to a degree of consideration for general influence and personal ability, which, considering he had no official or parliamentary rank, very few of his equals enjoyed. Persevering, steady, crafty, and possessing, to an eminent degree, that happy art of “canting” which opens the readiest way to character and consequence, the rise and reputation of Mr. Vavasour Mordaunt appeared less to be wondered at than envied; yet, even envy was only for those who could not look beyond the surface of things. He was at heart an anxious and unhappy man. The evil we do in the world is often paid back in the bosom of home. Mr. Vavasour Mordaunt was, like Crauford, what might be termed a mistaken utilitarian: he had lived utterly and invariably for self; but instead of uniting self-interest with the interest of others, he considered them as perfectly incompatible ends. But character was among the greatest of all objects to him; so that, though he had rarely deviated into what might fairly be termed a virtue, he had never transgressed what might rigidly be called a propriety. He had not the aptitude, the wit, the moral audacity of Crauford: he could not have indulged in one offence with impunity, by a mingled courage and hypocrisy in veiling others; he was the slave of the forms which Crauford subjugated to himself. He was only so far resembling Crauford as one man of the world resembles another in selfishness and dissimulation: he could be dishonest, not villanous,—much less a villain upon system. He was a canter, Crauford a hypocrite: his uttered opinions were, like Crauford’s, different from his conduct; but he believed the truth of the former even while sinning in the latter; he canted so sincerely that the tears came into his eyes when he spoke. Never was there a man more exemplary in words: people who departed from him went away impressed with the idea

of an excess of honour, a plethora of conscience. "It was almost a pity," said they, "that Mr. Vavasour was so romantic;" and thereupon they named him as executor to their wills and guardian to their sons. None but he could, in carrying the lawsuit against Mordaunt, have lost nothing in reputation by success. But there was something so specious, so ostensibly fair in his manner and words, while he was ruining Mordaunt, that it was impossible not to suppose he was actuated by the purest motives, the most holy desire for justice; not for himself, he said, for he was old, and already rich enough, but for his son! From that son came the punishment of all his offences,—the black drop at the bottom of a bowl seemingly so sparkling. To him, as the father grew old and desirous of quiet, Vavasour had transferred all his selfishness, as if to a securer and more durable firm. The child, when young, had been singularly handsome and intelligent; and Vavasour, as he toiled and toiled at his ingenious and graceful cheateries, pleased himself with anticipating the importance and advantages the heir to his labours would enjoy. For that son he certainly had persevered more arduously than otherwise he might have done in the lawsuit, of the justice of which he better satisfied the world than his own breast; for that son he rejoiced as he looked around the stately halls and noble domain from which the rightful possessor had been driven; for that son he extended economy into penuriousness, and hope into anxiety; and, too old to expect much more from the world himself, for that son he anticipated, with a wearing and feverish fancy, whatever wealth could purchase, beauty win, or intellect command.

But as if, like the Castle of Otranto, there was something in Mordaunt Court which contained a penalty and a doom for the usurper, no sooner had Vavasour possessed himself of his kinsman's estate, than the prosperity of his life dried and withered away, like Jonah's gourd, in a single night. His son, at the age of thirteen, fell from a scaffold, on which the workmen were making some extensive alterations in the old house, and became a cripple and a valetudinarian for life. But still Vavasour, always of a sanguine temperament, cherished a hope that surgical assistance might restore him: from place to place, from professor to professor, from quack to quack, he carried the unhappy boy, and as each remedy failed he was only the more impatient to devise a new one. But as it was the mind as well as person of his son in which the father had stored up his ambition; so, in despite of this fearful accident and the wretched health by which it was followed, Vavasour never suffered his son to rest from the tasks and tuitions and lectures of the various masters by whom he was surrounded. The poor boy, it is true, deprived of physical exertion and naturally of a serious disposition, required very little urging to second his father's wishes for his mental improvement; and as the tutors were all of the orthodox university calibre, who imagine that there is no knowledge (but vanity) in any other works than those in which their own education has consisted, so Henry Vavasour became at once the victor and victim of Bentleys and Scaligers, word-weighers and metre-

scanners, till, utterly ignorant of everything which could have softened his temper, dignified his misfortunes, and reconciled him to his lot, he was sinking fast into the grave, soured by incessant pain into moroseness, envy, and bitterness; exhausted by an unwholesome and useless application to unprofitable studies; an excellent scholar (as it is termed), with the worst regulated and worst informed mind of almost any of his contemporaries equal to himself in the advantages of ability, original goodness of disposition, and the costly and profuse expenditure of education.

But the vain father, as he heard, on all sides, of his son's talents, saw nothing sinister in their direction; and though the poor boy grew daily more contracted in mind and broken in frame, Vavasour yet hugged more and more closely to his breast the hope of ultimate cure for the latter and future glory for the former. So he went on heaping money and extending acres, and planting and improving and building and hoping and anticipating, for one at whose very feet the grave was already dug!

But we left Mr. Brown in the study, making his bow and professions of service to Mr. Vavasour Mordaunt and his son.

"Good day, honest Brown," said the former, a middle-sized and rather stout man, with a well-powdered head, and a sharp, shrewd, and very fallow countenance; "good day; have you brought any of the foreign liqueurs you spoke of, for Mr. Henry?"

"Yes, sir, I have some curiously fine eau d'or and liqueur des files, besides the marasquino and curacoa. The late Lady Waddilove honoured my taste in these matters with her especial approbation."

"My dear boy," said Vavasour, turning to his son, who lay extended on the couch, reading not the "Prometheus" (that most noble drama ever created), but the notes upon it, "my dear boy, as you are fond of liqueurs, I desired Brown to get some peculiarly fine; perhaps—"

"Pish!" said the son, fretfully interrupting him, "do, I beseech you, take your hand off my shoulder. See now, you have made me lose my place. I really do wish you would leave me alone for one moment in the day."

"I beg your pardon, Henry," said the father, looking reverently on the Greek characters which his son preferred to the newspaper. "It is very vexatious, I own; but do taste these liqueurs. Dr. Lukewarm said you might have everything you liked—"

"But quiet!" muttered the cripple.

"I assure you, sir," said the wandering merchant, "that they are excellent; allow me, Mr. Vavasour Mordaunt, to ring for a corkscrew.

I really do think, sir, that Mr. Henry looks much better. I declare he has quite a colour."

"No, indeed!" said Vavasour, eagerly. "Well, it seems to me, too, that he is getting better. I intend him to try Mr. E—'s patent collar in a day or two; but that will in some measure prevent his reading. A great pity; for I am very anxious that he should lose no time in his studies just at present. He goes to Cambridge in October."

"Indeed, sir! Well, he will set the town in a blaze, I guess, sir! Everybody says what a fine scholar Mr. Henry is,—even in the servants' hall!"

"Ay, ay," said Vavasour, gratified even by this praise, "he is clever enough, Brown; and, what is more" (and here Vavasour's look grew sanctified), "he is good enough. His principles do equal honour to his head and heart. He would be no son of mine if he were not as much the gentleman as the scholar."

The youth lifted his heavy and distorted face from his book, and a sneer raised his lip for a moment; but a sudden spasm of pain seizing him, the expression changed, and Vavasour, whose eyes were fixed upon him, hastened to his assistance.

