

ALICE - OR THE MYSTERIES - BOOK VI

EDWARD BULWER LYTTON*

Produced by Dagny, dagnypg@yahoo.com
and David Widger, widger@cecomet.net

BOOK VI.

"I will bring fire to thee—I reek not of the place."
—EURIPIDES: *Andromache*., 214.

CHAPTER I.

. . . THIS ancient city,
How wanton sits she amidst Nature's smiles!

. . . Various nations meet,
As in the sea, yet not confined in space,
But streaming freely through the spacious streets.—YOUNG.

. . . His teeth he still did grind,
And grimly gnash, threatening revenge in vain.—SPENSER.

"PARIS is a delightful place,—that is allowed by all. It is delightful to the young, to the gay, to the idle; to the literary lion, who likes to be petted; to the wiser epicure, who indulges a more justifiable appetite. It is delightful to ladies, who wish to live at their ease, and buy beautiful caps; delightful to philanthropists, who wish for listeners to schemes of colonizing the moon; delightful to the haunters of balls and ballets, and little theatres and superb *cafes*., where men with beards of all sizes and shapes scowl at the English, and involve their intellects in the fascinating game of dominos. For these, and for many others, Paris is delightful. I say nothing against it. But, for my own part, I would rather live in a garret in London than in a palace in the Chaussee d'Antin.—'Chacun a son mauvais gout.'

"I don't like the streets, in which I cannot walk but in the kennel; I don't like the shops, that contain nothing except what's at the window; I don't like the houses, like prisons which look upon a courtyard; I don't

*PDF created by pdfbooks.co.za

like the *beaux jardins*_, which grow no plants save a Cupid in plaster; I don't like the wood fires, which demand as many *petits soins*_ as the women, and which warm no part of one but one's eyelids, I don't like the language, with its strong phrases about nothing, and vibrating like a pendulum between 'rapture' and 'desolation;' I don't like the accent, which one cannot get, without speaking through one's nose; I don't like the eternal fuss and jabber about books without nature, and revolutions without fruit; I have no sympathy with tales that turn on a dead jackass, nor with constitutions that give the ballot to the representatives, and withhold the suffrage from the people; neither have I much faith in that enthusiasm for the *beaux arts*_, which shows its produce in execrable music, detestable pictures, abominable sculpture, and a droll something that I believe the *French*_ call POETRY. Dancing and cookery,—these are the arts the French excel in, I grant it; and excellent things they are; but oh, England! oh, Germany! you need not be jealous of your rival!"

These are not the author's remarks,—he disowns them; they were Mr. Cleveland's. He was a prejudiced man; Maltravers was more liberal, but then Maltravers did not pretend to be a wit.

Maltravers had been several weeks in the city of cities, and now he had his apartments in the gloomy but interesting Faubourg St. Germain, all to himself. For Cleveland, having attended eight days at a sale, and having moreover ransacked all the curiosity shops, and shipped off bronzes and cabinets, and Genoese silks and *objets de vertu*_, enough to have half furnished Fonthill, had fulfilled his mission, and returned to his villa. Before the old gentleman went, he flattered himself that change of air and scene had already been serviceable to his friend; and that time would work a complete cure upon that commonest of all maladies,—an unrequited passion, or an ill-placed caprice.

Maltravers, indeed, in the habit of conquering, as well as of concealing emotion, vigorously and earnestly strove to dethrone the image that had usurped his heart. Still vain of his self-command, and still worshipping his favourite virtue of Fortitude and his delusive philosophy of the calm Golden Mean, he would not weakly indulge the passion, while he so sternly fled from its object.

But yet the image of Evelyn pursued,—it haunted him; it came on him unawares, in solitude, in crowds. That smile so cheering, yet so soft, that ever had power to chase away the shadow from his soul; that youthful and luxurious bloom of pure and eloquent thoughts, which was as the blossom of genius before its fruit, bitter as well as sweet, is born; that rare union of quick feeling and serene temper, which forms the very ideal of what we dream of in the mistress, and exact from the wife,—all, even more, far more, than the exquisite form and the delicate graces of the less durable beauty, returned to him, after every struggle with himself; and time only seemed to grave, in deeper if more latent folds of his heart, the ineradicable impression.

Maltravers renewed his acquaintance with some persons not unfamiliar to the reader.

Valerie de Ventadour—how many recollections of the fairer days of life were connected with that name! Precisely as she had never reached to his love, but only excited his fancy (the fancy of twenty-two), had her image always retained a pleasant and grateful hue; it was blended with no deep sorrow, no stern regret, no dark remorse, no haunting shame.

They met again. Madame de Ventadour was still beautiful, and still admired,—perhaps more admired than ever; for to the great, fashion and celebrity bring a second and yet more popular youth. But Maltravers, if rejoiced to see how gently Time had dealt with the fair Frenchwoman, was yet more pleased to read in her fine features a more serene and contented expression than they had formerly worn. Valerie de Ventadour had preceded her younger admirer through the "MYSTERIES of LIFE;" she had learned the real objects of being; she distinguished between the Actual and the Visionary, the Shadow and the Substance; she had acquired content for the present, and looked with quiet hope towards the future. Her character was still spotless; or rather, every year of temptation and trial had given it a fairer lustre. Love, that might have ruined, being once subdued, preserved her from all after danger. The first meeting between Maltravers and Valerie was, it is true, one of some embarrassment and reserve: not so the second. They did but once, and that slightly, recur to the past, and from that moment, as by a tacit understanding, true friendship between them dated. Neither felt mortified to see that an illusion had passed away,—they were no longer the same in each other's eyes. Both might be improved, and were so; but the Valerie and the Ernest of Naples were as things dead and gone! Perhaps Valerie's heart was even more reconciled to the cure of its soft and luxurious malady by the renewal of their acquaintance. The mature and experienced reasoner, in whom enthusiasm had undergone its usual change, with the calm brow and commanding aspect of sober manhood, was a being so different from the romantic boy, new to the actual world of civilized toils and pleasures, fresh from the adventures of Eastern wanderings, and full of golden dreams of poetry before it settles into authorship or action! She missed the brilliant errors, the daring aspirations,—even the animated gestures and eager eloquence,—that had interested and enamoured her in the loiterer by the shores of Baiae, or amidst the tomb-like chambers of Pompeii. For the Maltravers now before her—wiser, better, nobler, even handsomer than of yore (for he was one whom manhood became better than youth)—the Frenchwoman could at any period have felt friendship without danger. It seemed to her, not as it really was, the natural _development_, but the very _contrast_, of the ardent, variable, imaginative boy, by whose side she had gazed at night on the moonlit waters and rosy skies of the soft Parthenope! How does time, after long absence, bring to us such contrasts between the one we remember and the one we see! And what a melancholy mockery does it seem of our own vain hearts, dreaming of impressions never to be changed, and affections that never can grow cool!

