

WHAT WILL HE DO WITH IT - BOOK 7.

EDWARD BULWER-LYTTON*

BOOK VII.

CHAPTER I.

VIGNETTES FOR THE NEXT BOOK OF BEAUTY.

"I quite agree with you, Alban; Honoria Vipont is a very superior young lady."

"I knew you would think so!" cried the Colonel, with more warmth than usual to him.

"Many years since," resumed Darrell, with reflective air, "I read Miss Edgeworth's novels; and in conversing with Miss Honoria Vipont, methinks I confer with one of Miss Edgeworth's heroines—so rational, so prudent, so well-behaved—so free from silly romantic notions—so replete with solid information, moral philosophy and natural history—so sure to regulate her watch and her heart to the precise moment, for the one to strike, and the other to throb—and to marry at last a respectable steady husband, whom she will win with dignity, and would lose with decorum! A very superior girl indeed."

["Darrell speaks—not the author. Darrell is unjust to the more exquisite female characters of a Novelist, admirable for strength of sense, correctness of delineation, terseness of narrative, and lucidity of style—nor less admirable for the unexaggerated nobleness of sentiment by which some of her heroines are notably distinguished.]

"Though your description of Miss Vipont is satirical," said Alban Morley, smiling, in spite of some irritation, "yet I will accept it as panegyric; for it conveys, unintentionally, a just idea of the qualities that make an intelligent coinpanion and a safe wife. And those are the qualities we must look to, if we marry at our age. We are no longer boys," added the Colonel sententiously.

*PDF created by pdfbooks.co.za

DARRELL.—"Alas, no! I wish we were. But the truth of your remark is indisputable. Ah, look! Is not that a face which might make an octogenarian forget that he is not a boy?—what regular features!—and what a blush!"

The friends were riding in the park; and as Darrell spoke, he bowed to a young lady, who, with one or two others, passed rapidly by in a barouche. It was that very handsome young lady to whom Lionel had seen him listening so attentively in the great crowd, for which Carr Vipont's family party had been deserted.

"Yes; Lady Adela is one of the loveliest girls in Loudon," said the Colonel, who had also lifted his hat as the barouche whirled by—"and amiable too: I have known her ever since she was born. Her father and I are great friends—an excellent man but stingy. I had much difficulty in arranging the eldest girl's marriage with Lord Bolton, and am a trustee in the settlement. If you feel a preference for Lady Adela, though I don't think she would suit you so well as Miss Vipont, I will answer for her father's encouragement and her consent. 'Tis no drawback to you, though it is to most of her admirers, when I add, 'There's nothing with her!'"

"And nothing in her! which is worse," said Darrell.

"Still, it is pleasant to gaze on a beautiful landscape, even though the soil be barren."

COLONEL MORLEY.—"That depends upon whether you are merely the artistic spectator of the landscape, or the disappointed proprietor of the soil."

"Admirable!" said Darrell; "you have disposed of Lady Adela. So ho! so ho!" Darrell's horse (his old high-nettled horse, freshly sent to him from Fawley, and in spite of the five years that had added to its age, of spirit made friskier by long repose) here put down its ears lashed out—and indulged in a bound which would have unseated many a London rider. A young Amazon, followed hard by some two or three young gentlemen and their grooms, shot by, swift and reckless as a hero at Balaclava. But with equal suddenness, as she caught sight of Darrell—whose hand and voice had already soothed the excited nerves of his steed—the Amazon wheeled round and gained his side. Throwing up her veil, she revealed a face so prettily arch, so perversely gay—with eye of radiant hazel, and fair locks half loosened from their formal braid—that it would have beguiled resentment from the most insensible—reconciled to danger the most timid. And yet there was really a grace of humility in the apologies she tendered for her discourtesy and thoughtlessness. As the girl reined her light palfrey by Darrell's side—turning from the young companions who had now joined her, their hackneys in a foam—and devoting to his ear all her lively overflow of happy spirits, not untempered by a certain deference, but still apparently free from dissimulation—

Daxrell's grand face lighted up—his mellow laugh, unrestrained, though low, echoed her sportive tones; her youth, her joyousness were irresistibly contagious. Alban Morley watched observant, while interchanging talk with her attendant comrades, young men of high ton, but who belonged to that /jeunesse doree/ with which the surface of life patrician is fretted over—young men with few ideas, fewer duties—but with plenty of leisure—plenty of health—plenty of money in their pockets—plenty of debts to their tradesmen—daring at Melton—scheming at T'attersall's—pride to maiden aunts—plague to thrifty fathers—fickle lovers, but solid matches—in brief, fast livers, who get through their youth betimes, and who, for the most part, are middle-aged before they are thirty—tamed by wedlock—sobered by the responsibilities that come with the cares of property and the dignities of rank—undergo abrupt metamorphosis into chairmen of quarter sessions, county members, or decorous peers;—their ideas enriched as their duties grow—their opinions, once loose as willows to the wind, stiffening into the palisades of fenced propriety—valuable, busy men, changed as Henry V., when coming into the cares of state, he said to the Chief Justice, "There is my hand;" and to Sir John Falstaff,

"I know thee not, old roan;
Fall to thy prayers!"

But meanwhile the elite of this /jeunesse doree/ glittered round Flora Vyvyan: not a regular beauty like Lady Adela—not a fine girl like Miss Vipont, but such a light, faultless figure—such a pretty radiant face—more womanly for affection to be manlike—Hebe aping Thalestris. Flora, too, was an heiress—an only child—spoilt, wilful—not at all accomplished—(my belief is that accomplishments are thought great bores by the jeunesse doree)—no accomplishment except horsemanship, with a slight knack at billiards, and the capacity to take three whiffs from a Spanish cigarette. That last was adorable—four offers had been advanced to her hand on that merit alone.—(N.B. Young ladies do themselves no good with the jeunesse doree, which, in our time, is a lover that rather smokes than "sighs, like furnace," by advertising their horror of cigars.) You would suppose that Flora Vyvyan must be coarse—vulgar perhaps; not at all; she was pignaute—original; and did the oddest things with the air and look of the highest breeding. Fairies cannot be vulgar, no matter what they do; they may take the strangest liberties—pinch the maids—turn the house topsy-turvy; but they are ever the darlings of grace and poetry. Flora Vyvyan was a fairy. Not peculiarly intellectual herself, she had a veneration for intellect; those fast young men were the last persons likely to fascinate that fast young lady. Women are so perverse; they always prefer the very people you would least suspect—the antithesis to themselves. Yet is it possible that Flora Vyvyan can have carried her crotchets to so extravagant a degree as to have designed the conquest of Guy Darrell—ten years older than her own father? She, too, an heiress—certainly not mercenary; she who had already refused better worldly matches than Darrell himself was—young men, handsome men, with coronets on the margin of their note-paper and

the panels of their broughams! The idea seemed preposterous; nevertheless, Alban Morley, a shrewd observer, conceived that idea, and trembled for his friend.

At last the young lady and her satellites shot off, and the Colonel said cautiously, "Miss Vyvyan is—alarming."

DARRELL.—"Alarming! the epithet requires construing."

COLONEL MORLEY.—"The sort of girl who might make a man of our years really and literally an old fool!"

DARRELL.—"Old fool such a man must be if girls of any sort are permitted to make him a greater fool than he was before. But I think that, with those pretty hands resting on one's arm-chair, or that sunny face shining into one's study windows, one might be a very happy old fool—and that is the most one can expect!"

COLONEL MORLEY (checking an anxious groan).—"I am afraid, my poor friend, you are far gone already. No wonder Honoria Vipont fails to be appreciated. But Lady Selina has a maxim—the truth of which my experience attests—the moment it comes to woman, the most sensible men are the'—"

"Oldest fools!" put in Darrell. "If Mark Antony made such a goose of himself for that painted harridan Cleopatra, what would he have done for a blooming Juliet! Youth and high spirit! Alas! why are these to be unsuitable companions for us, as we reach that climax in time and sorrow—when to the one we are grown the most indulgent, and of the other have the most need? Alban, that girl, if her heart were really won—her wild nature wisely mastered, gently guided—would make a true, prudent, loving, admirable wife—"

"Heavens!" cried Alban Morley.

"To such a husband," pursued Darrell, unheeding the ejaculation, "as—Lionel Haughton. What say you?" "Lionel—oh, I have no objection at all to that; but he's too young yet to think of marriage—a mere boy. Besides, if you yourself marry, Lionel could scarcely aspire to a girl of Miss Vyvyan's birth and fortune."

"Ho, not aspire! That boy at least shall not have to woo in vain from the want of fortune. The day I marry—if ever that day come—I settle on Lionel Haughton and his heirs five thousand a-year; and if, with gentle blood, youth, good looks, and a heart of gold, that fortune does not allow him to aspire to any girl whose hand he covets, I can double it, and still be rich enough to buy a superior companion in Honoria Vipont—"

MORLEY.—"Don't say buy—"

DARRELL.—"Ay, and still be young enough to catch a butterfly in Lady Adela—still be bold enough to chain a panther in Flora Vyvyan. Let the world know—your world in each nook of its gaudy auction-mart—that Lione: Haughton is no pauper cousin—no penniless fortune-hunter. I wish that world to be kind to him while he is yet young, and can enjoy it. Ah, Morley, Pleasure, like Punishment, hobbles after us, /pede claudo/. What would have delighted us yesterday does not catch us up till to-morrow, and yesterday's pleasure is not the morrow's. A pennyworth of sugar-plums would have made our eyes sparkle when we were scrawling pot-hooks at a preparatory school, but no one gave us sugar-plums then. Now every day at dessert France heaps before us her daintiest sugar-plums in gilt /bonbonnieres/. Do you ever covet them? I never do. Let Lionel have his sugar-plums in time. And as we talk, there he comes. Lionel, how are you?"

"I resign you to Lionel's charge now," said the Colonel, glancing at his watch. "I have an engagement—trouble some. Two silly friends of mine have been quarrelling—high words—in an age when duels are out of the question. I have promised to meet another man, and draw up the form for a mutual apology. High words are so stupid nowadays. No option but to swallow them up again if they were as high as steeples. Adieu for the present. We meet to-night at Lady Dulcett's concert?"

"Yes," said Darrell. "I promised Miss Vyvyan to be there, and keep her from disturbing the congregation. You Lionel, will come with me."

LIONELL (embarrassed).—"No; you must excuse me. I have long been engaged elsewhere."

"That's a pity," said the Colonel, gravely. "Lady Dulcett's conceit is just one of the places where a young man should be seen." Colonel Morley waved his hand with his usual languid elegance, and his hack cantered off with him, stately as a charger, easy as a rocking-horse.

"Unalterable man," said Darrell, as his eye followed the horseman's receding figure. "Through all the mutations on Time's dusty high-road—stable as a milestone. Just what Alban Morley was as a school-boy he is now; and if mortal span were extended to the age of the patriarchs, just what Alban Morley is now, Alban Morley would be a thousand years hence. I don't mean externally, of course; wrinkles will come—cheeks will fade. But these are trifles: man's body is a garment, as Socrates said before me, and every seven years, according to the physiologists, man has a new suit, fibre and cuticle, from top to toe. The interior being that wears the clothes is the same in Alban Morley. Has he loved, hated, rejoiced, suffered? Where is the sign? Not one. At school, as in life, doing nothing, but decidedly somebody—respected by small boys, petted by big boys—an authority with all. Never getting honours—arm and arm with those who did; never in scrapes—advising those who were; imperturbable, immovable, calm above mortal cares as an Epicurean deity. What can wealth give that he has not got? In the houses of the richest he chooses

his room. Talk of ambition, talk of power—he has their rewards without an effort. True prime minister of all the realm he cares for; good society has not a vote against him—he transacts its affairs, he knows its secrets—he yields its patronage. Ever requested to do a favour—no loan great enough to do him one. Incorruptible, yet versed to a fraction in each man's price; impeccable, yet confidant in each man's foibles; smooth as silk, hard as adamant; impossible to wound, vex, annoy him—but not insensible; thoroughly kind. Dear, dear Alban! nature never polished a finer gentleman out of a solider block of man!" Darrell's voice quivered a little as he completed in earnest affection the sketch begun in playful irony, and then with a sudden change of thought, he resumed lightly:

"But I wish you to do me a favour, Lionel. Aid me to repair a fault in good breeding, of which Alban Morley would never have been guilty. I have been several days in London, and not yet called on your mother. Will you accompany me now to her house and present me?"

"Thank you, thank you; you will make her so proud and happy; but may I ride on and prepare her for your visit?"

"Certainly; her address is—"

"Gloucester Place, No.—"

"I will meet you there in half an hour."

CHAPTER II.

"Let observation, with expansive view,
Survey mankind from China to Peru,"

—AND OBSERVATION WILL EVERYWHERE FIND, INDISPENSABLE
TO THE HAPPINESS OF
WOMAN, A VISITING ACQUAINTANCE.

Lionel knew that Mrs. Haughton would that day need more than usual forewarning of a visit from Mr. Darrell. For the evening of that day Mrs. Haughton proposed "to give a party." When Mrs. Haughton gave a party, it was a serious affair. A notable and bustling housewife, she attended herself to each preparatory detail. It was to assist at this party that Lionel had resigned Lady Dulcett's concert. The young man, reluctantly acquiescing in the arrangements by which Alban Morley had engaged him a lodging of his own, seldom or never let a day pass without gratifying his mother's proud heart by an hour or two spent in Gloucester Place, often to the forfeiture of a pleasant ride, or other tempting

excursion, with gay comrades. Difficult in London life, and at the full of its season, to devote an hour or two to visits, apart from the track chalked out by one's very mode of existence—difficult to cut off an hour so as not to cut up a day. And Mrs. Haughton was exacting-nice in her choice as to the exact slice in the day. She took the prime of the joint. She liked her neighbours to see the handsome, elegant young man dismount from his charger or descend from his cabriolet, just at the witching hour when Gloucester Place was fullest. Did he go to a levee, he must be sure to come to her before he changed his dress, that she and Gloucester Place might admire him in uniform. Was he going to dine at some very great house, he must take her in his way (though no street could be more out of his way), that she might be enabled to say in the parties to which she herself repaired "There is a great dinner at Lord So-and-so's to-day; my son called on me before he went there. If he had been disengaged, I should have asked permission to bring him here."

Not that Mrs. Haughton honestly designed, nor even wished to draw the young man from the dazzling vortex of high life into her own little currents of dissipation. She was much too proud of Lionel to think that her friends were grand enough for him to honour their houses by his presence. She had in this, too, a lively recollection of her lost Captain's doctrinal views of the great world's creed. The Captain had flourished in the time when Impertinence, installed by Brummell, though her influence was waning, still schooled her oligarchs, and maintained the etiquette of her court; and even when his /misalliance/ and his debts had cast him out of his native sphere, he lost not all the original brightness of an exclusive. In moments of connubial confidence, when owning his past errors, and tracing to his sympathising Jessie the causes of his decline, he would say: "'Tis not a man's birth, nor his fortune, that gives him his place in society—it depends on his conduct, Jessie. He must not be seen bowing to snobs, nor should his enemies track him to the haunts of vulgarians. I date my fall in life to dining with a horrid man who lent me L100, and lived in Upper Baker Street. His wife took my arm from a place they called a drawing-room (the Captain as he spoke was on a fourth floor), to share some unknown food which they called a dinner (the Captain at that moment would have welcomed a rasher). The woman went about blabbing—the thing got wind—for the first time my character received a soil. What is a man without character! and character once sullied, Jessie, man becomes reckless. Teach my boy to beware of the first false step—no association with parvenus. Don't cry, Jessie—I don't mean that he is to cut your—relations are quite different from other people—nothing so low as cutting relations. I continued, for instance, to visit Guy Darrell, though he lived at the back of Holborn, and I actually saw him once in brown beaver gloves. But he was a relation. I have even dined at his house, and met odd people there—people who lived also at the back of Holborn. But he did not ask me to go to their houses, and if he had, I must have cut him." By reminiscences of this kind of talk, Lionel was saved from any design of Mrs. Haughton's to attract his orbit into the circle within which she herself moved. He must come to the parties she gave—illumine or awe odd

people there. That was a proper tribute to maternal pride. But had they asked him to their parties, she would have been the first to resent such a liberty.

Lionel found Mrs. Haughton in great bustle. A gardener's cart was before the street door. Men were bringing in a grove of evergreens, intended to border the staircase, and make its exiguous ascent still more difficult. The refreshments were already laid out in the dining-room. Mrs. Haughton, with scissors in hand, was cutting flowers to fill the eperyne, but darting to and fro, like a dragonfly, from the dining-room to the hall, from the flowers to the evergreens.

"Dear me, Lionel, is that you? Just tell me, you who go to all those grandees, whether the ratafia-cakes should be opposite to the spauge-cakes, or whether they would not go better—thus—at cross-corners?"

"My dear mother, I never observed—I don't know. But make haste—take off that apron—have those doors shut—come upstairs. Mr. Darrell will be here very shortly. I have ridden on to prepare you."

"Mr. Darrell—TO-DAY—HOW could you let him come? Oh, Lionel, how thoughtless you are! You should have some respect for your mother—I am your mother, sir."

"Yes, my own dear mother—don't scold—I could not help it. He is so engaged, so sought after; if I had put him off to-day, he might never have come, and—"

"Never have come! Who is Mr. Darrell, to give himself such airs?—Only a lawyer after all," said Mrs. Haughton, with majesty.

"Oh, mother, that speech is not like you. He is our benefactor—our—"

"Don't, don't say very more—I was very wrong—quite wicked—only my temper, Lionel dear. Good Mr. Darrell! I shall be so happy to see him—see him, too, in this house that I owe to him—see him by your side! I think I shall fall down on my knees to him."

And her eyes began to stream.

Lionel kissed the tears away fondly. "That's my own mother now indeed—now I am proud of you, mother; and how well you look! I am proud of that too."

"Look well—I am not fit to be seen, this figure—though perhaps an elderly quiet gentleman like good Mr. Darrell does not notice ladies much. John, John, makes haste with those plants. Gracious me! you've got your coat off!—put it on—I expect a gentleman—I'm at home, in the front drawing-room—no—that's all set out—the back drawing-room, John. Send Susan to me. Lionel, do just look at the supper-table; and what is

to be done with the flowers, and—”

The rest of Mrs. Haughton’s voice, owing to the rapidity of her ascent, which affected the distinctness of her utterance, was lost in air. She vanished at culminating point—within her chamber.

CHAPTER III.

MRS. HAUGHTON AT HOME TO GUY DARRELL.

Thanks to Lionel’s activity, the hall was disencumbered—the plants hastily stowed away—the parlour closed on the festive preparations—and the footman in his livery waiting at the door—when Mr. Darrell arrived. Lionel himself came out and welcomed his benefactor’s footstep across the threshold of the home which the generous man had provided for the widow.

If Lionel had some secret misgivings as to the result of this interview, they were soon and most happily dispelled. For, at the sight of Guy Darrell leaning so affectionately on her son’s arm, Mrs. Haughton mechanically gave herself up to the impulse of her own warm, grateful, true woman’s heart. And her bound forward, her seizure of Darrell’s hand—her first fervent blessing—her after words, simple but eloquent with feeling—made that heart so transparent, that Darrell looked it through with respectful eyes.

Mrs. Haughton was still a pretty woman, and with much of that delicacy of form and outline which constitutes the gentility of person. She had a sweet voice too, except when angry. Her defects of education, of temper, or of conventional polish, were not discernible in the overflow of natural emotion. Darrell had come resolved to be released if possible. Pleased he was, much more than he had expected. He even inly accepted for the deceased Captain excuses which he had never before admitted to himself. The linen-draper’s daughter was no coarse presuming dowdy, and in her candid rush of gratitude there was not that underbred servility which Darrell had thought perceptible in her epistolary compositions. There was elegance too, void both of gaudy ostentation and penurious thrift, in the furniture and arrangements of the room. The income he gave to her was not spent with slatternly waste or on tawdry gewgaws. To ladies in general, Darrell’s manner was extremely attractive—not the less winning because of a certain shyness which, implying respect for those he addressed, and a modest undervaluing of his own merit, conveyed compliment and soothed self-love. And to that lady in especial such gentle shyness was the happiest good-breeding.

In short, all went off without a hitch, till, as Darrell was taking leave, Mrs. Haughton was reminded by some evil genius of her evening

party, and her very gratitude, longing for some opportunity to requite obligation, prompted her to invite the kind man to whom the facility of giving parties was justly due. She had never realised to herself, despite all that Lionel could say, the idea of Darrell's station in the world—a lawyer who had spent his youth at the back of Holborn, whom the stylish Captain had deemed it a condescension not to cut, might indeed become very rich; but he could never be the fashion. "Poor man," she thought, "he must be very lonely. He is not, like Lionel, a young dancing man. A quiet little party, with people of his own early rank and habits, would be more in his way than those grand places to which Lionel goes. I can but ask him—I ought to ask him. What would he say if I did not ask him? Black ingratitude indeed, if he were not asked!" All these ideas rushed through her mind in a breath, and as she clasped Darrell's extended hand in both her own, she said: "I have a little party to-night!"—and paused. Darrell remaining mute, and Lionel not suspecting what was to ensue, she continued: "There may be some good music—young friends of mine—sing charmingly—Italians!"

Darrell bowed. Lionel began to shudder.

"And if I might presume to think it would amuse you, Mr. Darrell, oh, I should be so happy to see you!—so happy!"

"Would you?" said Darrell, briefly. "Then I should be a churl if I did not come. Lionel will escort me. Of course you expect him too?"

"Yes, indeed. Though he has so many fine places to go to—and it can't be exactly what he is used to—yet he is such a dear good boy that he gives up all to gratify his mother."

Lionel, in agonies, turned an unfilial back, and looked steadily out of the window; but Darrell, far too august to take offence where none was meant, only smiled at the implied reference to Lionel's superior demand in the fashionable world, and replied, without even a touch of his accustomed irony: "And to gratify his mother is a pleasure I thank you for inviting me to share with him."

More and more at her ease, and charmed with having obeyed her hospitable impulse, Mrs. Haughton, following Darrell to the landing-place, added:

"And if you like to play a quiet rubber—"

"I never touch cards—I abhor the very name of them, ma'am," interrupted Darrell, somewhat less gracious in his tones.

He mounted his horse; and Lionel, breaking from Mrs. Haughton, who was assuring him that Mr. Darrell was not at all what she expected, but really quite the gentleman—nay, a much grander gentleman than even Colonel Morley—regained his kinsman's side, looking abashed and discomfited. Darrell, with the kindness which his fine quick intellect

enabled him so felicitously to apply, hastened to relieve the young guardsman's mind.

"I like your mother much—very much," said he, in his most melodious accents. "Good boy! I see now why you gave up Lady Dulcett. Go and take a canter by yourself, or with younger friends, and be sure you call on me so that we may be both at Mrs. Haughton's by ten o'clock. I can go later to the concert if I feel inclined."

He waved his hand, wheeled his horse, and trotted off towards the fair suburban lanes that still proffer to the denizens of London glimpses of rural fields, and shadows from quiet hedgerows. He wished to be alone; the sight of Mrs. Haughton had revived recollections of bygone days—memory linking memory in painful chain-gay talk with his younger schoolfellow—that wild Charlie, now in his grave—his own laborious youth, resolute aspirings, secret sorrows—and the strong man felt the want of the solitary self-commune, without which self-conquest is unattainable.

CHAPTER IV.

MRS. HAUGHTON AT HOME MISCELLANEOUSLY. LITTLE PARTIES ARE USEFUL IN BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER. ONE NEVER KNOWS WHOM ONE MAY MEET.

Great kingdoms grew out of small beginnings. Mrs. Haughton's social circle was described from a humble centre. On coming into possession of her easy income and her house in Gloucester Place, she was naturally seized with the desire of an appropriate "visiting acquaintance." The accomplishment of that desire had been deferred awhile by the excitement of Lionel's departure for Paris, and the IMMENSE TEMPTATION to which the attentions of the spurious Mr. Courtenay Smith had exposed her widowed solitude: but no sooner had she recovered from the shame and anger with which she had discarded that showy impostor, happily in time, than the desire became the more keen; because the good lady felt that with a mind so active and restless as hers, a visiting acquaintance might be her best preservative from that sense of loneliness which disposes widows to lend the incautious ear to adventurous wooers. After her experience of her own weakness in listening to a sharper, and with a shudder at her escape, Mrs. Haughton made a firm resolve never to give her beloved son a father-in-law. No, she would distract her thoughts—she would have a VISITING ACQUAINTANCE. She commenced by singling out such families as at various times had been her genteel lodgers—now lodging elsewhere. She informed them by polite notes of her accession of consequence and

fortune, which she was sure they would be happy to hear; and these notes, left with the card of "Mrs. Haughton, Gloucester Place," necessarily produced respondent notes and correspondent cards. Gloucester Place then prepared itself for a party. The ci-devant lodgers urbanely attended the summons. In their turn they gave parties. Mrs. Haughton was invited. From each such party she bore back a new draught into her "social circle." Thus, long before the end of five years, Mrs. Haughton had attained her object. She had a "VISITING ACQUAINTANCE!" It is true that she was not particular; so that there was a new somebody at whose house a card could be left, or a morning call achieved—who could help to fill her rooms, or whose rooms she could contribute to fill in turn. She was contented. She was no tuft-hunter. She did not care for titles. She had no visions of a column in the Morning Post. She wanted, kind lady, only a vent for the exuberance of her social instincts; and being proud, she rather liked acquaintances who looked up to, instead of looking down on her. Thus Gloucester Place was invaded by tribes not congenial to its natural civilised atmosphere. Hengists and Horsas, from remote Anglo-Saxon districts, crossed the intervening channel, and insulted the British nationality of that salubrious district. To most of such immigrants, Mrs. Haughton, of Gloucester Place, was a personage of the highest distinction. A few others of prouder status in the world, though they owned to themselves that there was a sad mixture at Mrs. Haughton's house, still, once seduced there, came again—being persons who, however independent in fortune or gentle by blood, had but a small "visiting acquaintance" in town; fresh from economical colonisation on the Continent or from distant provinces in these three kingdoms. Mrs. Haughton's rooms were well lighted. There was music for some, whist for others; tea, ices, cakes, and a crowd for all.

At ten o'clock—the rooms already nearly filled, and Mrs. Haughton, as she stood at the door, anticipating with joy that happy hour when the staircase would become inaccessible—the head attendant, sent with the ices from the neighbouring confectioner, announced in a loud voice: "Mr. Haughton—Mr. Darrell."

At that latter name a sensation thrilled the assembly—the name so much in every one's mouth at that period, nor least in the mouths of the great middle class, on whom—though the polite may call them "a sad mixture," cabinets depend—could not fail to be familiar to the ears of Mrs. Haughton's "visiting acquaintance." The interval between his announcement and his ascent from the hall to the drawing-room was busily filled up by murmured questions to the smiling hostess: "Darrell! what! the Darrell! Guy Darrell! greatest man of the day! A connection of yours? Bless me, you don't say so?" Mrs. Haughton began to feel nervous. Was Lionel right? Could the man who had only been a lawyer at the back of Holborn really be, now, such a very, very great man—greatest man of the day? Nonsense!

"Ma'am," said one pale, puff-cheeked, flat-nosed gentleman, in a very large white waistcoat, who was waiting by her side till a vacancy in one

of the two whist-tables should occur. "Ma'am, I'm an enthusiastic admirer of Mr. Darrell. You say he is a connection of yours? Present me to him."

Mrs. Haughton nodded flutteringly, for, as the gentleman closed his request, and tapped a large gold snuff-box, Darrell stood before her—Lionel close at his side, looking positively sheepish. The great man said a few civil words, and was gliding into the room to make way for the press behind him, when he of the white waistcoat, touching Mrs. Haughton's arm, and staring Darrell full in the face, said, very loud: "In these anxious times, public men dispense with ceremony. I crave an introduction to Mr. Darrell." Thus pressed, poor Mrs. Haughton, without looking up, muttered out: "Mr. Adolphus Poole—Mr. Darrell," and turned to welcome fresh comers.

"Mr. Darrell," said Mr. Poole, bowing to the ground, "this is an honour."

Darrell gave the speaker one glance of his keen eye, and thought to himself: "If I were still at the bar I should be sorry to hold a brief for that fellow." However, he returned the bow formally, and, bowing again at the close of a highly complimentary address with which Mr. Poole followed up his opening sentence, expressed himself "much flattered," and thought he had escaped; but wherever he went through the crowd, Mr. Poole contrived to follow him, and claim his notice by remarks on the affairs of the day—the weather—the funds—the crops. At length Darrell perceived, sitting aloof in a corner, an excellent man whom indeed it surprised him to see in a London drawing-room, but who, many years ago, when Darrell was canvassing the enlightened constituency of Ouzelford, had been on a visit to the chairman of his committee—an influential trader—and having connections in the town—and, being a very high character, had done him good service in the canvass. Darrell rarely forgot a face, and never a service. At any time he would have been glad to see the worthy man once more, but at that time he was grateful indeed.

"Excuse me," he said bluntly to Mr. Poole, "but I see an old friend." He moved on, and thick as the crowd had become, it made way, with respect as to royalty for the distinguished orator. The buzz of admiration as he passed—louder than in drawing-rooms more refined—would have had sweeter music than Grisi's most artful quaver to a vainer man—nay, once on a time to him. But—sugar plums come too late! He gained the corner, and roused the solitary sitter.

"My dear Mr. Hartopp, do you not remember me—Guy Darrell?"

"Mr. Darrell!" cried the ex-mayor of Gatesboro', rising, "who could think that you would remember me?"

"What! not remember those ten stubborn voters, on whom, all and singly, I had lavished my powers of argument in vain? You came, and with the brief words, 'John—Ned—Dick—oblige me—vote for Darrell!' the men were

convinced—the votes won. That’s what I call eloquence”—(sotto voce—
”Confound that fellow! still after me! ”Aside to Hartopp)—”Oh! may I ask
who is that Mr. What’s-his-name—there—in the white waistcoat?”

”Poole,” answered Hartopp. ”Who is he, sir? A speculative man. He is
connected with a new Company—I am told it answers. Williams (that’s my
foreman—a very long head he has too) has taken shares in the Company,
and wanted me to do the same, but ’tis not in my way. And Mr. Poole may
be a very honest man, but he does not impress me with that idea. I have
grown careless; I know I am liable to be taken in—I was so once—and
therefore I avoid ’Companies’ upon principle—especially when they
promise thirty per cent., and work copper mines—Mr. Poole has a copper
mine.”

”And deals in brass—you may see it in his face! But you are not in town
for good, Mr. Hartopp? If I remember right, you were settled at
Gatesboro’ when we last met.”