"Throw open the window, Brown, ring the bell, call—"

"Pooh, Father," cried the boy, with a sharp, angry voice, "I am not going to die yet, nor faint either; but it is all your fault. If you will have those odious, vulgar people here for your own pleasure, at least suffer me, another day, to retire."

"My son, my son!" said the grieved father, in reproachful anger, "it was my anxiety to give you some trifling enjoyment that brought Brown here: you must be sensible of that!"

"You tease me to death," grumbled the peevish unfortunate.

"Well, sir," said Mr. Brown, "shall I leave the bottles here? or do you please that I shall give them to the butler? I see that I am displeasing and troublesome to Mr. Henry; but as my worthy friend and patroness, the late Lady—"

"Go, go, honest Brown!" said Vavasour (who desired every man's good word), "go, and give the liqueurs to Preston. Mr. Henry is extremely sorry that he is too unwell to see you now; and I—I have the heart of a father for his sufferings."

Mr. Brown withdrew. "'Odious and vulgar,'" said he to himself, in a little fury,—for Mr. Brown peculiarly valued himself on his

gentility,—’odious and vulgar!’ To think of his little lordship uttering such shameful words! However, I will go into the steward’s room, and abuse him there. But, I suppose, I shall get no dinner in this house,—no, not so much as a crust of bread; for while the old gentleman is launching out into such prodigious expenses on a great scale,—making heathenish temples, and spoiling the fine old house with his new picture gallery and nonsense,—he is so close in small matters, that I warrant not a candle-end escapes him; griping and pinching and squeezing with one hand, and scattering money, as if it were dirt, with the other,—and all for that cross, ugly, deformed, little whippersnapper of a son. ’Odious and vulgar,’ indeed! What shocking language! Mr. Algernon Mordaunt would never have made use of such words, I know. And, bless me, now I think of it, I wonder where that poor gentleman is. The young heir here is not long for this world, I can see; and who knows but what Mr. Algernon may be in great distress; and I am sure, as far as four hundred pounds, or even a thousand, go, I would not mind lending it him, only upon the post-obits of Squire Vavasour and his hopeful. I like doing a kind thing; and Mr. Algernon was always very good to me; and I am sure I don’t care about the security, though I think it will be as sure as sixpence; for the old gentleman must be past sixty, and the young one is the worse life of the two. And when he’s gone, what relation so near as Mr. Algernon? We should help one another; it is but one’s duty: and if he is in great distress he would not mind a handsome premium. Well, nobody can say Morris Brown is not as charitable as the best Christian breathing; and, as the late Lady Waddilove very justly observed, ’Brown, believe me, a prudent risk is the surest gain!’ I will lose no time in finding the late squire out.”

Muttering over these reflections, Mr. Brown took his way to the steward’s room.

CHAPTER LV.

Clar.—How, two letters?—The Lover’s Progress.

LETTER FROM CLARENCE LINDEN, ESQ., TO THE DUKE OF HAVERFIELD.

HOTEL —, CALAIS.

My Dear Duke,—After your kind letter, you will forgive me for not having called upon you before I left England, for you have led me to hope that I may dispense with ceremony towards you; and, in sad and sober earnest, I was in no mood to visit even you during the few days I was in London, previous to my departure. Some French philosopher

has said that, 'the best compliment we can pay our friends, when in sickness or misfortune, is to avoid them.' I will not say how far I disagree with this sentiment, but I know that a French philosopher will be an unanswerable authority with you; and so I will take shelter even under the battery of an enemy.

I am waiting here for some days in expectation of Lord Aspeden's arrival. Sick as I was of England and all that has lately occurred to me there, I was glad to have an opportunity of leaving it sooner than my chief could do; and I amuse myself very indifferently in this dull town, with reading all the morning, plays all the evening, and dreams of my happier friends all the night.

And so you are sorry that I did not destroy Lord Borodaile. My dear duke, you would have been much more sorry if I had! What could you then have done for a living Pasquin for your stray lampoons and vagrant sarcasms? Had an unfortunate bullet carried away—

"That peer of England, pillar of the state,"

as you term him, pray on whom could 'Duke Humphrey unfold his griefs'?—Ah, Duke, better as it is, believe me; and, whenever you are at a loss for a subject for wit, you will find cause to bless my forbearance, and congratulate yourself upon the existence of its object.

Dare I hope that, amidst all the gayeties which court you, you will find time to write to me? If so, you shall have in return the earliest intelligence of every new soprano, and the most elaborate criticisms on every budding figurante of our court.

Have you met Trollop lately, and in what new pursuit are his intellectual energies engaged? There, you see, I have fairly entrapped your Grace into a question which common courtesy will oblige you to answer.

Adieu, ever, my dear Duke. Most truly yours, etc.

LETTER FROM THE DUKE OF HAVERFIELD TO CLARENCE LINDEN, ESQ.

A thousand thanks, mon cher, for your letter, though it was certainly less amusing and animated than I could have wished it for your sake, as well as my own; yet it could not have been more welcomely received, had it been as witty as your conversation itself. I heard that you had accepted the place of secretary to Lord Aspeden, and that you had passed through London on your way to the Continent, looking (the amiable Callythorpe, 'who never flatters,' is my authority) more like a ghost than yourself. So you may be sure, my dear Linden, that I was very anxious to be convinced under your own hand of your carnal

existence.

Take care of yourself, my good fellow, and don't imagine, as I am apt to do, that youth is like my hunter, Fearnought, and will carry you over everything. In return for your philosophical maxim, I will give you another. "In age we should remember that we have been young, and in youth that we are to be old." Ehem!—am I not profound as a moralist? I think a few such sentences would become my long face well; and, to say truth, I am tired of being witty; every one thinks he can be that: so I will borrow Trollop's philosophy,—take snuff, wear a wig out of curl, and grow wise instead of merry.

A propos of Trollop; let me not forget that you honour him with your inquiries. I saw him three days since, and he asked me if I had been impressed lately with the idea vulgarly called Clarence Linden; and he then proceeded to inform me that he had heard the atoms which composed your frame were about to be resolved into a new form. While I was knitting my brows very wisely at this intelligence, he passed on to apprise me that I had neither length, breadth, nor extension, nor anything but mind. Flattered by so delicate a compliment to my understanding, I yielded my assent: and he then shifted his ground, and told me that there was no such thing as mind; that we were but modifications of matter; and that, in a word, I was all body. I took advantage of this doctrine, and forthwith removed my modification of matter from his.

Findlater has just lost his younger brother in a duel. You have no idea how shocking it was. Sir Christopher one day heard his brother, who had just entered the — Dragoons, ridiculed for his want of spirit, by Major Elton, who professed to be the youth's best friend. The honest heart of our worthy baronet was shocked beyond measure at this perfidy, and the next time his brother mentioned Elton's name with praise, out came the story. You may guess the rest: young Findlater called out Elton, who shot him through the lungs! "I did it for the best," cried Sir Christopher.

La pauvre petite Meronville! What an Ariadne! Just as I was thinking to play the Bacchus to your Theseus, up steps an old gentleman from Yorkshire, who hears it is fashionable to marry bonas robas, proposes honourable matrimony, and deprives me and the world of La Meronville! The wedding took place on Monday last, and the happy pair set out to their seat in the North. Verily, we shall have quite a new race in the next generation; I expect all the babes will skip into the world with a pas de zephyr, singing in sweet trebles,—

"Little dancing loves we are!
Who the deuce is our papa?"