And now, as they conversed with all the ease of cordial and guileless friendship, how did Valerie rejoice in secret that upon that friendship there rested no blot of shame! and that she had not forfeited those consolations for a home without love, which had at last settled into cheerful nor unhallowed resignation,—consolations only to be found in the conscience and the pride!

M. de Ventadour had not altered, except that his nose was longer, and that he now wore a peruque in full curl instead of his own straight hair. But somehow or other—perhaps by the mere charm of custom—he had grown more pleasing in Valerie’s eyes; habit had reconciled her to his foibles, deficiencies, and faults; and, by comparison with others, she could better appreciate his good qualities, such as they were,—generosity, good-temper, good-nature, and unbounded indulgence to herself. Husband and wife have so many interests in common, that when they have joggled on through the ups and downs of life a sufficient time, the leash which at first galled often grows easy and familiar; and unless the temper, or rather the disposition and the heart, of either be insufferable, what was once a grievous yoke becomes but a companionable tie. And for the rest, Valerie, now that sentiment and fancy were sobered down, could take pleasure in a thousand things which her pining affections once, as it were, overlooked and overshot. She could feel grateful for all the advantages her station and wealth procured her; she could cull the roses in her reach, without sighing for the amaranths of Elysium.

If the great have more temptations than those of middle life, and if their senses of enjoyment become more easily pampered into a sickly apathy, so at least (if they can once outlive satiety) they have many more resources at their command. There is a great deal of justice in the old line, displeasing though it be to those who think of love in a cottage, ”’Tis best repenting in a coach and six!” If among the Eupatrids, the Well Born, there is less love in wedlock, less quiet happiness at home, still they are less chained each to each,—they have more independence, both the woman and the man, and occupations and the solace without can be so easily obtained! Madame de Ventadour, in retiring from the mere frivolities of society—from crowded rooms, and the inane talk and hollow smiles of mere acquaintanceship—became more sensible of the pleasures that her refined and elegant intellect could derive from art and talent, and the communion of friendship. She drew around her the most cultivated minds of her time and country. Her abilities, her wit, and her conversational graces enabled her not only to mix on equal terms with the most eminent, but to amalgamate and blend the varieties of talent into harmony. The same persons, when met elsewhere, seemed to have lost their charm; under Valerie’s roof every one breathed a congenial atmosphere. And music and letters, and all that can refine and embellish civilized life, contributed their resources to this gifted and beautiful woman. And thus she found that the mind has excitement and occupation, as well as the heart; and, unlike the latter, the culture we bestow upon the first ever yields us its return. We talk of education

for the poor, but we forget how much it is needed by the rich. Valerie was a living instance of the advantages to women of knowledge and intellectual resources. By them she had purified her fancy, by them she had conquered discontent, by them she had grown reconciled to life and to her lot! When the heavy heart weighed down the one scale, it was the mind that restored the balance.

The spells of Madame de Ventadour drew Maltravers into this charmed circle of all that was highest, purest, and most gifted in the society of Paris. There he did not meet, as were met in the times of the old _regime_, sparkling abbes intent upon intrigues; or amorous old dowagers, eloquent on Rousseau; or powdered courtiers, uttering epigrams against kings and religions,—straws that foretold the whirlwind. Paul Courier was right! Frenchmen are Frenchmen still; they are full of fine phrases, and their thoughts smell of the theatre; they mistake foil for diamonds, the Grotesque for the Natural, the Exaggerated for the Sublime: but still I say, Paul Courier was right,—there is more honesty now in a single _salon_ in Paris than there was in all France in the days of Voltaire. Vast interests and solemn causes are no longer tossed about like shuttlecocks on the battledores of empty tongues. In the _bouleversement_ of Revolutions the French have fallen on their feet!

Meeting men of all parties and all classes, Maltravers was struck with the heightened tone of public morals, the earnest sincerity of feeling which generally pervaded all, as compared with his first recollections of the Parisians. He saw that true elements for national wisdom were at work, though he saw also that there was no country in which their operations would be more liable to disorder, more slow and irregular in their results. The French are like the Israelites in the Wilderness, when, according to a Hebrew tradition, every morning they seemed on the verge of Pisgah, and every evening they were as far from it as ever. But still time rolls on, the pilgrimage draws to its close, and the Canaan must come at last!

At Valerie's house, Maltravers once more met the De Montaignes. It was a painful meeting, for they thought of Cesarini when they met.

It is now time to return to that unhappy man. Cesarini had been removed from England when Maltravers quitted it after Lady Florence's death; and Maltravers had thought it best to acquaint De Montaigne with all the circumstances that had led to his affliction. The pride and the honour of the high-spirited Frenchman were deeply shocked by the tale of fraud and guilt, softened as it was; but the sight of the criminal, his awful punishment, merged every other feeling in compassion. Placed under the care of the most skilful practitioners in Paris, great hopes of Cesarini's recovery had been at first entertained. Nor was it long, indeed, before he appeared entirely restored, so far as the external and superficial tokens of sanity could indicate a cure. He testified complete consciousness of the kindness of his relations, and clear remembrance of the past: but to the incoherent ravings of delirium, an

intense melancholy, still more deplorable, succeeded. In this state, however, he became once more the inmate of his brother-in-law's house; and though avoiding all society, except that of Teresa, whose affectionate nature never wearied of its cares, he resumed many of his old occupations. Again he appeared to take delight in desultory and unprofitable studies, and in the cultivation of that luxury of solitary men, "the thankless muse." By shunning all topics connected with the gloomy cause of his affliction, and talking rather of the sweet recollections of Italy and childhood than of more recent events, his sister was enabled to soothe the dark hour, and preserve some kind of influence over the ill-fated man. One day, however, there fell into his hands an English newspaper, which was full of the praises of Lord Vargrave; and the article in lauding the peer referred to his services as the commoner Lumley Ferrers.