”And so I am still—or rather in the neighbourhood. I am gradually
retiring from business, and grown more and more fond of farming. But I
have a family, and we live in enlightened times, when children require a
finer education than their parents had. Mrs. Hartopp thought my daughter
Anna Maria was in need of some ’finishing lessons’—very fond of the harp
is Anna Maria—and so we have taken a house in London for six weeks.
That’s Mrs. Hartopp yonder, with the bird on her head—bird of paradise,
I believe; Williams says birds of that kind never rest. That bird is an
exception—it has rested on Mrs. Hartopp’s head for hours together, every
evening since we have been in town.”

”Significant of your connubial felicity, Mr. Hartopp.”

”May it be so of Anna Maria’s. She is to be married when her education
is finished—married, by the by, to a son of your old friend Jessop, of
Ouzelford; and between you and me, Mr. Darrell, that is the reason why I
consented to come to town. Do not suppose that I would have a daughter
finished unless there was a husband at hand who undertook to be
responsible for the results.”

”You retain your wisdom, Mr. Hartopp; and I feel sure that not even your
fair partner could have brought you up to London unless you had decided
on the expediency of coming. Do you remember that I told you the day you
so admirably settled a dispute in our committee-room, ’it was well you
were not born a king, for you would have been an irresistible tyrant?’”

”Hush! hush!” whispered Hartopp, in great alarm, ”if Mrs. H. should hear
you! What an observer you are, sir. I thought I was a judge of
character—but I was once deceived. I dare say you never were.”

”You mistake,” answered Darrell, wincing, ”you deceived! How?”

"Oh, a long story, sir. It was an elderly man—the most agreeable, interesting companion—a vagabond nevertheless—and such a pretty bewitching little girl with him, his grandchild. I thought he might have been a wild harumscarum chap in his day, but that he had a true sense of honour"—(Darrell, wholly uninterested in this narrative, suppressed a yawn, and wondered when it would end).

"Only think, sir, just as I was saying to myself, 'I know character—I never was taken in,' down comes a smart fellow—the man's own son—and tells me—or rather he suffers a lady who comes with him to tell me—that this charming old gentleman of high sense of honour was a returned convict—been transported for robbing his employer."

Pale, breathless, Darrell listened, not unheeding now. "What was the name of—of—"

"The convict? He called himself Chapman, but the son's name was Losely—Jasper."

"Ah!" faltered Darrell, recoiling. "And you spoke of a little girl?"

"Jasper Losely's daughter; he came after her with a magistrate's warrant. The old miscreant had carried her off,—to teach her his own swindling ways, I suppose."

"Luckily she was then in my charge. I gave her back to her father, and the very respectable-looking lady he brought with him. Some relation, I presume."

"What was her name, do you remember?"

"Crane."

"Crane!—Crane!" muttered Darrell, as if trying in vain to tax his memory with that name. "So he said the child was his daughter—are you sure?"

"Oh, of course he said so, and the lady too. But can you be acquainted with their, sir?"

"I?—no! Strangers to me, except by repute. Liars—infamous liars! But have the accomplices quarrelled—I mean the son and father—that the father should be exposed and denounced by the son?"

"I conclude so. I never saw them again. But you believe the father really was, then, a felon, a convict—no excuse for him—no extenuating circumstances? There was something in that man, Mr. Darrell, that made one love him—positively love him; and when I had to tell him that I had given up the child he trusted to my charge, and saw his grief, I felt a

criminal myself.”

Darrell said nothing, but the character of his face was entirely altered—stern, hard, relentless—the face of an inexorable judge. Hartopp, lifting his eyes suddenly to that countenance, recoiled in awe.

”You think I was a criminal!” he said, piteously.

”I think we are both talking too much, Mr. Hartopp, of a gang of miserable swindlers, and I advise you to dismiss the whole remembrance of intercourse with any of them from your honest breast, and never to repeat to other ears the tale you have poured into mine. Men of honour should crush down the very thought that approaches them to knaves.”

Thus saying, Darrell moved off with abrupt rudeness, and passing quickly back through the crowd, scarcely noticed Mrs. Haughton by a retreating nod, nor heeded Lionel at all, but hurried down the stairs. He was impatiently searching for his cloak in the back parlour, when a voice behind said: ”Let me assist you, sir—do:” and turning round with petulant quickness, he beheld again Mr. Adolphus Poole. It requires an habitual intercourse with equals to give perfect and invariable control of temper to a man of irritable nerves and frank character; and though, where Darrell really liked, he had much sweet forbearance, and where he was indifferent much stately courtesy, yet, when he was offended, he could be extremely uncivil. ”Sir,” he cried almost stamping his foot, ”your importunities annoy me I request you to cease them.”

”Oh, I ask your pardon,” said Mr. Poole, with an angry growl. ”I have no need to force myself on any man. But I beg you to believe that if I presumed to seek your acquaintance, it was to do you a service sir—yes, a private service, sir.” He lowered his voice into a whisper, and laid his finger on his nose: ”There’s one Jasper Losely, sir—eh? Oh, sir, I’m no mischief-maker. I respect family secrets. Perhaps I might be of use, perhaps not.”

”Certainly not to me, sir,” said Darrell, flinging the cloak he had now found across his shoulders, and striding from the house. When he entered his carriage, the footman stood waiting for orders. Darrell was long in giving them. ”Anywhere for half an hour—to St. Paul’s, then home.” But on returning from this objectless plunge into the City, Darrell pulled the check-string: ”To Belgrave Square—Lady Dulcett’s.”

The concert was half over; but Flora Vyvyan had still guarded, as she had promised, a seat beside herself for Darrell, by lending it for the present to one of her obedient vassals. Her face brightened as she saw Darrell enter and approach. The vassal surrendered the chair. Darrell appeared to be in the highest spirits; and I firmly believe that he was striving to the utmost in his power—what? to make himself agreeable to Flora Vyvyan? No; to make Flora Vyvyan agreeable to himself. The man did not presume that a fair young lady could be in love with him; perhaps

he believed that, at his years, to be impossible. But he asked what seemed much easier, and was much harder—he asked to be himself in love.

CHAPTER V.

IT IS ASSERTED BY THOSE LEARNED MEN WHO HAVE DEVOTED THEIR LIVES TO THE STUDY OF THE MANNERS AND HABIT OF INSECT SOCIETY, THAT WHEN A SPIDER HAS LOST ITS LAST WEB, HAVING EXHAUSTED ALL THE GLUTINOUS MATTER WHEREWITH TO SPIN ANOTHER, IT STILL. PROTRACTS ITS INNOCENT EXISTENCE, BY OBTUDING ITS NIPPERS ON SOME LESS WARLIKE BUT MORE RESPECTABLE SPIDER, POSSESSED OF A CONVENIENT HOME AND AN AIRY LARDER. OBSERVANT MORALISTS HAVE NOTICED THE SAME PECULIARITY IN THE MANEATER, OR POCKET-CANNIBAL.

Eleven o'clock, A.M., Samuel Adolphus Poole, Esq., is in his parlour, —the house one of those new dwellings which yearly spring up north of the Regent's Park,—dwellings that, attesting the eccentricity of the national character, task the fancy of the architect and the gravity of the beholder—each tenement so tortured into contrast with the other, that, on one little rood of ground, all ages seemed blended, and all races encamped. No. 1 is an Egyptian tomb!—Pharaohs may repose there! No. 2 is a Swiss chalet—William Tell may be shooting in its garden! Lo! the severity of Doric columns—Sparta is before you! Behold that Gothic porch—you are rapt to the Norman days! Ha! those Elizabethan mullions—Sidney and Raleigh, rise again! Ho! the trellises of China—come forth, Confucius, and Commissioner Yeh! Passing a few paces, we are in the land of the Zegri and Abencerrage:

'Land of the dark-eyed maid and dusky Moor.'

Mr. Poole's house is called Alhambra Villa! Moorish verandahs—plate-glass windows, with cusped heads and mahogany sashes—a garden behind, a smaller one in front—stairs ascending to the doorway under a Saracenic portico, between two pedestalled lions that resemble poodles—the whole new and lustrous—in semblance stone, in substance stucco—cracks in the stucco denoting "settlements." But the house being let for ninety-nine years—relet again on a running lease of seven, fourteen, and twenty-one—the builder is not answerable for duration, nor the original lessee for repairs. Take it altogether, than Alhambra Villa masonry could devise no

better type of modern taste and metropolitan speculation.

Mr. Poole, since we saw him between four and five years ago, has entered the matrimonial state. He has married a lady of some money, and become a reformed man. He has eschewed the turf, relinquished Belcher neckcloths and Newmarket coats—dropped his old-bachelor acquaintances. When a man marries and reforms, especially when marriage and reform are accompanied with increased income, and settled respectably in Alhambra Villa—relations, before estranged, tender kindly overtures: the world, before austere, becomes indulgent. It was so with Poole—no longer Dolly. Grant that in earlier life he had fallen into bad ways, and, among equivocal associates, had been led on by that taste for sporting which is a manly though a perilous characteristic of the true-born Englishman; he who loves horses is liable to come in contact with blacklegs; the racer is a noble animal; but it is his misfortune that the better his breeding the worse his company:—Grant that, in the stables, Adolphus Samuel Poole had picked up some wild oats—he had sown them now. Bygones were bygones. He had made a very prudent marriage. Mrs. Poole was a sensible woman—had rendered him domestic, and would keep him straight! His uncle Samuel, a most worthy man, had found him that sensible woman, and, having found her, had paid his nephew's debts, and adding a round sum to the lady's fortune, had seen that the whole was so tightly settled on wife and children that Poole had the tender satisfaction of knowing that, happen what might to himself, those dear ones were safe; nay, that if, in the reverses of fortune, he should be compelled by persecuting creditors to fly his native shores, law could not impair the competence it had settled upon Mrs. Poole, nor destroy her blessed privilege to share that competence with a beloved spouse. Insolvency itself, thus protected by a marriage settlement, realises the sublime security of VIRTUE immortalised by the Roman muse:

—”Repulse nescia sordidae,
Intaminatis fulget honoribus;
Nec sumit ant ponit secures
Arbitrio popularis aurae.”

Mr. Poole was an active man in the parish vestry—he was a sound politician—he subscribed to public charities—he attended public dinners he had votes in half a dozen public institutions—he talked of the public interests, and called himself a public man. He chose his associates amongst gentlemen in business—speculative, it is true, but steady. A joint-stock company was set up; he obtained an official station at its board, coupled with a salary—not large, indeed, but still a salary.

”The money,” said Adolphus Samuel Poole, ”is not my object; but I like to have something to do.” I cannot say how he did something, but no doubt somebody was done.

Mr. Poole was in his parlour, reading letters and sorting papers, before

he departed to his office in the West End. Mrs. Poole entered, leading an infant who had not yet learned to walk alone, and denoting, by an interesting enlargement of shape, a kindly design to bless that infant, at no distant period, with a brother or sister, as the case might be.

"Come and kiss Pa, Johnny," said she to the infant. "Mrs. Poole, I am busy," growled Pa.

"Pa's busy—working hard for little Johnny. Johnny will be better for it some day," said Mrs. Poole, tossing the infant half up to the ceiling, in compensation for the loss of the paternal kiss.

"Mrs. Poole, what do you want?"

"May I hire Jones's brougham for two hours to-day, to pay visits? There are a great many cards we ought to leave; is there any place where I should leave a card for you, lovey—any person of consequence you were introduced to at Mrs. Haughton's last night? That great man they were all talking about, to whom you seemed to take such a fancy, Samuel, duck—"

"Do get out! that man insulted me, I tell you."

"Insulted you! No; you never told me."

"I did tell you last night coming home."

"Dear me, I thought you meant that Mr. Hartopp."

"Well, he almost insulted me, too. Mrs. Poole, you are stupid and disagreeable. Is that all you have to say?"

"Pa's cross, Johnny dear! poor Pa!—people have vexed Pa, Johnny—naughty people. We must go or we shall vex him too."

Such heavenly sweetness on the part of a forbearing wife would have softened Tamburlane. Poole's sullen brow relaxed. If women knew how to treat men, not a husband, unhenpecked, would be found from Indos to the Pole.

And Poole, for all his surly demeanour, was as completely governed by that angel as a bear by his keeper.

"Well, Mrs. Poole, excuse me. I own I am out of sorts to-day—give me little Johnny—there (kissing the infant; who in return makes a dig at Pa's left eye, and begins to cry on finding that he has not succeeded in digging it out)—take the brougham. Hush, Johnny—hush—and you may leave a card for me at Mr. Peckham's, Harley Street. My eye smarts horribly; that baby will gouge me one of these days."

Mrs. Poole had succeeded in stilling the infant, and confessing that Johnny's fingers are extremely strong for his age—but, adding that babies will catch at whatever is very bright and beautiful, such as gold and jewels and Mr. Poole's eyes, administers to the wounded orb so soothing a lotion of pity and admiration that Poole growls out quite mildly: "Nonsense, blarney—by the by, I did not say this morning that you should not have the rosewood chiffoniere!"

"No, you said you could not afford it, duck; and when Pa says he can't afford it, Pa must be the judge—must not he, Johnny dear?"

"But perhaps I can afford it. Yes, you may have it yes, I say, you shall have it. Don't forget to leave that card on Peckham—he's a moneyed man. There's a ring at the bell. Who is it? run and see."

Mrs. Poole obeyed with great activity, considering her interesting condition. She came back in half a minute. "Oh, my Adolphus—I oh, my Samuel! it is that dreadful-looking man who was here the other evening—stayed with you so long. I don't like his looks at all. Pray don't be at home."

"I must," said Poole, turning a shade paler, if that were possible. "Stop—don't let that girl go to the door; and you—leave me." He snatched his hat and gloves, and putting aside the parlour-maid, who had emerged from the shades below in order to answer the "ring," walked hastily down the small garden.

Jasper Losely was stationed at the little gate. Jasper was no longer in rags, but he was coarsely clad—clad as if he had resigned all pretence to please a lady's eye, or to impose upon a West-End tradesman—a check shirt—a rough pea-jacket, his hands buried in its pockets.

Poole started with well-simulated surprise. "What, you! I am just going to my office—in a great hurry at present."

"Hurry or not, I must and will speak to you," said Jasper, doggedly.

"What now? then, step in;—only remember I can't give you snore than five minutes."

The rude visitor followed Poole into the back parlour, and closed the door after him.

Leaning his arm over a chair, his hat still on his head, Losely fixed his fierce eyes on his old friend, and said in a low, set, determined voice: "Now, mark me, Dolly Poole, if you think to shirk my business, or throw me over, you'll find yourself in Queer Street. Have you called on Guy Darrell, and put my case to him, or have you not?"

"I met Mr. Darrell only last night, at a very genteel party." (Poole

deemed it prudent not to say by WHOM that genteel party was given, for it will be remembered that Poole had been Jasper's confidant in that adventurer's former designs upon Mrs. Haughton; and if Jasper knew that Poole had made her acquaintance, might he not insist upon Poole's reintroducing him as a visiting acquaintance?) "A very genteel party," repeated Poole. "I made a point of being presented to Mr. Darrell, and very polite he was at first."

"Curse his politeness—get to the point."

"I sounded my way very carefully, as you may suppose; and when I had got him into friendly chat, you understand, I began; Ah! my poor Losely, nothing to be done there—he flew off in a tangent—as much as desired me to mind my own business, and hold my tongue; and upon my life, I don't think there is a chance for you in that quarter."

"Very well—we shall see. Next, have you taken any steps to find out the girl, my daughter?"

"I have, I assure you. But you give me so slight a clue. Are you quite sure she is not in America after all?"

"I have told you before that that story about America was all bosh! a stratagem of the old gentleman's to deceive me. Poor old man," continued Jasper, in a tone that positively betrayed feeling, "I don't wonder that he dreads and flies me; yet I would not hurt him more than I have done, even to be as well off as you are—blinking at me from your mahogany perch like a pet owl with its crop full of mice. And if I would take the girl from him, it is for her own good. For if Darrell could be got to make a provision on her, and, through her, on myself, why, of course the old man should share the benefit of it. And now that these infernal pains often keep me awake half the night, I can't always shut out the idea of that old man wandering about the world, and dying in a ditch. And that runaway girl—to whom, I dare swear, he would give away his last crumb of bread—ought to be an annuity to us both: Basta, basta! As to the American story—I had a friend at Paris, who went to America on a speculation; I asked him to inquire about this Willaim Waife and his granddaughter Sophy, who were said to have sailed for New York nearly five years ago, and he saw the very persons—settled in New York—no longer under the name of Waife, but their true name of Simpson, and got out from the man that they had been induced to take their passage from England in the name of Waife, at the request of a person whom the mail would not-give up, but to whom he said he was under obligations. Perhaps the old gentleman had done the fellow a kind turn in early life. The description of this /soi-disant/ Waife and his grandchild settles the matter—wholly unlike those I seek; so that there is every reason to suppose they must still be in England, and it is your business to find them. Continue your search—quicken your wits—let me be better pleased with your success when I call again this day week—and meanwhile four pounds, if you please—as much more as you like."

"Why, I gave you four pounds the other day, besides six pounds for clothes; it can't be gone."

"Every penny."

"Dear, dear! can't you maintain yourself anyhow? Can't you get any one to play at cards? Four pounds! Why, with your talent for whist, four pounds are a capital!"

"Whom can I play with! Whom can I herd with? Cracksmen and pickpockets. Fit me out; ask me to your own house; invite your own friends; make up a rubber, and you will then see what I can do with four pounds; and may go shares if you like, as we used to do."

"Don't talk so loud. Losely, you know very well that what you ask is impossible. I've turned over a new leaf."

"But I've still got your handwriting on the old leaf."

"What's the good of these stupid threats? If you really wanted to do me a mischief, where could you go to, and who'd believe you?"

"I fancy your wife would. I'll try. Hillo—"

"Stop—stop—stop. No row here, sir. No scandal. Hold your tongue, or I'll send for the police."

"Do! Nothing I should like better. I'm tired out. I want to tell my own story at the Old Bailey, and have my revenge upon you, upon Darrell, upon all. Send for the police."

Losely threw himself at length on the sofa—(new morocco with spring cushions)—and folded his arms.

"You could only give me five minutes—they are gone, I fear. I am more liberal. I give you your own time to consider. I don't care if I stay to dine; I dare say Mrs. Poole will excuse my dress."

"Losely, you are such a—fellow! If I do give you the four pounds you ask, will you promise to shift for yourself somehow, and molest me no more?"

"Certainly not. I shall come once every week for the same sum. I can't live upon less—until—"

"Until what?"

"Until either you get Mr. Darrell to settle on me a suitable provision; or until you place me in possession of my daughter, and I can then be in a better condition to treat with him myself; for if I would make a claim on account of the girl, I must produce the girl, or he may say she is dead. Besides, if she be as pretty as she was when a child, the very sight of her might move him more than all my talk."

"And if I succeed in doing anything with Mr. Darrell, or discovering your daughter, you will give up all such letters and documents of mine as you say you possess?"

"'Say I possess!' I have shown them to you in this pocket-book, Dolly Poole—your own proposition to rob old Latham's safe."

Poole eyed the book, which the ruffian took out and tapped. Had the ruffian been a slighter man, Poole would have been a braver one. As it was—he eyed and groaned. "Turn against one's own crony! So unhandsome, so unlike what I thought you were."

"It is you who would turn against me. But stick to Darrell or find me my daughter, and help her and me to get justice out of him; and you shall not only have back these letters, but I'll pay you handsomely—handsomely, Dolly Poole. Zooks, sir—I am fallen, but I am always a gentleman."

Therewith Losely gave a vehement slap to his hat, which, crushed by the stroke, improved his general appearance into an aspect so outrageously raffish, that but for the expression of his countenance the contrast between the boast and the man would have been ludicrous even to Mr. Poole. The countenance was too dark to permit laughter. In the dress, but the ruin of fortune—in the face, the ruin of man. Poole heaved a deep sigh, and extended four sovereigns.

Losely rose and took them carelessly. "This day week," he said—shook himself—and went his way.

CHAPTER VI.

FRESH TOUCHES TO THE THREE VIGNETTES FOR THE BOOK OF BEAUTY.

Weeks passed—the London season was beginning—Darrell had decided nothing—the prestige of his position was undiminished,—in politics, perhaps higher. He had succeeded in reconciling some great men; he had strengthened—it might be saved—a jarring cabinet. In all this he had shown admirable knowledge of mankind, and proved that time and disuse had

not lessened his powers of perception. In his matrimonial designs, Darrell seemed more bent than ever upon the hazard—irresolute as ever on the choice of a partner. Still the choice appeared to be circumscribed to the fair three who had been subjected to Colonel Morley’s speculative criticism—Lady Adela, Miss Vipont, Flora Vyvyan. Much pro and con might be said in respect to each. Lady Adela was so handsome that it was a pleasure to look at her; and that is much when one sees the handsome face every day,—provided the pleasure does not wear off. She had the reputation of a very good temper; and the expression of her countenance confirmed it. There, panegyric stopped; but detraction did not commence. What remained was inoffensive commonplace. She had no salient attribute, and no ruling passion. Certainly she would never have wasted a thought on Mr. Darrell, nor have discovered a single merit in him, if he had not been quoted as a very rich man of high character in search of a wife, and if her father had not said to her: “Adela, Mr. Darrell has been greatly struck with your appearance—he told me so. He is not young, but he is still a very fine looking man, and you are twenty-seven. ’Tis a greater distinction to be noticed by a person of his years and position, than by a pack of silly young fellows, who think more of their own pretty faces than they would ever do of yours.”

“If you did not mind a little disparity of years, he would make you a happy wife; and, in the course of nature, a widow, not too old to enjoy liberty, and with a jointure that might entitle you to a still better match.”

Darrell thus put into Lady Adela’s head, he remained there, and became an */idee fixe/*. Viewed in the light of a probable husband, he was elevated into an “interesting man.” She would have received his addresses with gentle complacency; and, being more the creature of habit than impulse, would no doubt, in the intimacy of connubial life, have blest him, or any other admiring husband, with a reasonable modicum of languid affection. Nevertheless, Lady Adela was an unconscious impostor; for, owing to a mild softness of eye and a susceptibility to blushes, a victim ensnared by her beauty would be apt to give her credit for a nature far more accessible to the romance of the tender passion than, happily perhaps for her own peace of mind, she possessed; and might flatter himself that he had produced a sensation which gave that softness to the eye and that damask to the blush.

Honoraria Vipont would have been a choice far more creditable to the good sense of so mature a wooer. Few better specimens of a young lady brought up to become an accomplished woman of the world. She had sufficient instruction to be the companion of an ambitious man—solid judgment to fit her for his occasional adviser. She could preside with dignity over a stately household—receive with grace distinguished guests. Fitted to administer an ample fortune, ample fortune was necessary to the development of her excellent qualities. If a man of Darrell’s age were bold enough to marry a young wife, a safer wife amongst the young ladies of London he could scarcely find; for though Honoraria was only three-and-

twenty, she was as staid, as sensible, and as remote from all girlish frivolities, as if she had been eight-and-thirty. Certainly had Guy Darrell been of her own years, his fortunes unmade, his fame to win, a lawyer residing at the back of Holborn, or a pretty squire in the petty demesnes of Fawley, he would have had no charm in the eyes of Honoria Vipont. Disparity of years was in this case no drawback but his advantage, since to that disparity Darrell owed the established name and the eminent station which made Honoria think she elevated her own self in preferring him. It is but justice to her to distinguish here between a woman's veneration for the attributes of respect which a man gathers round him, and the more vulgar sentiment which sinks the man altogether, except as the necessary fixture to be taken in with general valuation. It is not fair to ask if a girl who entertains a preference for one of our toiling, stirring, ambitious sex, who may be double her age or have a snub nose, but who looks dignified and imposing on a pedestal of state, whether she would like him as much if stripped of all his accessories, and left unredeemed to his baptismal register or unbecoming nose. Just as well ask a girl in love with a young Lothario if she would like him as much if he had been ugly and crooked. The high name of the one man is as much a part of him as good looks are to the other. Thus, though it was said of Madame de la Valliere that she loved Louis XIV: for himself and not for his regal grandeur, is there a woman in the world, however disinterested, who believes that Madame de la Valliere would have liked Louis XIV. as much if Louis XIV. had been Mr. John Jones; Honoria would not have bestowed her hand on a brainless, worthless nobleman, whatever his rank or wealth. She was above that sort of ambition; but neither would she have married the best-looking and worthiest John Jones who ever bore that British appellation, if he had not occupied the social position which brought the merits of a Jones within range of the eyeglass of a Vipont.

Many girls in the nursery say to their juvenile confidants, "I will marry the man I love." Honoria had ever said, "I will only marry the man I respect." Thus it was her respect for Guy Darrell that made her honour him by her preference. She appreciated his intellect—she fell in love with the reputation which the intellect had acquired. And Darrell might certainly choose worse. His cool reason inclined him much to Honoria. When Alban Morley argued in her favour, he had no escape from acquiescence, except in the turns and doubles of his ironical humour. But his heart was a rebel to his reason; and, between you and me, Honoria was exactly one of those young women by whom a man of grave years ought to be attracted, and by whom, somehow or other, he never is; I suspect, because the older we grow the more we love youthfulness of character. When Alcides, having gone through all the fatigues of life, took a bride in Olympus, he ought to have selected Minerva, but he chose Hebe.

Will Darrell find his Hebe in Flora Vyvyan? Alban Morley became more and more alarmed by the apprehension. He was shrewd enough to recognise in her the girl of all others formed to glad the eye and plague the heart of

a grave and reverend seigneur. And it might well not only flatter the vanity, but beguile the judgment, of a man who feared his hand would be accepted only for the sake of his money, that Flora just at this moment refused the greatest match in the kingdom, young Lord Vipont, son of the new Earl of Montfort, a young man of good sense, high character, well-looking as men go—heir to estates almost royal; a young man whom no girl on earth is justified in refusing. But would the whimsical creature accept Darrell? Was she not merely making sport of him, and if, caught by her arts, he, sage and elder, solemnly offered homage and hand to that /belle dedaigneuse/ who had just doomed to despair a comely young magnet with five times his fortune, would she not hasten to make hirer the ridicule of London.

Darrell had perhaps his secret reasons for thinking otherwise, but he did not confide them even to Alban Morley. This much only will the narrator, more candid, say to the reader: If out of the three whom his thoughts fluttered round, Guy Darrell wished to select the one who would love him best—love him with the whole fresh unreasoning heart of a girl whose childish forwardness sprang from childlike innocence, let him dare the hazard of refusal and of ridicule; let him say to Flora Vyvyan, in the pathos of his sweet deep voice: "Come and be the spoiled darling of my gladdened age; let my life, ere it sink into night, be rejoiced by the bloom and fresh breeze of the morning."

But to say it he must wish it; he himself must love—love with all the lavish indulgence, all the knightly tenderness, all the grateful sympathising joy in the youth of the beloved, when youth for the lover is no more, which alone can realise what we sometimes see, though loth to own it—congenial unions with unequal years. If Darrell feel not that love, woe to him, woe and thrice shame if he allure to his hearth one who might indeed be a Hebe to the spouse who gave up to her his whole heart in return for hers; but to the spouse who had no heart to give, or gave but the chips of it, the Hebe indignant would be worse than Erinnys!

All things considered, then, they who wish well to Guy Darrell must range with Alban Morley in favour of Miss Honoria Vipont. She, proffering affectionate respect—Darrell responding by rational esteem. So, perhaps, Darrell himself thought, for whenever Miss Vipont was named he became more taciturn, more absorbed in reflection, and sighed heavily, like a man who slowly makes up his mind to a decision, wise, but not tempting.

CHAPTER VII.

CONTAINING MUCH OF THAT INFORMATION WHICH THE WISEST MEN IN THE

WORLD COULD NOT GIVE, BUT WHICH THE AUTHOR CAN.

"Darrell," said Colonel Morley, "you remember my nephew George as a boy? He is now the rector of Humberston; married—a very nice sort of woman—suits him Humberston is a fine living; but his talents are wasted there. He preached for the first time in London last year, and made a considerable sensation. This year he has been much out of town. He has no church here as yet.

"I hope to get him one. Carr is determined that he shall be a Bisop. Meanwhile he preaches at—Chapel tomorrow; come and hear him with me, and then tell me frankly—is he eloquent or not?"

Darrell had a prejudice against fashionable preachers; but to please Colonel Morley he went to hear George. He was agreeably surprised by the pulpit oratory of the young divine. It had that rare combination of impassioned earnestness with subdued tones, and decorous gesture, which suits the ideal of ecclesiastical eloquence conceived by an educated English Churchman

"Strong without rage, without o'erflowing full."

Occasionally the old defect in utterance was discernible; there was a gasp as for breath, or a prolonged dwelling upon certain syllables, which, occurring in the most animated passages, and apparently evincing the preacher's struggle with emotion, rather served to heighen the sympathy of the audience. But, for the most part, the original stammer was replaced by a felicitous pause, the pause as of a thoughtful reasoner or a solemn monitor knitting ideas, that came too quick, into method, or chastening impulse into disciplined zeal. The mind of the preacher, thus not only freed from trammel, but armed for victory, came forth with that power which is peculiar to an original intellect—the power which suggests more than it demonstrates. He did not so much preach to his audience as wind himself through unexpected ways into the hearts of the audience; and they who heard suddenly found their hearts preaching to themselves. He took for his text: "Cast down, but not destroyed;" and out of this text he framed a discourse full of true Gospel tenderness, which seemed to raise up comfort as the saving, against despair as the evil, principle of mortal life. The congregation was what is called "brilliant"—statesmen, and peers, and great authors, and fine ladies—people whom the inconsiderate believe to stand little in need of comfort, and never to be subjected to despair. In many an intent or drooping farce in that brilliant congregation might be read a very different tale. But of all present there was no one whom the discourse so moved as a woman who, chancing to pass that way, had followed the throng into the Chapel, and with difficulty obtained a seat at the far end; a woman who had not been within the walls of a chapel or church for long years—a grim woman, in iron grey. There she sate unnoticed, in her remote corner; and before the preacher had done, her face was hidden behind her clasped hands, and she was weeping such tears as she had not wept since

childhood.

On leaving church, Darrell said little more to the Colonel than this: "Your nephew takes me by surprise. The Church wants such men. He will have a grand career, if life be spared to him." Then he sank into a reverie, from which he broke abruptly: "Your nephew was, at school with my boy. Had my son lived, what had been his career?"

The Colonel, never encouraging painful subjects, made no rejoinder.

"Bring George to see me to-morrow. I shrunk from asking it before: I thought the sight of him would too much revive old sorrows; but I feel I should accustom myself to face every memory. Bring him."

The next day the Colonel took George to Darrell's; but George had been pre-engaged till late at noon, and Darrell was just leaving home, and at his street door, when the uncle and nephew came. They respected his time too much to accept his offer to come in, but walked beside him for a few minutes, as he bestowed upon George those compliments which are sweet to the ears of rising men from the lips of those who have risen.