I think you will be surprised to hear that Lord Borodaile is beginning to thaw; I saw him smile the other day! Certainly, we are not so near

the North Pole as we were! He is going, and so am I, in the course of the autumn, to your old friends the Westboroughs. Report says that he is un peu epris de la belle Flore; but, then, Report is such a liar! For my own part I always contradict her.

I eagerly embrace your offer of correspondence, and assure you that there are few people by whose friendship I conceive myself so much honoured as by yours. You will believe this; for you know that, like Callythorpe, I never flatter. Farewell for the present.

Sincerely yours, HAVERFIELD.

CHAPTER LVI.

Q. Eliz.—Shall I be tempted of the devil thus?

K. Rich.—Ay, if the devil tempt thee to do good.

Q. Eliz.—Shall I forget myself to be myself?—SHAKSPEARE.

It wanted one hour to midnight, as Crauford walked slowly to the lonely and humble street where he had appointed his meeting with Glendower. It was a stormy and fearful night. The day had been uncommonly sultry, and, as it died away, thick masses of cloud came labouring along the air, which lay heavy and breathless, as if under a spell,—as if in those dense and haggard vapours the rider of the storm sat, like an incubus, upon the atmosphere beneath, and paralyzed the motion and wholesomeness of the sleeping winds. And about the hour of twilight, or rather when twilight should have been, instead of its quiet star, from one obscure corner of the heavens flashed a solitary gleam of lightning, lingered a moment,—

”And ere a man had power to say, Behold!
The jaws of darkness did devour it up.”

But then, as if awakened from a torpor by a signal universally acknowledged, from the courts and quarters of heaven, came, blaze after blaze, and peal upon peal, the light and voices of the Elements when they walk abroad. The rain fell not: all was dry and arid; the mood of Nature seemed not gentle enough for tears; and the lightning, livid and forked, flashed from the sullen clouds with a deadly fierceness, made trebly perilous by the panting drought and stagnation of the air. The streets were empty and silent, as if the huge city had been doomed and delivered to the wrath of the tempest; and ever and anon the lightnings paused upon the housetops, shook and quivered as if meditating their stroke, and then, baffled as it were, by some superior and guardian agency, vanished into their gloomy tents, and made their next descent from some opposite corner of the skies.

It was a remarkable instance of the force with which a cherished object occupies the thoughts, and of the all-sufficiency of the human mind to itself, the slowness and unconsciousness of danger with which Crauford, a man luxurious as well as naturally timid, moved amidst the angry fires of heaven and brooded, undisturbed and sullenly serene, over the project at his heart.

"A rare night for our meeting," thought he; "I suppose he will not fail me. Now let me con over my task. I must not tell him all yet. Such babes must be led into error before they can walk: just a little inkling will suffice, a glimpse into the arcana of my scheme. Well, it is indeed fortunate that I met him, for verily I am surrounded with danger, and a very little delay in the assistance I am forced to seek might exalt me to a higher elevation than the peerage."

Such was the meditation of this man, as with a slow, shuffling walk, characteristic of his mind, he proceeded to the appointed spot.

A cessation of unusual length in the series of the lightnings, and the consequent darkness, against which the dull and scanty lamps vainly struggled, prevented Crauford and another figure approaching from the opposite quarter seeing each other till they almost touched. Crauford stopped abruptly.

"Is it you?" said he.

"It is a man who has outlived fortune!" answered Glendower, in the exaggerated and metaphorical language which the thoughts of men who imagine warmly, and are excited powerfully, so often assume.

"Then," rejoined Crauford, "you are the more suited for my purpose. A little urging of necessity behind is a marvellous whetter of the appetite to danger before, he! he!" And as he said this, his low chuckling laugh jarringly enough contrasted with the character of the night and his companion.

Glendower replied not: a pause ensued; and the lightning which, spreading on a sudden from east to west, hung over the city a burning and ghastly canopy, showed the face of each to the other, working and almost haggard as it was with the conception of dark thoughts, and rendered wan and unearthly by the spectral light in which it was beheld. "It is an awful night," said Glendower.

"True," answered Crauford, "a very awful night; but we are all safe under the care of Providence. Jesus! what a flash! Think you it is a favourable opportunity for our conversation?"

"Why not?" said Glendower; "what have the thunders and wrath of Heaven to do with us?"

"H-e-m! h-e-m! God sees all things," rejoined Crauford, "and avenges Himself on the guilty by His storms!"

"Ay; but those are the storms of the heart! I tell you that even the innocent may have that within to which the loudest tempests without are peace! But guilt, you say; what have we to do with guilt?"

Crauford hesitated, and, avoiding any reply to this question, drew Glendower's arm within his own, and in a low half-whispered tone said,—

"Glendower, survey mankind; look with a passionless and unprejudiced eye upon the scene which moves around us: what do you see anywhere but the same re-acted and eternal law of Nature,—all, all preying upon each other? Or if there be a solitary individual who refrains, he is as a man without a common badge, without a marriage garment, and the rest trample him under foot! Glendower, you are such a man! Now hearken, I will deceive you not; I honour you too much to beguile you, even to your own good. I own to you, fairly and at once, that in the scheme I shall unfold to you, there may be something repugnant, to the factitious and theoretical principles of education,—something hostile to the prejudices, though not to the reasonings, of the mind; but—"

"Hold!" said Glendower, abruptly, pausing and fixing his bold and searching eye upon the tempter; "hold! there will be no need of argument or refinement in this case: tell me at once your scheme, and at once I will accept or reject it!"

"Gently," said Crauford; "to all deeds of contract there is a preamble. Listen to me yet further: when I have ceased, I will listen to you. It is in vain that you place man in cities; it is in vain that you fetter him with laws; it is in vain that you pour into his mind the light of an imperfect morality, of a glimmering wisdom, of an ineffectual religion: in all places he is the same,—the same savage and crafty being, who makes the passions which rule himself the tools of his conquest over others! There is in all creation but one evident law,—self-preservation! Split it as you like into hairbreadths and atoms, it is still fundamentally and essentially unaltered. Glendower, that self-preservation is our bond now. Of myself I do not at present speak; I refer only to you: self-preservation commands you to place implicit confidence in me; it impels you to abjure indigence, by accepting the proposal I am about to make to you."

"You, as yet, speak enigmas," said Glendower; "but they are sufficiently clear to tell me their sense is not such as I have heard you utter."

"You are right. Truth is not always safe,—safe either to others, or to ourselves! But I dare open to you now my real heart: look in it; I

dare to say that you will behold charity, benevolence, piety to God, love and friendship at this moment to yourself; but I own, also, that you will behold there a determination—which to me seems courage—not to be the only idle being in the world, where all are busy; or, worse still, to be the only one engaged in a perilous and uncertain game, and yet shunning to employ all the arts of which he is master. I will own to you that, long since, had I been foolishly inert, I should have been, at this moment, more penniless and destitute than yourself. I live happy, respected, wealthy! I enjoy in their widest range the blessings of life. I dispense those blessings to others. Look round the world: whose name stands fairer than mine? whose hand relieves more of human distresses? whose tongue preaches purer doctrines? None, Glendower, none. I offer to you means not dissimilar to those I have chosen, fortunes not unequal to those I possess. Nothing but the most unjustifiable fastidiousness will make you hesitate to accept my offer.”