This incident, slight as it appeared, and perfectly untraceable by his relations, produced a visible effect on Cesarini; and three days afterwards he attempted his own life. The failure of the attempt was followed by the fiercest paroxysms. His disease returned in all its dread force: and it became necessary to place him under yet stricter confinement than he had endured before. Again, about a year from the date now entered upon, he had appeared to recover; and again he was removed to De Montaigne's house. His relations were not aware of the influence which Lord Vargrave's name exercised over Cesarini; in the melancholy tale communicated to them by Maltravers, that name had not been mentioned. If Maltravers had at one time entertained some vague suspicions that Lumley had acted a treacherous part with regard to Florence, those suspicions had long since died away for want of confirmation; nor did he (nor did therefore the De Montaignes) connect Lord Vargrave with the affliction of Cesarini. De Montaigne himself, therefore, one day at dinner, alluding to a question of foreign politics which had been debated that morning in the Chamber, and in which he himself had taken an active part, happened to refer to a speech of Vargrave upon the subject, which had made some sensation abroad, as well as at home. Teresa asked innocently who Lord Vargrave was; and De Montaigne, well acquainted with the biography of the principal English statesmen, replied that he had commenced his career as Mr. Ferrers, and reminded Teresa that they had once been introduced to him in Paris. Cesarini suddenly rose and left the room; his absence was not noted, for his comings and goings were ever strange and fitful. Teresa soon afterwards quitted the apartment with her children, and De Montaigne, who was rather fatigued by the exertions and excitement of the morning, stretched himself in his chair to enjoy a short *siesta*. He was suddenly awakened by a feeling of pain and suffocation,—awakened in time to struggle against a strong grip that had fastened itself at his throat. The room was darkened in the growing shades of the evening; and, but for the glittering and savage eyes that were fixed on him, he could scarcely discern his assailant. He at length succeeded, however, in freeing himself, and casting the intended assassin on the ground. He shouted for assistance; and the lights borne by the servants who rushed into the room

revealed to him the face of his brother-in-law. Cesarini, though in strong convulsions, still uttered cries and imprecations of revenge; he denounced De Montaigne as a traitor and a murderer! In the dark confusion of his mind, he had mistaken the guardian for the distant foe, whose name sufficed to conjure up the phantoms of the dead, and plunge reason into fury.

It was now clear that there was danger and death in Cesarini's disease. His madness was pronounced to be capable of no certain and permanent cure; he was placed at a new asylum (the superintendents of which were celebrated for humanity as well as skill), a little distance from Versailles, and there he still remained. Recently his lucid intervals had become more frequent and prolonged; but trifles that sprang from his own mind, and which no care could prevent or detect, sufficed to renew his calamity in all its fierceness. At such times he required the most unrelaxing vigilance, for his madness ever took an alarming and ferocious character; and had he been left unshackled, the boldest and stoutest of the keepers would have dreaded to enter his cell unarmed, or alone.

What made the disease of the mind appear more melancholy and confirmed was, that all this time the frame seemed to increase in health and strength. This is not an uncommon case in instances of mania—and it is generally the worst symptom. In earlier youth, Cesarini had been delicate even to effeminacy; but now his proportions were enlarged, his form, though still lean and spare, muscular and vigorous,—as if in the torpor which usually succeeded to his bursts of frenzy, the animal portion gained by the repose or disorganization of the intellectual. When in his better and calmer mood—in which indeed none but the experienced could have detected his malady—books made his chief delight. But then he complained bitterly, if briefly, of the confinement he endured, of the injustice he suffered; and as, shunning all companions, he walked gloomily amidst the grounds that surrounded that House of Woe, his unseen guardians beheld him clenching his hands, as at some visionary enemy, or overheard him accuse some phantom of his brain of the torments he endured.

Though the reader can detect in Lumley Ferrers the cause of the frenzy, and the object of the imprecation, it was not so with the De Montaignes, nor with the patient's keepers and physicians; for in his delirium he seldom or never gave name to the shadows that he invoked,—not even to that of Florence. It is, indeed, no unusual characteristic of madness to shun, as by a kind of cunning, all mention of the names of those by whom the madness has been caused. It is as if the unfortunates imagined that the madness might be undiscovered if the images connected with it were unbetrayed.

Such, at this time, was the wretched state of the man, whose talents had promised a fair and honourable career, had it not been the wretched tendency of his mind, from boyhood upward, to pamper every unwholesome and unhallowed feeling as a token of the exuberance of genius. De

Montaigne, though he touched as lightly as possible upon this dark domestic calamity in his first communications with Maltravers, whose conduct in that melancholy tale of crime and woe had, he conceived, been stamped with generosity and feeling, still betrayed emotions that told how much his peace had been embittered.

"I seek to console Teresa," said he, turning away his manly head, "and to point out all the blessings yet left to her; but that brother so beloved, from whom so much was so vainly expected,—still ever and ever, though she strives to conceal it from me, this affliction comes back to her, and poisons every thought! Oh, better a thousand times that he had died! When reason, sense, almost the soul, are dead, how dark and fiend-like is the life that remains behind! And if it should be in the blood—if Teresa's children—dreadful thought!"

De Montaigne ceased, thoroughly overcome.

"Do not, my dear friend, so fearfully exaggerate your misfortune, great as it is; Cesarini's disease evidently arose from no physical conformation,—it was but the crisis, the development, of a long-contracted malady of mind, passions morbidly indulged, the reasoning faculty obstinately neglected; and yet too he may recover. The further memory recedes from the shock he has sustained, the better the chance that his mind will regain its tone."

De Montaigne wrung his friend's hand.

"It is strange that from you should come sympathy and comfort!—you whom he so injured; you whom his folly or his crime drove from your proud career, and your native soil! But Providence will yet, I trust, redeem the evil of its erring creature, and I shall yet live to see you restored to hope and home, a happy husband, an honoured citizen. Till then, I feel as if the curse lingered upon my race."

"Speak not thus. Whatever my destiny, I have recovered from that wound; and still, De Montaigne, I find in life that suffering succeeds to suffering, and disappointment to disappointment, as wave to wave. To endure is the only philosophy; to believe that we shall live again in a brighter planet, is the only hope that our reason should accept from our desires."

CHAPTER II.

MONSTRA evenerunt mihi:
Introit in aedes ater alienus canis,
Anguis per impluvium decidit de tegulis,

Gallina cecinit!—TERENCE.

”Prodigies have occurred: a strange black dog came into the house; a snake glided from the tiles, through the court; the hen crowed.”

WITH his constitutional strength of mind, and conformably with his acquired theories, Maltravers continued to struggle against the latest and strongest passion of his life. It might be seen in the paleness of his brow, and that nameless expression of suffering which betrays itself in the lines about the mouth, that his health was affected by the conflict within him; and many a sudden fit of absence and abstraction, many an impatient sigh, followed by a forced and unnatural gayety, told the observant Valerie that he was the prey of a sorrow he was too proud to disclose. He compelled himself, however, to take, or to affect, an interest in the singular phenomena of the social state around him,—phenomena that, in a happier or serener mood, would indeed have suggested no ordinary food for conjecture and meditation.

The state of *visible transition* is the state of nearly all the enlightened communities in Europe. But nowhere is it so pronounced as in that country which may be called the Heart of European Civilization. There, all to which the spirit of society attaches itself appears broken, vague, and half developed,—the Antique in ruins, and the New not formed. It is, perhaps, the only country in which the Constructive principle has not kept pace with the Destructive. The *Has Been* is blotted out; the *To Be* is as the shadow of a far land in a mighty and perturbed sea.