"I remember you, George, as a boy," said Darrell, "and thanked you then for good advice to a schoolfellow, who is lost to your counsels now." He faltered an instant, but went on firmly: "You had then a slight defect in utterance, which, I understand from your uncle, increased as you grew older; so that I never anticipated for you the fame that you are achieving. Orator fit—you must have been admirably taught. In the management of your voice, in the excellence of your delivery, I see that you are one of the few who deem that the Divine Word should not be unworthily uttered. The debater on beer bills may be excused from studying the orator's effects; but all that enforce, dignify, adorn, make the becoming studies of him who strives by eloquence to people heaven; whose task it is to adjure the thoughtless, animate the languid, soften the callous, humble the proud, alarm the guilty, comfort the sorrowful, call back to the fold the lost. Is the culture to be slovenly where the glebe is so fertile? The only field left in modern times for the ancient orator's sublime conceptions, but laborious training, is the Preacher's. And I own, George, that I envy the masters who skilled to the Preacher's art an intellect like yours."

"Masters," said the Colonel. "I thought all those elocution masters failed with you, George. You cured and taught yourself. Did not you? No! Why, then, who was your teacher?"

George looked very much embarrassed, and, attempting to answer, began horribly to stutter.

Darrell, conceiving that a preacher whose fame was not yet confirmed might reasonably dislike to confess those obligations to elaborate study, which, if known, might detract from his effect or expose him to ridicule,

hastened to change the subject. "You have been to the country, I hear, George; at your living, I suppose?"

"No. I have not been there very lately; travelling about."

"Have you seen Lady Montfort since your return?" asked the Colonel.

"I only returned on Saturday night. I go to Lady Montfort's at Twickenham, this evening."

"She has a delightful retreat," said the Colonel. "But if she wish to avoid admiration, she should not make the banks of the river her favourite haunt. I know some romantic admirers, who, when she re-appears in the world, may be rival aspirants, and who have much taken to rowing since Lady Montfort has retired to Twickenham. They catch a glimpse of her, and return to boast of it. But they report that there is a young lady seen walking with her an extremely pretty one—who is she? People ask me—as if I knew everything."

"A companion, I suppose," said George, more and more confused. "But, pardon me, I must leave you now. Good-bye, uncle. Good day, Mr. Darrell."

Darrell did not seem to observe George take leave, but walked on, his hat over his brows, lost in one of his frequent fits of abstracted gloom.

"If my nephew were not married," said the Colonel, "I should regard his embarrassment with much suspicion—embarrassed at every point, from his travels about the country to the question of a young lady at Twickenham. I wonder who that young lady can be—not one of the Viponts, or I should have heard. Are there any young ladies on the Lyndsay side?—Eh, Darrell?"

"What do I care?—your head runs on young ladies," answered Darrell, with peevish vivacity, as he stopped abruptly at Carr Vipont's door.

"And your feet do not seem to run from them," said the Colonel; and, with an ironical salute, walked away, while the expanding portals engulfed his friend.

As he sauntered up St. James's Street, nodding towards the thronged windows of its various clubs, the Colonel suddenly encountered Lionel, and, taking the young gentleman's arm, said: "If you are not very much occupied, will you waste half an hour on me?—I am going homewards."

Lionel readily assented, and the Colonel continued "Are you in want of your cabriolet to-day, or can you lend it to me? I have asked a Frenchman, who brings me a letter of introduction, to dine at the nearest restaurant's to which one can ask a Frenchman. I need not say that is Greenwich: and if I took him in a cabriolet, he would not suspect that he

was taken five miles out of town.”

”Alas, my dear Colonel, I have just sold my cabriolet.” What! old-fashioned already!—True, it has been built three months. Perhaps the horse, too, has become an antique in some other collection—silent—um!—cabriolet and horse both sold?”

”Both,” said Lionel, imefully.

”Nothing surprises me that man can do,” said the Colonel; ”or I should be surprised. When, acting on Darrell’s general instructions for your outfit, I bought that horse, I flattered myself that I had chosen well. But rare are good horses—rarer still a good judge of them; I suppose I was cheated, and the brute proved a screw.”

”The finest cab-horse in London, my dear Colonel, and every one knows how proud I was of him. But I wanted money, and had nothing else that would bring the sum I required. Oh, Colonel Morley, do hear me?”

”Certainly, I am not deaf, nor is St. James’s Street. When a man says, ’I have parted with my horse because I wanted money,’ I advise him to say it in a whisper.”

”I have been imprudent, at least unlucky, and I must pay the penalty. A friend of mine—that is, not exactly a friend, but an acquaintance—whom I see every day—one of my own set—asked me to sign my name at Paris to a bill at three months’ date, as his security. He gave me his honour that I should hear no more of it—he would be sure to take up the bill when due—a man whom I supposed to be as well off as myself! You will allow that I could scarcely refuse—at all events, I did not. The bill became due two days ago; my friend does not pay it, and indeed says he cannot, and the holder of the bill calls on me. He was very civil—offered to renew it—pressed me to take my time, &c.; but I did not like his manner: and as to my friend, I find that, instead of being well off, as I supposed, he is hard up, and that I am not the first he has got into the same scrape—not intending it, I am sure. He’s really a very good fellow, and, if I wanted security, would be it to-morrow to any amount.”

”I’ve no doubt of it—to any amount!” said the Colonel.

”So I thought it best to conclude the matter at once. I had saved nothing from my allowance, munificent as it is. I could not have the face to ask Mr. Darrell to remunerate me for my own imprudence. I should not like to borrow from my mother—I know it would be inconvenient to her.

”I sold both horse and cabriolet this morning. I had just been getting the cheque cashed when I met you. I intend to take the money myself to the bill-holder. I have just the sum—L200.”

"The horse alone was worth that," said the Colonel, with a faint sigh—"not to be replaced. France and Russia have the pick of our stables. However, if it is sold, it is sold—talk no more of it. I hate painful subjects. You did right not to renew the bill—it is opening an account with Ruin; and though I avoid preaching on money matters, or, indeed, any other (preaching is my nephew's vocation, not mine), yet allow me to extract from you a solemn promise never again to sign bills, nor to draw them. Be to your friend what you please except security for him. Orestes never asked Pylades to help him to borrow at fifty per cent. Promise me—your word of honour as a gentleman! Do you hesitate?"

"My dear Colonel," said Lionel frankly, "I do hesitate. I might promise not to sign a money-lender's bill on my own account, though really I think you take rather an exaggerated view of what is, after all, a common occurrence—"

"Do I?" said the Colonel meekly. "I'm sorry to hear it. I detest exaggeration. Go on. You might promise not to ruin yourself—but you object to promise not to help in the ruin of your friend."

"That is exquisite irony, Colonel," said Lionel, piqued; but it does not deal with the difficulty, which is simply this: When a man whom you call friend—whom you walk with, ride with, dine with almost every day, says to you 'I am in immediate want of a few hundreds—I don't ask you to lend them to me, perhaps you can't—but assist me to borrow—trust to my honour that the debt shall not fall on you,—why, then, it seems as if to refuse the favour was to tell the man you call friend that you doubt his honour; and though I have been caught once in that way, I feel that I must be caught very often before I should have the moral courage to say 'No!' Don't ask me, then to promise—be satisfied with my assurance that, in future at least, I will be more cautious, and if the loss fall on me, why, the worst that can happen is to do again what I do now."

"Nay, you would not perhaps have another horse and cab to sell. In that case, you would do the reverse of what you do now—you would renew the bill—the debt would run like a snowball—in a year or two you would owe, not hundreds, but thousands. But come in—here we are at my door."

The Colonel entered his drawing-room. A miracle of exquisite neatness the room was—rather effeminate, perhaps, in its attributes; but that was no sign of the Colonel's tastes, but of his popularity with the ladies. All those pretty things were their gifts. The tapestry on the chairs—their work—the Sevres on the consoles—the clock on the mantel-shelf—the inkstand, paper-cutter, taper-stand on the writing-table—their birthday presents. Even the white woolly Maltese dog that sprang from the rug to welcome him—even the flowers in the jardiniere—even the tasteful cottage-piano, and the very music-stand beside it—and the card-trays, piled high with invitations,—were contributions from the forgiving sex to the unrequiting bachelor.

Surveying his apartment with a complacent air, the Colonel sank into his easy /fauteuil/, and drawing off his gloves leisurely said—

”No man has more friends than I have—never did I lose one—never did I sign a bill. Your father pursued a different policy—he signed many bills—and lost many friends.” Lionel, much distressed, looked down, and evidently desired to have done with the subject. Not so the Colonel. That shrewd man, though he did not preach, had a way all his own, which was perhaps quite as effective as any sermon by a fashionable layman can be to an impatient youth.

”Yes,” resumed the Colonel, ”it is the old story. One always begins by being security to a friend. The discredit of the thing is familiarised to one’s mind by the false show of generous confidence in another. Their what you have done for a friend, a friend should do for you;—a hundred or two would be useful now—you are sure to repay it in three months. To Youth the Future seems safe as the Bank of England, and distant as the peaks of Himalaya. You pledge your honour that in three months you will release your friend. The three months expire. To release the one friend, you catch hold of another—the bill is renewed, premium and interest thrown into the next pay-day—soon the account multiplies, and with it the honour dwindles—your NAME circulates from hand to hand on the back of doubtful paper—your name, which, in all money transactions, should grow higher and higher each year you live, falling down every month like the shares in a swindling speculation. You begin by what you call trusting a friend, that is, aiding him to self-destruction—buying him arsenic to clear his complexion—you end by dragging all near you into your own abyss, as a drowning man would clutch at his own brother. Lionel Haughton, the saddest expression I ever saw in your father’s face was when—when—but you shall hear the story—”

”No, sir; spare me. Since you so insist on it, I will give the promise—it is enough; and my father—”

”Was as honourable as you when he first signed his name to a friend’s bill; and, perhaps, promised to do so no more as reluctantly as you do. You had better let me say on; if I stop now, you will forget all about it by this day twelve-month; if I go on, you will never forget. There are other examples besides your father; I am about to name one.”

Lionel resigned himself to the operation, throwing his handkerchief over his face as if he had taken chloroform. ”When I was young,” resumed the Colonel, ”I chanced to make acquaintance with a man of infinite whim and humour; fascinating as Darrell himself, though in a very different way. We called him Willy—you know the kind of man one calls by his Christian name, cordially abbreviated—that kind of man seems never to be quite grown up; and, therefore, never rises in life. I never knew a man called Willy after the age of thirty, who did not come to a melancholy end! Willy was the natural son of a rich, helter-skelter, cleverish, maddish, stylish, raffish, four-in-hand Baronet, by a celebrated French actress.

The title is extinct now, and so, I believe, is that genus of stylish, raffish, four-in-hand Baronet—Sir Julian Losely—”

”Losely!” echoed Lionel. ”Yes; do you know the name?”

”I never heard it till yesterday. I want to tell you what I did hear then—but after your story—go on.”

”Sir Julian Losely (Willy’s father) lived with the French lady as his wife, and reared Willy in his house, with as much pride and fondness as if he intended him for his heir. The poor boy, I suspect, got but little regular education; though of course, he spoke his French mother’s tongue like a native; and, thanks also perhaps to his mother, he had an extraordinary talent for mimicry and acting. His father was passionately fond of private theatricals, and Willy had early practice in that line. I once saw him act Falstaff in a country house, and I doubt if Quin could have acted it better. Well, when Willy was still a mere boy, he lost his mother, the actress. Sir Julian married—had a legitimate daughter—died intestate—and the daughter, of course, had the personal property, which was not much; the heir-at-law got the land, and poor Willy nothing. But Willy was an universal favourite with his father’s old friends—wild fellows like Sir Julian himself amongst them there were two cousins, with large country-houses, sporting-men, and bachelors. They shared Willy between them, and quarrelled which should have the most of him. So he grew up to be man, with no settled provision, but always welcome, not only to the two cousins, but at every house in which, like Milton’s lark, ’he came to startle the dull night’—the most amusing companion!—a famous shot—a capital horseman—knew the ways of all animals, fishes, and birds; I verily believe he could have coaxed a pug-dog to point, and an owl to sing. Void of all malice, up to all fun. Imagine how much people would court, and how little they would do for, a Willy of that sort. Do I bore you?”

”On the contrary, I am greatly interested.”

”One thing a Willy, if a Willy could be wise, ought to do for himself—keep single. A wedded Willy is in a false position. My Willy wedded—for love too—an amiable girl, I believe (I never saw her; it was long afterwards that I knew Willy)—but as poor as himself. The friends and relatives then said: ’This is serious: something—must be done for Willy.’ It was easy to say, ’something must be done,’ and monstrous difficult to do it. While the relations were consulting, his half-sister, the Baronet’s lawful daughter, died, unmarried; and though she had ignored him in life, left him L2,000. ’I have hit it now, ’cried one of the cousins; ’Willy is fond of a country life. I will let him have a farm on a nominal rent, his L2,000 will stock it; and his farm, which is surrounded by woods, will be a capital hunting-meet. As long as I live, Willy shall be mounted.’

”Willy took the farm, and astonished his friends by attending to it. It

was just beginning to answer when his wife died, leaving him only one child—a boy; and her death made him so melancholy that he could no longer attend to his farm. He threw it up, invested the proceeds as a capital, and lived on the interest as a gentleman at large. He travelled over Europe for some time—chiefly on foot—came back, having recovered his spirits—resumed his old desultory purposeless life at different country-houses, and at one of those houses I and Charles Haughton met him. Here I pause, to state that Willy Losely at that time impressed me with the idea that he was a thoroughly honest man. Though he was certainly no formalist—though he had lived with wild sets of convivial scapegraces—though, out of sheer high spirits, he would now and then make conventional Proprietaries laugh at their own long faces; yet, I should have said that Bayard himself—and Bayard was no saint—could not have been more incapable of a disloyal, rascally, shabby action. Nay, in the plain matter of integrity, his ideas might be called refined, almost Quixotic. If asked to give or to lend, Willy’s hand was in his pocket in an instant; but though thrown among rich men—careless as himself—Willy never put his hand into their pockets, never borrowed, never owed. He would accept hospitality—make frank use of your table, your horses, your dogs—but your money, no! He repaid all he took from a host by rendering himself the pleasantest guest that host ever entertained. Poor Willy! I think I see his quaint smile brimming over with sly sport! The sound of his voice was like a cry of ‘o-half-holiday’ in a schoolroom. He dishonest! I should as soon have suspected the noonday sun of being a dark lantern! I remember, when he and I were walking home from wild-duck shooting in advance of our companions, a short conversation between us that touched me greatly, for it showed that, under all his levity, there were sound sense and right feeling. I asked him about his son, then a boy at school: ‘Why, as it was the Christmas vacation, he had refused our host’s suggestion to let the lad come down there?’ ‘Ah,’ said he, ‘don’t fancy that I will lead my son to grow up a scatterbrained good-for-nought like his father. His society is the joy of my life; whenever I have enough in my pockets to afford myself that joy, I go and hire a quiet lodging close by his school, to have him with me from Saturday till Monday all to myself—where he never hears wild fellows call me “Willy,” and ask me to mimic. I had hoped to have spent this vacation with him in that way, but his school bill was higher than usual, and after paying it, I had not a guinea to spare—obliged to come here where they lodge and feed me for nothing; the boy’s uncle on the mother’s side—respectable man in business—kindly takes him home for the holidays; but did not ask me, because his wife—and I don’t blame her—thinks I’m too wild for a City clerk’s sober household.’

”I asked Willy Losely what he meant to do with his son, and hinted that I might get the boy a commission in the army without purchase.

”No,’ said Willy. ‘I know what it is to set up for a gentleman on the capital of a beggar. It is to be a shuttlecock between discontent and temptation. I would not have my lost wife’s son waste his life as I have done. He would be more spoiled, too, than I have been. The handsomest

boy you ever saw—and bold as a lion. Once in that set' (pointing over his shoulder towards some of our sporting comrades, whose loud laughter every now and then reached our ears)—'once in that set, he would never be out of it—fit for nothing. I swore to his mother on her death-bed that I would bring him up to avoid my errors—that he should be no hanger-on and led-captain! Swore to her that he should be reared according to his real station—the station of his mother's kin—(I have no station)—and if I can but see him an honest British trader—respectable, upright, equal to the highest—because no rich man's dependant, and no poor man's jest—my ambition will be satisfied. And now you understand, sir, why my boy is not here.' You would say a father who spoke thus had a man's honest stuff in him. Eh, Lionel!"

"Yes, and a true gentleman's heart, too!"

"So I thought; yet I fancied I knew the world! After that conversation, I quitted our host's roof, and only once or twice afterwards, at country-houses, met William Losely again. To say truth, his chief patrons and friends were not exactly in my set. But your father continued to see Willy pretty often. They took a great fancy to each other. Charlie, you know, was jovial—fond of private theatricals, too; in short, they became great allies. Some years after, as ill-luck would have it, Charles Haughton, while selling off his Middlesex property, was in immediate want of L1,200. He could get it on a bill, but not without security. His bills were already rather down in the market, and he had already exhausted most of the friends whose security was esteemed by accommodators any better than his own. In an evil hour he had learned that poor Willy had just L1,500 out upon mortgage; and the money-lender, who was lawyer for the property on which the mortgage was, knew it too. It was on the interest of this L1,500 that Willy lived, having spent the rest of his little capital in settling his son as a clerk in a first-rate commercial house. Charles Haughton went down to shoot at the house where Willy was a guest—shot with him—drank with him—talked with him—proved to him, no doubt, that long before the three months were over the Middlesex property would be sold; the bill taken up, Willy might trust to his Honour. Willy did trust. Like you, my dear Lionel, he had not moral courage to say 'No.' Your father, I am certain, meant to repay him; your father never in cold blood meant to defraud any human being; but—your father gambled! A debt of honour at piquet preceded the claim of a bill-discounter. The L1,200 were forestalled—your father was penniless. The money-lender came upon Willy. Sure that Charles Haughton would yet redeem his promise, Willy renewed the bill another three months on usurious terms; those months over, he came to town to find your father hiding between four walls, unable to stir out for fear of arrest. Willy had no option but to pay the money; and when your father knew that it was so paid, and that the usury had swallowed up the whole of Willy's little capital, then, I say, I saw upon Charles Haughton's once radiant face the saddest expression I ever saw on mortal man's. And sure I am that all the joys your father ever knew as a man of pleasure were not worth the agony and remorse of that moment. I respect your emotion, Lionel, but

you begin as your father began; and if I had not told you this story, you might have ended as your father ended.”

Lionel’s face remained covered, and it was only by choking gasps that he interrupted—the Colonel’s narrative. ”Certainly,” resumed Alban Morley, in a reflective tone ”certainly that villain—I mean William Losely, for villain he afterwards proved to be—had the sweetest, most forgiving temper! He might have gone about to his kinsmen and friends denouncing Charles Haughton, and saying by what solemn promises he had been undone. But no! such a story just at that moment would have crushed Charles Haughton’s last chance of ever holding up his head again, and Charles told me (for it was through Charles that I knew the tale) that Willy’s parting words to him were ’Do not fret, Charles—after all, my boy is now settled in life, and I am a cat with nine lives, and should fall on my legs if thrown out of a garret window. Don’t fret.’ So he kept the secret, and told the money-lender to hold his tongue. Poor Willy! I never asked a rich friend to lend me money but once in my life. It was then I went to Guy Darrell, who was in full practice, and said to him: ’Lend me one thousand pounds. I may never repay you.’ ’Five thousand pounds, if you like it,’ said he. ’One will do.’

”I took the money and sent it to Willy. Alas! he returned it, writing word that ’Providence had been very kind to him; he had just been appointed to a capital place, with a magnificent salary.’ The cat had fallen on its legs. He bade me comfort Haughton with that news. The money went back into Darrell’s pocket, and perhaps wandered thence to Charles Haughton’s creditors. Now for the appointment. At the country-house to which Willy had returned destitute, he had met a stranger (no relation), who said to him: ’You live with these people—shoot their game—break in their horses—see to their farms—and they give you nothing! You are no longer very young—you should lay by your little income, and add to it. Live with me and I will give you L300 a-year. I am parting with my steward—take his place, but be my friend.’ William Losely of course closed with the proposition. This gentleman, whose name was Gunston, I had known slightly in former times—(people say I know everybody)—a soured, bilious, melancholy, indolent, misanthropical old bachelor. With a splendid place universally admired, and a large estate universally envied, he lived much alone, ruminating on the bitterness of life and the nothingness of worldly blessings. Meeting Willy at the country-house to which, by some predestined relaxation of misanthropy, he had been decoyed—for the first time for years Mr. Gunston was heard to laugh. He said to himself, ’Here is a man who actually amuses me.’ William Losely contrived to give the misanthrope a new zest of existence; and when he found that business could be made pleasant, the rich man conceived an interest in his own house, gardens, property. For the sake of William’s merry companionship, he would even ride over his farms, and actually carried a gun. Meanwhile, the property, I am told, was really well managed. Ah! that fellow Willy was a born genius, and could have managed everybody’s affairs except his own. I heard of all this with pleasure—(people say I hear everything)—when one day a sporting man

seizes me by the button at Tattersall's—'Do you know the news? Will Losely is in prison on a charge; of robbing his employer.'"

"Robbing! incredible!" exclaimed Lionel.

"My dear Lionel, it was after hearing that news that I established as invariable my grand maxim, /Nil admirari/—never to be astonished at anything!"

"But of course he was innocent?"

"On the contrary, he confessed,—was committed; pleaded guilty, and was transported! People who knew Willy said that Gunston ought to have declined to drag him before a magistrate, or, at the subsequent trial, have abstained from giving evidence against him; that Willy had been till then a faithful steward; the whole proceeds of the estate lead passed through his hands; he might, in transactions for timber, have cheated undetected to twice the amount of the alleged robbery; it must have been a momentary aberration of reason; the rich man should have let him off. But I side with the rich man. His last belief in his species was annihilated. He must have been inexorable. He could never be amused, never be interested again. He was inexorable and—vindictive."

"But what were the facts?—what was the evidence?"

"Very little came out on the trial; because, in pleading guilty, the court had merely to consider the evidence which had sufficed to commit him. The trial was scarcely noticed in the London papers. William Losely was not like a man known about town. His fame was confined to those who resorted to old-fashioned country-houses, chiefly single men, for the sake of sport. But stay. I felt such an interest in the case, that I made an abstract or *praecis*, not only of all that appeared, but all that I could learn of its leading circumstances. 'Tis a habit of mine, whenever any of my acquaintances embroil themselves with the Crown—" The Colonel rose, unlocked a small glazed bookcase, selected from the contents a MS. volume, reseated himself, turning the pages, found the place sought, and reading from it, resumed his narrative. "One evening Mr. Gunston came to William Losely's private apartment. Losely had two or three rooms appropriated to himself in one side of the house; which was built in a quadrangle round a courtyard. When Losely opened his door to Mr. Gunston's knock, it struck Mr. Gunston that his manner seemed confused. After some talk on general subjects, Losely said that he had occasion to go to London next morning for a few days on private business of his own. This annoyed Mr. Gunston. He observed that Losely's absence just then would be inconvenient. He reminded him that a tradesman, who lived at a distance, was coming over the next day to be paid for a vinery he had lately erected, and on the charge for which there was a dispute. Could not Losely at least stay to settle it? Losely replied, 'that he had already, by correspondence, adjusted the dispute, having suggested deductions which the tradesman had agreed to,

and that Mr. Gunston would only have to give a cheque for the balance—viz. L270.’ Thereon Mr. Gunston remarked: ‘If you were not in the habit of paying my bills for me out of what you receive, you would know that I seldom give cheques. I certainly shall not give one now, for I have the money in the house.’ Losely observed ‘That is a bad habit of yours keeping large sums in your own house. You may be robbed.’ Gunston answered ‘Safer than lodging large sums in a country bank. Country banks break. My grandfather lost L1,000 by the failure of a country bank; and my father, therefore, always took his payments in cash, remitting them to London from time to time as he went thither himself. I do the same, and I have never been robbed of a farthing that I know of. Who would rob a great house like this, full of menservants?’—‘That’s true,’ said Losely; ‘so if you are sure you have as much by you, you will pay the bill and have done with it. I shall be back before Sparks the builder comes to be paid for the new barn to the home farm—that will be L600; but I shall be taking money for timber next week. He can be paid out of that.’

GUNSTON.—‘No. I will pay Sparks, too, out of what I have in my bureau; and the timber-merchant can pay his debt into my London banker’s.’

LOSELY.—‘DO you mean that you have enough for both these bills actually in the house?’

GUNSTON.—‘Certainly, in the bureau in my study. I don’t know how much I’ve got. It may be L1,500—it may be L1,700. I have not counted; I am such a bad man of business; but I am sure it is more than L1,400.’ Losely made some jocular observation to the effect that if Gunston never kept an account of what he had, he could never tell whether he was robbed, and, therefore, never would be robbed; since, according to Othello,

‘He that is robbed, not wanting what is stolen,
Let him not know it, and He’s not robbed at all.’

”After that, Losely became absent in manner, and seemed impatient to get rid of Mr. Gunston, hinting that he had the labour-book to look over, and some orders to write out for the bailiff, and that he should start early the next morning.”

Here the Colonel looked up from his MS., and said episodically: ”Perhaps you will fancy that these dialogues are invented by me after the fashion of the ancient historians? Not so. I give you the report of what passed, as Gunston repeated it verbatim; and I suspect that his memory was pretty accurate. Well (here Alban returned to his MS.) Gunston left Willy, and went into his own study, where he took tea by himself. When his valet brought it in, he told the man that Mr. Losely was going to town early the next morning, and ordered the servant to see himself that coffee was served to Mr. Losely before he went. The servant observed ‘that Mr. Losely had seemed much out of sorts lately, and that it was perhaps some unpleasant affair connected with the gentleman who had come

to see him two days before.' Gunston had not heard of such a visit.

"Losely had not mentioned it. When the servant retired, Gunston, thinking over Losely's quotation respecting his money, resolved to ascertain what he had in his bureau. He opened it, examined the drawers, and found, stowed away in different places at different times, a larger sum than he had supposed—gold and notes to the amount of L1,975, of which nearly L300 were in sovereigns. He smoothed the notes carefully; and, for want of other occupation, and with a view of showing Losely that he could profit by a hint, he entered the numbers of the notes in his pocketbook, placed them all together in one drawer with the gold, relocked his bureau, and went shortly afterwards to bed. The next day (Losely having gone in the morning) the tradesman came to be paid for the vinery. Gunston went to his bureau, took out his notes, and found L250 were gone. He could hardly believe his senses. Had he made a mistake in counting? No. There was his pocket book, the missing notes entered duly therein. Then he re-re-counted the sovereigns; 142 were gone of them—nearly L400 in all thus abstracted. He refused at first to admit suspicion of Losely; but, on interrogating his servants, the valet deposed, that he was disturbed about two o'clock in the morning by the bark of the house-dog, which was let loose of a night within the front courtyard of the house. Not apprehending robbers, but fearing the dog might also disturb his master, he got out of his window (being on the ground-floor) to pacify the animal; that he then saw, in the opposite angle of the building, a light moving along the casement of the passage between Losely's rooms and Mr. Gunston's study. Surprised at this, at such an hour, he approached that part of the building and saw the light very faintly through the chinks in the shutters of the study. The passage windows had no shutters, being old-fashioned stone mullions. He waited by the wall a few minutes, when the light again reappeared in the passage; and he saw a figure in a cloak, which, being in a peculiar colour, he recognised at once as Losely's, pass rapidly along; but before the figure had got half through the passage, the light was extinguished, and the servant could see no more. But so positive was he, from his recognition of the cloak, that the man was Losely, that he ceased to feel alarm or surprise, thinking, on reflection, that Losely, sitting up later than usual to transact business before his departure, might have gone into his employer's study for any book or paper which he might have left there. The dog began barking again, and seemed anxious to get out of the courtyard to which he was confined; but the servant gradually appeased him—went to bed, and somewhat overslept himself. When he awoke, he hastened to take the coffee into Losely's room, but Losely was gone. Here there was another suspicious circumstance. It had been a question how the bureau had been opened, the key being safe in Gunston's possession, and there being no sign of force. The lock was one of those rude old-fashioned ones which are very easily picked, but to which a modern key does not readily fit. In the passage there was found a long nail crooked at the end; and that nail, the superintendent of the police (who had been summoned) had the wit to apply to the lock of the bureau, and it unlocked and re-locked it easily. It was clear that whoever had

so shaped the nail could not have used such an instrument for the first time, and must be a practised picklock. That, one would suppose at first, might exonerate Losely; but he was so clever a fellow at all mechanical contrivances that, coupled with the place of finding, the nail made greatly against him; and still more so when some nails precisely similar were found on the chimney-piece of an inner room in his apartment, a room between that in which he had received Guarston and his bed-chamber, and used by him both as study and workshop. The nails, indeed, which were very long and narrow, with a Gothic ornamental head, were at once recognised by the carpenter on the estate as having been made according to Losely's directions, for a garden bench to be placed in Gunston's favourite walk, Gunston having remarked, some days before, that he should like a seat there, and Losely having undertaken to make one from a design by Pugin. Still loth to believe in Losely's guilt, Gunston went to London with the police superintendent, the valet, and the neighbouring attorney. They had no difficulty in finding Losely; he was at his son's lodgings in the City, near the commercial house in which the son was a clerk. On being told of the robbery, he seemed at first unaffectedly surprised, evincing no fear. He was asked whether he had gone into the study about two o'clock in the morning. He said, 'No; why should I?' The valet exclaimed: 'But I saw you—I knew you by that old grey cloak, with the red lining. Why, there it is now—on that chair yonder. I'll swear it is the same.' Losely then began to tremble visibly, and grew extremely pale. A question was next put to him as to the nail, but he secured quite stupefied, muttering: 'Good heavens! the cloak—you mean to say you saw that cloak?' They searched his person—found on him some sovereigns, silver, and one bank-note for five pounds. The number on that bank-note corresponded with a number in Gunston's pocket-book. He was asked to say where he got that five-pound note. He refused to answer. Gunston said: 'It is one of the notes stolen from me!' Losely cried fiercely: 'Take care what you say. How do you know?' Gunston replied: 'I took an account of the numbers of my notes on leaving your room. Here is the memorandum in my pocket-book—see—' Losely looked, and fell back as if shot. Losely's brother-in-law was in the room at the time, and he exclaimed, 'Oh, William! you can't be guilty. You are the honestest fellow in the world. There must be some mistake, gentlemen. Where did you get the note, William—say?'

"Losely made no answer, but seemed lost in thought or stupefaction. 'I will go for your son, William—perhaps he may help to explain.' Losely then seemed to wake up. 'My son! what! would you expose me before my son? he's gone into the country, as you know. What has he to do with it? I took the notes—there—I have confessed. —Have done with it,'—or words to that effect.