”You cannot expect that I have met you this night with a resolution to be unjustifiably fastidious,” said Glendower, with a hollow and cold smile.

Crauford did not immediately answer, for he was considering whether it was yet the time for disclosing the important secret. While he was deliberating, the sullen clouds began to break from their suspense. A double darkness gathered around, and a few large drops fell on the ground in token of a more general discharge about to follow from the floodgates of heaven. The two men moved onward, and took shelter under an old arch. Crauford first broke silence. ”Hist!” said he, hist! do you hear anything?”

”Yes! I heard the winds and the rain, and the shaking houses, and the plashing pavements, and the reeking housetops,—nothing more.”

Looking long and anxiously around to certify himself that none was indeed the witness of their conference, Crauford approached close to Glendower and laid his hand heavily upon his arm. At that moment a vivid and lengthened flash of lightning shot through the ruined arch, and gave to Crauford’s countenance a lustre which Glendower almost started to behold. The face, usually so smooth, calm, bright in complexion, and almost inexpressive from its extreme composure, now agitated by the excitement of the moment, and tinged by the ghastly light of the skies, became literally fearful. The cold blue eye glared out from its socket; the lips blanched, and, parting in act to speak, showed the white glistening teeth; and the corners of the mouth, drawn down in a half sneer, gave to the cheeks, rendered green and livid by the lightning, a lean and hollow appearance contrary to their natural shape.

”It is,” said Crauford, in a whispered but distinct tone, ”a perilous secret that I am about to disclose to you. I indeed have no concern

in it, but my lords the judges have, and you will not therefore be surprised if I forestall the ceremonies of their court and require an oath."

Then, his manner and voice suddenly changing into an earnest and deep solemnity, as excitement gave him an eloquence more impressive, because unnatural to his ordinary moments, he continued: "By those lightnings and commotions above; by the heavens in which they revel in their terrible sports; by the earth, whose towers they crumble, and herbs they blight, and creatures they blast into cinders at their will; by Him whom, whatever be the name He bears, all men in the living world worship and tremble before; by whatever is sacred in this great and mysterious universe, and at the peril of whatever can wither and destroy and curse,—swear to preserve inviolable and forever the secret I shall whisper in your ear!"

The profound darkness which now, in the pause of the lightning, wrapped the scene, hid from Crauford all sight of the effect he had produced, and even the very outline of Glendower's figure; but the gloom made more distinct the voice which thrilled through it upon Crauford's ear.

"Promise me that there is not dishonour, nor crime, which is dishonour, in this confidence, and I swear."

Crauford ground his teeth. He was about to reply impetuously, but he checked himself. "I am not going," thought he, "to communicate my own share of this plot, but merely to state that a plot does exist, and then to point out in what manner he can profit by it; so far, therefore, there is no guilt in his concealment, and, consequently, no excuse for him to break his vow."

Rapidly running over this self-argument, he said aloud, "I promise!"

"And," rejoined Glendower, "I swear!"

At the close of this sentence another flash of lightning again made darkness visible, and Glendower, beholding the countenance of his companion, again recoiled: for its mingled haggardness and triumph seemed to his excited imagination the very expression of a fiend! "Now," said Crauford, relapsing into his usual careless tone, somewhat enlivened by his sneer, "now, then, you must not interrupt me in my disclosure by those starts and exclamations which break from your philosophy like sparks from flint. Hear me throughout."

And, bending down, till his mouth reached Glendower's ear, he commenced his recital. Artfully hiding his own agency, the master-spring of the gigantic machinery of fraud, which, too mighty for a single hand, required an assistant,—throwing into obscurity the sin, while, knowing the undaunted courage and desperate fortunes of the

man, he did not affect to conceal the danger; expatiating upon the advantages, the immense and almost inexhaustible resources of wealth which his scheme suddenly opened upon one in the deepest abyss of poverty, and slightly sketching, as if to excite vanity, the ingenuity and genius by which the scheme originated, and could only be sustained,—Crauford's detail of temptation, in its knowledge of human nature, in its adaptation of act to principles, in its web-like craft of self-concealment, and the speciousness of its lure, was indeed a splendid masterpiece of villanous invention.

But while Glendower listened, and his silence flattered Crauford's belief of victory, not for one single moment did a weak or yielding desire creep around his heart. Subtly as the scheme was varnished, and scarce a tithe of its comprehensive enormity unfolded, the strong and acute mind of one long accustomed to unravel sophistry and gaze on the loveliness of truth, saw at once that the scheme proposed was of the most unmingled treachery and baseness. Sick, chilled, withering at heart, Glendower leaned against the damp wall; as every word which the tempter fondly imagined was irresistibly confirming his purpose, tore away the last prop to which, in the credulity of hope, the student had clung, and mocked while it crushed the fondness of his belief.

Crauford ceased, and stretched forth his hand to grasp Glendower's. He felt it not. "You do not speak, my friend," said he; "do you deliberate, or have you not decided?" Still no answer came. Surprised, and half alarmed, he turned round, and perceived by a momentary flash of lightning, that Glendower had risen and was moving away towards the mouth of the arch.

"Good Heavens! Glendower," cried Crauford, "where are you going?"

"Anywhere," cried Glendower, in a sudden paroxysm of indignant passion, "anywhere in this great globe of suffering, so that the agonies of my human flesh and heart are not polluted by the accents of crime! And such crime! Why, I would rather go forth into the highways, and win bread by the sharp knife and the death-struggle, than sink my soul in such mire and filthiness of sin. Fraud! fraud! treachery! Merciful Father! what can be my state, when these are supposed to tempt me!"

Astonished and aghast, Crauford remained rooted to the spot.

"Oh!" continued Glendower, and his noble nature was wrung to the utmost; "Oh, MAN, MAN! that I should have devoted my best and freshest years to the dream of serving thee! In my boyish enthusiasm, in my brief day of pleasure and of power, in the intoxication of love, in the reverse of fortune, in the squalid and obscure chambers of degradation and poverty, that one hope animated, cheered, sustained me through all! In temptation did this hand belie, or in sickness did

this brain forego, or in misery did this heart forget, thy great and advancing cause? In the wide world, is there one being whom I have injured, even in thought; one being who, in the fellowship of want, should not have drunk of my cup, or broken with me the last morsel of my bread?—and now, now, is it come to this?”

And, hiding his face with his hands, he gave way to a violence of feeling before which the weaker nature of Crauford stood trembling and abashed. It lasted not long; he raised his head from its drooping posture, and, as he stood at the entrance of the arch, a prolonged flash from the inconstant skies shone full upon his form. Tall, erect, still, the gloomy and ruined walls gave his colourless countenance and haughty stature in bold and distinct relief; all trace of the past passion had vanished: perfectly calm and set, his features borrowed even dignity from their marble paleness, and the marks of suffering which the last few months had writ in legible characters on the cheek and brow. Seeking out, with an eye to which the intolerable lightnings seemed to have lent something of their fire, the cowering and bended form of his companion, he said,—

”Go home, miserable derider of the virtue you cannot understand; go to your luxurious and costly home; go and repine that human nature is not measured by your mangled and crippled laws: amidst men, yet more fallen than I am, hope to select your victim; amidst prisons, and hovels, and roofless sheds; amidst rags and destitution, and wretches made mad by hunger, hope that you may find a villain. I leave you to that hope, and—to remembrance!”