The reader will remember that these remarks were written long before the last French Revolution, and when the dynasty of Louis Philippe was generally considered most secure.

Maltravers, who for several years had not examined the progress of modern literature, looked with mingled feelings of surprise, distaste, and occasional and most reluctant admiration, on the various works which the successors of Voltaire and Rousseau have produced, and are pleased to call the offspring of Truth united to Romance.

Profoundly versed in the mechanism and elements of those masterpieces of Germany and England, from which the French have borrowed so largely while pretending to be original, Maltravers was shocked to see the monsters which these Frankensteins had created from the relics and the offal of the holiest sepulchres. The head of a giant on the limbs of a dwarf, incongruous members jumbled together, parts fair and beautiful,—the whole a hideous distortion!

”It may be possible,” said he to De Montaigne, ”that these works are admired and extolled; but how they can be vindicated by the examples of Shakspeare and Goethe, or even of Byron, who redeemed poor and melodramatic conceptions with a manly vigour of execution, an energy and completeness of purpose, that Dryden himself never surpassed, is to me

utterly inconceivable.”

”I allow that there is a strange mixture of fustian and maudlin in all these things,” answered De Montaigne; ”but they are but the windfalls of trees that may bear rich fruit in due season; meanwhile, any new school is better than eternal imitations of the old. As for critical vindications of the works themselves, the age that produces the phenomena is never the age to classify and analyze them. We have had a deluge, and now new creatures spring from the new soil.”

”An excellent simile: they come forth from slime and mud,—fetid and crawling, unformed and monstrous. I grant exceptions; and even in the New School, as it is called, I can admire the real genius, the vital and creative power of Victor Hugo. But oh, that a nation which has known a Corneille should ever spawn forth a —! And with these rickety and drivelling abortions—all having followers and adulators—your Public can still bear to be told that they have improved wonderfully on the day when they gave laws and models to the literature of Europe; they can bear to hear — proclaimed a sublime genius in the same circles which sneer down Voltaire!”

Voltaire is out of fashion in France, but Rousseau still maintains his influence, and boasts his imitators. Rousseau was the worse man of the two; perhaps he was also the more dangerous writer. But his reputation is more durable, and sinks deeper into the heart of his nation; and the danger of his unstable and capricious doctrines has passed away. In Voltaire we behold the fate of all writers purely destructive; their uses cease with the evils they denounce. But Rousseau sought to construct as well as to destroy; and though nothing could well be more absurd than his constructions, still man loves to look back and see even delusive images—castles in the air—reared above the waste where cities have been. Rather than leave even a burial-ground to solitude, we populate it with ghosts.

By degrees, however, as he mastered all the features of the French literature, Maltravers become more tolerant of the present defects, and more hopeful of the future results. He saw in one respect that that literature carried with it its own ultimate redemption.

Its general characteristic—contradistinguished from the literature of the old French classic school—is to take the *heart* for its study; to bring the passions and feelings into action, and let the *Within* have its record and history as well as the *Without*. In all this our contemplative analyst began to allow that the French were not far wrong when they contended that Shakspeare made the fountain of their inspiration,—a fountain which the majority of our later English Fictionists have neglected. It is not by a story woven of interesting incidents, relieved by delineations of the externals and surface of character, humorous phraseology, and every-day ethics, that Fiction achieves its grandest ends.

In the French literature, thus characterized, there is much false morality, much depraved sentiment, and much hollow rant; but still it carries within it the germ of an excellence, which, sooner or later, must in the progress of national genius arrive at its full development. Meanwhile, it is a consolation to know that nothing really immoral is ever permanently popular, or ever, therefore, long deleterious; what is dangerous in a work of genius cures itself in a few years. We can now read "Werther," and instruct our hearts by its exposition of weakness and passion, our taste by its exquisite and unrivalled simplicity of construction and detail, without any fear that we shall shoot ourselves in top-boots! We can feel ourselves elevated by the noble sentiments of "The Robbers," and our penetration sharpened as to the wholesale immorality of conventional cant and hypocrisy, without any danger of turning banditti and becoming cutthroats from the love of virtue. Providence, that has made the genius of the few in all times and countries the guide and prophet of the many, and appointed Literature as the sublime agent of Civilization, of Opinion, and of Law, has endowed the elements it employs with a divine power of self-purification. The stream settles of itself by rest and time; the impure particles fly off, or are neutralized by the healthful. It is only fools that call the works of a master-spirit immoral. There does not exist in the literature of the world one popular book that is immoral two centuries after it is produced. For, in the heart of nations, the False does not live so long; and the True is the Ethical to the end of time.

From the literary Maltravers turned to the political state of France his curious and thoughtful eye. He was struck by the resemblance which this nation—so civilized, so thoroughly European—bears in one respect to the despotisms of the East: the convulsions of the capital decide the fate of the country; Paris is the tyrant of France. He saw in this inflammable concentration of power, which must ever be pregnant with great evils, one of the causes why the revolutions of that powerful and polished people are so incomplete and unsatisfactory, why, like Cardinal Fleury, system after system, and Government after Government—

. . . "floruit sine fructu,
Defloruit sine luctu."

"Flourished without fruit, and was destroyed without regret."

Maltravers regarded it as a singular instance of perverse ratiocination, that, unwarned by experience, the French should still persist in perpetuating this political vice; that all their policy should still be the policy of Centralization,—a principle which secures the momentary strength, but ever ends in the abrupt destruction of States. It is, in fact, the perilous tonic, which seems to brace the system, but drives the blood to the head,—thus come apoplexy and madness. By centralization the provinces are weakened, it is true,—but weak to assist as well as to oppose a government, weak to withstand a mob. Nowhere, nowadays, is a

mob so powerful as in Paris: the political history of Paris is the history of snobs. Centralization is an excellent quackery for a despot who desires power to last only his own life, and who has but a life-interest in the State; but to true liberty and permanent order centralization is a deadly poison. The more the provinces govern their own affairs, the more we find everything, even to roads and post-horses, are left to the people; the more the Municipal Spirit pervades every vein of the vast body, the more certain may we be that reform and change must come from universal opinion, which is slow, and constructs ere it destroys,—not from public clamour, which is sudden, and not only pulls down the edifice but sells the bricks!