"Nothing more of importance," said the Colonel, turning over the leaves of his MS., "except to account for the crime. And here we come back to the money-lender. You remember the valet said that a gentleman had called on Losely two days before the robbery. This proved to be the identical bill-discounter to whom Losely had paid away his fortune. This

person deposed that Losely had written to him some days before, stating that he wanted to borrow two or three hundred pounds, which he could repay by instalments out of his salary. What would be the terms? The money-lender, having occasion to be in the neighbourhood, called to discuss the matter in person, and to ask if Losely could not get some other person to join in security—suggesting his brother-in-law. Losely replied that it was a favour he would never ask of any one; that his brother-in-law had no pecuniary means beyond his salary as a senior clerk; and, supposing that he (Losely) lost his place, which he might any day, if Gunston were displeased with him—how then could he be sure that his debt would not fall on the security? Upon which the money-lender remarked that the precarious nature of his income was the very reason why a security was wanted. And Losely answered, 'Ay; but you know that you incur that risk, and charge accordingly. Between me and you the debt and the hazard are mere matter of business, but between me and my security it would be a matter of honour.' Finally the money-lender agreed to find the sum required, though asking very high terms. Losely said he would consider, and let him know. There the conversation ended. But Gunston inquired 'if Losely had ever had dealings with the money-lender before, and for what purpose it was likely he would leant the money now;' and the money-lender answered 'that probably Losely had some sporting or gaming speculations on the sly, for that it was to pay a gambling debt that he had joined Captain Haughton in a bill for L1,200.' And Gunston afterwards told a friend of mine that this it was that decided him to appear as a witness at the trial; and you will observe that if Gunston had kept away there would have been no evidence sufficient to insure conviction. But Gunston considered that the man who could gamble away his whole fortune must be incorrigible, and that Losely, having concealed from him that he had become destitute by such transactions, must have been more than a mere security in a joint bill with Captain Haughton.

"Gunston could never have understood such an inconsistency in human nature, that the same man who broke open his bureau should have become responsible to the amount of his fortune for a debt of which he had not shared the discredit, and still less that such a man should, in case he had been so generously imprudent, have concealed his loss out of delicate tenderness for the character of the man to whom he owed his ruin. Therefore, in short, Gunston looked on his dishonest steward not as a man tempted by a sudden impulse in some moment of distress, at which a previous life was belied, but as a confirmed, dissimulating sharper, to whom public justice allowed no mercy. And thus, Lionel, William Losely was prosecuted, tried, and sentenced to seven years' transportation. By pleading guilty, the term was probably made shorter than it otherwise would have been."

Lionel continued too agitated for words. The Colonel, not seeming to heed his emotions, again ran his eye over the MS.

"I observe here that there are some queries entered as to the evidence against Losely. The solicitor whom, when I heard of his arrest, I

engaged and sent down to the place on his behalf—”

”You did! Heaven reward you!” sobbed out Lionel. ”But my father?—where was he?”

”Then?—in his grave.”

Lionel breathed a deep sigh, as of thankfulness.

”The lawyer, I say—a sharp fellow—was of opinion that if Losely had refused to plead guilty, he could have got him off in spite of his first confession—turned the suspicion against some one else. In the passage where the nail was picked up there was a door into the park. That door was found unbolted in the inside the next morning: a thief might therefore have thus entered and passed at once into the study. The nail was discovered close by the door; the thief might have dropped it on putting out his light, which, by the valet’s account, he must have done when he was near the door in question, and required the light no more. Another circumstance in Losely’s favour: just outside the door, near a laurel-bush, was found the fag-end of one of those small rose-coloured wax-lights which are often placed in Lucifer-match boxes. If this had been used by the thief, it would seem as if, extinguishing the light before he stepped into the air, he very naturally jerked away the morsel of taper left, when, in the next moment, he was out of the house. But Losely would not have gone out of the house; nor was he, nor any one about the premises, ever known to make use of that kind of taper, which would rather appertain to the fashionable fopperies of a London dandy. You will have observed, too, the valet had not seen the thief’s face. His testimony rested solely on the colours of a cloak, which, on cross-examination; might have gone for nothing. The dog had barked before the light was seen. It was not the light that made him bark. He wished to get out of the courtyard; that looked as if there were some stranger in the grounds beyond. Following up this clue, the lawyer ascertained that a strange man had been seen in the park towards the grey of the evening, walking up in the direction of the house. And here comes the strong point. At the railway station, about five miles from Mr. Gunston’s, a strange man had arrived just in time to take his place in the night-train from the north towards London, stopping there at four o’clock in the morning. The station-master remembered the stranger buying the ticket, but did not remark his appearance. The porter did, however, so far notice him as he hurried into a first-class carriage, that he said afterwards to the stationmaster: ’Why, that gentleman has a grey cloak just like Mr. Losely’s. If he had not been thinner and taller, I should have thought it was Mr. Losely.’ Well, Losely went to the same station the next morning, taking an early train, going thither on foot, with his carpet-bag in his hand; and both the porter and station-master declared that he had no cloak on him at the time; and as he got into a second-class carriage, the porter even said to him: ”Tis a sharp morning, sir; I’m afraid you’ll be cold.’ Furthermore, as to the purpose for which Losely had wished to borrow of the money-lender, his brother-in-law

stated that Losely's son had been extravagant, had contracted debts, and was even hiding from his creditors in a county town, at which William Losely had stopped for a few hours on his way to London. He knew the young man's employer had written kindly to Losely several days before, lamenting the son's extravagance; intimating that unless his debts were discharged he must lose the situation, in which otherwise he might soon rise to competence, for that he was quick and sharp; and that it was impossible not to feel indulgent towards him, he was so lively and so good-looking. The trader added that he would forbear to dismiss the young man as long as he could. It was on the receipt of that letter that Losely had entered into communication with the money-lender, whom he had come to town to seek, and to whose house he was actually going at the very hour of Gunston's arrival. But why borrow of the money-lender, if he had just stolen more money than he had any need to borrow?

The most damning fact against Losely, by the discovery in his possession of the L5 note, of which Mr. Gunston deposed to have taken the number, was certainly hard to get over; still an ingenious lawyer might have thrown doubt on Gunston's testimony—a man confessedly so careless might have mistaken the number, &c. The lawyer went, with these hints for defence, to see Losely himself in prison; but Losely declined his help—became very angry—said that he would rather suffer death itself than have suspicion transferred to some innocent man; and that, as to the cloak, it had been inside his carpet-bag. So you see, bad as he was, there was something inconsistently honourable left in him still. Poor Willy! he would not even subpoena any of his old friends as to his general character. But even if he had, what could the Court do since he pleaded guilty? And now dismiss that subject, it begins to pain me extremely. You were to speak to me about some one of the same name when my story was concluded. What is it?"

"I am so confused," faltered Lionel, still quivering with emotion, "that I can scarcely answer you—scarcely recollect myself. But—but—while you were describing this poor William Losely, his talent for mimicry and acting, I could not help thinking that I had seen him." Lionel proceeded to speak of Gentleman Waife. "Can that be the man?"

Alban shook his head incredulously. He thought it so like a romantic youth to detect imaginary resemblances.

"No," said he, "my dear boy. My William Losely could never become a strolling-player in a village fair. Besides, I have good reason to believe that Willy is well off; probably made money in the colony by some lucky hit for when do you say you saw your stroller? Five years ago? Well, not very long before that date—perhaps a year or two—less than two years, I am sure—this eccentric rascal sent Mr. Gunston, the man who had transported him, L100! Gunston, you must know, feeling more than ever bored and hipped when he lost Willy, tried to divert himself by becoming director in some railway company. The company proved a bubble; all turned their indignation on the one rich man who could pay where others

cheated. Gunston was ruined—purse and character—fled to Calais; and there, less than seven years ago, when in great distress, he received from poor Willy a kind, affectionate, forgiving letter, and L100. I have this from Gunston's nearest relation, to whom he told it, crying like a child. Willy gave no address! but it is clear that at the time he must have been too well off to turn mountebank at your miserable exhibition. Poor, dear, rascally, infamous, big-hearted Willy," burst out the Colonel. "I wish to heaven he had only robbed me!"

"Sir," said Lionel, "rely upon it, that man you described never robbed any one—'tis impossible."

"No—very possible!—human nature," said Alban Morley. "And, after all, he really owed Gunston that L100. For, out of the sum stolen, Gunston received anonymously, even before the trial, all the missing notes, minus about that L100; and Willy, therefore, owed Gunston the money, but not, perhaps, that kind, forgiving letter. Pass on—quick—the subject is worse than the gout. You have heard before the name of Losely—possibly. There are many members of the old Baronet's family; but when or where did you hear it?"

"I will tell you; the man who holds the bill (ah, the word sickens me) reminded me when he called that I had seen him at my mother's house—a chance acquaintance of hers—professed great regard for me—great admiration for Mr. Darrell—and then surprised me by asking if I had never heard Mr. Darrell speak of Mr. Jasper Losely."

"Jasper!" said the Colonel; "Jasper!—well, go on." "When I answered, 'No,' Mr. Poole (that is his name) shook his head, and muttered: 'A sad affair—very bad business—I could do Mr. Darrell a great service if he would let me;' and then went on talking what seemed to me impertinent gibberish about 'family exposures' and 'poverty making men desperate,' and 'better compromise matters;' and finally wound up by begging me, 'if I loved Mr. Darrell, and wished to guard him from very great annoyance and suffering, to persuade him to give Mr. Poole an interview.' Then he talked about his own character in the City, and so forth, and entreating me 'not to think of paying him till quite convenient; that he would keep the bill in his desk; nobody should know of it; too happy to do me a favour'—laid his card on the table, and went away. Tell me, should I say anything to Mr. Darrell about this or not?"

"Certainly not, till I have seen Mr. Poole myself. You have the money to pay him about you? Give it to me, with Mr. Poole's address; I will call, and settle the matter. Just ring the bell." (To the servant entering) "Order my horse round." Then, when they were again alone, turning to Lionel, abruptly laying one hand on his shoulder, with the other grasping his hand warmly, cordially: "Young man," said Alban Morley, "I love you—I am interested in you—who would not be? I have gone through this story; put myself positively to pain—which I hate—solely for your good. You see what usury and money-lenders bring men to. Look me in the

face! Do you feel now that you would have the 'moral courage' you before doubted of? Have you done with such things for ever?"

"For ever, so help me Heaven! The lesson has been cruel, but I do thank and bless you for it."

"I knew you would. Mark this! never treat money affairs with levity—MONEY is CHARACTER! Stop. I have bared a father's fault to a son. It was necessary—or even in his grave those faults might have revived in you. Now, I add this, if Charles Haughton—like you, handsome, high-spirited, favoured by men, spoiled by women—if Charles Haughton, on entering life, could have seen, in the mirror I have held up to you, the consequences of pledging the morrow to pay for to-day, Charles Haughton would have been shocked as you are, cured as you will be. Humbled by your own first error, be lenient to all his. Take up his life where I first knew it: when his heart was loyal, his lips truthful. Raze out the interval; imagine that he gave birth to you in order to replace the leaves of existence we thus blot out and tear away. In every error avoided say, 'Thus the father warns the son;' in every honourable action, or hard self-sacrifice, say, 'Thus the son pays a father's debt.'"

Lionel, clasping his hands together, raised his eyes streaming with tears, as if uttering inly a vow to Heaven. The Colonel bowed his soldier-crest with religious reverence, and glided from the room noiselessly.

CHAPTER VIII.

BEING BUT ONE OF THE CONSIDERATE PAUSES IN A LONG JOURNEY,
CHARITABLY AFFORDED TO THE READER.

Colonel Morley found Mr. Poole at home, just returned from his office; he stayed with that gentleman nearly an hour, and then went straight to Darrell. As the time appointed to meet the French acquaintance, who depended on his hospitalities for a dinner, was now nearly arrived, Alban's conference with his English friend was necessarily brief and hurried, though long enough to confirm one fact in Mr. Poole's statement, which had been unknown to the Colonel before that day, and the admission of which inflicted on Guy Darrell a pang as sharp as ever wrenched confession from the lips of a prisoner in the cells of the Inquisition. On returning from Greenwich, and depositing his Frenchman in some melancholy theatre, time enough for that resentful foreigner to witness theft and murder committed upon an injured countryman's vaudeville, Alban hastened again to Carlton Gardens. He found Darrell alone, pacing his floor to and fro, in the habit he had acquired in earlier life, perhaps

when meditating some complicated law case, or wrestling with himself against some secret sorrow. There are men of quick nerves who require a certain action of the body for the better composure of the mind; Darrell was one of them.

During these restless movements, alternated by abrupt pauses, equally inharmonious to the supreme quiet which characterised his listener's tastes and habits, the haughty gentleman disburdened himself of at least one of the secrets which he had hitherto guarded from his early friend. But as that secret connects itself with the history of a Person about whom it is well that the reader should now learn more than was known to Darrell himself, we will assume our privilege to be ourselves the narrator, and at the cost of such dramatic vivacity as may belong to dialogue, but with the gain to the reader of clearer insight into those portions of the past which the occasion permits us to reveal—we will weave into something like method the more imperfect and desultory communications by which Guy Darrell added to Alban Morley's distasteful catalogue of painful subjects. The reader will allow, perhaps, that we thus evince a desire to gratify his curiosity, when we state that of Arabella Crane Darrell spoke but in one brief and angry sentence, and that not by the name in which the reader as yet alone knows her; and it is with the antecedents of Arabella Crane that our explanation will tranquilly commence.

CHAPTER IX.

GRIM ARABELLA CRANE.

Once on a time there lived a merchant named Fossett, a widower with three children, of whom a daughter, Arabella, was by some years the eldest. He was much respected, deemed a warm man, and a safe-attended diligently to his business—suffered no partner, no foreman, to dictate or intermeddle—liked his comforts, but made no pretence to fashion. His villa was at Clapham, not a showy but a solid edifice, with lodge, lawn, and gardens chiefly notable for what is technically called glass—viz. a range of glass-houses on the most improved principles, the heaviest pines, the earliest strawberries. "I'm no judge of flowers," quoth Mr. Fossett, meekly. "Give me a plain lawn, provided it be close-shaven. But I say to my gardener: 'Forcing is my hobby—a cucumber with my fish all the year round!'" Yet do not suppose Mr Fossett ostentatious—quite the reverse. He would no more ruin himself for the sake of dazzling others, than he would for the sake of serving them. He liked a warm house, spacious rooms, good living, old wine, for their inherent merits: He cared not to parade them to public envy. When he dined alone, or with a single favoured guest, the best Lafitte, the oldest sherry!—when extending the rites of miscellaneous hospitality to neighbours,

relations, or other slight acquaintances—for Lafitte, Julien; and for sherry, Cape!—Thus not provoking vanity, nor courting notice, Mr. Fossett was without an enemy, and seemed without a care. Formal were his manners, formal his household, formal even the stout cob that bore him from Cheapside to Clapham, from Clapham to Cheapside. That cob could not even prick up its ears if it wished to shy—its ears were cropped, so were its mane and its tail.

Arabella early gave promise of beauty, and more than ordinary power of intellect and character. Her father bestowed on her every advantage of education. She was sent to a select boarding-school of the highest reputation; the strictest discipline, the best masters, the longest bills. At the age of seventeen she had become the show pupil of the seminary. Friends wondered somewhat why the prim merchant took such pains to lavish on his daughter the worldly accomplishments which seemed to give him no pleasure, and of which he never spoke with pride. But certainly, if she was so clever—first-rate musician, exquisite artist, accomplished linguist, "it was very nice in old Fossett to bear it so meekly, never crying her up, nor showing her off to less fortunate parents—very nice in him—good sense—greatness of mind."

"Arabella," said the worthy man one day, a little time after his eldest daughter had left school for good; "Arabella," said he, "Mrs. ——," naming the head teacher in that famous school, "pays you a very high compliment in a letter I received from her this morning. She says it is a pity you are not a poor man's daughter—that you are so steady and so clever that you could make a fortune for yourself as a teacher."

Arabella at that age could smile gaily, and gaily she smiled at the notion conveyed in the compliment.

"No one can guess," resumed the father, twirling his thumbs and speaking rather through his nose; "the ups and downs in this mortal sphere of trial, 'specially in the mercantile community. If ever, when I'm dead and gone, adversity should come upon you, you will gratefully remember that I have given you the best of education, and take care of your little brother and sister, who are both—stupid!"

These doleful words did not make much impression on Arabella, uttered as they were in a handsome drawing-room, opening on the neat-shaven lawn it took three gardeners to shave, with a glittering side-view of those galleries of glass in which strawberries were ripe at Christmas, and cucumbers never failed to fish. Time—went on. Arabella was now twenty-three—a very fine girl, with a decided manner—much occupied by her music, her drawing, her books, and her fancies. Fancies—for, like most girls with very active heads and idle hearts, she had a vague yearning for some excitement beyond the monotonous routine of a young lady's life; and the latent force of her nature inclined her to admire whatever was out of the beaten track—whatever was wild and daring. She had received two or three offers from young gentlemen in the same mercantile community

as that which surrounded her father in this sphere of trial. But they did not please her; and she believed her father when he said that they only courted her under the idea that he would come down with something handsome; "whereas," said the merchant, "I hope you will marry an honest man, who will like you for yourself; and wait for your fortune till my will is read. As King William says to his son, in the History of England, 'I don't mean to strip till I go to bed.'"

One night, at a ball in Clapham, Arabella saw the man who was destined to exercise so baleful an influence over her existence. Jasper Losely had been brought to this ball by a young fellow-clerk in the same commercial house as himself; and then in all the bloom of that conspicuous beauty, to which the miniature Arabella had placed before his eyes so many years afterwards did but feeble justice, it may well be conceived that he centred on himself the admiring gaze of the assembly. Jasper was younger than Arabella; but, what with the height of his stature and the self-confidence of his air, he looked four or five and twenty. Certainly, in so far as the distance from childhood may be estimated by the loss of innocence, Jasper might have been any age! He was told that old Fossett's daughter would have a very fine fortune; that she was a strong-minded young lady, who governed her father, and would choose for herself; and accordingly he devoted himself to Arabella the whole of the evening. The effect produced on the mind of this ill-fated woman by her dazzling admirer was as sudden as it proved to be lasting. There was a strange charm in the very contrast between his rattling audacity and the bashful formalities of the swains who had hitherto wooed her as if she frightened them. Even his good looks fascinated her less than that vital energy and power about the lawless brute, which to her seemed the elements of heroic character, though but the attributes of riotous spirits, magnificent formation, flattered vanity, and imperious egotism. She was a bird gazing spell-bound on a gay young boa-constrictor, darting from bough to bough, sunning its brilliant hues, and showing off all its beauty, just before it takes the bird for its breakfast.

When they parted that night, their intimacy had so far advanced that arrangements had been made for its continuance. Arabella had an instinctive foreboding that her father would be less charmed than herself with Jasper Losely; that, if Jasper were presented to him, he would possibly forbid her farther acquaintance with a young clerk, however superb his outward appearance. She took the first false step. She had a maiden aunt by the mother's side, who lived in Bloomsbury, gave and went to small parties, to which Jasper could easily get introduced. She arranged to pay a visit for some weeks to this aunt, who was then very civil to her, accepting with marked kindness seasonable presents of strawberries, pines, spring chickens, and so forth, and offering in turn, whenever it was convenient, a spare room, and whatever amusement a round of small parties, and the innocent flirtations incidental thereto, could bestow. Arabella said nothing to her father about Jasper Losely, and to her aunt she went. Arabella saw Jasper very often; they became engaged to each other, exchanged vows and love-tokens, locks of hair, &c.

Jasper, already much troubled by duns, became naturally ardent to insure his felicity and Arabella's supposed fortune. Arabella at last summoned courage, and spoke to her father. To her delighted surprise, Mr. Fossett, after some moralising, more on the uncertainty of life in general than her clandestine proceedings in particular, agreed to see Mr. Jasper Losely, and asked him down to dinner. After dinner, over 'a bottle of Lafitte, in an exceedingly plain but exceedingly weighty silver jug, which made Jasper's mouth water (I mean the jug), Mr. Fossett, commencing with that somewhat coarse though royal saying of William the Conqueror, with which he had before edified his daughter, assured Jasper that he gave his full consent to the young gentleman's nuptials with Arabella, provided Jasper or his relations would maintain her in a plain respectable way, and wait for her fortune till his (Fossett's) will was read. What that fortune would be, Mr. Fossett declined even to hint. Jasper went away very much cooled. Still the engagement remained in force; the nuptials were tacitly deferred. Jasper and his relations maintain a wife! Preposterous idea! It would take a clan of relations and a Zenana of wives to maintain in that state to which he deemed himself entitled—Jasper himself! But just as he was meditating the possibility of a compromise with old Fossett, by which he would agree to wait till the will was read for contingent advantages, provided Fossett, in his turn, would agree in the mean while to afford lodging and board, with a trifle for pocket-money, to Arabella and himself, in the Clapham villa, which, though not partial to rural scenery, Jasper preferred, on the whole, to a second floor in the City,—old Fossett fell ill, took to his bed; was unable to attend to his business, some one else attended to it; and the consequence was, that the house stopped payment, and was discovered to have been insolvent for the last ten years. Not a discreditable bankruptcy. There might perhaps be seven shillings in the pound ultimately paid, and not more than forty families irretrievably ruined. Old Fossett, safe in his bed, bore the affliction with philosophical composure; observed to Arabella that he had always warned her of the ups and downs in this sphere of trial; referred again with pride to her first-rate education; commended again to her care Tom and Bidly; and, declaring that he died in charity with all men, resigned himself to the last slumber.

Arabella at first sought a refuge with her maiden aunt. But that lady, though not hit in pocket by her brother-in-law's failure, was more vehement against his memory than his most injured creditor—not only that she deemed herself unjustly defrauded of the pines, strawberries, and spring chickens, by which she had been enabled to give small parties at small cost, though with ample show, but that she was robbed of the consequence she had hitherto derived from the supposed expectations of her niece. In short, her welcome was so hostile, and her condolences so cutting, that Arabella quitted her door with a solemn determination never again to enter it.

And now the nobler qualities of the bankrupt's daughter rose at once into play. Left penniless, she resolved by her own exertions to support and

to rear her young brother and sister. The great school to which she had been the ornament willingly received her as a teacher, until some more advantageous place in a private family, and with a salary worthy of her talents and accomplishments, could be found.

Her intercourse with Jasper became necessarily suspended. She had the generosity to write, offering to release him from his engagement. Jasper considered himself fully released without that letter; but he deemed it neither gallant nor discreet to say so. Arabella might obtain a situation with larger salary than she could possibly need, the superfluities whereof Jasper might undertake to invest. Her aunt had evidently something to leave, though she might have nothing to give. In fine, Arabella, if not rich enough for a wife, might be often rich enough for a friend at need; and so long as he was engaged to her for life, it must be not more her pleasure than her duty to assist him to live. Besides, independently of these prudential though not ardent motives for declaring unalterable fidelity to troth, Jasper at that time really did entertain what he called love for the handsome young woman—flattered that one of attainments so superior to all the girls he had ever known should be so proud even less of his affection for her than her own affection for himself. Thus the engagement lasted—interviews none—letters frequent. Arabella worked hard, looking to the future; Jasper worked as little as possible, and was very much bored by the present.

Unhappily, as it turned out, so great a sympathy, not only amongst the teachers, but amongst her old schoolfellows, was felt for Arabella's reverse; her character for steadiness, as well as talent, stood so high, and there was something so creditable in her resolution to maintain her orphan brother and sister, that an effort was made to procure her a livelihood much more lucrative, and more independent, than she could obtain either in a school or a family. Why not take a small house of her own, live there with her fellow-orphans, and give lessons out by the hour? Several families at once agreed so to engage her, and an income adequate to all her wants was assured. Arabella adopted this plan. She took the house; Bridget Greggs, the nurse of her infancy, became her servant, and soon to that house, stealthily in the shades of evening, glided Jasper Losely. She could not struggle against his influence—had not the heart to refuse his visits—he was so poor—in such scrapes—and professed himself to be so unhappy. There now became some one else to toil for, besides the little brother and sister. But what were Arabella's gains to a man who already gambled? New afflictions smote her. A contagious fever broke out in the neighborhood; her little brother caught it; her little sister sickened the next day; in less than a week two small coffins were borne from her door by the Black Horses—borne to that plot of sunny turf in the pretty suburban cemetery, bought with the last earnings made for the little ones by the mother-like sister:—Motherless lone survivor! what! no friend on earth, no soother but that direful Jasper! Alas! the truly dangerous Venus is not that Erycina round whom circle Jest and Laughter. Sorrow, and that sense of solitude which makes us welcome a footstep as a child left in the

haunting dark welcomes the entrance of light, weaken the outworks of female virtue more than all the vain levities of mirth, or the flatteries which follow the path of Beauty through the crowd. Alas, and alas! let the tale hurry on!

Jasper Losely has still more solemnly sworn to marry his adored Arabella. But when? When they are rich enough. She feels as if her spirit was gone—as if she could work no more. She was no weak commonplace girl, whom love can console for shame. She had been rigidly brought up; her sense of female rectitude was keen; her remorse was noiseless, but it was stern. Harassments of a more vulgar nature beset her: she had forestalled her sources of income; she had contracted debts for Jasper's sake;—in vain: her purse was emptied, yet his no fuller. His creditors pressed him; he told her that he must hide. One winter's day he thus departed; she saw him no more for a year. She heard, a few days after he left her, of his father's crime and committal. Jasper was sent abroad by his maternal uncle, at his father's prayer; sent to a commercial house in France, in which the uncle obtained him a situation. In fact, the young man had been despatched to France under another name, in order to save him from the obloquy which his father had brought upon his own.

Soon came William Losely's trial and sentence. Arabella felt the disgrace acutely—felt how it would affect the audacious insolent Jasper; did not wonder that he forbore to write to her. She conceived him bowed by shame, but she was buoyed up by her conviction that they should meet again. For good or for ill, she held herself bound to him for life. But meanwhile the debts she had incurred on his account came upon her. She was forced to dispose of her house; and at this time Mrs. Lyndsay, looking out for some first-rate superior governess for Matilda Darrell, was urged by all means to try and secure for that post Arabella Fossett. The highest testimonials from the school at which she had been reared, from the most eminent professional masters, from the families at which she had recently taught, being all brought to bear upon Mr. Darrell, he authorised Mrs. Lyndsay to propose such a salary as could not fail to secure a teacher of such rare qualifications. And thus Arabella became governess to Miss Darrell.

There is a kind of young lady of whom her nearest relations will say, "I can't make that girl out." Matilda Darrell was that kind of young lady. She talked very little; she moved very noiselessly; she seemed to regard herself as a secret which she had solemnly sworn not to let out. She had been steeped in slyness from her early infancy by a sly mother. Mrs. Darrell was a woman who had always something to conceal. There was always some note to be thrust out of sight; some visit not to be spoken of; something or other which Matilda was not on any account to mention to Papa.

When Mrs. Darrell died, Matilda was still a child, but she still continued to view her father as a person against whom prudence demanded her to be constantly on her guard. It was not that she was exactly

afraid of him—he was very gentle to her, as he was to all children; but his loyal nature was antipathetic to hers. She had no sympathy with him. How confide her thoughts to him? She had an instinctive knowledge that those thoughts were not such as could harmonise with his. Yet, though taciturn, uncaressing, undemonstrative, she appeared mild and docile. Her reserve was ascribed to constitutional timidity. Timid to a degree she usually seemed; yet, when you thought you had solved the enigma, she said or did something so coolly determined, that you were forced again to exclaim, "I can't make that girl out!" She was not quick at her lessons. You had settled in your mind that she was dull, when, by a chance remark, you were startled to find that she was very sharp; keenly observant, when you had fancied her fast asleep. She had seemed, since her mother's death, more fond of Mrs. Lyndsay and Caroline than of any other human beings—always appeared sullen or out of spirits when they were absent; yet she confided to them no more than she did to her father. You would suppose from this description that Matilda could inspire no liking in those with whom she lived. Not so; her very secretiveness had a sort of attraction—a puzzle always creates some interest. Then her face, though neither handsome nor pretty, had in it a treacherous softness—a subdued, depressed expression. A kind observer could not but say with an indulgent pity; "There must be a good deal of heart in that girl, if one could but—make her out."

She appeared to take at once to Arabella, more than she had taken to Mrs. Lyndsay, or even to Caroline, with whom she had been brought up as a sister, but who, then joyous and quick and innocently fearless—with her soul in her eyes and her heart on her lips—had no charm for Matilda, because there she saw no secret to penetrate, and her she had no object in deceiving.

But this stranger, of accomplishments so rare, of character so decided, with a settled gloom on her lip, a gathered care on her brow—there was some one to study, and some one with whom she felt a sympathy; for she detected at once that Arabella was also a secret.

At first, Arabella, absorbed in her own reflections, gave to Matilda but the mechanical attention which a professional teacher bestows on an ordinary pupil. But an interest in Matilda sprung up in her breast, in proportion as she conceived a venerated gratitude for Darrell. He was aware of the pomp and circumstance which had surrounded her earlier years; he respected the creditable energy with which she had devoted her talents to the support of the young children thrown upon her care; compassionated her bereavement of those little fellow-orphans for whom toil had been rendered sweet; and he strove, by a kindness of forethought and a delicacy of attention, which were the more prized in a man so eminent and so preoccupied, to make her forget that she was a salaried teacher—to place her saliently, and as a matter of course, in the position of a gentlewoman, guest, and friend. Recognising in her a certain vigour and force of intellect apart from her mere accomplishments, he would flatter her scholastic pride, by referring to

her memory in some question of reading, or consulting her judgment on some point of critical taste. She, in return, was touched by his chivalrous kindness to the depth of a nature that, though already seriously injured by its unhappy contact with a soul like Jasper's, retained that capacity of gratitude, the loss of which is humanity's last deprivation. Nor this alone: Arabella was startled by the intellect and character of Darrell into that kind of homage which a woman, who has hitherto met but her own intellectual inferiors, renders to the first distinguished personage in whom she recognises, half with humility and half with awe, an understanding and a culture to which her own reason is but the flimsy glass-house, and her own knowledge but the forced exotic.