As Glendower moved away, Crauford recovered himself. Rendered desperate by the vital necessity of procuring some speedy aid in his designs, and not yet perfectly persuaded of the fallacy of his former judgment, he was resolved not to suffer Glendower thus easily to depart. Smothering his feelings by an effort violent even to his habitual hypocrisy, he sprang forward, and laid his hand upon Glendower’s shoulder.

”Stay, stay,” said he, in a soothing and soft voice; ”you have wronged me greatly. I pardon your warmth,—nay, I honour it; but hereafter you will repent your judgment of me. At least, do justice to my intentions. Was I an actor in the scheme proposed to you? what was it to me? Was I in the smallest degree to be benefited by it? Could I have any other motive than affection for you? If I erred, it was from a different view of the question; but is it not the duty of a friend to find expedients for distress, and to leave to the distressed person the right of accepting or rejecting them? But let this drop forever: partake of my fortune; be my adopted brother. Here, I have hundreds about me at this moment; take them all, and own at least that I meant you well.”

Feeling that Glendower, who at first had vainly endeavoured to shake

off his hand, now turned towards him, though at the moment it was too dark to see his countenance, the wily speaker continued, "Yes, Glendower, if by that name I must alone address you, take all I have: there is no one in this world dearer to me than you are. I am a lonely and disappointed man, without children or ties. I sought out a friend who might be my brother in life and my heir in death. I found you: be that to me!"

"I am faint and weak," said Glendower, slowly, "and I believe my senses cannot be clear; but a minute since, and you spoke at length, and with a terrible distinctness, words which it polluted my very ear to catch, and now you speak as if you loved me. Will it please you to solve the riddle?"

"The truth is this," said Crauford: "I knew your pride; I feared you would not accept a permanent pecuniary aid, even from friendship. I was driven, therefore, to devise some plan of independence for you. I could think of no plan but that which I proposed. You speak of it as wicked: it may be so; but it seemed not wicked to me. I may have formed a wrong—I own it is a peculiar-system of morals; but it is, at least, sincere. Judging of my proposal by that system, I saw no sin in it. I saw, too, much less danger than, in the honesty of my heart, I spoke of. In a similar distress, I solemnly swear, I myself would have adopted a similar relief. Nor is this all; the plan proposed would have placed thousands in your power. Forgive me if I thought your life, and the lives of those most dear to you, of greater value than these sums to the persons defrauded, ay, defrauded, if you will: forgive me if I thought that with these thousands you would effect far more good to the community than their legitimate owners. Upon these grounds, and on some others, too tedious now to state, I justified my proposal to my conscience. Pardon me, I again beseech you: accept my last proposal; be my partner, my friend, my heir; and forget a scheme never proposed to you, if I had hoped (what I hope now) that you would accept the alternative which it is my pride to offer, and which you are not justified, even by pride, to refuse."

"Great Source of all knowledge!" ejaculated Glendower, scarce audibly, and to himself. "Supreme and unfathomable God! dost Thou most loathe or pity Thine abased creatures, walking in their dim reason upon this little earth, and sanctioning fraud, treachery, crime, upon a principle borrowed from Thy laws? Oh! when, when will Thy full light of wisdom travel down to us, and guilt and sorrow, and this world's evil mysteries, roll away like vapours before the blaze?"

"I do not hear you, my friend," said Crauford. "Speak aloud; you will, I feel you will, accept my offer, and become my brother!"

"Away!" said Glendower; "I will not."

"He wanders; his brain is touched!" muttered Crauford, and then

resumed aloud, "Glendower, we are both unfit for talk at present; both unstrung by our late jar. You will meet me again to-morrow, perhaps. I will accompany you now to your door."

"Not a step: our paths are different."

"Well, well, if you will have it so, be it as you please. I have offended: you have a right to punish me, and play the churl to-night; but your address?"

"Yonder," said Glendower, pointing to the heavens. "Come to me a month hence, and you will find me there!"

"Nay, nay, my friend, your brain is heated; but you leave me? Well, as I said, your will is mine: at least take some of these paltry notes in earnest of our bargain; remember when next we meet you will share all I have."

"You remind me," said Glendower, quietly, "that we have old debts to settle. When last I saw you, you lent me a certain sum: there it is; take it; count it; there is but one poor guinea gone. Fear not: even to the uttermost farthing you shall be repaid."

"Why, why, this is unkind, ungenerous. Stay, stay,—" but, waving his hand impatiently, Glendower darted away, and passing into another street, the darkness effectually closed upon his steps.

"Fool! fool! that I am," cried Crauford, stamping vehemently on the ground; "in what point did my wit fail me, that I could not win one whom very hunger had driven into my net? But I must yet find him; and I will; the police shall be set to work: these half confidences may ruin me. And how deceitful he has proved: to talk more diffidently than a whining harlot upon virtue, and yet be so stubborn upon trial! Dastard that I am, too, as well as fool: I felt sunk into the dust by his voice. But pooh, I must have him yet; your worst villains make the most noise about the first step. True that I cannot storm, but I will undermine. But, wretch that I am, I must win him or another soon, or I perish on a gibbet. Out, base thought!"

CHAPTER LVII.

Formam quidem ipsam, Marce fili, et tanquam faciem honesti video: quae, si oculis cerneretur, mirabiles amores (ut ait Plato) excitaret sapientia.—TULLY.

[“Son Marcus, you see the form and as it were the face of Virtue: that

Wisdom, which if it could be perceived by the eyes, would (as Plato saith) kindle absolute and marvellous affection.”]

It was almost dawn when Glendower returned to his home. Fearful of disturbing his wife, he stole with mute steps to the damp and rugged chamber, where the last son of a princely line, and the legitimate owner of lands and halls which ducal rank might have envied, held his miserable asylum. The first faint streaks of coming light broke through the shutterless and shattered windows, and he saw that she reclined in a deep sleep upon the chair beside their child’s couch. She would not go to bed herself till Glendower returned, and she had sat up, watching and praying, and listening for his footsteps, till, in the utter exhaustion of debility and sickness, sleep had fallen upon her. Glendower bent over her.

”Sleep,” said he, ”sleep on! The wicked do not come to thee now. Thou art in a world that has no fellowship with this,—a world from which even happiness is not banished! Nor woe nor pain, nor memory of the past nor despair of all before thee, make the characters of thy present state! Thou forestaltest the forgetfulness of the grave, and thy heart concentrates all earth’s comfort in one word,—’Oblivion! ’Beautiful, how beautiful thou art even yet! that smile, that momentary blush, years have not conquered them. They are as when, my young bride, thou didst lean first upon my bosom, and dream that sorrow was no more! And I have brought thee unto this! These green walls make thy bridal chamber, yon fragments of bread thy bridal board. Well! it is no matter! thou art on thy way to a land where all things, even a breaking heart, are at rest. I weep not; wherefore should I weep? Tears are not for the dead, but their survivors. I would rather see thee drop inch by inch into the grave, and smile as I beheld it, than save thee for an inheritance of sin. What is there in this little and sordid life that we should strive to hold it? What in this dreadful dream that we should fear to wake?”