Another peculiarity in the French Constitution struck and perplexed Maltravers. This people so pervaded by the republican sentiment; this people, who had sacrificed so much for Freedom; this people, who, in the name of Freedom, had perpetrated so much crime with Robespierre, and achieved so much glory with Napoleon,—this people were, as a people, contented to be utterly excluded from all power and voice in the State! Out of thirty-three millions of subjects, less than two hundred thousand electors! Where was there ever an oligarchy equal to this? What a strange infatuation, to demolish an aristocracy and yet to exclude a people! What an anomaly in political architecture, to build an inverted pyramid! Where was the safety-valve of governments, where the natural vents of excitement in a population so inflammable? The people itself were left a mob,—no stake in the State, no action in its affairs, no legislative interest in its security.

Has not all this proved prophetic?

On the other hand, it was singular to see how—the aristocracy of birth broken down—the aristocracy of letters had arisen. A Peerage, half composed of journalists, philosophers, and authors! This was the beau-ideal of Algernon Sidney's Aristocratic Republic, of the Helvetian vision of what ought to be the dispensation of public distinctions; yet was it, after all, a desirable aristocracy? Did society gain; did literature lose? Was the priesthood of Genius made more sacred and more pure by these worldly decorations and hollow titles; or was aristocracy itself thus rendered a more disinterested, a more powerful, or a more sagacious element in the administration of law, or the elevation of opinion? These questions, not lightly to be answered, could not fail to arouse the speculation and curiosity of a man who had been familiar with the closet and the forum; and in proportion as he found his interest excited in these problems to be solved by a foreign nation, did the thoughtful Englishman feel the old instinct—which binds the citizen to the fatherland—begin to stir once more earnestly and vividly within him.

"You, yourself individually, are passing like us," said De Montaigne one day to Maltravers, "through a state of transition. You have forever left the Ideal, and you are carrying your cargo of experience over to the Practical. When you reach that haven, you will have completed the

development of your forces.”

”You mistake me,—I am but a spectator.”

”Yes; but you desire to go behind the scenes; and he who once grows familiar with the green-room, longs to be an actor.”

With Madame de Ventadour and the De Montaignes Maltravers passed the chief part of his time. They knew how to appreciate his nobler and to love his gentler attributes and qualities; they united in a warm interest for his future fate; they combated his Philosophy of Inaction; and they felt that it was because he was not happy that he was not wise. Experience was to him what ignorance had been to Alice. His faculties were chilled and dormant. As affection to those who are unskilled in all things, so is affection to those who despair of all things. The mind of Maltravers was a world without a sun!

CHAPTER III.

COELEBS, quid agam?—HORACE.

”What shall I do, a bachelor?”

IN a room at Fenton’s Hotel sat Lord Vargrave and Caroline Lady Doltimore,—two months after the marriage of the latter.

”Doltimore has positively fixed, then, to go abroad on your return from Cornwall?”

”Positively,—to Paris. You can join us at Christmas, I trust?”

”I have no doubt of it; and before then I hope that I shall have arranged certain public matters, which at present harass and absorb me even more than my private affairs.”

”You have managed to obtain terms with Mr. Douce, and to delay the repayment of your debt to him?”

”Yes, I hope so, till I touch Miss Cameron’s income; which will be mine, I trust, by the time she is eighteen.”

”You mean the forfeit money of thirty thousand pounds?”

”Not I; I mean what I said!”

"Can you really imagine she will still accept your hand?"

"With your aid, I do imagine it! Hear me. You must take Evelyn with you to Paris. I have no doubt but that she will be delighted to accompany you; nay, I have paved the way so far. For, of course, as a friend of the family, and guardian to Evelyn, I have maintained a correspondence with Lady Vargrave. She informs me that Evelyn has been unwell and low-spirited; that she fears Brook-Green is dull for her, etc. I wrote, in reply, to say that the more my ward saw of the world, prior to her accession, when of age, to the position she would occupy in it, the more she would fulfil my late uncle's wishes with respect to her education and so forth. I added that as you were going to Paris, and as you loved her so much, there could not be a better opportunity for her entrance into life under the most favourable auspices. Lady Vargrave's answer to this letter arrived this morning: she will consent to such an arrangement should you propose it."

"But what good will result to yourself in this project? At Paris you will be sure of rivals, and—"

"Caroline," interrupted Lord Vargrave, "I know very well what you would say: I also know all the danger I must incur. But it is a choice of evils, and I choose the least. You see that while she is at Brook-Green, and under the eye of that sly old curate, I can effect nothing with her. There, she is entirely removed from my influence: not so abroad; not so under your roof. Listen to me still further. In this country, and especially in the seclusion and shelter of Brook-Green, I have no scope for any of those means which I shall be compelled to resort to, in failure of all else."

"What can you intend?" said Caroline, with a slight shudder.

"I don't know what I intend yet. But this, at least, I can tell you,—that Miss Cameron's fortune I must and will have. I am a desperate man; and I can play a desperate game, if need be."

"And do you think that I will aid, will abet?"

"Hush, not so loud! Yes, Caroline, you will, and you must aid and abet me in any project I may form."

"Must! Lord Vargrave?"

"Ay," said Lumley, with a smile, and sinking his voice into a whisper,—"ay! you are in my power!"

"Traitor!—you cannot dare! you cannot mean—"

"I mean nothing more than to remind you of the ties that exist between us,—ties which ought to render us the firmest and most confidential of

friends. Come, Caroline, recollect all the benefit must not lie on one side. I have obtained for you rank and wealth; I have procured you a husband,—you must help me to a wife!”

Caroline sank back, and covered her face with her hands.

”I allow,” continued Vargrave, coldly,—”I allow that your beauty and talent were sufficient of themselves to charm a wiser man than Doltimore; but had I not suppressed jealousy, sacrificed love, had I dropped a hint to your liege lord,—nay, had I not fed his lap-dog vanity by all the cream and sugar of flattering falsehoods,—you would be Caroline Merton still!”

”Oh, would that I were! Oh that I were anything but your tool, your victim! Fool that I was! wretch that I am! I am rightly punished!”

”Forgive me, forgive me, dearest,” said Vargrave, soothingly; ”I was to blame, forgive me: but you irritated, you maddened me, by your seeming indifference to my prosperity, my fate. I tell you again and again, pride of my soul, I tell you, that you are the only being I love! and if you will allow me, if you will rise superior, as I once fondly hoped, to all the cant and prejudice of convention and education, the only woman I could ever respect, as well as love. Oh, hereafter, when you see me at that height to which I feel that I am born to climb, let me think that to your generosity, your affection, your zeal, I owed the ascent. At present I am on the precipice; without your hand I fall forever. My own fortune is gone; the miserable forfeit due to me, if Evelyn continues to reject my suit, when she has arrived at the age of eighteen, is deeply mortgaged. I am engaged in vast and daring schemes, in which I may either rise to the highest station or lose that which I now hold. In either case, how necessary to me is wealth: in the one instance, to maintain my advancement; in the other, to redeem my fall.”