Arabella, thus roused from her first listlessness, sought to requite Darrell's kindness by exerting every energy to render his insipid daughter an accomplished woman. So far as mere ornamental education extends, the teacher was more successful than, with all her experience, her skill, and her zeal, she had presumed to anticipate. Matilda, without ear, or taste, or love for music, became a very fair mechanical musician. Without one artistic predisposition, she achieved the science of perspective—she attained even to the mixture of colours—she filled a portfolio with drawings which no young lady need have been ashamed to see circling round a drawing-room. She carried Matilda's thin mind to the farthest bound it could have reached without snapping, through an elegant range of selected histories and harmless feminine classics—through Gallic dialogues—through Tuscan themes—through Teuton verbs—yea, across the invaded bounds of astonished Science into the Elementary Ologies. And all this being done, Matilda Darrell was exactly the same creature that she was before. In all that related to character, to inclinations, to heart, even that consummate teacher could give no intelligible answer, when Mrs. Lyndsay in her softest accents (and no accents ever were softer) sighed: "Poor dear Matilda! can you make her out, Miss Fossett?" Miss Fossett could not make her out. But, after the most attentive study, Miss Fossett had inly decided that there was nothing to make out—that, like many other very nice girls, Matilda Darrell was a harmless nullity, what you call "a Miss" white deal or willow, to which Miss Fossett had done all in the way of increasing its value as ornamental furniture, when she had veneered it over with rosewood or satinwood, enriched its edges with ormolu, and strewed its surface with nicknacks and albums. But Arabella firmly believed Matilda Darrell to be a quiet, honest, good sort of "Miss," on the whole—very fond of her, Arabella. The teacher had been several months in Darrell's family, when Caroline Lyndsay, who had been almost domesticated with Matilda (sharing the lessons bestowed on the latter, whether by Miss Fossett or visiting masters), was taken away by Mrs. Lyndsay on a visit to the old Marchioness of Montfort. Matilda, who was to come out the next year, was thus almost exclusively with Arabella, who redoubled all her pains to veneer the white deal, and protect with ormolu its feeble edges—so that, when it "came out," all should admire that thoroughly fashionable piece of furniture. It was the habit of Miss Fossett and her pupil to take a morning walk in the quiet retreats of the

Green Park; and one morning, as they were thus strolling, nursery-maids and children, and elderly folks who were ordered to take early exercises, undulating round their unsuspecting way,—suddenly, right upon their path (unlooked-for as the wolf that startled Horace in the Sabine wood, but infinitely more deadly than that runaway animal), came Jasper Losely! Arabella uttered a faint scream. She could not resist—had no thought of resisting—the impulse to bound forward—lay her hand on his arm. She was too agitated to perceive whether his predominant feeling was surprise or rapture. A few hurried words were exchanged, while Matilda Darrell gave one sidelong glance towards the handsome stranger, and walked quietly by them. On his part, Jasper said that he had just returned to London—that he had abandoned for ever all idea of a commercial life—that his father’s misfortune (he gave that gentle appellation to the incident of penal transportation) had severed him from all former friends, ties, habits—that he had dropped the name of Losely for ever—entreated Arabella not to betray it—his name now was Hammond—his “prospects,” he said, “fairer than they had ever been.” Under the name of Hammond, as an independent gentleman, he had made friends more powerful than he could ever have made under the name of Losely as a city clerk. He blushed to think he had ever been a city clerk. No doubt he should get into some Government office; and then, oh then, with assured income and a certainty to rise, he might claim the longed-for hand of the “best of creatures.”

On Arabella’s part, she hastily explained her present position. She was governess to Miss Darrell—that was Miss Darrell. Arabella must not leave her walking on by herself—she would write to him. Addresses were exchanged—Jasper gave a very neat card—“Mr. Hammond, No.—, Duke Street, St. James’s.”

Arabella, with a beating heart, hastened to join her friend. At the rapid glance she had taken of her perfidious lover, she thought him, if possible, improved. His dress, always studied, was more to the fashion of polished society, more simply correct—his air more decided. Altogether he looked prosperous, and his manner had never been more seductive, in its mixture of easy self-confidence and hypocritical coaxing. In fact, Jasper had not been long in the French commercial house—to which he had been sent out of the way while his father’s trial was proceeding and the shame of it fresh—before certain licenses of conduct had resulted in his dismissal. But, meanwhile, he had made many friends amongst young men of his own age—those loose wild viveurs who, without doing anything the law can punish as dishonest, contrive for a few fast years to live very showily on their wits. In that strange social fermentation which still prevails in a country where an aristocracy of birth, exceedingly impoverished, and exceedingly numerous so far as the right to prefix a De to the name, or to stamp a coronet on the card, can constitute an aristocrat—is diffused amongst an ambitious, adventurous, restless, and not inelegant young democracy—each cemented with the other by that fiction of law called egalite; in that yet unsettled and struggling society in which so much of the old has been

irretrievably destroyed, and so little of the new has been solidly constructed—there are much greater varieties, infinitely more subtle grades and distinctions, in the region of life which lies between respectability and disgrace, than can be found in a country like ours. The French novels and dramas may apply less a mirror than a magnifying-glass to the beings that move through that region. But still those French novels and dramas do not unfaithfully represent the classifications of which they exaggerate the types. Those strange combinations, into one tableau, of students and grisettes; opera-dancers, authors, viscounts, swindlers, romantic Lorettes, gamblers on the Bourse, whose pedigree dates from the Crusades; impostors, taking titles from villages in which their grandsires might have been saddlers—and if detected, the detection but a matter of laugh; delicate women living like lawless men; men making trade out of love, like dissolute women, yet with point of honour so nice, that, doubt their truth or their courage, and—piff! you are in Charon’s boat,—humanity in every civilised land may present single specimens, more or less, answering to each thus described. But where, save in France, find them all, if not precisely in the same salons, yet so crossing each other to and fro as to constitute a social phase, and give colour to a literature of unquestionable genius? And where, over orgies so miscellaneously Berecynthian, an atmosphere so elegantly Horatian? And where can coarseness so vanish into polished expression as in that diamond-like language—all terseness and sparkle—which, as friendly to Wit in its airiest prose, as hostile to Passion in its torrent of cloud-wrack of poetry, seems invented by the Grace out of spite to the Muse?

Into circles such as those of which the dim outline is here so imperfectly sketched, Jasper Losely niched himself, as */le bel Anglais/*. (Pleasant representative of the English nation!) Not that those circles are to have the sole credit of his corruption. No! Justice is justice! Stand we up for our native land! */Le bel Anglais/* entered those circles a much greater knave than most of those whom he found there. But there, at least, he learned to set a yet higher value on his youth, and strength, and comeliness—on his readiness of resource—on the reckless audacity that browbeat timid and some even valiant men—on the six feet one of faultless symmetry that captivated foolish, and some even sensible women. Gaming was, however, his vice by predilection. A month before Arabella met him, he had had a rare run of luck. On the strength of it he had resolved to return to London, and (wholly oblivious of the best of creatures till she had thus startled him) hunt out and swoop off with an heiress. Three French friends accompanied him. Each had the same object. Each believed that London swarmed with heiresses. They were all three fine-looking men. One was a Count,—at least he said so. But proud of his rank?—not a bit of it: all for liberty (no man more likely to lose it)—all for fraternity (no man you would less love as a brother). And as for */egalite!/*—the son of a shoemaker who was */homme de lettres/*, and wrote in a journal, inserted a jest on the Count’s courtship. ”All men are equal before the pistol,” said the Count; and knowing that in that respect he was equal to most, having practised at

/poupees/ from the age of fourteen, he called out the son of Crispin and shot him through the lungs. Another of Jasper's travelling friends was an /enfant die peuple/-boasted that he was a foundling. He made verses of lugubrious strain, and taught Jasper how to shuffle at whist. The third, like Jasper, had been designed for trade; and, like Jasper, he had a soul above it. In politics he was a Communist—in talk Philanthropist. He was the cleverest man of them all, and is now at the galleys. The fate of his two compatriots—more obscure it is not my duty to discover. In that peculiar walk of life Jasper is as much as I can possibly manage.

It need not be said that Jasper carefully abstained from reminding his old city friends of his existence. It was his object and his hope to drop all identity with that son of a convict who had been sent out of the way to escape humiliation. In this resolve he was the more confirmed because he had no old city friends out of whom anything could be well got. His poor uncle, who alone of his relations in England had been privy to his change of name, was dead; his end hastened by grief for William Losely's disgrace, and the bad reports he had received from France of the conduct of William Losely's son. That uncle had left, in circumstances too straitened to admit the waste of a shilling, a widow of very rigid opinions; who, if ever by some miraculous turn in the wheel of fortune she could have become rich enough to slay a fatted calf, would never have given the shin-bone of it to a prodigal like Jasper, even had he been her own penitent son, instead of a graceless step-nephew. Therefore, as all civilisation proceeds westward, Jasper turned his face from the east; and had no more idea of recrossing Temple Bar in search of fortune, friends, or kindred, than a modern Welshman would dream of a pilgrimage to Asian shores to re-embrace those distant relatives whom Hu Gadarn left behind him countless centuries ago, when that mythical chief conducted his faithful Cymrians over the Hazy Sea to this happy island of Honey.

[Mel Ynnys—Isle of Honey. One of the poetic names given to England in the language of the ancient Britons.]

Two days after his rencontre with Arabella in the Green Park, the /soi-disant/ Hammond having, in the interim, learned that Darrell was immensely rich, and that Matilda was his only surviving child, did not fail to find himself in the Green Park again—and again—and again!

Arabella, of course, felt how wrong it was to allow him to accost her, and walk by one side of her while Miss Darrell was on the other. But she felt, also, as if it would be much more wrong to slip out and meet him alone. Not for worlds would she again have placed herself in such peril. To refuse to meet him at all?—she had not strength enough for that! Her joy at seeing him was so immense. And nothing could be more respectful than Jasper's manner and conversation. Whatever of warmer and more impassioned sentiment was exchanged between them passed in notes. Jasper had suggested to Arabella to represent him to Matilda as some near relation. But Arabella refused all such disguise. Her sole claim to

self-respect was in considering him solemnly engaged to her—the man she was to marry.

And, after the second time they thus met, she said to Matilda, who had not questioned her by a word-by a look: "I was to be married to that gentleman before my father died; we are to be married as soon as we have something to live upon."

Matilda made some commonplace but kindly rejoinder. And thus she became raised into Arabella's confidence, so far as that confidence could be given, without betraying Jasper's real name or one darker memory in herself. Luxury, indeed, it was to Arabella to find, at last, some one to whom she could speak of that betrothal in which her whole future was invested—of that affection which was her heart's sheet-anchor—of that home, humble it might be and far off, but to which Time rarely fails to bring the Two, if never weary of the trust to become as One. Talking thus, Arabella forgot the relationship of pupil and teacher; it was as woman to woman—girl to girl—friend to friend. Matilda seemed touched by the confidence—flattered to possess at last another's secret. Arabella was a little chafed that she did not seem to admire Jasper as much as Arabella thought the whole world must admire. Matilda excused herself. "She had scarcely noticed Mr. Hammond. Yes: she had no doubt he would be considered handsome; but she owned, though it might be bad taste, that she preferred a pale complexion, with auburn hair;" and then she sighed and looked away, as if she had, in the course of her secret life, encountered some fatal pale complexion, with never-to-be-forgotten auburn hair. Not a word was said by either Matilda or Arabella as to concealing from Mr. Darrell these meetings with Mr. Hammond. Perhaps Arabella could not stoop to ask that secrecy; but there was no necessity to ask; Matilda was always too rejoiced to have something to conceal.

Now, in these interviews, Jasper scarcely ever addressed himself to Matilda; not twenty spoken words could have passed between them; yet, in the very third interview, Matilda's sly fingers had closed on a sly note. And from that day, in each interview, Arabella walking in the centre, Jasper on one side, Matilda the other—behind Arabella's back—passed the sly fingers and the sly notes, which Matilda received and answered. Not more than twelve or fourteen times was even this interchange effected. Darrell was about to move to Fawley. All such meetings would be now suspended. Two or three mornings before that fixed for leaving London, Matilda's room was found vacant. She was gone. Arabella was the first to discover her flight, the first to learn its cause. Matilda had left on her writing-table a letter for Miss Fossett. It was very short, very quietly expressed, and it rested her justification on a note from Jasper, which she enclosed—a note in which that gallant hero, ridiculing the idea that he could ever have been in love with Arabella, declared that he would destroy himself if Matilda refused to fly. She need not fear such angelic confidence in him. No! Even

Had he a heart for falsehood framed,
He ne'er could injure her."

Stifling each noisier cry—but panting—gasping—literally half out of her mind, Arabella rushed into Darrell's study. He, unsuspecting man, calmly bending over his dull books, was startled by her apparition. Few minutes sufficed to tell him all that it concerned him to learn. Few brief questions, few passionate answers, brought him to the very worst.

Who, and what, was this Mr. Hammond? Heaven of heavens! the son of William Losely—of a transported felon!

Arabella exulted in a reply which gave her a moment's triumph over the rival who had filched from her such a prize. Roused from his first misery and sense of abasement in this discovery, Darrell's wrath was naturally poured, not on the fugitive child, but on the frontless woman, who, buoyed up by her own rage and sense of wrong, faced him, and did not cower. She, the faithless governess, had presented to her pupil this convict's son in another name; she owned it—she had trepanned into the snares of so vile a fortune-hunter an ignorant child: she might feign amaze—act remorse—she must have been the man's accomplice. Stung, amidst all the bewilderment of her anguish, by this charge, which, at least, she did not deserve, Arabella tore from her bosom Jasper's recent letters to herself—letters all devotion and passion—placed them before Darrell, and bade him read. Nothing thought she then of name and fame—nothing but of her wrongs and of her woes. Compared to herself, Matilda seemed the perfidious criminal—she the injured victim. Darrell but glanced over the letters; they were signed "your loving husband."

"What is this?" he exclaimed; "are you married to the man?"

"Yes," cried Arabella, "in the eyes of Heaven!"

To Darrell's penetration there was no mistaking the significance of those words and that look; and his wrath redoubled. Anger in him, when once roused, was terrible; he had small need of words to vent it. His eye withered, his gesture appalled. Conscious but of one burning firebrand in brain and heart—of a sense that youth, joy, and hope were for ever gone, that the world could never be the same again—Arabella left the house, her character lost, her talents useless, her very means of existence stopped. Who henceforth would take her to teach? Who henceforth place their children under her charge?

She shrank into a gloomy lodging—she shut herself up alone with her despair. Strange though it may seem, her anger against Jasper was slight as compared with the intensity of her hate to Matilda. And stranger still it may seem, that as her thoughts recovered from their first chaos, she felt more embittered against the world, more crushed by a sense of shame, and yet galled by a no less keen sense of injustice, in recalling the scorn with which Darrell had rejected all excuse for her conduct in

the misery it had occasioned her, than she did by the consciousness of her own lamentable errors. As in Darrell's esteem there was something that, to those who could appreciate it, seemed invaluable, so in his contempt to those who had cherished that esteem there was a weight of ignominy, as if a judge had pronounced a sentence that outlaws the rest of life.

Arabella had not much left out of her munificent salary. What she had hitherto laid by had passed to Jasper—defraying, perhaps, the very cost of his flight with her treacherous rival. When her money was gone, she pawned the poor relics of her innocent happy girlhood, which she had been permitted to take from her father's home, and had borne with her wherever she went, like household gods, the prize-books, the lute, the costly work-box, the very bird-cage, all which the reader will remember to have seen in her later life, the books never opened—the lute broken, the bird long, long, long vanished from the cage! Never did she think she should redeem those pledges from that Golgotha, which takes, rarely to give back, so many hallowed tokens of the Dreamland called "Better Days,"—the trinkets worn at the first ball, the ring that was given with the earliest love-vow—yea, even the very bells and coral that pleased the infant in his dainty cradle, and the very Bible in which the lips, that now bargain for sixpence more, read to some grey-haired father on his bed of death!

Soon the sums thus miserably raised were as miserably doled away. With a sullen apathy the woman contemplated famine. She would make no effort to live—appeal to no relations, no friends. It was a kind of vengeance she took on others, to let herself drift on to death. She had retreated from lodging to lodging, each obscurer, more desolate than the other. Now, she could no longer pay rent for the humblest room; now, she was told to go forth—whither? She knew not—cared not—took her way towards the River, as by that instinct which, when the mind is diseased, tends towards self-destruction, scarce less involuntarily than it turns, in health, towards self-preservation. Just as she passed under the lamp-light at the foot of Westminster Bridge, a man looked at her, and seized her arm. She raised her head with a chilly, melancholy scorn, as if she had received an insult—as if she feared that the man knew the stain upon her name, and dreamed, in his folly, that the dread of death might cause her to sin again.

"Do you not know me?" said the man; "more strange that I should recognise you! Dear, dear, and what a dress!—how you are altered! Poor thing!"

At the words "poor thing" Arabella burst into tears; and in those tears the heavy cloud on her brain seemed to melt away.

"I have been inquiring, seeking for you everywhere, Miss," resumed the man. "Surely, you know me now! Your poor aunt's lawyer! She is no more—died last week. She has left you all she had in the world; and a

very pretty income it is, too, for a single lady.”

Thus it was that we find Arabella installed in the dreary comforts of Podden Place. ”She exchanged,” she said, ”in honour to her aunt’s memory, her own name for that of Crane, which her aunt had borne—her own mother’s maiden name.” She assumed, though still so young, that title of ”Mrs.” which spinsters, grown venerable, moodily adopt when they desire all mankind to know that henceforth they relinquish the vanities of tender misses—that, become mistress of themselves, they defy and spit upon our worthless sex, which, whatever its repentance, is warned that it repents in vain. Most of her aunt’s property was in houses, in various districts of Bloombury. Arabella moved from one to the other of these tenements, till she settled for good into the dullest of all. To make it duller yet, by contrast with the past, the Golgotha for once gave up its buried treasures—broken lute, birdless cage!

Somewhere about two years after Matilda’s death, Arabella happened to be in the office of the agent who collected her house-rents, when a well-dressed man entered, and, leaning over the counter, said: ”There is an advertisement in to-day’s Times about a lady who offers a home, education, and so forth, to any little motherless girl; terms moderate, as said lady loves children for their own sake. Advertiser refers to your office for particulars—give them!”

The agent turned to his books; and Arabella turned towards the inquirer. ”For whose child do you want a home, Jasper Losely?”

Jasper started. ”Arabella! Best of creatures! And can you deign to speak to such a vil—”

”Hush—let us walk. Never mind the advertisement of a stranger. I may find a home for a motherless child—a home that will cost you nothing.”

She drew him into the street. ”But can this be the child of—of—Matilda Darrell?”—

”Bella!” replied, in coaxing accents, that most execrable of lady-killers, ”can I trust you?—can you be my friend in spite of my having been such a very sad dog? But money—what can one do without money in this world? ’Had I a heart for falsehood framed, it would ne’er have injured you’—if I had not been so cursedly hard up! And indeed, now, if you would but condescend to forgive and forget, perhaps some day or other we may be Darby and Joan—only, you see, just at this moment I am really not worthy of such a Joan. You know, of course, that I am a widower—not inconsolable.”

”Yes; I read of Mrs. Hammond’s death in an old newspaper.”

”And you did not read of her baby’s death, too—some weeks afterwards?”’

"No; it is seldom that I see a newspaper. Is the infant dead?"

"Hum—you shall hear." And Jasper entered into a recital, to which Arabella listened with attentive interest. At the close she offered to take, herself, the child for whom Jasper sought a home. She informed him of her change of name and address. The wretch promised to call that evening with the infant; but he sent the infant, and did not call. Nor did he present himself again to her eyes, until, several years afterwards, those eyes so luridly welcomed him to Podden Place. But though he did not even condescend to write to her in the mean while, it is probable that Arabella contrived to learn more of his habits and mode of life at Paris than she intimated when they once more met face to face.

And now the reader knows more than Alban Morley, or Guy Darrell, perhaps ever will know, of the grim woman in iron-grey,

CHAPTER X.

"Sweet are the uses of Adversity,
Which, like the toad, ugly and venomous,
Bears yet a precious jewel in its head."

MOST PERSONS WILL AGREE THAT THE TOAD IS UGLY AND VENOMOUS, BUT FEW INDEED ARE THE PERSONS WHO CAN BOAST OF HAVING ACTUALLY DISCOVERED THAT "PRECIOUS JEWEL IN ITS HEAD," WHICH THE POET ASSURES US IS PLACED THERE. BUT CALAMITY MAY BE CLASSED IN TWO GREAT DIVISIONS—1ST, THE AFFLICTIONS, WHICH NO PRUDENCE CAN AVERT; 2ND, THE MISFORTUNES, WHICH MEN TAKE ALL POSSIBLE PAINS TO BRING UPON THEMSELVES. AFFLICTIONS OF THE FIRST CLASS MAY BUT CALL FORTH OUR VIRTUES, AND RESULT IN OUR ULTIMATE GOOD. SUCH IS THE ADVERSITY WHICH MAY GIVE US THE JEWEL. BUT TO GET AT THE JEWEL WE MUST KILL THE TOAD. MISFORTUNES OF THE SECOND CLASS BUT TOO OFTEN INCREASE THE ERRORS OR THE VICES BY WHICH THEY WERE CREATED. SUCH IS THE ADVERSITY WHICH IS ALL TOAD AND NO JEWEL. IF YOU CHOOSE TO BREED

AND FATTEN YOUR OWN TOADS, THE INCREASE OF THE VENOM
ABSORBS EVERY
BIT OF THE JEWEL.

Never did I know a man who was an habitual gambler, otherwise than notably inaccurate in his calculations of probabilities in the ordinary affairs of life. Is it that such a man has become so chronic a drunkard of hope, that he sees double every chance in his favour?

Jasper Losely had counted upon two things as matters of course.

1st. Darrell's speedy reconciliation with his only child. 2nd. That Darrell's only child must of necessity be Darrell's heiress.

In both these expectations the gambler was deceived. Darrell did not even answer the letters that Matilda addressed to him from France, to the shores of which Jasper had borne her, and where he had hastened to make her his wife under the assumed name of Hammond, but his true Christian name of Jasper.

In the disreputable marriage Matilda had made, all the worst parts of her character seemed suddenly revealed to her father's eye, and he saw what he had hitherto sought not to see, the true child of a worthless mother. A mere mesalliance, if palliated by long or familiar acquaintance with the object, however it might have galled him, his heart might have pardoned; but here, without even a struggle of duty, without the ordinary coyness of maiden pride, to be won with so scanty a wooing, by a man who she knew was betrothed to another—the dissimulation, the perfidy, the combined effrontery and meanness of the whole transaction, left no force in Darrell's eyes to the common place excuses of experience and youth. Darrell would not have been Darrell if he could have taken back to his home or his heart a daughter so old in deceit, so experienced in thoughts that dishonour.

Darrell's silence, however, little saddened the heartless bride, and little dismayed the sanguine bridegroom. Both thought that pardon and plenty were but the affair of time a little more or little less. But their funds rapidly diminished; it became necessary to recruit them. One can't live in hotels entirely upon hope. Leaving his bride for a while in a pleasant provincial town, not many hours distant from Paris, Jasper returned to London, intent upon seeing Darrell himself; and, should the father-in-law still defer articles of peace, Jasper believed that he could have no trouble in raising a present supply upon such an El Dorado of future expectations. Darrell at once consented to see Jasper, not at his own house, but at his solicitor's. Smothering all opposing disgust, the proud gentleman deemed this condescension essential to the clear and definite understanding of those resolves upon which depended the worldly station and prospects of the wedded pair.

When Jasper was shown into Mr. Gotobed's office, Darrell was alone,

standing near the hearth, and by a single quiet gesture repelled that tender rush towards his breast which Jasper had elaborately prepared; and thus for the first time the two men saw each other, Darrell perhaps yet more resentfully mortified while recognising those personal advantages in the showy profligate which had rendered a daughter of his house so facile a conquest: Jasper (who had chosen to believe that a father-in-law so eminent must necessarily be old and broken) shocked into the most disagreeable surprise by the sight of a man still young, under forty, with a countenance, a port, a presence, that in any assemblage would have attracted the general gaze from his own brilliant self, and looking altogether as unfavourable an object, whether for pathos or for post-obits, as unlikely to breathe out a blessing or to give up the ghost, as the worst brute of a father-in-law could possibly be. Nor were Darrell's words more comforting than his aspect.

"Sir, I have consented to see you, partly that you may learn from my own lips once for all that I admit no man's right to enter my family without my consent, and that consent you will never receive; and partly that, thus knowing each other by sight, each may know the man it becomes him most to avoid. The lady who is now your wife is entitled by my marriage-settlement to the reversion of a small fortune at my death; nothing more from me is she likely to inherit. As I have no desire that she to whom I once gave the name of daughter should be dependent wholly on yourself for bread, my solicitor will inform you on what conditions I am willing, during my life, to pay the interest of the sum which will pass to your wife at my death. Sir, I return to your hands the letters that lady has addressed to me, and which, it is easy to perceive, were written at your dictation. No letter from her will I answer. Across my threshold her foot will never pass. Thus, sir, concludes all possible intercourse between you and myself; what rests is between you and that gentleman."

Darrell had opened a side-door in speaking the last words—pointed towards the respectable form of Mr. Gotobed standing tall beside his tall desk—and, before Jasper could put in a word, the father-in-law was gone.

With becoming brevity, Mr. Gotobed made Jasper fully aware that not only all, Mr. Darrell's funded or personal property was entirely at his own disposal—that not only the large landed estates he had purchased (and which Jasper had vaguely deemed inherited and in strict entail) were in the same condition—condition enviable to the proprietor, odious to the bridegroom of the proprietor's sole daughter; but that even the fee-simple of the poor Fawley Manor House and lands were vested in Darrell, encumbered only by the portion of L10,000 which the late Mrs. Darrell had brought to her husband, and which was settled, at the death of herself and Darrell, on the children of the marriage.

In the absence of marriage-settlements between Jasper and Matilda, that sum at Darrell's death was liable to be claimed by Jasper, in right of his wife, so as to leave no certainty that provision would remain for the support of his wife and family; and the contingent reversion might, in

the mean time, be so dealt with as to bring eventual poverty on them all.

"Sir," said the lawyer, "I will be quite frank with you. It is my wish, acting for Mr. Darrell, so to settle this sum of L10,000 on your wife, and any children she may bear you, as to place it out of your power to anticipate or dispose of it, even with Mrs. Hammond's consent. If you part with that power, not at present a valuable one, you are entitled to compensation. I am prepared to make that compensation liberal. Perhaps you would prefer communicating with me through your own solicitor. But I should tell you, that the terms are more likely to be advantageous to you in proportion as negotiation is confined to us two. It might, for instance, be expedient to tell your solicitor that your true name (I beg you a thousand pardons) is not Hammond. That is a secret which, the more you can keep it to yourself, the better I think it will be for you. We have no wish to blab it out."

Jasper, by this time, had somewhat recovered the first shock of displeasure and disappointment; and with that quickness which so erratically darted through a mind that contrived to be dull when anything honest was addressed to its apprehension, he instantly divined that his real name of Losely was worth something. He had no idea of reusing—was, indeed, at that time anxious altogether to ignore and eschew it; but he had a right to it, and a man's rights are not to be resigned for nothing. Accordingly, he said with some asperity: "I shall resume my family name whenever I choose it. If Mr. Darrell does not like his daughter to be called Mrs. Jasper Losely—or all the malignant tittle-tattle which my poor father's unfortunate trial might provoke—he must, at least, ask me as a favour to retain the name I have temporarily adopted—a name in my family, sir. A Losely married a Hammond, I forget when—generations ago—you'll see it in the Baronetage. My grandfather, Sir Julian, was not a crack lawyer, but he was a baronet of as good birth as any in the country; and my father, sir"—(Jasper's voice trembled) "my father," he repeated, fiercely striking his clenched hand on the table, "was a gentleman every inch of his body; and I'll pitch any man out of the window who says a word to the contrary!"

"Sir," said Mr. Gotobed, shrinking towards the bell pull, "I think, on the whole, I had better see your solicitor."

Jasper cooled down at that suggestion; and, with a slight apology for natural excitement, begged to know what Mr. Gotobed wished to propose. To make an end of this part of the story, after two or three interviews, in which the two negotiators learned to understand each other, a settlement was legally completed, by which the sum of L10,000 was inalienably settled on Matilda, and her children by her marriage with Jasper; in case he survived her, the interest was to be his for life—in case she died childless, the capital would devolve to himself at Darrell's decease. Meanwhile, Darrell agreed to pay L500 a year, as the interest of the L10,000 at five per cent., to Jasper Hammond, or his order, provided always that Jasper and his wife continued to reside

together, and fixed that residence abroad.

By a private verbal arrangement, not even committed to writing, to this sum was added another L200 a year, wholly at Darrell's option and discretion. It being clearly comprehended that these words meant so long as Mr. Hammond kept his own secret, and so long, too, as he forbore, directly or indirectly, to molest, or even to address, the person at whose pleasure it was held. On the whole, the conditions to Jasper were sufficiently favourable: he came into an income immeasurably beyond his right to believe that he should ever enjoy; and sufficient—well managed—for even a fair share of the elegancies as well as comforts of life, to a young couple blest in each other's love, and remote from the horrible taxes and emulous gentilities of this opulent England, where out of fear to be thought too poor nobody is ever too rich.