And Glendower knelt beside his wife, and, despite his words, tears flowed fast and gushingly down his cheeks; and wearied as he was, he watched upon her slumbers, till they fell from the eyes to which his presence was more joyous than the day.

It was a beautiful thing, even in sorrow, to see that couple, whom want could not debase, nor misfortune, which makes even generosity selfish, divorce! All that Fate had stripped from the poetry and graces of life, had not shaken one leaf from the romance of their green and unwithered affections! They were the very type of love in its holiest and most enduring shape: their hearts had grown together; their being had flowed through caves and deserts, and reflected the storms of an angry Heaven; but its waters had indissolubly mingled into one! Young, gifted, noble, and devoted, they were worthy victims of this blighting and bitter world! Their garden was turned into a wilderness; but, like our first parents, it was hand in hand that

they took their solitary way! Evil beset them, but they swerved not; the rains and the winds fell upon their unsheltered beads, but they were not bowed; and through the mazes and briers of this weary life, their bleeding footsteps strayed not, for they had a clew! The mind seemed, as it were, to become visible and external as the frame decayed, and to cover the body with something of its own invulnerable power; so that whatever should have attacked the mortal and frail part, fell upon that which, imperishable and divine, resisted and subdued it!

It was unfortunate for Glendower that he never again met Wolfe: for neither fanaticism of political faith, nor sternness of natural temper, subdued in the republican the real benevolence and generosity which redeemed and elevated his character; nor could any impulse of party zeal have induced him, like Crauford, systematically to take advantage of poverty in order to tempt to participation in his schemes. From a more evil companion Glendower had not yet escaped: Crauford, by some means or other, found out his abode, and lost no time in availing himself of the discovery. In order fully to comprehend his unwearied persecution of Glendower, it must constantly be remembered that to this persecution he was bound by a necessity which, urgent, dark, and implicating life itself, rendered him callous to every obstacle and unsusceptible of all remorse. With the exquisite tact which he possessed, he never openly recurred to his former proposal of fraud: he contented himself with endeavouring to persuade Glendower to accept pecuniary assistance, but in vain. The veil once torn from his character no craft could restore. Through all his pretences and sevenfold hypocrisy Glendower penetrated at once into his real motives: he was not to be duped by assurances of friendship which he knew the very dissimilarities between their natures rendered impossible. He had seen at the first, despite all allegations to the contrary, that in the fraud Crauford had proposed, that person could by no means be an uninfluenced and cold adviser. In after conversations, Crauford, driven by the awful interest he had in success from his usual consummateness of duplicity, betrayed in various important minutiae how deeply he was implicated in the crime for which he had argued; and not even the visible and progressive decay of his wife and child could force the stern mind of Glendower into accepting those wages of iniquity which he knew well were only offered as an earnest or a snare.

There is a royalty in extreme suffering, when the mind falls not with the fortunes, which no hardihood of vice can violate unabashed. Often and often, humble and defeated through all his dissimulation, was Crauford driven from the presence of the man whom it was his bitterest punishment to fear most when most he affected to despise; and as often, re-collecting his powers and fortifying himself in his experience of human frailty when sufficiently tried, did he return to his attempts. He waylaid the door and watched the paths of his intended prey. He knew that the mind which even best repels

temptation first urged hath seldom power to resist the same suggestion, if daily-dropping, unwearying-presenting itself in every form, obtruded in every hour, losing its horror by custom, and finding in the rebellious bosom itself its smoothest vizard and most alluring excuse. And it was, indeed, a mighty and perilous trial to Glendower, when rushing from the presence of his wife and child, when fainting under accumulated evils, when almost delirious with sickening and heated thought, to hear at each prompting of the wrung and excited nature, each heave of the black fountain that in no mortal breast is utterly exhausted, one smooth, soft, persuasive voice forever whispering, "Relief!"—relief, certain, utter, instantaneous! the voice of one pledged never to relax an effort or spare a pang, by a danger to himself, a danger of shame and death,—the voice of one who never spoke but in friendship and compassion, profound in craft, and a very sage in the disguises with which language invests deeds. But VIRTUE has resources buried in itself, which we know not till the invading hour calls them from their retreats. Surrounded by hosts without, and when Nature itself, turned traitor, is its most deadly enemy within, it assumes a new and a superhuman power, which is greater than Nature itself. Whatever be its creed, whatever be its sect, from whatever segment of the globe its orisons arise, Virtue is God's empire, and from His throne of thrones He will defend it. Though cast into the distant earth, and struggling on the dim arena of a human heart, all things above are spectators of its conflict or enlisted in its cause. The angels have their charge over it; the banners of archangels are on its side; and from sphere to sphere, through the illimitable ether, and round the impenetrable darkness at the feet of God, its triumph is hymned by harps which are strung to the glories of the Creator!

One evening, when Crauford had joined Glendower in his solitary wanderings, the dissembler renewed his attacks.

"But why not," said he, "accept from my friendship what to my benevolence you would deny? I couple with my offers, my prayers rather, no conditions. How then do you, can you, reconcile it to your conscience, to suffer your wife and child to perish before your eyes?"

"Man, man," said Glendower, "tempt me no more: let them die! At present the worst is death: what you offer me is dishonour."

"Heavens, how uncharitable is this! Can you call the mere act of accepting money from one who loves you dishonour?"

"It is in vain that you varnish your designs," said Glendower, stopping and fixing his eyes upon him. "Do you not think that cunning ever betrays itself? In a thousand words, in a thousand looks which have escaped you, but not me, I know that, if there be one being on this earth whom you hate and would injure, that being is myself. Nay, start not: listen to me patiently. I have sworn that it is the last

opportunity you shall have. I will not subject myself to farther temptation: I am now sane; but there are things which may drive me mad, and in madness you might conquer. You hate me it is out of the nature of earthly things that you should not. But even were it otherwise, do you think that I could believe you would come from your voluptuous home to these miserable retreats; that, among the lairs of beggary and theft, you would lie in wait to allure me to forsake poverty, without a stronger motive than love for one who affects it not for you? I know you: I have read your heart; I have penetrated into that stronger motive; it is your own safety. In the system of atrocity you proposed to me, you are the principal. You have already bared to me enough of the extent to which that system reaches to convince me that a single miscreant, however ingenious, cannot, unassisted, support it with impunity. You want help: I am he in whom you have dared to believe that you could find it. You are detected; now be undeceived!"

"Is it so?" said Crauford; and as he saw that it was no longer possible to feign, the poison of his heart broke forth in its full venom. The fiend rose from the reptile, and stood exposed in its natural shape. Returning Glendower's stern but lofty gaze with an eye to which all evil passions lent their unholy fire, he repeated, "Is it so? then you are more penetrating than I thought; but it is indifferent to me. It was for your sake, not mine, most righteous man, that I wished you might have a disguise to satisfy the modesty of your punctilios. It is all one to Richard Crauford whether you go blindfold or with open eyes into his snare. Go you must, and shall. Ay, frowns will not awe me. You have desired the truth: you shall have it. You are right: I hate you,—hate you with a soul whose force of hatred you cannot dream of. Your pride, your stubbornness, your coldness of heart, which things that would stir the blood of beggars cannot warm; your icy and passionless virtue,—I hate, I hate all! You are right also, most wise inquisitor, in supposing that in the scheme proposed to you, I am the principal: I am! You were to be the tool, and shall. I have offered you mild inducements,—pleas to soothe the technicalities of your conscience: you have rejected them; be it so. Now choose between my first offer and the gibbet. Ay, the gibbet! That night on which we made the appointment which shall not yet be in vain,—on that night you stopped me in the street; you demanded money; you robbed me; I will swear; I will prove it. Now, then, tremble, man of morality: dupe of your own strength, you are in my power; tremble! Yet in my safety is your escape: I am generous. I repeat my original offer,—wealth, as great as you will demand, or—the gibbet, the gibbet: do I speak loud enough? do you hear?"