”But did you not tell me,” said Caroline, ”that Evelyn proposed and promised to place her fortune at your disposal, even while rejecting your hand?”

”Absurd mockery!” exclaimed Vargrave; ”the foolish boast of a girl,—an impulse liable to every caprice. Can you suppose that when she launches into the extravagance natural to her age and necessary to her position, she will not find a thousand demands upon her rent-roll not dreamed of now; a thousand vanities and baubles that will soon erase my poor and hollow claim from her recollection? Can you suppose that, if she marry another, her husband will ever consent to a child’s romance? And even were all this possible, were it possible that girls were not extravagant, and that husbands had no common-sense, is it for me, Lord Vargrave, to be a mendicant upon reluctant bounty,—a poor cousin, a pensioned led-captain? Heaven knows I have as little false pride as any man, but still this is a degradation I cannot stoop to. Besides, Caroline, I am no miser, no Harpagon: I do not want wealth for wealth’s sake, but for

the advantages it bestows,—respect, honour, position; and these I get as the husband of the great heiress. Should I get them as her dependant? No: for more than six years I have built my schemes and shaped my conduct according to one assured and definite object; and that object I shall not now, at the eleventh hour, let slip from my hands. Enough of this: you will pass Brook-Green in returning from Cornwall; you will take Evelyn with you to Paris,—leave the rest to me. Fear no folly, no violence, from my plans, whatever they may be: I work in the dark. Nor do I despair that Evelyn will love, that Evelyn will voluntarily accept me yet: my disposition is sanguine; I look to the bright side of things; do the same!”

Here their conference was interrupted by Lord Doltimore, who lounged carelessly into the room, with his hat on one side. ”Ah, Vargrave, how are you? You will not forget the letters of introduction? Where are you going, Caroline?”

”Only to my own room, to put on my bonnet; the carriage will be here in a few minutes.” And Caroline escaped.

”So you go to Cornwall to-morrow, Doltimore?”

”Yes; cursed bore! but Lady Elizabeth insists on seeing us, and I don’t object to a week’s good shooting. The old lady, too, has something to leave, and Caroline had no dowry,—not that I care for it; but still marriage is expensive.”

”By the by, you will want the five thousand pounds you lent me?”

”Why, whenever it is convenient.”

Say no more,—it shall be seen to. Doltimore, I am very anxious that Lady Doltimore’s _debut_ at Paris should be brilliant: everything depends on falling into the right set. For myself, I don’t care about fashion, and never did; but if I were married, and an idle man like you, it might be different.”

”Oh, you will be very useful to us when we return to London. Meanwhile, you know, you have my proxy in the Lords. I dare say there will be some sharp work the first week or two after the recess.”

”Very likely; and depend on one thing, my dear Doltimore, that when I am in the Cabinet, a certain friend of mine shall be an earl. Adieu.”

”Good-by, my dear Vargrave, good-by; and, I say,—I say, don’t distress yourself about that trifle; a few months hence it will suit me just as well.”

”Thanks. I will just look into my accounts, and use you without ceremony. Well, I dare say we shall meet at Paris. Oh, I forgot,—I

observe that you have renewed your intimacy with Legard. Now, he is a very good fellow, and I gave him that place to oblige you; still, as you are no longer a _garcon_—but perhaps I shall offend you?”

”Not at all. What is there against Legard?”

”Nothing in the world,—but he is a bit of a boaster. I dare say his ancestor was a Gascon, poor fellow!—and he affects to say that you can’t choose a coat, or buy a horse, without his approval and advice,—that he can turn you round his finger. Now this hurts your consequence in the world,—you don’t get credit for your own excellent sense and taste. Take my advice, avoid these young hangers-on of fashion, these club-room lions. Having no importance of their own, they steal the importance of their friends. _Verbum sap_.”

”You are very right,—Legard _is_ a coxcomb; and now I see why he talked of joining us at Paris.”

”Don’t let him do any such thing! He will be telling the Frenchmen that her ladyship is in love with him, ha, ha!”

”Ha, ha!—a very good joke—poor Caroline!—very good joke!”

”Well, good-by, once more.” And Vargrave closed the door.

”Legard go to Paris—not if Evelyn goes there!” muttered Lumley. ”Besides, I want no partner in the little that one can screw out of this blockhead.”

CHAPTER IV.

MR. BUMBLECASE, a word with you—I have a little business. Farewell, the goodly Manor of Blackacre, with all its woods, underwoods, and appurtenances whatever.—WYCHERLEY: _Plain Dealer_.

IN quitting Fenton’s Hotel, Lord Vargrave entered into one of the clubs in St. James’s Street: this was rather unusual with him, for he was not a club man. It was not his system to spend his time for nothing. But it was a wet December day; the House was not yet assembled, and he had done his official business. Here, as he was munching a biscuit and reading an article in one of the ministerial papers—the heads of which he himself had supplied—Lord Saxingham joined and drew him to the window.

”I have reason to think,” said the earl, ”that your visit to Windsor did good.”

"Ah, indeed; so I fancied."

"I do not think that a certain personage will ever consent to the — question; and the premier, whom I saw to-day, seems chafed and irritated."

"Nothing can be better; I know that we are in the right boat."

"I hope it is not true, Lumley, that your marriage with Miss Cameron is broken off; such was the *on dit* in the club, just before you entered."

"Contradict it, my dear lord,—contradict it. I hope by the spring to introduce Lady Vargrave to you. But who broached the absurd report?"

"Why, your *protege*-, Legard, says he heard so from his uncle, who heard it from Sir John Merton."

"Legard is a puppy, and Sir John Merton a jackass. Legard had better attend to his office, if he wants to get on; and I wish you'd tell him so. I have heard somewhere that he talks of going to Paris,—you can just hint to him that he must give up such idle habits. Public functionaries are not now what they were,—people are expected to work for the money they pocket; otherwise Legard is a cleverish fellow, and deserves promotion. A word or two of caution from you will do him a vast deal of good."

"Be sure I will lecture him. Will you dine with me to-day, Lumley?"

"No. I expect my co-trustee, Mr. Douce, on matters of business,—a *tete-a-tete* dinner."

Lord Vargrave had, as he conceived, very cleverly talked over Mr. Douce into letting his debt to that gentleman run on for the present; and in the meanwhile, he had overwhelmed Mr. Douce with his condescensions. That gentleman had twice dined with Lord Vargrave, and Lord Vargrave had twice dined with him. The occasion of the present more familiar entertainment was in a letter from Mr. Douce, begging to see Lord Vargrave on particular business; and Vargrave, who by no means liked the word *business* from a gentleman to whom he owed money, thought that it would go off more smoothly if sprinkled with champagne.