Matilda wrote no more to Darrell. But some months afterwards he received an extremely well-expressed note in French, the writer whereof represented herself as a French lady, who had very lately seen Madame Hammond who was now in London, but for a few days, and had something to communicate, of such importance as to justify the liberty she took in requesting him to honour her with a visit. After some little hesitation, Darrell called on this lady. Though Matilda had forfeited his affection, he could not contemplate her probable fate without painful anxiety. Perhaps Jasper had ill-used her—perhaps she had need of shelter elsewhere. Though that shelter could not again be under a father's roof—and though Darrell would have taken no steps to separate her from the husband she had chosen, still, in secret, he would have felt comparative relief and ease had she herself sought to divide her fate from one whose path downwards in dishonour his penetration instinctively divined. With an idea that some communication might be made to him, to which he might reply that Matilda, if compelled to quit her husband, should never want the home and subsistence of a gentlewoman, he repaired to the house (a handsome house in a quiet street) temporarily occupied by the French lady. A tall chasseur, in full costume, opened the door—a page ushered him into the drawing-room. He saw a lady—young—and with all the grace of a Parisienne in her manner—who, after some exquisitely-turned phrases of excuse, showed him (as a testimonial of the intimacy between herself and Madame Hammond) a letter she had received from Matilda, in a very heart-broken, filial strain, full of professions of penitence—of a passionate desire for her father's forgiveness—but far from complaining of Jasper, or hinting at the idea of deserting a spouse with whom, but for the haunting remembrance of a beloved parent, her lot would be blest indeed. Whatever of pathos was deficient in the letter, the French lady supplied by such apparent fine feeling, and by so many touching little traits of Matilda's remorse, that Darrell's heart was softened in spite of his reason. He went away, however, saying very little, and intending to call no more. But another note came. The French lady had received a letter from a mutual friend—"Matilda," she feared, "was dangerously ill." This took him again to the house, and the poor French lady seemed so agitated by the news she had heard—and yet so desirous not to

exaggerate nor alarm him needlessly, that Darrell suspected his daughter was really dying, and became nervously anxious himself for the next report. Thus, about three or four visits in all necessarily followed the first one. Then Darrell abruptly closed the intercourse, and could not be induced to call again. Not that he for an instant suspected that this amiable lady, who spoke so becomingly, and whose manners were so high-bred, was other than the well-born Baroness she called herself, and looked to be, but partly because, in the last interview, the charming Parisienne had appeared a little to forget Matilda's alarming illness, in a not forward but still coquettish desire to centre his attention more upon herself; and the moment she did so, he took a dislike to her which he had not before conceived; and partly because his feelings having recovered the first effect which the vision of a penitent, pining, dying daughter could not fail to produce, his experience of Matilda's duplicity and falsehood made him discredit the penitence, the pining, and the dying. The Baroness might not wilfully be deceiving him—Matilda might be wilfully deceiving the Baroness. To the next note, therefore, despatched to him by the feeling and elegant foreigner, he replied but by a dry excuse—a stately hint, that family matters could never be satisfactorily discussed except in family councils, and that if her friend's grief or illness were really in any way occasioned by a belief in the pain her choice of life might have inflicted on himself, it might comfort her to know that that pain had subsided, and that his wish for her health and happiness was not less sincere, because henceforth he could neither watch over the one nor administer to the other. To this note, after a day or two, the Baroness replied by a letter so beautifully worded, I doubt whether Madame de Sevigne could have written in purer French, or Madame de Steel with a finer felicity of phrase. Stripped of the graces of diction, the substance was but small: "Anxiety for a friend so beloved—so unhappy—more pitted even than before, now that the Baroness had been enabled to see how fondly a daughter must idolise a father in the Man whom the nation revered!—(here two lines devoted to compliment personal)—compelled by that anxiety to quit even sooner than she had first intended the metropolis of that noble Country," &c.—(here four lines devoted to compliment national)—and then proceeding through some charming sentences about patriot altars and domestic hearths, the writer suddenly checked herself—" would intrude no more on time sublimely dedicated to the Human Race—and concluded with the assurance of sentiments the most /distinguees/." Little thought Darrell that this complimentary stranger, whom he never again beheld, would exercise an influence over that portion of his destiny which then seemed to him most secure from evil; towards which, then, he looked for the balm to every wound—the compensation to every loss!

Darrell heard no more of Matilda, till, not long afterwards, her death was announced to him. She had died from exhaustion shortly after giving birth to a female child. The news came upon him at a moment; when, from other causes—(the explanation of which, forming no part of his confidence to Alban, it will be convenient to reserve)—his mind was in a state of great affliction and disorder—when he had already buried

himself in the solitudes of Fawley—ambition resigned and the world renounced—and the intelligence saddened and shocked him more than it might have done some months before. If, at that moment of utter bereavement, Matilda's child had been brought to him—given up to him to rear—would he have rejected it? would he have forgotten that it was a felon's grandchild?

I dare not say. But his pride was not put to such a trial. One day he received a packet from Mr. Gotobed, enclosing the formal certificates of the infant's death, which had been presented to him by Jasper, who had arrived in London for that melancholy purpose, with which he combined a pecuniary proposition. By the death of Matilda and her only child, the sum of L10,000 absolutely reverted to Jasper in the event of Darrell's decease. As the interest meanwhile was continued to Jasper, that widowed mourner suggested "that it would be a great boon to himself and no disadvantage to Darrell if the principal were made over to him at once. He had been brought up originally to commerce. He had abjured all thoughts of resuming such vocation during his wife's lifetime, out of that consideration for her family and ancient birth which motives of delicacy imposed. Now that the connection with Mr. Darrell was dissolved, it might be rather a relief than otherwise to that gentleman to know that a son-in-law so displeasing to him was finally settled, not only in a foreign land, but in a social sphere in which his very existence would soon be ignored by all who could remind Mr. Darrell that his daughter had once a husband. An occasion that might never occur again now presented itself. A trading firm at Paris, opulent, but unostentatiously quiet in its mercantile transactions, would accept him as a partner could he bring to it the additional capital of L10,000." Not without dignity did Jasper add, "that since his connection had been so unhappily distasteful to Mr. Darrell, and since the very payment, each quarter, of the interest on the sum in question must in itself keep alive the unwelcome remembrance of that connection, he had the less scruple in making a proposition which would enable the eminent personage who so disdained his alliance to get rid of him altogether." Darrell closed at once with Jasper's proposal, pleased to cut off from his life each tie that could henceforth link it to Jasper's, nor displeased to relieve his hereditary acres from every shilling of the marriage portion which was imposed on it as a debt, and associated with memories of unmingled bitterness. Accordingly, Mr. Gotobed, taking care first to ascertain that the certificates as to the poor child's death were genuine, accepted Jasper's final release of all claim on Mr. Darrell's estate. There still, however, remained the L200 a year which Jasper had received during Matilda's life, on the tacit condition of remaining Mr. Hammond, and not personally addressing Mr. Darrell. Jasper inquired "if that annuity was to continue?" Mr. Gotobed referred the inquiry to Darrell, observing that the object for which this extra allowance had been made was rendered nugatory by the death of Mrs. Hammond and her child; since Jasper henceforth could have neither power nor pretext to molest Mr. Darrell, and that it could signify but little what name might in future be borne by one whose connection with the Darrell family was wholly dissolved.

Darrell impatiently replied, "That nothing having been said as to the withdrawal of the said allowance in case Jasper became a widower, he remained equally entitled, in point of honour, to receive that allowance, or an adequate equivalent."

This answer being intimated to Jasper, that gentleman observed "that it was no more than he had expected from Mr. Darrell's sense of honour," and apparently quite satisfied, carried himself and his L10,000 back to Paris. Not long after, however, he wrote to Mr. Gotobed that "Mr. Darrell having alluded to an equivalent for the L200 a year allowed to him, evidently implying that it was as disagreeable to Mr. Darrell to see that sum entered quarterly in his banker's books, as it had been to see there the quarterly interest of the L10,000, so Jasper might be excused in owning that he should prefer an equivalent. The commercial firm to which he was about to attach himself required a somewhat larger capital on his part than he had anticipated, &c., &c. Without presuming to dictate any definite sum, he would observe that L1,500 or even L1000 would be of more avail to his views and objects in life than an annuity of L200 a year, which, being held only at will, was not susceptible of a temporary loan." Darrell, wrapped in thoughts wholly remote from recollections of Jasper, chafed at being thus recalled to the sense of that person's existence wrote back to the solicitor who transmitted to him this message, "that an annuity held on his word was not to be calculated by Mr. Hammond's notions of its value. That the L200 a year should therefore be placed on the same footing as the L500 a year that had been allowed on a capital of L10,000; that accordingly it might be held to represent a principal of L4,000, for which he enclosed a cheque, begging Mr. Gotobed not only to make Mr. Hammond fully understand that there ended all possible accounts or communication between them, but never again to trouble him with any matters whatsoever in reference to affairs that were thus finally concluded." Jasper, receiving the L4,000, left Darrell and Gotobed in peace till the following year. He then addressed to Gotobed an exceedingly plausible, business-like letter. "The firm he had entered, in the silk trade, was in the most flourishing state—an opportunity occurred to purchase a magnificent mulberry plantation in Provence, with all requisite magnaneries, &c., which would yield an immense increase of profit. That if, to insure him a share in this lucrative purchase, Mr. Darrell could accommodate him for a year with a loan of L2,000 or L3,000, he sanguinely calculated on attaining so high a position in the commercial world as, though it could not render the recollection of his alliance more obtrusive to Mr. Darrell, would render it less humiliating."

Mr. Gotobed, in obedience to the peremptory instructions he had received from his client, did not refer this letter to Darrell, but having occasion at that time to visit Paris on other business, he resolved (without calling on Mr. Hammond) to institute there some private inquiry—into that rising trader's prospects and status. He found, on arrival at Paris, these inquiries difficult. No one in either the /beau monde/ or in the /haut commerce/ seemed to know anything about this Mr. Jasper

Hammond. A few fashionable English /roues/ remembered to have seen, once or twice during Matilda's life, and shortly after her decease, a very fine-looking man shooting meteoric across some equivocal /salons/, or lounging in the Champs Elysees, or dining at the Cafe de Paris; but of late that meteor had vanished. Mr. Gotobed, then anxiously employing a commissioner to gain some information of Mr. Hammond's firm at the private residence from which Jasper addressed his letter, ascertained that in that private residence Jasper did not reside. He paid the porter to receive occasional letters, for which he called or sent; and the porter, who was evidently a faithful and discreet functionary, declared his belief that Monsieur Hammond lodged in the house in which he transacted business, though where was the house or what was the business, the porter observed, with well-bred implied rebuke, "Monsieur Hammond was too reserved to communicate, he himself too incurious to inquire." At length, Mr. Gotobed's business, which was, in fact, a commission from a distressed father to extricate an imprudent son, a mere boy, from some unhappy associations, having brought him into the necessity of seeing persons who belonged neither to the /beau monde/ nor to the /haut commerce/, he gleaned from them the information he desired. Mr. Hammond lived in the very heart of a certain circle in Paris, which but few Englishmen ever penetrate. In that circle Mr. Hammond had, on receiving his late wife's dowry, become the partner in a private gambling hell; in that hell had been engulfed all the monies he had received—a hell that ought to have prospered with him, if he could have economised his villanous gains. His senior partner in that firm retired into the country with a fine fortune—no doubt the very owner of those mulberry plantations which were now on sale! But Jasper scattered napoleons faster than any croupier could rake them away. And Jasper's natural talent for converting solid gold into thin air had been assisted by a lady who, in the course of her amiable life, had assisted many richer men than Jasper to lodgings in /St. Pelagie/, or cells in the /Maison des Fous/. With that lady he had become acquainted during the lifetime of his wife, and it was supposed that Matilda's discovery of this liaison had contributed perhaps to the illness which closed in her decease; the name of that lady was Gabrielle Desinarets. She might still be seen daily at the Bois de Boulogne, nightly at opera-house or theatre; she had apartments in the Chaussee d'Antin far from inaccessible to Mr. Gotobed, if he coveted the honour of her acquaintance. But Jasper was less before an admiring world. He was supposed now to be connected with another gambling-house of lower grade than the last, in which he had contrived to break his own bank and plunder his own till. It was supposed also that he remained good friends with Mademoiselle Desmarets; but if he visited her at her house, he was never to be seen there. In fact, his temper was so uncertain, his courage so dauntless, his strength so prodigious, that gentlemen who did not wish to be thrown out of the window, or hurled down a staircase, shunned any salon or boudoir in which they had a chance to encounter him. Mademoiselle Desmarets had thus been condemned to the painful choice between his society and that of nobody else, or that of anybody else with the rigid privation of his. Not being a turtle-dove, she had chosen the latter alternative. It was believed, nevertheless,

that if Gabrielle Desmarets had known the weakness of a kind sentiment, it was for this turbulent lady-killer; and that, with a liberality she had never exhibited in any other instance, when she could no longer help him to squander, she would still, at a pinch, help him to live; though, of course, in such a reverse of the normal laws of her being, Mademoiselle Desmarets set those bounds on her own generosity which she would not have imposed upon his, and had said with a sigh: "I could forgive him if he beat me and beggared my friends! but to beat my friends and to beggar me,—that is not the kind of love which makes the world go round!"

Scandalised to the last nerve of his respectable system by the information thus gleaned, Mr. Gotobed returned to London. More letters from Jasper—becoming urgent, and at last even insolent—Mr. Gotobed worried into a reply, wrote back shortly "that he could not even communicate such applications to Mr. Darrell, and that he must peremptorily decline all further intercourse, epistolary or personal, with Mr. Hammond."

Darrell, on returning from one of the occasional rambles on the Continent, "remote, unfriended, melancholy," by which he broke the monotony of his Fawley life, found a letter from Jasper, not fawning, but abrupt, addressed to himself, complaining of Mr. Gotobed's improper tone, requesting pecuniary assistance, and intimating that he could in return communicate to Mr. Darrell an intelligence that would give him more joy than all his wealth could purchase. Darrell enclosed that note to Mr. Gotobed; Mr. Gotobed came down to Fawley to make those revelations of Jasper's mode of life which were too delicate—or too much the reverse of delicate—to commit to paper. Great as Darrell's disgust at the memory of Jasper had hitherto been, it may well be 'conceived how much more bitter became that memory now. No answer was, of course, vouchsafed to Jasper, who, after another extremely forcible appeal for money, and equally enigmatical boast of the pleasurable information it was in his power to bestow, relapsed into sullen silence.

One day, somewhat more than five years after Matilda's death, Darrell, coming in from his musing walks, found a stranger waiting for him. This stranger was William Losely, returned from penal exile; and while Darrell, on hearing this announcement, stood mute with haughty wonder that such a visitor could cross the threshold of his father's house, the convict began what seemed to Darrell a story equally audacious and incomprehensible—the infant Matilda had borne to Jasper, and the certificates of whose death had been so ceremoniously produced and so prudently attested, lived still! Sent out to nurse as soon as born, the nurse had in her charge another babe, and this last was the child who had died and been buried as Matilda Hammond's. The elder Losely went on to stammer out a hope that his son was not at the time aware of the fraudulent exchange, but had been deceived by the nurse—that it had not been a premeditated imposture of his own to obtain his wife's fortune.

When Darrell came to this part of his story, Alban Morley's face grew more seriously interested. "Stop!" he said; "William Losely assured you of his own conviction that this strange tale was true. What proofs did he volunteer?"

"Proofs! Death, man, do you think that at such moments I was but a bloodless lawyer, to question and cross examine? I could but bid the impostor leave the house which his feet polluted."

Alban heaved a sigh, and murmured, too low for Darrell to overhear, "Poor Willy!" then aloud: "But, my dear friend, bear with me one moment. Suppose that, by the arts of this diabolical Jasper, the exchange really had been effected, and a child to your ancient line lived still, would it not be a solace, a comfort—"

"Comfort!" cried Darrell, "comfort in the perpetuation of infamy! The line I promised my father to restore to its rank in the land, to be renewed in the grandchild of a felon!—in the child of the yet viler sharper of a hell! You, gentleman and soldier, call that thought—'comfort!' O Alban!—out on you! Fie! fie! No!—leave such a thought to the lips of a William Losely! He indeed, clasping his hands, faltered forth some such word; he seemed to count on my forlorn privation of kith and kindred—no heir to my wealth—no representative of my race—would I deprive myself of—ay—your very words—of a solace—a comfort! He asked me, at least, to inquire."

"And you answered?"

"Answered so as to quell and crush in the bud all hopes in the success of so flagrant a falsehood—answered: 'Why inquire? Know that, even if your tale were true, I have no heir, no representative, no descendant in the child of Jasper—the grandchild of William-Losely. I can at least leave my wealth to the son of Charles Haughton. True, Charles Haughton was a spendthrift, a gamester; but he was neither a professional cheat nor a convicted felon.'"

"You said that—Oh, Darrell!"

The Colonel checked himself. But for Charles Haughton, the spendthrift and gamester, would William Losely have been the convicted felon? He checked that thought, and hurried on: "And how did William Losely reply?"

"He made no reply—he skulked away without a word." Darrell then proceeded to relate the interview which Jasper had forced on him at Fawley during Lionel's visit there—on Jasper's part an attempt to tell the same tale as William had told—on Darrell's part, the same scornful refusal to hear it out. "And," added Darrell, "the man, finding it thus impossible to dupe my reason, had the inconceivable meanness to apply to me for alms. I could not better show the disdain in which I held himself and his story than in recognising his plea as a mendicant. I threw my

purse at his feet, and so left him.

"But," continued Darrell, his brow growing darker and darker—"but wild and monstrous as the story was, still the idea that it MIGHT be true—a supposition which derived its sole strength from the character of Jasper Losely—from the interest he had in the supposed death of a child that alone stood between himself and the money he longed to grasp—an interest which ceased when the money itself was gone, or rather changed into the counter-interest of proving a life that, he thought, would re-establish a hold on me—still, I say, an idea that the story might be true would force itself on my fears, and if so, though my resolution never to acknowledge the child of Jasper Losely as a representative, or even as a daughter, of my house, would of course be immovable—yet it would become my duty to see that her infancy was sheltered, her childhood reared, her youth guarded, her existence amply provided for."

"Right—your plain duty," said Alban bluntly. "Intricate sometimes are the obligations imposed on us as gentlemen; 'noblesse oblige' is a motto which involves puzzles for a casuist; but our duties as men are plain—the idea very properly haunted you—and—"

"And I hastened to exorcise the spectre. I left England—I went to the French town in which poor Matilda died—I could not, of course, make formal or avowed inquiries of a nature to raise into importance the very conspiracy (if conspiracy there were) which threatened me. But I saw the physician who had attended both my daughter and her child—I sought those who had seen them both when living—seen them both when dead. The doubt on my mind was dispelled—not a pretext left for my own self-torment. The only person needful in evidence whom I failed to see was the nurse to whom the infant had been sent. She lived in a village some miles from the town—I called at her house—she was out. I left word I should call the next day—I did so—she had absconded. I might, doubtless, have traced her, but to what end if she were merely Jasper's minion and tool? Did not her very flight prove her guilt and her terror? Indirectly I inquired into her antecedents and character. The inquiry opened a field of conjecture, from which I hastened to turn my eyes. This woman had a sister who had been in the service of Gabrielle Desmarets, and Gabrielle Desmarets had been in the neighbourhood during my poor daughter's lifetime, and just after my daughter's death. And the nurse had had two infants under her charge; the nurse had removed with one of them to Paris—and Gabrielle Desmarets lived in Paris—and, O Alban, if there be really in flesh and life a child by Jasper Losely, to be forced upon my purse or my pity—is it his child, not by the ill-fated Matilda, but by the vile woman for whom Matilda, even in the first year of wedlock, was deserted? Conceive how credulity itself would shrink appalled from the horrible snare!—I to acknowledge, adopt, proclaim as the last of the Darrells, the adulterous offspring of a Jasper Losely and a Gabrielle Desmarets!—or, when I am in my grave, some claim advanced upon the sum settled by my marriage articles on Matilda's issue, and which, if a child survived, could not have been legally transferred to its father—a claim

with witnesses suborned—a claim that might be fraudulently established—a claim that would leave the representative—not indeed of my lands and wealth, but, more precious far, of my lineage and blood—in—in the person of—of—”

Darrell paused, almost stifling, and became so pale that Alban started from his seat in alarm.

”It is nothing,” resumed Darrell, faintly, ”and, ill or well, I must finish this subject now, so that we need not reopen it.”

”I remained abroad, as you know, for some years. During that time two or three letters from Jasper Losely were forwarded to me; the latest in date more insolent than all preceding ones. It contained demands as if they were rights, and insinuated threats of public exposure, reflecting on myself and my pride: ’He was my son-in-law after all, and if he came to disgrace, the world should know the tie.’ Enough. This is all I knew until the man who now, it seems, thrusts himself forward as Jasper Losely’s friend or agent, spoke to me the other night at Mrs. Haughton’s. That man you have seen, and you say that he—”

”Represents Jasper’s poverty as extreme; his temper unscrupulous and desperate; that he is capable of any amount of scandal or violence. It seems that though at Paris he has (Poole believes) still preserved the name of Hammond, yet that in England he has resumed that of Losely; and seems by Poole’s date of the time at which he, Poole, made Jasper’s acquaintance, to have done so after his baffled attempt on you at Fawley—whether in so doing he intimated the commencement of hostilities, or whether, as is more likely, the sharper finds it convenient to have one name in one country, and one in another, ’tis useless to inquire; enough that the identity between the Hammond who married poor Matilda, and the Jasper Losely whose father was transported, that unscrupulous rogue has no longer any care to conceal. It is true that the revelation of this identity would now be of slight moment to a man of the world—as thick-skinned as myself, for instance; but to you it would be disagreeable—there is no denying that—and therefore, in short, when Mr. Poole advises a compromise, by which Jasper could be secured from want and yourself from annoyance, I am of the same opinion as Mr. Poole is.”

”You are?”

”Certainly. My dear Darrell, if in your secret heart there was something so galling in the thought that the man who had married your daughter, though without your consent, was not merely the commonplace adventurer whom the world supposed, but the son of that poor dear—I mean that rascal who was transported, Jasper, too, himself a cheat and a sharper—if this galled you so, that you have concealed the true facts from myself, your oldest friend, till this day—if it has cost you even now so sharp a pang to divulge the true name of that Mr. Hammond, whom our society never saw, whom even gossip has forgotten in connection with yourself—how

intolerable would be your suffering to have this man watching for you in the streets, some wretched girl in his hand, and crying out, 'A penny for your son-in-law and your grandchild!' Pardon me—I must be blunt. You can give him to the police—send him to the treadmill. Does that mend the matter? Or, worse still, suppose the man commits some crime that fills all the newspapers with his life and adventures, including of course his runaway marriage with the famous Guy Darrell's heiress—no one would blame you, no one respect you less; but do not tell me that you would not be glad to save your daughter's name from being coupled with such a miscreant's at the price of half your fortune."

"Alban" said Darrell, gloomily, "you can say nothing on this score that has not been considered by myself. But the man has so placed the matter, that honour itself forbids me to bargain with him for the price of my name. So long as he threatens, I cannot buy off a threat; so long as he persists in a story by which he would establish a claim on me on behalf of a child whom I have every motive as well as every reason to disown as inheriting my blood—whatever I bestowed on himself would seem like hush-money to suppress that claim."

"Of course—I understand, and entirely agree with you. But if the man retract all threats, confess his imposture in respect to this pretended offspring, and consent to retire for life to a distant colony, upon an annuity that may suffice for his wants, but leave no surplus beyond, to render more glaring his vices, or more effective his powers of evil; if this could be arranged between Mr. Poole and myself, I think that your peace might be permanently secured without the slightest sacrifice of honour. Will you leave the matter in my hands on this assurance—that I will not give this person a farthing except on the conditions I have premised?"

"On these conditions, yes, and most gratefully," said Darrell. "Do what you will; but one favour more: never again speak to me (unless absolutely compelled) in reference to this dark portion of my inner life."

Alban pressed his friend's hand, and both were silent for some moments. Then said the Colonel, with an attempt at cheerfulness: "Darrell, more than ever now do I see that the new house at Fawley, so long suspended, must be finished. Marry again you must!—you can never banish old remembrances unless you can supplant them by fresh hopes."

"I feel it—I know it," cried Darrell, passionately. "And oh! if one remembrance could be wrenched away! But it shall—it shall!"

"Ah!" thought Alban—"the remembrance of his former conjugal life!—a remembrance which might well make the youngest and the boldest Benedict shrink from the hazard of a similar experiment."

In proportion to the delicacy, the earnestness, the depth of a man's nature, will there be a something in his character which no male friend

can conceive, and a something in the secrets of his life which no male friend can ever conjecture.

CHAPTER XI.

OUR OLD FRIEND THE POCKET-CANNIBAL EVINCES UNEXPECTED PATRIOTISM AND PHILOSOPHICAL MODERATION, CONTENTED WITH A STEAK OFF HIS OWN SUCCULENT FRIEND IN THE AIRS OF HIS OWN NATIVE SKY.

Colonel Morley had a second interview with Mr. Poole. It needed not Alban's knowledge of the world to discover that Poole was no partial friend to Jasper Losely; that, for some reason or other, Poole was no less anxious than the Colonel to get that formidable client, whose cause he so warmly advocated, pensioned and packed off into the region most remote from Great Britain in which a spirit hitherto so restless might consent to settle. And although Mr. Poole had evidently taken offence at Mr. Darrell's discourteous rebuff of his amiable intentions, yet no grudge against Darrell furnished a motive for conduct equal to his Christian desire that Darrell's peace should be purchased by Losely's perpetual exile. Accordingly, Colonel Morley took leave, with a well-placed confidence in Poole's determination to do all in his power to induce Jasper to listen to reason. The Colonel had hoped to learn something from Poole of the elder Losely's present residence and resources. Poole, as we know, could give him there no information. The Colonel also failed to ascertain any particulars relative to that female pretender on whose behalf Jasper founded his principal claim to Darrell's aid. And so great was Poole's embarrassment in reply to all questions on that score—Where was the young person? With whom had she lived? What was she like? Could the Colonel see her, and hear her own tale?—that Alban entertained a strong suspicion that no such girl was in existence; that she was a pure fiction and myth; or that, if Jasper were compelled to produce some petticoated fair, she would be an artful baggage hired for the occasion.

Poole waited Jasper's next visit with impatience and sanguine delight. He had not a doubt that the ruffian would cheerfully consent to allow that, on further inquiry, he found he had been deceived in his belief of Sophy's parentage, and that there was nothing in England so peculiarly sacred to his heart, but what he might consent to breathe the freer air of Columbian skies, or even to share the shepherd's harmless life amidst the pastures of auriferous Australia! But, to Poole's ineffable consternation, Jasper declared sullenly that he would not consent to expatriate himself merely for the sake of living.

"I am not so young as I was," said the bravo; "I don't speak of years, but feeling. I have not the same energy; once I had high spirits—they are broken; once I had hope—I have none: I am not up to exertion; I have got into lazy habits. To go into new scenes, form new plans, live in a horrid raw new world, everybody round me bustling and pushing—No! that may suit your thin dapper light Hop-o'-my-thumbs! Look at me! See how I have increased in weight the last five years—all solid bone and muscle. I defy any four draymen to move me an inch if I am not in the mind to it; and to be blown off to the antipodes as if I were the down of a pestilent thistle, I am not in the mind for that, Dolly Poole!"

"Hum!" said Poole, trying to smile. "This is funny talk. You always were a funny fellow. But I am quite sure, from Colonel Morley's decided manner, that you can get nothing from Darrell if you choose to remain in England."

"Well, when I have nothing else left, I may go to Darrell myself, and have that matter out with him. At present I am not up to it. Dolly, don't bore!" And the bravo, opening a jaw strong enough for any carnivorous animal, yawned—yawned much as a bored tiger does in the face of a philosophical student of savage manners in the Zoological Gardens.

"Bore!" said Poole, astounded and recoiling from that expanded jaw. "But I should have thought no subject could bore you less than the consideration of how you are to live?"

"Why, Dolly, I have learned to be easily contented, and you see at present I live upon you."

"Yes," groaned Poole, "but that can't go on for ever; and, besides, you promised that you would leave me in peace as soon as I had got Darrell to provide for you."

"So I will. Zounds, sir, do you doubt my word? So I will. But I don't call exile 'a provision'—Basta! I understand from you that Colonel Morley offers to restore the niggardly L200 a year Darrell formerly allowed to me, to be paid monthly or weekly, through some agent in Van Diemen's Land, or some such uncomfortable half-way house to Eternity, that was not even in the Atlas when I studied geography at school. But L200 a year is exactly my income in England, paid weekly too, by your agreeable self, with whom it is a pleasure to talk over old times. Therefore that proposal is out of the question. Tell Colonel Morley, with my compliments, that if he will double the sum, and leave me to spend it where I please, I scorn haggling, and say 'done.' And as to the girl, since I cannot find her (which, on penalty of being threshed to a mummy, you will take care not to let out), I would agree to leave Mr. Darrell free to disown her. But are you such a dolt as not to see that I put the ace of trumps on my adversary's pitiful deuce, if I depose that my own child is not my own child, when all I get for it is what I equally get out of you, with my ace of trumps still in my hands? Basta!—I say

again Basta! It is evidently an object to Darrell to get rid of all fear that Sophy should ever pounce upon him tooth and claw: if he be so convinced that she is not his daughter's child, why make a point of my saying that I told him a fib, when I said she was? Evidently, too, he is afraid of my power to harass and annoy him; or why make it a point that I shall only nibble his cheese in a trap at the world's end, stared at by bushmen, and wombats, and rattlesnakes, and alligators, and other American citizens or British settlers! £200 a year, and my wife's father a millionaire! The offer is an insult. Ponder this: put on the screw; make them come to terms which I can do them the honour to accept; meanwhile, I will trouble you for my four sovereigns."

Poole had the chagrin to report to the Colonel, Jasper's refusal of the terms proposed, and to state the counter-proposition he was commissioned to make. Alban was at first surprised, not conjecturing the means of supply, in his native land, which Jasper had secured in the coffers of Poole himself. On sounding the unhappy negotiator as to Jasper's reasons, he surmised, however, one part of the truth—viz., that Jasper built hopes of better terms precisely on the fact that terms had been offered to him at all; and this induced Alban almost to regret that he had made any such overtures, and to believe that Darrell's repugnance to open the door of conciliation a single inch to so sturdy a mendicant was more worldly-wise than Alban had originally supposed. Yet partly, even for Darrell's own security and peace, from that persuasion of his own powers of management which a consummate man of the world is apt to entertain, and partly from a strong curiosity to see the audacious soil of that poor dear rascal Willy, and examine himself into the facts he asserted, and the objects he aimed at, Alban bade Poole inform Jasper that Colonel Morley would be quite willing to convince him, in a personal interview, of the impossibility of acceding to the propositions Jasper had made; and that he should be still more willing to see the young person whom Jasper asserted to be the child of his marriage.

Jasper, after a moment's moody deliberation, declined to meet Colonel Morley, actuated to some extent in that refusal by the sensitive vanity which once had given him delight, and now only gave him pain. Meet thus—altered, fallen, imbruted—the fine gentleman whose calm eye had quelled him in the widow's drawing-room in his day of comparative splendour—that in itself was distasteful to the degenerated bravo. But he felt as if he should be at more disadvantage in point of argument with a cool and wary representative of Darrell's interests, than he should be even with Darrell himself. And unable to produce the child whom he arrogated the right to obtrude, he should be but exposed to a fire of cross-questions without a shot in his own locker. Accordingly he declined, point-blank, to see Colonel Morley; and declared that the terms he himself had proposed were the lowest he would accept. "Tell Colonel Morley, however, that if negotiations fail, I shall not fail, sooner or later, to argue my view of the points in dispute with my kind father-in-law, and in person."

"Yes, hang it!" cried Poole, exasperated; "go and see Darrell yourself. He is easily found."

"Ay," answered Jasper, with the hardest look of his downcast sidelong eye—"Ay; some day or other it may come to that. I would rather not, if possible. I might not keep my temper. It is not merely a matter of money between us, if we two meet. There are affronts to efface. Banished his house like a mangy dog—treated by a jackanapes lawyer like the dirt in the kennel! The Loselys, I suspect, would have looked down on the Darrells fifty years ago; and what if my father was born out of wedlock, is the blood not the same? Does the breed dwindle down for want of a gold ring and priest? Look at me. No; not what I now am; not even as you saw me five years ago; but as I leapt into youth! Was I born to cast sums and nib pens as a City clerk? Aha, my poor father, you were wrong there! Blood will out! Mad devil, indeed, is a racer in a citizen's gig! Spavined, and wind-galled, and foundered—let the brute go at last to the knockers; but by his eye, and his pluck, and his bone, the brute shows the stock that he came from!"