"Poor fool!" said Glendower, laughing scornfully and moving away. But when Crauford, partly in mockery, partly in menace, placed his hand upon Glendower's shoulder, as if to stop him, the touch seemed to change his mood from scorn to fury; turning abruptly round, he seized the villain's throat with a giant's strength, and cried out, while his

whole countenance worked beneath the tempestuous wrath within, "What if I squeeze out thy poisonous life from thee this moment!" and then once more bursting into a withering laughter, as he surveyed the terror which he had excited, he added, "No, no: thou art too vile!" and, dashing the hypocrite against the wall of a neighbouring house, he strode away.

Recovering himself slowly, and trembling with rage and fear, Crauford gazed round, expecting yet to find he had sported too far with the passions he had sought to control. When, however, he had fully satisfied himself that Glendower was gone, all his wrathful and angry feelings returned with redoubled force. But their most biting torture was the consciousness of their impotence. For after the first paroxysm of rage had subsided he saw, too clearly, that his threat could not be executed without incurring the most imminent danger of discovery. High as his character stood, it was possible that no charge against him might excite suspicion, but a word might cause inquiry, and inquiry would be ruin. Forced, therefore, to stomach his failure, his indignation, his shame, his hatred, and his vengeance, his own heart became a punishment almost adequate to his vices.

"But my foe will die," said he, clinching his fist so firmly that the nails almost brought blood from the palm; "he will starve, famish, and see them—his wife, his child—perish first! I shall have my triumph, though I shall not witness it. But now, away to my villa: there, at least, will be some one whom I can mock and beat and trample, if I will! Would—would—would that I were that very man, destitute as he is! His neck, at least, is safe: if he dies, it will not be upon the gallows, nor among the hootings of the mob! Oh, horror! horror! What are my villa, my wine, my women, with that black thought ever following me like a shadow? Who, who while an avalanche is sailing over him, who would sit down to feast?"

Leaving this man to shun or be overtaken by Fate, we return to Glendower. It is needless to say that Crauford visited him no more; and, indeed, shortly afterwards Glendower again changed his home. But every day and every hour brought new strength to the disease which was creeping and burning through the veins of the devoted wife; and Glendower, who saw on earth nothing before them but a jail, from which as yet they had been miraculously delivered, repined not as he beheld her approach to a gentler and benigner home. Often he sat, as she was bending over their child, and gazed upon her cheek with an insane and fearful joy at the characters which consumption had there engraved; but when she turned towards him her fond eyes (those deep wells of love, in which truth lay hid, and which neither languor nor disease could exhaust), the unnatural hardness of his heart melted away, and he would rush from the house, to give vent to an agony against which fortitude and manhood were in vain.

There was no hope for their distress. His wife had, unknown to

Glendower (for she dreaded his pride), written several times to a relation, who, though distant, was still the nearest in blood which fate had spared her, but ineffectually; the scions of a large and illegitimate family, which surrounded him, utterly prevented the success, and generally interrupted the application, of any claimant on his riches but themselves. Glendower, whose temper had ever kept him aloof from all but the commonest acquaintances, knew no human being to apply to. Utterly unable to avail himself of the mine which his knowledge and talents should have proved; sick, and despondent at heart, and debarred by the loftiness of honour, or rather principle that nothing could quell, from any unlawful means of earning bread, which to most minds would have been rendered excusable by the urgency of nature,—Glendower marked the days drag on in dull and protracted despair, and envied every corpse that he saw borne to the asylum in which all earth's hopes seemed centred and confined.

CHAPTER LVIII.

For ours was not like earthly love.
And must this parting be our very last?
No! I shall love thee still when death itself is past.

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Hush'd were his Gertrude's lips! but still their bland
And beautiful expression seem'd to melt
With love that could not die! and still his hand
She presses to the heart, no more that felt.
Ah, heart! where once each fond affection dwelt.
CAMPBELL.

"I wonder," said Mr. Brown to himself, as he spurred his shaggy pony to a speed very unusual to the steady habits of either party, "I wonder where I shall find him. I would not for the late Lady Waddilove's best diamond cross have any body forestall me in the news. To think of my young master dying so soon after my last visit, or rather my last visit but one; and to think of the old gentleman taking on so, and raving about his injustice to the rightful possessor, and saying that he is justly punished, and asking me so eagerly if I could discover the retreat of the late squire, and believing me so implicitly when I undertook to do it, and giving me this letter!" And here Mr. Brown wistfully examined an epistle sealed with black wax, peeping into the corners, which irritated rather than satisfied his curiosity. "I wonder what the old gentleman says in it; I suppose he will, of course, give up the estate and house. Let me see; that long picture gallery, just built, will, at all events, want furnishing. That would be a famous opportunity to get rid of the Indian jars, and the sofas, and the great Turkey carpet. How lucky that I should just

have come in time to get the letter. But let me consider how I shall find out?—an advertisement in the paper? Ah! that's the plan. 'Algernon Mordaunt, Esq.: something greatly to his advantage; apply to Mr. Brown, etc.' Ah! that will do well, very well. The Turkey carpet won't be quite long enough. I wish I had discovered Mr. Mordaunt's address before, and lent him some money during the young gentleman's life: it would have seemed more generous. However, I can offer it now, before I show the letter. Bless me, it's getting dark. Come, Dobbin, ye-up!" Such were the meditations of the faithful friend of the late Lady Waddilove, as he hastened to London, charged with the task of discovering Mordaunt and with the delivery of the following epistle:—

You are now, sir, the heir to that property which, some years ago, passed from your hands into mine. My son, for whom alone wealth or I may say life was valuable to me, is no more. I only, an old, childless man, stand between you and the estates of Mordaunt. Do not wait for my death to enjoy them. I cannot live here, where everything reminds me of my great and irreparable loss. I shall remove next month into another home. Consider this, then, as once more yours. The house, I believe, you will not find disimproved by my alterations: the mortgages on the estate have been paid off; the former rental you will perhaps allow my steward to account to you for, and after my death the present one will be yours. I am informed that you are a proud man, and not likely to receive favours. Be it so, sir! it is no favour you will receive, but justice; there are circumstances connected with my treaty with your father which have of late vexed my conscience; and conscience, sir, must be satisfied at any loss. But we shall meet, perhaps, and talk over the past; at present I will not enlarge on it. If you have suffered by me, I am sufficiently punished, and my only hope is to repair your losses.

I am, etc., H. VAVASOUR MORDAUNT.