Accordingly, he begged "My dear Mr. Douce" to excuse ceremony, and dine with him on Thursday at seven o'clock,—he was really so busy all the mornings.

At seven o'clock, Mr. Douce came. The moment he entered Vargrave called out, at the top of his voice, "Dinner immediately!" And as the little man bowed and shuffled, and fidgeted and wriggled (while Vargrave shook him by the hand), as if he thought he was going himself to be spitted, his host said, "With your leave, we'll postpone the budget till after

dinner. It is the fashion nowadays to postpone budgets as long as we can,—eh? Well, and how are all at home? Devilish cold; is it not? So you go to your villa every day? That's what keeps you in such capital health. You know I had a villa too,—though I never had time to go there."

"Ah, yes; I think, I remember, at Ful-Ful-Fulham!" gasped out Mr. Douce. "Your poor uncle's—now Lady Var-Vargrave's jointure-house. So—so—"

"She don't live there!" burst in Vargrave (far too impatient to be polite). "Too cockneyfied for her,—gave it up to me; very pretty place, but d—d expensive. I could not afford it, never went there, and so I have let it to my wine-merchant; the rent just pays his bill. You will taste some of the sofas and tables to-day in his champagne. I don't know how it is, I always fancy my sherry smells like my poor uncle's old leather chair: very odd smell it had,—a kind of respectable smell! I hope you're hungry,—dinner's ready."

Vargrave thus rattled away in order to give the good banker to understand that his affairs were in the most flourishing condition: and he continued to keep up the ball all dinnertime, stopping Mr. Douce's little, miserable, gasping, dancelike mouth, with "a glass of wine, Douce?" or "by the by, Douce," whenever he saw that worthy gentleman about to make the AEschylean improvement of a second person in the dialogue.

At length, dinner being fairly over, and the servants withdrawn, Lord Vargrave, knowing that sooner or later Douce would have his say, drew his chair to the fire, put his feet on the fender, and cried, as he tossed off his claret, "NOW, DOUCE, WHAT CAN I DO FOR YOU?"

Mr. Douce opened his eyes to their full extent, and then as rapidly closed them; and this operation he continued till, having snuffed them so much that they could by no possibility burn any brighter, he was convinced that he had not misunderstood his lordship.

"Indeed, then," he began, in his most frightened manner, "indeed—I—really, your lordship is very good—I—I wanted to speak to you on business."

"Well, what can I do for you,—some little favour, eh? Snug sinecure for a favourite clerk, or a place in the Stamp-Office for your fat footman—John, I think you call him? You know, my dear Douce, you may command me."

"Oh, indeed, you are all good-good-goodness—but—but—"

Vargrave threw himself back, and shutting his eyes and pursing up his mouth, resolutely suffered Mr. Douce to unbosom himself without interruption. He was considerably relieved to find that the business referred to related only to Miss Cameron.

Mr. Douce having reminded Lord Vargrave, as he had often done before, of the wishes of his uncle, that the greater portion of the money bequeathed to Evelyn should be invested in land, proceeded to say that a most excellent opportunity presented itself for just such a purchase as would have rejoiced the heart of the late lord,—a superb place, in the style of Blickling,—deer-park six miles round, ten thousand acres of land, bringing in a clear eight thousand pounds a year, purchase money only two hundred and forty thousand pounds. The whole estate was, indeed, much larger,—eighteen thousand acres; but then the more distant farms could be sold in different lots, in order to meet the exact sum Miss Cameron's trustees were enabled to invest.

"Well," said Vargrave, "and where is it? My poor uncle was after De Clifford's estate, but the title was not good."

"Oh! this—is much—much—much fi-fi-finer; famous investment—but rather far off—in—in the north, Li-Li-Lisle Court."

"Lisle Court! Why, does not that belong to Colonel Maltravers?"

"Yes. It is, indeed, quite, I may say, a secret—yes—really—a se-se-secret—not in the market yet—not at all—soon snapped up."

"Humph! Has Colonel Maltravers been extravagant?"

"No; but he does not—I hear—or rather Lady—Julia—so I'm told, yes, indeed—does not li-like—going so far, and so they spend the winter in Italy instead. Yes—very odd—very fine place."

Lumley was slightly acquainted with the elder brother of his old friend,—a man who possessed some of Ernest's faults,—very proud, and very exacting, and very fastidious; but all these faults were developed in the ordinary commonplace world, and were not the refined abstractions of his younger brother.

Colonel Maltravers had continued, since he entered the Guards, to be thoroughly the man of fashion, and nothing more. But rich and well-born, and highly connected, and thoroughly *à la mode*—as he was, his pride made him uncomfortable in London, while his fastidiousness made him uncomfortable in the country. He was *rather* a great person, but he wanted to be a *very* great person. This he was at Lisle Court; but that did not satisfy him. He wanted not only to be a very great person, but a very great person among very great persons—and squires and parsons bored him. Lady Julia, his wife, was a fine lady, inane and pretty, who saw everything through her husband's eyes. He was quite master *chez lui*—, was Colonel Maltravers! He lived a great deal abroad; for on the Continent his large income seemed princely, while his high character, thorough breeding, and personal advantages, which were remarkable, secured him a greater position in foreign courts than at his own. Two

things had greatly disgusted him with Lisle Court,—trifles they might be with others, but they were not trifles to Cuthbert Maltravers; in the first place, a man who had been his father's attorney, and who was the very incarnation of coarse unrepellable familiarity, had bought an estate close by the said Lisle Court, and had, *horresco referens*., been made a baronet! Sir Gregory Gubbins took precedence of Colonel Maltravers! He could not ride out but he met Sir Gregory; he could not dine out but he had the pleasure of walking behind Sir Gregory's bright blue coat with its bright brass buttons. In his last visit to Lisle Court, which he had then crowded with all manner of fine people, he had seen—the very first morning after his arrival—seen from the large window of his state saloon, a great staring white, red, blue, and gilt thing, at the end of the stately avenue planted by Sir Guy Maltravers in honour of the victory over the Spanish armada. He looked in mute surprise, and everybody else looked; and a polite German count, gazing through his eye-glass, said, "Ah! dat is vat you call a vim in your *pays*.,—the vim of Colonel Maltravers!"