Dolly opened his eyes and-blinked. Never in his gaudy days had Jasper half so openly revealed what, perhaps, had been always a sore in his pride; and his outburst now may possibly aid the reader to a subtler comprehension of the arrogance, and levity, and egotism, which accompanied his insensibility to honour, and had converted his very claim to the blood of a gentleman into an excuse for a cynic's disdain of the very virtues for which a gentleman is most desirous of obtaining credit. But by a very ordinary process in the human mind, as Jasper had fallen lower and lower into the lees and dregs of fortune, his pride had more prominently emerged from the group of the other and gaudier vices, by which, in health and high spirits, it had been pushed aside and outshone.

"Humph!" said Poole, after a pause. "If Darrell was as uncivil to you as he was to me, I don't wonder that you owe him a grudge. But even if you do lose temper in seeing him, it might rather do good than not. You can make yourself cursedly unpleasant if you choose it; and perhaps you will have a better chance of getting your own terms if they see you can bite as well as bark! Set at Darrell, and worry him; it is not fair to worry nobody but me!"

"Dolly, don't bluster! If I could stand at his door, or stop him in the streets, with the girl in my hand, your advice would be judicious. The world would not care for a row between a rich man and a penniless son-in-law. But an interesting young lady, who calls him grandfather, and falls at his knees,—he could not send her to hard labour; and if he does not believe in her birth, let the thing but just get into the newspapers, and there are plenty who will: and I should be in a very different position for treating. 'Tis just because, if I meet Darrell again, I don't wish that again it should be all bark and no bite, that I postpone the interview. All your own laziness—exert yourself and find the girl."

"But I can't find the girl, and you know it. And I tell you what, Mr. Losely, Colonel Morley, who is a very shrewd man, does not believe in the girl's existence."

"Does not he! I begin to doubt it myself. But, at all events, you can't doubt of mine, and I am grateful for yours; and since you have given me the trouble of coming here to no purpose, I may as well take the next week's pay in advance—four sovereigns if you please, Dolly Poole."

CHAPTER XII.

ANOTHER HALT—CHANGE OF HORSES—AND A TURN ON THE ROAD.

Colonel Morley, on learning that Jasper declined a personal conference with himself, and that the proposal of an interview with Jasper's alleged daughter was equally scouted or put aside, became still more confirmed in his belief that Jasper had not yet been blest with a daughter sufficiently artful to produce. And pleased to think that the sharper was thus unprovided with a means of annoyance, which, skilfully managed, might have been seriously harassing; and convinced that when Jasper found no farther notice taken of him, he himself 'would be compelled to petition for the terms he now rejected, the Colonel dryly informed Poole "that his interference was at an end; that if Mr. Losely, either through himself, or through Mr. Poole, or any one else, presumed to address Mr. Darrell direct, the offer previously made would be peremptorily and irrevocably withdrawn. I myself," added the Colonel, "shall be going abroad very shortly for the rest of the summer; and should Mr. Losely, in the mean while, think better of a proposal which secures him from want, I refer him to Mr. Darrell's solicitor. To that proposal, according to your account of his destitution, he must come sooner or later; and I am glad to see that he has in yourself so judicious an adviser"—a compliment which by no means consoled the miserable Poole.

In the briefest words, Alban informed Darrell of his persuasion that Jasper was not only without evidence to support a daughter's claim, but that the daughter herself was still in that part of Virgil's Hades appropriated to souls that have not yet appeared upon the upper earth; and that Jasper himself, although holding back, as might be naturally expected, in the hope of conditions more to his taste, had only to be left quietly to his own meditations in order to recognise the advantages of emigration. Another L100 a-year or so, it is true, he might bargain for, and such a demand might be worth conceding. But, on the whole, Alban congratulated Darrell upon the probability of hearing very little more of the son-in-law, and no more at all of the son-in-law's daughter.

Darrell made no comment nor reply. A grateful look, a warm pressure of

the hand, and, when the subject was changed, a clearer brow and livelier smile, thanked the English Alban better than all words.

CHAPTER XIII.

COLONEL MORLEY SHOWS THAT IT IS NOT WITHOUT REASON THAT HE ENJOYS HIS REPUTATION OF KNOWING SOMETHING ABOUT EVERYBODY.

"Well met," said Darrell, the day after Alban had conveyed to him the comforting assurances which had taken one thorn from his side-dispersed one cloud in his evening sky. "Well met," said Darrell, encountering the Colonel a few paces from his own door. "Pray walk with me as far as the New Road. I have promised Lionel to visit the studio of an artist friend of his, in whom he chooses to find a Raffaele, and in whom I suppose, at the price of truth, I shall be urbanely compelled to compliment a dauber."

"Do you speak of Frank Vance?"

"The same."

"You could not visit a worthier man, nor compliment a more promising artist. Vance is one of the few who unite gusto and patience, fancy and brushwork. His female heads, in especial, are exquisite, though they are all, I confess, too much like one another. The man himself is a thoroughly fine fellow. He has been much made of in good society, and remains unspoiled. You will find his manner rather off-hand, the reverse of shy; partly, perhaps, because he has in himself the racy freshness and boldness which he gives to his colours; partly, perhaps, also, because he has in his art the self-esteem that patricians take from their pedigree, and shakes a duke by the hand to prevent the duke holding out to him a finger."

"Good," said Darrell, with his rare, manly laugh. "Being shy myself, I like men who meet one half-way. I see that we shall be at our ease with each other."

"And perhaps still more 'when I tell you that he is connected with an old Eton friend of ours, and deriving no great benefit from that connection; you remember poor Sidney Branthwaite?"

"To be sure. He and I were great friends at Eton somewhat in the same position of pride and poverty. Of all the boys in the school we two had the least pocket-money. Poor Branthwaite! I lost sight of him afterwards. He went into the Church, got only a curacy, and died young."

"And left a son, poorer than himself, who married Frank Vance's sister."

"You don't say so. The Branthwaites were of good old family; what is Mr. Vance's?"

"Respectable enough. Vance's father was one of those clever men who have too many strings to their bow. He, too, was a painter; but he was also a man of letters, in a sort of a way—had a share in a journal, in which he wrote Criticisms on the Fine Arts. A musical composer, too.

"Rather a fine gentleman, I suspect, with a wife who was rather a fine lady. Their house was much frequented by artists and literary men: old Vance, in short, was hospitable—his wife extravagant. Believing that posterity would do that justice to his pictures which his contemporaries refused, Vance left to his family no other provision. After selling his pictures and paying his debts, there was just enough left to bury him. Fortunately, Sir ——, the great painter of that day, had already conceived a liking to Frank Vance—then a mere boy—who had shown genius from an infant, as all true artists do. Sir —— took him into his studio and gave him lessons. It would have been unlike Sir ——, who was open-hearted but close-fisted, to give anything else. But the boy contrived to support his mother and sister. That fellow, who is now as arrogant a stickler for the dignity of art as you or my Lord Chancellor may be for that of the bar, stooped then to deal clandestinely with fancy shops, and imitate Watteau on fans. I have two hand-screens that he painted for a shop in Rathbone Place. I suppose he may have got ten shillings for them, and now any admirer of Frank's would give L100 apiece for them."

"That is the true soul in which genius lodges, and out of which fire springs," cried Darrell cordially. "Give me the fire that lurks in the flint, and answers by light the stroke of the hard steel. I'm glad Lionel has won a friend in such a man. Sidney Branthwaite's son married Vance's sister—after Vance had won reputation?"

"No; while Vance was still a boy. Young Arthur Branthwaite was an orphan. If he had any living relations, they were too poor to assist him. He wrote poetry much praised by the critics (they deserve to be hanged, those critics!)—scribbled, I suppose, in old Vance's journal; saw Mary Vance a little before her father died; fell in love with her; and on the strength of a volume of verse, in which the critics all solemnly deposed to his surpassing riches—of imagination, rushed to the altar, and sacrificed a wife to the Muses! Those villanous critics will have a dark account to render in the next world! Poor Arthur Branthwaite! For the sake of our old friend, his father, I bought a copy of his little volume. Little as the volume was, I could not read it through."

What!—below contempt?"

"On the contrary, above comprehension! All poetry praised by critics now-a-days is as hard to understand as a hieroglyphic. I own a weakness for Pope and common sense. I could keep up with our age as far as Byron; after him I was thrown out. However, Arthur was declared by the critics to be a great improvement on Byron—more 'poetical in form'—more 'aesthetically artistic'—more 'objective' or 'subjective' (I am sure I forget which; but it was one or the other, nonsensical, and not English) in his views of man and nature. Very possibly. All I know is—I bought the poems, but could not read them; the critics read them, but did not buy. All that Frank Vance could make by painting hand-screens and fans and album-scrap, he sent, I believe, to the poor poet; but I fear it did not suffice. Arthur, I suspect, must have been publishing another volume on his own account. I saw a Monody on something or other, by Arthur Branthwaite, advertised, and no doubt Frank's fans and hand-screens must have melted into the printer's bill. But the Monody never appeared: the poet died, his young wife too. Frank Vance remains a bachelor, and sneers at gentility—abhors poets—is insulted if you promise posthumous fame—gets the best price he can for his pictures—and is proud to be thought a miser. Here we are at his door."

CHAPTER XIV.

ROMANTIC LOVE PATHOLOGICALLY REGARDED BY FRANK VANCE AND ALBAN MORLEY.

Vance was before his easel, Lionel looking over his shoulder. Never was Darrell more genial than he was that day to Frank Vance. The two men took to each other at once, and talked as familiarly as if the retired lawyer and the rising painter were old fellow-travellers along the same road of life. Darrell was really an exquisite judge of art, and his praise was the more gratifying because discriminating. Of course he gave the due meed of panegyric to the female heads, by which the artist had become so renowned. Lionel took his kinsman aside, and, with a mournful expression of face, showed him the portrait by which, all those varying ideals had been suggested—the portrait of Sophy as Titania.

"And that is Lionel," said the artist, pointing to the rough outline of Bottom.

"Pish!" said Lionel, angrily. Then turning to Darrell: "This is the Sophy we have failed to find, sir—is it not a lovely face?"

"It is indeed," said Darrell. "But that nameless refinement in expression—that arch yet tender elegance in the simple, watchful

attitude—these, Mr. Vance, must be your additions to the original.”

”No, I assure you, sir,” said Lionel: ”besides that elegance, that refinement, there was a delicacy in the look and air of that child to which Vance failed to do justice. Own it, Frank.”

”Reassure yourself, Mr. Darrell,” said Vance, ”of any fears which Lionel’s enthusiasm might excite. He tells me that Titania is in America; yet, after all, I would rather he saw her again—no cure for love at first sight like a second sight of the beloved object after a long absence.”

DARRELL (somewhat gravely).—”A hazardous remedy—it might kill, if it did not cure.”

COLONEL MORLEY.—”I suspect, from Vance’s manner, that he has tested its efficacy on his own person.”

LIONEL.—”NO, mon Colonel—I’ll answer for Vance. He in love! Never.”

Vance coloured—gave a touch to the nose of a Roman senator in the famous classical picture which he was then painting for a merchant at Manchester—and made no reply. Darrell looked at the artist with a sharp and searching glance.

COLONEL MORLEY.—”Then all the more credit to Vance for his intuitive perception of philosophical truth. Suppose, my dear Lionel, that we light, one idle day, on a beautiful novel, a glowing romance—suppose that, by chance, we are torn from the book in the middle of the interest—we remain under the spell of the illusion—we recall the scenes—we try to guess what should have been the sequel—we think that no romance ever was so captivating, simply because we were not allowed to conclude it. Well, if, some years afterwards, the romance fall again in our way, and we open at the page where we left off, we cry, in the maturity of our sober judgment, ’Mawkish stuff!—is this the same thing that I once thought so beautiful?—how one’s tastes do alter!’”

DARRELL.—”Does it not depend on the age in which one began the romance?”

LIONEL.—”Rather, let me think, sir, upon the real depth of the interest—the true beauty of the—”

VANCE (interrupting).—”Heroine?—Not at all, Lionel. I once fell in love—incredible as it may seem to you—nine years ago last January. I was too poor then to aspire to any young lady’s hand—therefore I did not tell my love, but ’let concealment,’ et cetera, et cetera. She went away with her mamma to complete her education on the Continent. I remained ’Patience on a monument.’ She was always before my eyes—the slenderest,

shyest creature just eighteen. I never had an idea that she could grow any older, less slender, or less shy. Well, four years afterwards (just before we made our excursion into Surrey, Lionel), she returned to England, still unmarried. I went to a party at which I knew she was to be-saw her, and was cured."

"Bad case of small-pox, or what?" asked the Colonel, smiling.

VANCE—"Nay; everybody said she was extremely improved—that was the mischief—she had improved herself out of my fancy. I had been faithful as wax to one settled impression, and when I saw a fine, full-formed, young Frenchified lady, quite at her ease, armed with eyeglass and bouquet and bustle, away went my dream of the slim blushing maiden. The Colonel is quite right, Lionel; the romance once suspended, 'tis a haunting remembrance till thrown again in our way, but complete disillusion if we try to renew it; though I swear that in my case the interest was deep, and the heroine improved in her beauty. So with you and that dear little creature. See her again, and you'll tease, me no more to give you that portrait of Titania at watch over Bottom's soft slumbers. All a Midsummer Night's Dream, Lionel. Titania fades back into the arms of Oberon, and would not be Titania if you could make her—Mrs. Bottom."

CHAPTER XV.

EVEN COLONEL MORLEY, (KNOWING EVERYBODY AND EVERYTHING), IS PUZZLED
WHEN IT COMES TO THE PLAIN QUESTION—"WHAT WILL HE DO WITH IT?"

"I am delighted with Vance," said Darrell, when he and the Colonel were again walking arm-in-arm. "His is not one of those meagre intellects which have nothing to spare out of the professional line. He has humour. Humour—strength's rich superfluity."

"I like your definition," said the Colonel. "And humour in Vance, though fantastic, is not without subtlety. There was much real kindness in his obvious design to quiz Lionel out of that silly enthusiasm for—"

"For a pretty child, reared up to be a strolling player," interrupted Darrell. "Don't call it silly enthusiasm. I call it chivalrous compassion. Were it other than compassion, it would not be enthusiasm—it would be degradation. But do you believe, then, that Vance's confession of first love, and its cure, was but a whimsical invention?"

COLONEL MORLEY.—"Not so. Many a grave truth is spoken jestingly. I

have no doubt that, allowing for the pardonable exaggeration of a /raconteur/, Vance was narrating an episode in his own life.”

DARRELL.—“Do you think that a grown man, who has ever really felt love, can make a jest of it, and to mere acquaintances?”

COLONEL MORLEY.—“Yes; if he be so thoroughly cured, that he has made a jest of it to himself. And the more lightly he speaks of it, perhaps the more solemnly at one time he felt it. Levity is his revenge on the passion that fooled him.”

DARRELL.—“You are evidently an experienced philosopher in the lore of such folly. *’/Consultas insipientis sapientiae/.*’ Yet I can scarcely believe that you have ever been in love.”

“Yes, I have,” said the Colonel bluntly, “and very often! Everybody at my age has—except yourself. So like a man’s observation, that,” continued the Colonel with much tartness. “No man ever thinks another man capable of a profound and romantic sentiment!”

DARRELL.—“True; I own my shallow fault, and beg you ten thousand pardons. So then you really believe, from your own experience, that there is much in Vance’s theory and your own very happy illustration? Could we, after many years, turn back to the romance at the page at which we left off, we should—”

COLONEL MORLEY.—“Not care a straw to read on! Certainly, half the peculiar charm of a person beloved must be ascribed to locality and circumstance.”

DARRELL.—“I don’t quite understand you.”

COLONEL MORLEY.—“Then, as you liked my former illustration, I will explain myself by another one more homely. In a room to which you are accustomed there is a piece of furniture, or an ornament, which so exactly suits the place that you say: *’The prettiest thing I ever saw!’* You go away—you return—the piece of furniture or the ornament has been moved into another room. You see it there, and you say: *’Bless me, is that the thing I so much admired!’* The strange room does not suit it—losing its old associations and accessories, it has lost its charm. So it is with human beings—seen in one place, the place would be nothing without them; seen in another, the place without them would be all the better!”

DARRELL (musingly)—“There are some puzzles in life which resemble the riddles a child asks you to solve. Your imagination cannot descend low enough for the right guess. Yet, when you are told, you are obliged to say, *’How clever!’* Man lives to learn.”

"Since you have arrived at that conviction," replied Colonel Morley, amused by his friend's gravity, "I hope that you will rest satisfied with the experiences of Vance and myself; and that if you have a mind to propose to one of the young ladies whose merits we have already discussed, you will not deem it necessary to try what effect a prolonged absence might produce on your good resolution."

"No!" said Darrell, with sudden animation. "Before three days are over my mind shall be made up." "Bravo!—as to whom of the three you would ask in marriage?"

"Or as to the idea of ever marrying again. Adieu, I am going to knock at that door."

"Mr. Vyvyan's! Ah, is it so, indeed? Verily, you are a true Dare-all."

"Do not be alarmed. I go afterwards to an exhibition with Lady Adela, and I dine with the Carr Viponts. My choice is not yet made, and my hand still free."

"His hand still free!" muttered the Colonel, pursuing his walk alone. "Yes—but three days hence—O—What will he do with it?"

CHAPTER XVI.

GUY DARRELL'S DECISION.

Guy Darrell returned home from Carr Vipont's dinner at a late hour. On his table was a note from Lady Adela's father, cordially inviting Darrell to pass the next week at his country-house; London was now emptying fast. On the table too was a parcel, containing a book which Darrell had lent to Miss Vyvyan some weeks ago, and a note from herself. In calling at her father's house that morning, he had learned that Mr. Vyvyan had suddenly resolved to take her into Switzerland, with the view of passing the next winter in Italy. The room was filled with loungers of both sexes. Darrell had stayed but a short time. The leave-taking had been somewhat formal—Flora unusually silent. He opened her note, and read the first lines listlessly; those that followed, with a changing cheek and an earnest eye. He laid down the note very gently, again took it up and reperused. Then he held it to the candle, and it dropped from his hand in tinder. "The innocent child," murmured he, with a soft paternal tenderness; "she knows not what she writes." He began to pace the room with his habitual restlessness when in solitary thought—often stopping—often sighing heavily. At length his face cleared—his lips became firmly set. He summoned his favourite servant. "Mills," said he, "I shall leave town on horseback as soon as the sun rises. Put what I may require

for a day or two into the saddle-bags. Possibly, however I may be back by dinner-time. Call me at five o'clock, and then go round to the stables. I shall require no groom to attend me."

The next morning, while the streets were deserted, no houses as yet astir, but the sun bright, the air fresh, Guy Darrell rode from his door. He did not return the same day, nor the next, nor at all. But, late in the evening of the second day, his horse, reeking hot and evidently hard-riden, stopped at the porch of Fawley Manor-House; and Darrell flung himself from the saddle, and into Fairthorn's arms. "Back again—back again—and to leave no more!" said he, looking round; "Spes et Fortuna valete!"

CHAPTER XVII.

A MAN'S LETTER—UNSATISFACTORY AND PROVOKING AS A MAN'S LETTERS ALWAYS ARE.

GUY DARRELL To COLONEL MORLEY.

Fawley Manor-House, August 11, 18—. I HAVE decided, my dear Alban. I did not take three days to do so, though the third day may be just over ere you learn my decision. I shall never marry again: I abandon that last dream of declining years. My object in returning to the London world was to try whether I could not find, amongst the fairest and most attractive women that the world produces—at least to an English eye—some one who could inspire me with that singleness of affection which could alone justify the hope that I might win in return a wife's esteem and a contented home. That object is now finally relinquished, and with it all idea of resuming the life of cities. I might have re-entered a political career, had I first secured to myself a mind sufficiently serene and healthful for duties that need the concentration of thought and desire. Such a state of mind I cannot secure. I have striven for it; I am baffled. It is said that politics are a jealous mistress—that they require the whole man. The saying is not invariably true in the application it commonly receives—that is, a politician may have some other employment of intellect, which rather enlarges his powers than distracts their political uses. Successful politicians have united with great parliamentary toil and triumph legal occupations or learned studies. But politics do require that the heart should be free, and at peace from all more absorbing private anxieties—from the gnawing of a memory or a care, which dulls ambition and paralyses energy. In this sense politics do require the whole man. If I return to politics now, I should fail to them, and they to me. I feel that the brief interval between me and the grave has need of repose: I find that repose here.

I have therefore given the necessary orders to dismiss the pompous retinue which I left behind me, and instructed my agent to sell my London house for whatever it may fetch. I was unwilling to sell it before—unwilling to abandon the hope, however faint, that I might yet regain strength for action. But the very struggle to obtain such strength leaves me exhausted more.

You may believe that it is not without a pang, less of pride than of remorse, that I resign unfulfilled the object towards which all my earlier life was so resolutely shaped. The house I promised my father to re-found dies to dust in my grave. To my father's blood no heir to my wealth can trace. Yet it is a consolation to think that Lionel Haughton is one on whom my father would have smiled approvingly. At my death, therefore, at least the old name will not die; Lionel Haughton will take and be worthy to bear it. Strange weakness of mine, you will say; but I cannot endure the thought that the old name should be quite blotted out of the land. I trust that Lionel may early form a suitable and happy marriage. Sure that he will not choose ignobly, I impose no fetters on his choice.

One word only on that hateful subject, confided so tardily to your friendship, left so thankfully to your discretion. Now that I have once more buried myself in Fawley, it is very unlikely that the man it pains me to name will seek me here. If he does, he cannot molest me as if I were in the London world. Continue, then, I pray you, to leave him alone. And, in adopting your own shrewd belief, that after all there is no such child as he pretends to claim, my mind becomes tranquillised on all that part of my private griefs.

Farewell, old school-friend! Here, so far as I can foretell—here, where my life began, it returns, when Heaven pleases, to close. Here I could not ask you to visit me: what is rest to me would be loss of time to you. But in my late and vain attempt to re-enter that existence in which you have calmly and wisely gathered round yourself, "all that should accompany old age—honour, love, obedience, troops of friends"—nothing so repaid the effort—nothing now so pleasantly remains to recollection—as the brief renewal of that easy commune which men like me never know, save with those whose laughter brings back to them a gale from the old playground. "/Vive, vale/;" I will not add, "/Sis memor mei/." So many my obligations to your kindness, that you will be forced to remember me whenever you recall the not "painful subjects" of early friendship and lasting gratitude. Recall only those when reminded of GUY DARRELL.

CHAPTER XVIII.

NO COINAGE IN CIRCULATION SO FLUCTUATES IN VALUE AS THE WORTH OF A MARRIAGEABLE MAN.

Colonel Morley was not surprised (that, we know, he could not be, by any fresh experience of human waywardness and caprice), but much disturbed and much vexed by the unexpected nature of Darrell's communication. Schemes for Darrell's future lead become plans of his own. Talk with his old school-fellow had, within the last three months, entered into the pleasures of his age. Darrell's abrupt and final renunciation of this social world made at once a void in the business of Alban's mind, and in the affections of Alban's heart. And no adequate reason assigned for so sudden a flight and so morbid a resolve! Some tormenting remembrance—some rankling grief—distinct from those of which Alban was cognisant, from those in which he had been consulted, was implied, but by vague and general hints. But what was the remembrance or the grief, Alban Morley, who knew everything, was quite persuaded that Darrell would never suffer him to know. Could it be in any way connected with those three young ladies to whom Darrell's attentions had been so perversely impartial? The Colonel did not fail to observe that to those young ladies Darrell's letter made no allusion. Was it not possible that he had really felt for one of them a deeper sentiment than a man advanced in years ever likes to own even to his nearest friend—hazarded a proposal, and met with a rebuff? If so, Alban conjectured the female culprit by whom the sentiment had been inspired, and the rebuff administered. "That mischievous kitten, Flora Vyvyan," growled the Colonel. "I always felt that she had the claws of a tigress under her /patte de velours/!" Roused by this suspicion, he sallied forth to call on the Vyvyans. Mr. Vyvyan, a widower, one of those quiet gentleman-like men who sit much in the drawing-room and like receiving morning visitors, was at home to him. "So Darrell has left town for the season," said the Colonel, pushing straight to the point.

"Yes," said Mr. Vyvyan. "I had a note from him this morning to say he had renounced all hope of—"

"What?" cried the Colonel.

"Joining us in Switzerland. I am so sorry. Flora still more sorry. She is accustomed to have her own way, and she had set her heart on hearing Darrell read 'Manfred' in sight of the Jungfrau!"

"Um!" said the Colonel. "What might be sport to her might be death to him. A man at his age is not too old to fall in love with a young lady of hers. But he is too old not to be extremely ridiculous to such a young lady if he does."

"Colonel Morley-Fie!" cried an angry voice behind him. Flora had entered the room unobserved. Her face was much flushed, and her eyelids looked as if tears had lately swelled beneath them, and were swelling still.

"What have I said to merit your rebuke?" asked the Colonel composedly.

"Said! coupled the thought of ridicule with the name of Mr. Darrell!"

"Take care, Morley," said Mr. Vyvyan, laughing. "Flora is positively superstitious in her respect for Guy Darrell; and you cannot offend her more than by implying that he is mortal. Nay, child, it is very natural. Quite apart from his fame, there is something in that man's familiar talk, or rather, perhaps, in the very sound of his voice, which makes most other society seem flat and insipid.

"I feel it myself. And when Flora's young admirers flutter and babble round her—just after Darrell has quitted his chair beside her—they seem very poor company. I am sure, Flora," continued Vyvyan kindly, "that the mere acquaintance of such a man has done you much good; and I am now in great hopes that, whenever you marry, it will be a man of sense."

"Um!" again said the Colonel, eyeing Flora aslant, but with much attention. "How I wish, for my friend's sake, that he was of an age which inspired Miss Vyvyan with less-veneration."

Flora turned her back on the Colonel, looking out of the window, and her small foot beating the ground with nervous irritation.

"It was given out that Darrell intended to marry again," said Mr. Vyvyan. "A man of that sort requires a very superior highly-educated woman; and if Miss Carr Vipont had been a little more of his age she would have just suited him. But I am patriot enough to hope that he will remain single, and have no wife but his country, like Mr. Pitt." The Colonel having now satisfied his curiosity, and assured himself that Darrell was, there at least, no rejected suitor, rose and approached Flora to make peace and to take leave. As he held out his hand, he was struck with the change in a countenance usually so gay in its aspect—it spoke of more than dejection, it betrayed distress; when she took his hand, she retained it, and looked into his eyes wistfully; evidently there was something on her mind which she wished to express and did not know how. At length she said in a whisper: "You are Mr. Darrell's most intimate friend; I have heard him say so; shall you see him soon?"

"I fear not; but why?"

"Why? you, his friend; do you not perceive that he is not happy? I, a mere stranger, saw it at the first. You should cheer and comfort him; you have that right—it is a noble privilege."

"My dear young lady," said the Colonel, touched, "you have a better heart than I thought for. It is true Darrell is not a happy man; but can you give me any message that might cheer him more than an old bachelor's commonplace exhortations to take heart, forget the rains of yesterday, and hope for some gleam of sun on the morrow?"

"No," said Flora, sadly, "it would be a presumption indeed in me, to affect the consoler's part; but"—(her lips quivered)—"but if I may judge by his letter, I may never see him again."

"His letter! He has written to you, then, as well as to your father?"

"Yes," said Flora, confused and colouring, "a few lines in answer to a silly note of mine; yes, tell him that I shall never forget his kind counsels, his delicate, indulgent construction of—of—in short, tell him my father is right, and that I shall be better and wiser all my life for the few short weeks in which I have known Guy Darrell."

"What secrets are you two whispering there?" asked Mr. Vyvyan from his easy-chair.

"Ask her ten years hence," said the Colonel, as he retreated to the door. "The fairest leaves in the flower are the last that the bud will disclose."

From Mr. Vyvyan the Colonel went to Lord —'s. His lordship had also heard from Darrell that morning; Darrell declined the invitation to — Hall; business at Fawley. Lady Adela had borne the disappointment with her wonted serenity of temper, and had gone out shopping. Darrell had certainly not offered his hand in that quarter; had he done so—whether refused or accepted—all persons yet left in London would have heard the news. Thence the Colonel repaired to Carr Vipont's. Lady Selina was at home and exceedingly cross. Carr had been astonished by a letter from Mr. Darrell, dated Fawley—left town for the season without even calling to take leave—a most eccentric man. She feared his head was a little touched—that he knew it, but did not like to own it—perhaps the doctors had told him he must keep quiet, and not excite himself with politics. "I had thought," said Lady Selina, "that he might have felt a growing attachment for Honoria; and considering the disparity of years, and that Honoria certainly might marry any one, he was too proud to incur the risk of refusal. But I will tell you in confidence, as a relation and dear friend, that Honoria has a very superior mind, and might have overlooked the mere age: congenial tastes—you understand. But on thinking it all over, I begin to doubt whether that be the true reason for his running away in this wild sort of manner. My maid tells me that his house-steward called to say that the establishment was to be broken up. That looks as if he had resigned London for good; just, too, when, Carr says, the CRISIS, so long put off, is sure to burst on us. I'm quite sick of clever men—one never knows how to trust them; if they are not dishonest

they are eccentric! I have just been telling Honoria that clever men are, after all, the most tiresome husbands. Well, what makes you so silent? What do you say? Why don't you speak?"

"I am slowly recovering from my shock," said the Colonel. "So Darrell shirks the CRISIS, and has not even hinted a preference for Honoria, the very girl in all London that would have made him a safe, rational companion. I told him so, and he never denied it. But it is a comfort to think he is no loss. Old monster!"

"Nay," said Lady Selina, mollified by so much sympathy, "I don't say he is no loss. Honestly speaking—between ourselves—I think he is a very great loss. An alliance between him and Honoria would have united all the Vipont influence. Lord Montfort has the greatest confidence in Darrell; and if this CRISIS comes, it is absolutely necessary for the Vipont interest that it should find somebody who can speak. Really, my dear Colonel Morley, you, who have such an influence over this very odd man, should exert it now. One must not be over-nice in times of CRISIS; the country is at stake, Cousin Alban."

"I will do my best," said the Colonel; "I am quite aware that an alliance which would secure Darrell's talents to the House of Vipont, and the House of Vipont to Darrell's talents, would—but 'tis no use talking, we must not sacrifice Honoria even on the altar of her country's interest!"

"Sacrifice! Nonsense! The man is not young certainly, but then what a grand creature, and so clever."

"Clever—yes! But that was your very objection to him five minutes ago."

"I forgot the CRISIS.—One don't want clever men every day, but there are days when one does want them!"

"I envy you that aphorism. But from what you now imply, I fear that Honoria may have allowed her thoughts to settle upon what may never take place; and if so, she may fret."