Such was the letter, so important to Mordaunt, with which our worthy friend was charged. Bowed to the dust as Vavasour was by the loss of his son, and open to conscience as affliction had made him, he had lived too long for effect, not to be susceptible to its influence, even to the last. Amidst all his grief, and it was intense, there were some whispers of self-exaltation at the thought of the eclat which his generosity and abdication would excite; and, with true worldly morality, the hoped-for plaudits of others gave a triumph rather than humiliation to his reconciliation with himself.

To say truth, there were indeed circumstances connected with his treaty with Mordaunt's father calculated to vex his conscience. He knew that he had not only taken great advantage of Mr. Mordaunt's distress, but that at his instigation a paper which could forever have prevented Mr. Mordaunt's sale of the property, had been destroyed. These circumstances, during the life of his son, he had endeavoured to

forget or to palliate. But grief is rarely deaf to remorse; and at the death of that idolized son the voice at his heart grew imperious, and he lost the power in losing the motive of reasoning it away.

Mr. Brown's advertisement was unanswered; and, with the zeal and patience of the Christian proselyte's tribe and calling, the good man commenced, in person, a most elaborate and painstaking research. For a long time, his endeavours were so ineffectual that Mr. Brown, in despair, disposed of the two Indian jars for half their value, and heaved a despondent sigh, whenever he saw the great Turkey carpet rolled up in his warehouse with as much obstinacy as if it never meant to unroll itself again.

At last, however, by dint of indefatigable and minute investigation, he ascertained that the object of his search had resided in London, under a feigned name; from lodging to lodging, and corner to corner, he tracked him, till at length he made himself master of Mordaunt's present retreat. A joyful look did Mr. Brown cast at the great Turkey carpet, as he passed by it, on his way to his street door, on the morning of his intended visit to Mordaunt. "It is a fine thing to have a good heart," said he, in the true style of Sir Christopher Findlater, and he again eyed the Turkey carpet. "I really feel quite happy at the thought of the pleasure I shall give."

After a walk through as many obscure and filthy wynds and lanes and alleys and courts as ever were threaded by some humble fugitive from justice, the patient Morris came to a sort of court, situated among the miserable hovels in the vicinity of the Tower. He paused wonderingly at a dwelling in which every window was broken, and where the tiles, torn from the roof, lay scattered in forlorn confusion beside the door; where the dingy bricks looked crumbling away, from very age and rottenness, and the fabric, which was of great antiquity, seemed so rocking and infirm that the eye looked upon its distorted and overhanging position with a sensation of pain and dread; where the very rats had deserted their loathsome cells from the insecurity of their tenure, and the ragged mothers of the abject neighbourhood forbade their brawling children to wander under the threatening walls, lest they should keep the promise of their mouldering aspect, and, falling, bare to the obstructed and sickly day the secrets of their prison-house. Girt with the foul and reeking lairs of that extreme destitution which necessity urges irresistibly into guilt, and excluded, by filthy alleys and an eternal atmosphere of smoke and rank vapour, from the blessed sun and the pure air of heaven, the miserable mansion seemed set apart for every disease to couch within,—too perilous even for the hunted criminal; too dreary even for the beggar to prefer it to the bare hedge, or the inhospitable porch, beneath whose mockery of shelter the frost of winter had so often numbed him into sleep.

Thrice did the heavy and silver-headed cane of Mr. Brown resound upon

the door, over which was a curious carving of a lion dormant, and a date, of which only the two numbers 15 were discernable. Roused by a note so unusual, and an apparition so unwontedly smug as the worthy Morris, a whole legion of dingy and smoke-dried brats, came trooping from the surrounding huts, and with many an elvish cry, and strange oath, and cabalistic word, which thrilled the respectable marrow of Mr. Brown, they collected in a gaping, and, to his alarmed eye, a menacing group, as near to the house as their fears and parents would permit them.

"It is very dangerous," thought Mr. Brown, looking shiveringly up at the hanging and tottering roof, "and very appalling," as he turned to the ragged crowd of infant reprobates which began with every moment to increase. At last he summoned courage, and inquired, in a tone half soothing and half dignified, if they could inform him how to obtain admittance or how to arouse the inhabitants.

An old crone, leaning out of an opposite window, with matted hair hanging over a begrimed and shrivelled countenance, made answer. "No one," she said, in her peculiar dialect, which the worthy man scarcely comprehended, "lived there or had done so for years:" but Brown knew better; and while he was asserting the fact, a girl put her head out of another hovel, and said that she had sometimes seen, at the dusk of the evening, a man leave the house, but whether any one else lived in it she could not tell. Again Mr. Brown sounded an alarm, but no answer came forth, and in great fear and trembling he applied violent hands to the door: it required but little force; it gave way; he entered; and, jealous of the entrance of the mob without, reclosed and barred, as well as he was able, the shattered door. The house was unnaturally large for the neighbourhood, and Brown was in doubt whether first to ascend a broken and perilous staircase or search the rooms below: he decided on the latter; he found no one, and with a misgiving heart, which nothing but the recollection of the great Turkey carpet could have inspired, he ascended the quaking steps. All was silent. But a door was unclosed. He entered, and saw the object of his search before him.

Over a pallet bent a form, on which, though youth seemed withered and even pride broken, the unconquerable soul left somewhat of grace and of glory, that sustained the beholder's remembrance of better days; a child in its first infancy knelt on the nearer side of the bed with clasped hands, and vacant eyes that turned towards the intruder with a listless and lacklustre gaze. But Glendower, or rather Mordaunt, as he bent over the pallet, spoke not, moved not: his eyes were riveted on one object; his heart seemed turned into stone and his veins curdled into ice. Awed and chilled by the breathing desolation of the spot, Brown approached, and spoke he scarcely knew what. "You are," he concluded his address, "the master of Mordaunt Court;" and he placed the letter in the hands of the person he thus greeted.

"Awake, hear me!" cried Algernon to Isabel, as she lay extended on the couch; and the messenger of glad tidings, for the first time seeing her countenance, shuddered, and knew that he was in the chamber of death.

"Awake, my own, own love! Happy days are in store for us yet: our misery is past; you will live, live to bless me in riches, as you have done in want."

Isabel raised her eyes to his, and a smile, sweet, comforting, and full of love, passed the lips which were about to close forever. "Thank Heaven," she murmured, "for your dear sake. It is pleasant to die now, and thus;" and she placed the hand that was clasped in her relaxing and wan fingers within the bosom which had been for anguished and hopeless years his asylum and refuge, and which now when fortune changed, as if it had only breathed in comfort to his afflictions, was for the first time and forever to be cold,—cold even to him!

"You will live, you will live," cried Mordaunt, in wild and incredulous despair, "in mercy live! You, who have been my angel of hope, do not,—O God, O God! do not desert me now!"

But that faithful and loving heart was already deaf to his voice, and the film grew darkening and rapidly over the eye which still with undying fondness sought him out through the shade and agony of death. Sense and consciousness were gone, and dim and confused images whirled round her soul, struggling a little moment before they sank into the depth and silence where the past lies buried. But still mindful of him, and grasping, as it were, at his remembrance, she clasped, closer and closer, the icy hand which she held, to her breast. "Your hand is cold, dearest, it is cold," said she, faintly, "but I will warm it here!" And so her spirit passed away, and Mordaunt felt afterwards, in a lone and surviving pilgrimage, that her last thought had been kindness to him, and that her last act had spoken forgetfulness even of death in the tenderness of love!