"Fret! a daughter of mine fret!—and of all my daughters, Honoria! A girl of the best-disciplined mind! Fret! what a word!—vulgar!"

COLONEL MORLEY.—"So it is; I blush for it; but let us understand each other. If Darrell proposed for Honoria, you think, ambition apart, she would esteem him sufficiently for a decided preference."

LADY SELINA.—"If that be his doubt, re-assure him. He is shy—men of genius are; Honoria would esteem him! Till he has actually proposed it would compromise her to say more even to you."

COLONEL MORLEY.—"And if that be not the doubt, and if I ascertain that

Darrell has no idea of proposing, Honoria would—”

LADY SELINA.—”Despise him. Ah, I see by your countenance that you think I should prepare her. Is it so, frankly?”

COLONEL MORLEY.—”Frankly, then. I think Guy Darrell, like many other men, has been so long in making up his mind to marry again that he has lost the right moment, and will never find it.”

Lady Selina smells at her vinaigrette, and replies in her softest, affectedest, civilest, and crushingest manner: ”POOR—DEAR—OLD MAN!”

CHAPTER XIX.

MAN IS NOT PERMITTED, WITH ULTIMATE IMPUNITY, TO EXASPERATE THE ENVIES AND INSULT THE MISERIES OF THOSE AROUND HIM, BY A SYSTEMATIC PERSEVERANCE IN WILFUL-CELIBACY. IN VAIN MAY HE SCHEME, IN THE MARRIAGE OF INJURED FRIENDS, TO PROVIDE ARM-CHAIRS, AND FOOT-STOOLS, AND PRATTLING BABIES FOR THE LUXURIOUS DELECTATION OF HIS INDOLENT AGE. THE AVENGING EUMENIDES (BEING THEMSELVES ANCIENT VIRGINS NEGLECTED) SHALL HUMBLE HIS INSOLENCY, BAFFLE HIS PROJECTS, AND CONDEMN HIS DECLINING YEARS TO THE HORRORS OF SOLITUDE,—RARELY EVEN WAKENING HIS SOUL TO THE GRACE OF REPENTANCE.

The Colonel, before returning home, dropped into the Clubs, and took care to give to Darrell’s sudden disappearance a plausible and commonplace construction. The season was just over. Darrell had gone to the country. The town establishment was broken up, because the house in Carlton Gardens was to be sold. Darrell did not like the situation—found the air relaxing—Park Lane or Grosvenor Square were on higher ground. Besides, the staircase was bad for a house of such pretensions—not suited to large parties. Next season Darrell might be in a position when he would have to give large parties, &c., &c. As no one is inclined to suppose that a man will retire from public life just when he has a chance of office, so the Clubs took Alban Morley’s remarks unsuspectingly, and generally agreed that Darrell showed great tact in absenting himself from town during the transition state of politics that

always precedes a CRISIS, and that it was quite clear that he calculated on playing a great part when the CRISIS was over, by finding his house had grown too small for him. Thus paving the way to Darrell's easy return to the world, should he repent of his retreat (a chance which Alban by no means dismissed from his reckoning), the Colonel returned home to find his nephew George awaiting him there. The scholarly clergyman had ensconced himself in the back drawing-room, fitted up as a library, and was making free with the books. "What have you there, George?" asked the Colonel, after shaking him by the hand. "You seemed quite absorbed in its contents, and would not have noticed my presence but for Gyp's bark."

"A volume of poems I never chanced to meet before, full of true genius."

"Bless me, poor Arthur Branthwaite's poems. And you were positively reading those—not induced to do so by respect for his father? Could you make head or tail of them?"

"There is a class of poetry which displeases middle age by the very attributes which render it charming to the young; for each generation has a youth with idiosyncrasies peculiar to itself, and a peculiar poetry by which those idiosyncrasies are expressed."

Here George was beginning to grow metaphysical, and somewhat German, when his uncle's face assumed an expression which can only be compared to that of a man who dreads a very severe and long operation. George humanely hastened to relieve his mind.

"But I will not bore you at present."

"Thank you," said the Colonel, brightening up.

"Perhaps you will lend me the book. I am going down to Lady Montfort's by-and-by, and I can read it by the way."

"Yes, I will lend it to you till next season. Let me have it again then, to put on the table when Frank Vance comes to breakfast with me. The poet was his brother-in-law; and though, for that reason, poets and poetry are a sore subject with Frank, yet the last time he breakfasted here, I felt, by the shake of his hand in parting, that he felt pleased by a mark of respect to all that is left of poor Arthur Branthwaite. So you are going to Lady Montfort? Ask her why she chits me!"

"My dear uncle! You know how secluded her life is at present; but she has charged me to assure you of her unalterable regard for you; and whenever her health and spirits are somewhat more recovered, I have no doubt that she will ask you to give her the occasion to make that assurance in person."

COLONEL MORLEY.—"Can her health and spirits continue so long affected by grief for the loss of that distant acquaintance whom the law called her husband?"

GEORGE.—"She is very far from well, and her spirits are certainly much broken. And now, uncle, for the little favour I came to ask. Since you presented me to Mr. Darrell, he kindly sent me two or three invitations to dinner, which my frequent absence from town would not allow me to accept. I ought to call on him; and, as I feel ashamed not to have done so before, I wish you would accompany me to his house. One happy word from you would save me a relapse into stutter. When I want to apologise I always stutter."

"Darrell has left town," said the Colonel, roughly, "you have missed an opportunity that will never occur again. The most charming companion; an intellect so manly, yet so sweet! I shall never find such another." And for the first time in thirty years a tear stole to Alban Morley's eye.

GEORGE.—"When did he leave town?"

COLONEL MORLEY.—"Three days ago."

GEORGE.—"Three days ago! and for the Continent again?"

COLONEL MORLEY.—"No; for the Hermitage, George. I have such a letter from him! You know how many years he has been absent from the world. When, this year, he re-appeared, he and I grew more intimate than we had ever been since we had left school; for though the same capital held us before, he was then too occupied for much familiarity with an idle man like me. But just when I was intertwining what is left of my life with the bright threads of his, he snaps the web asunder: he quits this London world again; says he will return to it no more."

GEORGE.—"Yet I did hear that he proposed to renew his parliamentary career; nay, that he was about to form a second marriage, with Honoria Vipont?"

COLONEL MORLEY.—"Mere gossip—not true. No, he will never marry again.

Three days ago I thought it certain that he would—certain that I should find for my old age a nook in his home—the easiest chair in his social circle; that my daily newspaper would have a fresh interest, in the praise of his name or the report of his speech; that I should walk proudly into White's, sure to hear there of Guy Darrell; that I should keep from misanthropical rust my dry knowledge of life, planning shrewd panegyrics to him of a young happy wife, needing all his indulgence—panegyrics to her of the high-minded sensitive man, claiming tender respect and delicate soothing;—that thus, day by day, I should have made more pleasant the home in which I should have planted myself, and found

in his children boys to lecture and girls to spoil. Don't be jealous, George. I like your wife, I love your little ones, and you will inherit all I have to leave. But to an old bachelor, who would keep young to the last, there is no place so sunny as the hearth of an old school-friend. But my house of cards is blown down—talk of it no more—'tis a painful subject. You met Lionel Haughton here the last time you called—how did you like him!"

"Very much indeed."

"Well, then, since you cannot call on Darrell, call on him."

GEORGE (with animation).—"It is just what I meant to do—what is his address?"

COLONEL MORLEY—"There is his card—take it. He was here last night to inquire if I knew where Darrell had gone, though no one in his household, nor I either, suspected till this morning that Darrell had left town for good. You will find Lionel at home, for I sent him word I would call. But really I am not up to it now. Tell him from me that Mr. Darrell will not return to Carlton Gardens this season, and is gone to Fawley. At present Lionel need not know more—you understand? And now, my dear George, good day."

CHAPTER XX.

EACH GENERATION HAS ITS OWN CRITICAL CANONS IN POETRY AS WELL AS IN POLITICAL CREEDS, FINANCIAL SYSTEMS, OR WHATEVER OTHER CHANGEABLE MATTERS OF TASTE ARE CALLED "SETTLED QUESTIONS" AND "FIXED OPINIONS."

George, musing much over all that his uncle had said respecting Darrell, took his way to Lionel's lodgings. The young man received him with the cordial greeting due from Darrell's kinsman to Colonel Morley's nephew, but tempered by the respect no less due to the distinction and the calling of the eloquent preacher.

Lionel was perceptibly affected by learning that Darrell had thus suddenly returned to the gloomy beech-woods of Fawley; and he evinced his anxious interest in his benefactor with so much spontaneous tenderness of feeling that George, as if in sympathy, warmed into the same theme. "I can well conceive," said he, "your affection for Mr. Darrell. I remember, when I was a boy, how powerfully he impressed me, though I saw but little of him. He was then in the zenith of his career, and had but

few moments to give to a boy like me; but the ring of his voice and the flash of his eye sent me back to school, dreaming of fame and intent on prizes. I spent part of one Easter vacation at his house in town; he bade his son, who was my schoolfellow, invite me."

LIONEL.—"You knew his son? How Mr. Darrell has felt that loss!"

GEORGE.—"Heaven often veils its most provident mercy in what to man seems its sternest inflictions. That poor boy must have changed his whole nature, if his life had not, to a father like Mr. Darrell, occasioned grief sharper than his death."

LIONEL.—"You amaze me. Mr. Darrell spoke of him as a boy of great promise."

GEORGE.—"He had that kind of energy which to a father conveys the idea of promise, and which might deceive those older than himself—a fine bright-eyed, bold-tongued boy, with just enough awe of his father to bridle his worst qualities before him."

LIONEL.—"What were those?"

GEORGE.—"Headstrong arrogance—relentless cruelty. He had a pride which would have shamed his father out of pride, had Guy Darrell detected its nature—purse pride! I remember his father said to me with a half-laugh: 'My boy must not be galled and mortified as I was every hour at school—clothes patched and pockets empty.' And so, out of mistaken kindness, Mr. Darrell ran into the opposite extreme, and the son was proud, not of his father's fame, but of his father's money, and withal not generous, nor exactly extravagant, but using money as power—power that allowed him to insult an equal or to buy a slave. In a word, his nickname at school was 'Sir Giles Overreach.' His death was the result of his strange passion for tormenting others. He had a fag who could not swim, and who had the greatest terror of the water; and it was while driving this child into the river out of his depth that cramp seized himself, and he was drowned. Yes, when I think what that boy would have been as a man, succeeding to Darrell's wealth—and had Darrell persevered (as he would, perhaps, if the boy had lived) in his public career—to the rank and titles he would probably have acquired and bequeathed—again, I say, in man's affliction is often Heaven's mercy."

Lionel listened aghast. George continued: "Would that I could speak as plainly to Mr. Darrell himself! For we find constantly in the world that there is no error that misleads us like the error that is half a truth wrenched from the other half; and nowhere is such an error so common as when man applies it to the judgment of some event in his own life, and separates calamity from consolation."

LIONEL.—"True; but who could have the heart to tell a mourning father that his dead son was worthless?"

GEORGE.—"Alas! my young friend, the preacher must sometimes harden his own heart if he would strike home to another's soul. But I am not sure that Mr. Darrell would need so cruel a kindness. I believe that his clear intellect must have divined some portions of his son's nature which enabled him to bear the loss with fortitude. And he did bear it bravely. But now, Mr. Haughton, if you have the rest of the day free, I am about to make you an unceremonious proposition for its disposal. A lady who knew Mr. Darrell when she was very young has—a strong desire to form your acquaintance. She resides on the banks of the Thames, a little above Twickenham. I have promised to call on her this evening. Shall we dine together at Richmond? and afterwards we can take a boat to her villa."

Lionel at once accepted, thinking so little of the lady that he did not even ask her name. He was pleased to have a companion with whom he could talk of Darrell. He asked but delay to write a few lines of affectionate inquiry to his kinsman at Fawley, and, while he wrote, George took out Arthur Branthwaite's poems, and resumed their perusal. Lionel having sealed his letter, George extended the book to him. "Here are some remarkable poems by a brother-in-law of that remarkable artist, Frank Vance."

"Frank Vance! True, he had a brother-in-law a poet. I admire Frank so much; and, though he professes to sneer at poetry, he is so associated in my mind with poetical images that I am prepossessed beforehand in favour of all that brings him, despite himself, in connection with poetry."

"Tell me then," said George, pointing out a passage in the volume, "what you think of these lines. My good uncle would call them gibberish. I am not sure that I can construe them; but when I was your age, I think I could—what say you?"

Lionel glanced. "Exquisite indeed!—nothing can be clearer—they express exactly a sentiment in myself that I could never explain."

"Just so," said George, laughing. "Youth has a sentiment that it cannot explain, and the sentiment is expressed in a form of poetry that middle age cannot construe. It is true that poetry of the grand order interests equally all ages; but the world ever throws out a poetry not of the grandest; not meant to be durable—not meant to be universal, but following the shifts and changes of human sentiment, and just like those pretty sundials formed by flowers, which bloom to tell the hour, open their buds to tell it, and, telling it, fade themselves from time."

Not listening to the critic, Lionel continued to read the poems, exclaiming, "How exquisite!—how true!"

CHAPTER XXI.

IN LIFE, AS IN ART, THE BEAUTIFUL MOVES IN CURVES.

They have dined.—George Morley takes the oars, and the boat cuts through the dance of waves flushed by the golden sunset. Beautiful river! which might furnish the English tale-teller with legends wild as those culled on shores licked by Hydaspes, and sweet as those which Cephisus ever blended with the songs of nightingales and the breath of violets! But what true English poet ever names thee, O Father Thames, without a melodious tribute? And what child ever whiled away summer noons along thy grassy banks, nor hallowed thy remembrance among the fairy days of life?

Silently Lionel bent over the side of the gliding boat; his mind carried back to the same soft stream five years ago. How vast a space in his short existence those five years seemed to fill! And how distant from the young man, rich in the attributes of wealth, armed with each weapon of distinction, seemed the hour when the boy had groaned aloud, "'Fortune is so far, Fame so impossible!'" Farther and farther yet than his present worldly station from his past seemed the image that had first called forth in his breast the dreamy sentiment, which the sternest of us in after life never, utterly forget. Passions rage and vanish, and when all their storms are gone, yea, it may be, at the verge of the very grave, we look back and see like a star the female face, even though it be a child's, that first set us vaguely wondering at the charm in a human presence, at the void in a smile withdrawn! How many of us could recall a Beatrice through the gaps of ruined hope, seen, as by the Florentine, on the earth a guileless infant, in the heavens a spirit glorified! Yes—Laura was an affectation—Beatrice a reality!

George's voice broke somewhat distastefully on Lionel's reverie. "We near our destination, and you have not asked me even the name of the lady to whom you are to render homage. It is Lady Montfort, widow to the last Marquess. You have no doubt heard Mr. Darrell speak of her?"

"Never Mr. Darrell—Colonel Morley often. And in the world I have heard her cited as perhaps the handsomest, and certainly the haughtiest, woman in England."

"Never heard Mr. Darrell mention her! that is strange indeed," said George Morley, catching at Lionel's first words, and unnoticing his after comment. "She was much in his house as a child, shared in his daughter's education."

"Perhaps for that very reason he shuns her name. Never but once did I hear him allude to his daughter; nor can I wonder at that, if it be true, as I have been told by people who seem to know very little of the

particulars, that, while yet scarcely out of the nursery, she fled from his house with some low adventurer—a Mr. Hammond—died abroad the first year of that unhappy marriage.”

”Yes, that is the correct outline of the story; and, as you guess, it explains why Mr. Darrell avoids mention of one, whom he associates with his daughter’s name; though, if you desire a theme dear to Lady Montfort, you can select none that more interests her grateful heart than praise of the man who saved her mother from penury, and secured to herself the accomplishments and instruction which have been her chief solace.”

”Chief solace! Was she not happy with Lord Montfort? What sort of man was he?”

”I owe to Lord Montfort the living I hold, and I can remember the good qualities alone of a benefactor. If Lady Montfort was not happy with him, it is just to both to say that she never complained. But there is much in Lady Montfort’s character which the Marquess apparently failed to appreciate; at all events, they had little in common, and what was called Lady Montfort’s haughtiness was perhaps but the dignity with which a woman of grand nature checks the pity that would debase her—the admiration that would sully—guards her own beauty, and protects her husband’s name. Here we are. Will you stay for a few minutes in the boat, while I go to prepare Lady Montfort for your visit?”

George leapt ashore, and Lionel remained under the covert of mighty willows that dipped their leaves into the wave. Looking through the green interstices of the foliage, he saw at the far end of the lawn, on a curving bank by which the glittering tide shot oblique, a simple arbour—an arbour like that from which he had looked upon summer stars five years ago—not so densely covered with the honeysuckle; still the honeysuckle, recently trained there, was fast creeping up the sides; and through the trellis of the woodwork and the leaves of the flowering shrub, he just caught a glimpse of some form within—the white robe of a female form in a slow gentle movement—tending perhaps the flowers that wreathed the arbour. Now it was still, now it stirred again; now it was suddenly lost to view. Had the inmate left the arbour? Was the inmate Lady Montfort? George Morley’s step had not passed in that direction.

CHAPTER XXII.

A QUIET SCENE—AN UNQUIET HEART.

Meanwhile, not far from the willow-bank which sheltered Lionel, but far enough to be out of her sight and beyond her hearing, George Morley found Lady Montfort seated alone. It was a spot on which Milton might have

placed the lady in "Comus"—a circle of the smoothest sward, ringed everywhere (except at one opening which left the glassy river in full view) with thick bosks of dark evergreens and shrubs of livelier verdure; oak and chest nut backing and overhanging all. Flowers, too, raised on rustic tiers and stages; a tiny fountain, shooting up from a basin starred with the water-lily; a rustic table, on which lay hooks and the implements of woman's graceful work; so that the place had the home-look of a chamber, and spoke that intense love of the out-door life which abounds in our old poets from Chaucer down to the day when minstrels, polished into wits, took to Will's Coffee-house, and the lark came no more to bid bards

"Good morrow
From his watch-tower in the skies."

But long since, thank Heaven we have again got back the English poetry which chimes to the babble of the waters, and the riot of the birds; and just as that poetry is the freshest which the out-door life has the most nourished, so I believe that there is no surer sign of the rich vitality which finds its raciest joys in sources the most innocent, than the childlike taste for that same out-door life. Whether you take from fortune the palace or the cottage, add to your chambers a hall in the courts of Nature. Let the earth but give you room to stand on; well, look up—Is it nothing to have for your roof-tree—Heaven?

Caroline Montfort (be her titles dropped) is changed since we last saw her. The beauty is not less in degree, but it has gained in one attribute, lost in another; it commands less, it touches more. Still in deep mourning, the sombre dress throws a paler shade over the cheek. The eyes, more sunken beneath the brow, appear larger, softer. There is that expression of fatigue which either accompanies impaired health or succeeds to mental struggle and disquietude. But the coldness or pride of mien which was peculiar to Caroline as a wife is gone—as if in widowhood it was no longer needed. A something like humility prevailed over the look and the bearing which had been so tranquilly majestic. As at the approach of her cousin she started from her seat, there was a nervous tremor in her eagerness; a rush of colour to the cheeks; an anxious quivering of the lip; a flutter in the tones of the sweet low voice: "Well, George."

"Mr. Darrell is not in London; he went to Fawley three days ago; at least he is there now. I have this from my uncle, to whom he wrote; and whom his departure has vexed and saddened."

"Three days ago! It must have been he, then! I was not deceived," murmured Caroline, and her eyes wandered mound.

"There is no truth in the report you heard that he was to marry Honoria Vipont. My uncle thinks he will never marry again, and implies that he has resumed his solitary life at Fawley with a resolve to quit it no

more.”

Lady Montfort listened silently, bending her face over the fountain, and dropping amidst its playful spray the leaves of a rose which she had abstractedly plucked as George was speaking.

”I have, therefore, fulfilled your commission so far,” renewed George Morley. ”I have ascertained that Mr. Darrell is alive, and doubtless well; so that it could not have been his ghost that startled you amidst yonder thicket. But I have done more: I have forestalled the wish you expressed to become acquainted with young Haughton; and your object in postponing the accomplishment of that wish while Mr. Darrell himself was in town having ceased with Mr. Darrell’s departure, I have ventured to bring the young man with me. He is in the boat yonder. Will you receive him? Or—but, my dear cousin, are you not too unwell today? What is the matter? Oh, I can easily make an excuse for you to Haughton. I will run and do so.”

”No, George, no. I am as well as usual. I will see Mr. Haughton. All that you have heard of him, and have told me, interests me so much in his favour; and besides—” She did not finish the sentence; but led away by some other thought, asked, ”Have you no news of our missing friend?”

”None as yet; but in a few days I shall renew my search. Now, then, I will go for Haughton.”

”Do so; and George, when you have presented him to me, will you kindly join that dear anxious child yonder!

”She is in the new arbour, or near it—her favourite spot. You must sustain her spirits, and give her hope. You cannot guess how eagerly she looks forward to your visits, and how gratefully she relies on your exertions.”

George shook his head half despondingly, and saying briefly, ”My exertions have established no claim to her gratitude as yet,” went quickly back for Lionel.

CHAPTER XXIII.

SOMETHING ON AN OLD SUBJECT, WHICH HAS NEVER BEEN SAID BEFORE

Although Lionel was prepared to see a very handsome woman in Lady Montfort, the beauty of her countenance took him by surprise. No preparation by the eulogies of description can lessen the effect that

the first sight of a beautiful object produces upon a mind to which refinement of idea gives an accurate and quick comprehension of beauty. Be it a work of art, a scene in nature, or, rarest of all, a human face divine, a beauty never before beheld strikes us with hidden pleasure, like a burst of light. And it is a pleasure that elevates; the imagination feels itself richer by a new idea of excellence; for not only is real beauty wholly original, having no prototype, but its immediate influence is spiritual. It may seem strange—I appeal to every observant artist if the assertion be not true—but the first sight of the most perfect order of female beauty, rather than courting, rebukes and strikes back, every grosser instinct that would alloy admiration. There must be some meanness and blemish in the beauty which the sensualist no sooner beholds than he covets. In the higher incarnation of the abstract idea which runs through all our notions of moral good and celestial purity—even if the moment the eye sees the heart loves the image—the love has in it something of the reverence which it was said the charms of Virtue would produce could her form be made visible; nor could mere human love obtrude itself till the sweet awe of the first effect had been familiarised away. And I apprehend that it is this exalting or etherealising attribute of beauty to which all poets, all writers who would poetise the realities of life, have unconsciously rendered homage, in the rank to which they elevate what, stripped of such attribute, would be but a gaudy idol of painted clay. If, from the loftiest epic to the tritest novel, a heroine is often little more than a name to which we are called upon to bow, as to a symbol representing beauty, and if we ourselves (be we ever so indifferent in our common life to fair faces) feel that, in art at least, imagination needs an image of the Beautiful—if, in a word, both poet and reader here would not be left excuseless, it is because in our inmost hearts there is a sentiment which links the ideal of beauty with the Supersensual. Wouldst thou, for instance, form some vague conception of the shape worn by a pure soul released? wouldst thou give to it the likeness of an ugly hag? or wouldst thou not ransack all thy remembrances and conceptions of forms most beauteous to clothe the holy image? Do so: now bring it thus robed with the richest graces before thy mind's eye. Well, seest thou now the excuse for poets in the rank they give to BEAUTY? Seest thou now how high from the realm of the senses soars the mysterious Archetype? Without the idea of beauty, couldst thou conceive a form in which to clothe a soul that has entered heaven?

CHAPTER XXIV.

AGREEABLE SURPRISES ARE THE PERQUISITES OF YOUTH.

If the beauty of Lady Montfort's countenance took Lionel by surprise, still more might he wonder at the winning kindness of her address—a

kindness of look, manner, voice, which seemed to welcome him not as a chance acquaintance but as a new-found relation. The first few sentences, in giving them a subject of common interest, introduced into their converse a sort of confiding household familiarity. For Lionel, ascribing Lady Montfort's gracious reception to her early recollections of his kinsman, began at once to speak of Guy Darrell; and in a little time they were walking over the turf, or through the winding alleys of the garden, linking talk to the same theme, she by question, he by answer—he, charmed to expatiate—she, pleased to listen—and liking each other more and more, as she recognised in all he said a bright young heart, overflowing with grateful and proud affection, and as he felt instinctively that he was with one who sympathised in his enthusiasm—one who had known the great man in his busy day, ere the rush of his career had paused, whose childhood had lent a smile to the great man's home before childhood and smile had left it.

As they thus conversed, Lionel now and then, in the turns of their walk, caught a glimpse of George Morley in the distance, walking also side by side with some young companion, and ever as he caught that glimpse a strange restless curiosity shot across his mind, and distracted it even from praise of Guy Darrell. Who could that be with George? Was it a relation of Lady Montfort's? The figure was not in mourning; its shape seemed slight and youthful—now it passes by that acacia tree,—standing for a moment apart and distinct from George's shadow, but its own outline dim in the deepening twilight—now it has passed on, lost amongst the laurels.

A turn in the walk brought Lionel and Lady Montfort before the windows of the house, which was not large for the rank of the owner, but commodious, with no pretence to architectural beauty—dark-red brick, a century and a half old—irregular; jutting forth here, receding there, so as to produce that depth of light and shadow which lends a certain picturesque charm even to the least ornate buildings—a charm to which the Gothic architecture owes half its beauty. Jessamine, roses, woodbine, ivy, trained up the angles and between the windows. Altogether the house had that air of HOME which had been wanting to the regal formality of Moutfort Court. One of the windows, raised above the ground by a short winding stair, stood open. Lights had just been brought into the room within, and Lionel's eye was caught by the gleam. Lady Montfort turned up the stair, and Lionel followed her into the apartment. A harp stood at one corner—not far from it a piano and music-stand. On one of the tables there were the implements of drawing—a sketch in water-colours half finished.

"Our work-room," said Lady Montfort, with a warm cheerful smile, and yet Lionel could see that tears were in her eyes—"mine and my dear pupil's. Yes, that harp is hers. Is he still fond of music—I mean Mr. Darrell?"

"Yes, though he does not care for it in crowds; but he can listen for

hours to Fairthorn's flute. You remember Mr. Fairthorn?"

"Ay, I remember him," answered Lady Montfort softly. "Mr. Darrell then likes his music, still?"

Lionel here uttered an exclamation of more than surprise. He had turned to examine the water-colour sketch—a rustic inn, a honeysuckle arbour, a river in front; a boat yonder—just begun.

"I know the spot!" he cried. "Did you make the sketch of it?"

"I? no; it is hers—my pupil's—my adopted child's." Lionel's dark eyes turned to Lady Montfort's wistfully, inquiringly; they asked what his lips could not presume to ask. "Your adopted child—what is she?—who?"

As if answering to the eyes, Lady Montfort said: "Wait here a moment; I will go for her."

She left him, descended the stairs into the garden, joined George Morley and his companion; took aside the former, whispered him, then drawing the arm of the latter within her own, led her back into the room, while George Morley remained in the garden, throwing himself on a bench, and gazing on the stars as they now came forth, fast and frequent, though one by one.

CHAPTER XXV.

"Quem Fors dierum cunq̄ue dabit
Lucro appone."—HORAT.

Lionel stood, expectant, in the centre of the room, and as the two female forms entered, the lights were full upon their faces. That younger face—it is she—it is she, the unforgotten—the long-lost. Instinctively, as if no years had rolled between—as if she were still the little child, he the boy who had coveted such a sister—he sprang forward and opened his arms, and as suddenly halted, dropped the arms to, his side, blushing, confused, abashed. She! that vagrant child!—she! that form so elegant—that great peeress's pupil—adopted daughter, she the poor wandering Sophy! She!—impossible!

But her eyes, at first downcast, are now fixed on him. She, too, starts—not forward, but in recoil; she, too, raises her arms, not to open, but to press them to her breast; and she, too, as suddenly checks an impulse, and stands, like him, blushing, confused, abashed.

"Yes," said Caroline Montfort, drawing Sophy nearer to her breast, "yes,

you will both forgive me for the surprise. Yes, you do see before you, grown up to become the pride of those who cherish her, that Sophy who—”

”Sophy!” cried Lionel advancing; ”it is so, then! I knew you were no stroller’s grandchild.”

Sophy drew up: ”I am, I am his grandchild, and as proud to be so as I was then.”

”Pardon me, pardon me; I meant to say that he too was not what he seemed. You forgive me,” extending his hand, and Sophy’s soft hand fell into his forgivingly.

”But he lives? is well? is here? is—” Sophy burst into tears, and Lady Montfort made a sign to Lionel to go into the garden, and leave them. Reluctantly and dizzily, as one in a dream, he obeyed, leaving the vagrant’s grandchild to be soothed in the fostering arms of her whom, an hour or two ago, he knew but by the titles of her rank and the reputation of her pride.

It was not many minutes before Lady Montfort rejoined him.

”You touched unawares,” said she, ”upon the poor child’s most anxious cause of sorrow. Her grandfather; for whom her affection is so sensitively keen, has disappeared. I will speak of that later; and if you wish, you shall be taken into our consultations. But—” she paused, looked into his face—open, loyal face, face of gentleman—with heart of man in its eyes, soul of man on its brow; face formed to look up to the stars which now lighted it—and laying her hand lightly on his shoulder, resumed with hesitating voice: ”but I feel like a culprit in asking you what, nevertheless, I must ask, as an imperative condition, if your visits here are to be renewed—if your intimacy here is to be established. And unless you comply with that condition, come no more; we cannot confide in each other.”

”Oh, Lady Montfort, impose any condition. I promise beforehand.”

”Not beforehand. The condition is this: inviolable secrecy. You will not mention to any one your visits here; your introduction to me; your discovery of the stroller’s grandchild in my adopted daughter.”

”Not to Mr. Darrell?”

”To him least of all; but this I add, it is for Mr. Darrell’s sake that I insist on such concealment; and I trust the concealment will not be long protracted.”

”For Mr. Darrell’s sake?”

"For the sake of his happiness," cried Lady Montfort, clasping her hands. "My debt to him is larger far than yours; and in thus appealing to you, I scheme to pay back a part of it. Do you trust me?"

"I do, I do."

And from that evening Lionel Haughton became the constant visitor in that house.

Two or three days afterwards Colonel Morley, quitting England for a German Spa at which he annually recruited himself for a few weeks, relieved Lionel from the embarrassment of any questions which that shrewd observer might otherwise have addressed to him. London itself was now empty. Lionel found a quiet lodging in the vicinity of Twickenham. And when his foot passed along the shady lane through yon wicket gate into that region of turf and flowers, he felt as might have felt that famous Minstrel of Ercildoun, when, blessed with the privilege to enter Fairyland at will, the Rhymer stole to the grassy hillside, and murmured the spell that unlocks the gates of Oberon,