This "vim" was the pagoda summer-house of Sir Gregory Gubbins, erected in imitation of the Pavilion at Brighton. Colonel Maltravers was miserable: the *vim* haunted him; it seemed ubiquitous; he could not escape it,—it was built on the highest spot in the county. Ride, walk, sit where he would, the *vim* stared at him; and he thought he saw little mandarins shake their round little heads at him. This was one of the great curses of Lisle Court; the other was yet more galling. The owners of Lisle Court had for several generations possessed the dominant interest in the county town. The colonel himself meddled little in politics, and was too fine a gentleman for the drudgery of parliament. He had offered the seat to Ernest, when the latter had commenced his public career; but the result of a communication proved that their political views were dissimilar, and the negotiation dropped without ill-feeling on either side. Subsequently a vacancy occurred; and Lady Julia's brother (just made a Lord of the Treasury) wished to come into parliament, so the county town was offered to him. Now, the proud commoner had married into the family of a peer as proud as himself, and Colonel Maltravers was always glad whenever he could impress his consequence on his connections by doing them a favour. He wrote to his steward to see that the thing was properly settled, and came down on the nomination-day "to share the triumph and partake the gale." Guess his indignation, when he found the nephew of Sir Gregory Gubbins was already in the field! The result of the election was that Mr. Augustus Gubbins came in, and that Colonel Maltravers was pelted with cabbage-stalks, and accused of attempting to sell the worthy and independent electors to a government nominee! In shame and disgust, Colonel Maltravers broke up his establishment at Lisle Court, and once more retired to the Continent.

About a week from the date now touched upon, Lady Julia and himself had arrived in London from Vienna; and a new mortification awaited the unfortunate owner of Lisle Court. A railroad company had been

established, of which Sir Gregory Gubbins was a principal shareholder; and the speculator, Mr. Augustus Gubbins, one of the "most useful men in the House," had undertaken to carry the bill through parliament. Colonel Maltravers received a letter of portentous size, inclosing the map of the places which this blessed railway was to bisect; and lo! just at the bottom of his park ran a portentous line, which informed him of the sacrifice he was expected to make for the public good,—especially for the good of that very county town, the inhabitants of which had pelted him with cabbage-stalks!

Colonel Maltravers lost all patience. Unacquainted with our wise legislative proceedings, he was not aware that a railway planned is a very different thing from a railway made; and that parliamentary committees are not by any means favourable to schemes for carrying the public through a gentleman's park.

"This country is not to be lived in," said he to Lady Julia; "it gets worse and worse every year. I am sure I never had any comfort in Lisle Court. I've a great mind to sell it."

"Why, indeed, as we have no sons, only daughters, and Ernest is so well provided for," said Lady Julia, "and the place is so far from London, and the neighbourhood is so disagreeable, I think we could do very well without it."

Colonel Maltravers made no answer, but he revolved the pros and cons; and then he began to think how much it cost him in gamekeepers and carpenters and bailiffs and gardeners and Heaven knows whom besides; and then the pagoda flashed across him; and then the cabbage-stalks, and at last he went to his solicitor.

"You may sell Lisle Court," said he, quietly.

The solicitor dipped his pen in the ink. "The particulars, Colonel?"

"Particulars of Lisle Court! everybody, that is, every gentleman, knows Lisle Court!"

"Price, sir?"

"You know the rents; calculate accordingly. It will be too large a purchase for one individual; sell the outlying woods and farms separately from the rest."

"We must draw up an advertisement, Colonel."

"Advertise Lisle Court! out of the question, sir. I can have no publicity given to my intention: mention it quietly to any capitalist; but keep it out of the papers till it is all settled. In a week or two

you will find a purchaser,—the sooner the better.”

Besides his horror of newspaper comments and newspaper puffs, Colonel Maltravers dreaded that his brother—then in Paris—should learn his intention, and attempt to thwart it; and, somehow or other, the colonel was a little in awe of Ernest, and a little ashamed of his resolution. He did not know that, by a singular coincidence, Ernest himself had thought of selling Burleigh.

The solicitor was by no means pleased with this way of settling the matter. However, he whispered it about that Lisle Court was in the market; and as it really was one of the most celebrated places of its kind in England, the whisper spread among bankers and brewers and soap-boilers and other rich people—the Medici of the New Noblesse rising up amongst us—till at last it reached the ears of Mr. Douce.

Lord Vargrave, however bad a man he might be, had not many of those vices of character which belong to what I may call the _personal class of vices_,—that is, he had no ill-will to individuals. He was not, ordinarily, a jealous man, nor a spiteful, nor a malignant, nor a vindictive man: his vices arose from utter indifference to all men, and all things—except as conducive to his own ends. He would not have injured a worm if it did him no good; but he would have set any house on fire if he had no other means of roasting his own eggs. Yet still, if any feeling of personal rancour could harbour in his breast, it was, first, towards Evelyn Cameron, and, secondly, towards Ernest Maltravers. For the first time in his life, he did long for revenge,—revenge against the one for stealing his patrimony, and refusing his hand; and that revenge he hoped to gratify.

As to the other, it was not so much dislike he felt, as an uneasy sentiment of inferiority. However well he himself had got on in the world, he yet grudged the reputation of a man whom he had remembered a wayward, inexperienced boy: he did not love to hear any one praise Maltravers. He fancied, too, that this feeling was reciprocal, and that Maltravers was pained at hearing of any new step in his own career. In fact, it was that sort of jealousy which men often feel for the companions of their youth, whose characters are higher than their own, and whose talents are of an order they do not quite comprehend. Now, it certainly did seem at that moment to Lord Vargrave that it would be a most splendid triumph over Mr. Maltravers of Burleigh to be lord of Lisle Court, the hereditary seat of the elder branch of the family to be, as it were, in the very shoes of Mr. Ernest Maltravers’s elder brother. He knew, too, that it was a property of great consequence. Lord Vargrave of Lisle Court would hold a very different post in the peerage from Lord Vargrave of —, Fulham! Nobody would call the owner of Lisle Court an adventurer; nobody would suspect such a man of caring three straws about place and salary. And if he married Evelyn, and if Evelyn bought Lisle Court, would not Lisle Court be his? He vaulted over the _ifs_, stiff monosyllables though they were, with a single jump. Besides, even should

the thing come to nothing, there was the very excuse he sought for joining Evelyn at Paris, for conversing with her, consulting her. It was true that the will of the late lord left it solely at the discretion of the trustees to select such landed investment as seemed best to them; but still it was, if not legally necessary, at least but a proper courtesy to consult Evelyn. And plans, and drawings, and explanations, and rent-rolls, would justify him in spending morning after morning alone with her.

Thus cogitating, Lord Vargrave suffered Mr. Douce to stammer out sentence upon sentence, till at length, as he rang for coffee, his lordship stretched himself with the air of a man stretching himself into self-complacency or a good thing, and said,—

”Mr. Douce, I will go down to Lisle Court as soon as I can; I will see it; I will ascertain all about it; I will consider favourably of it. I agree with you, I think it will do famously.”

”But,” said Mr. Douce, who seemed singularly anxious about the matter, ”we must make haste, my lord; for really—yes, indeed—if—if-if Baron Roths—Rothschild should—that is to say—”

”Oh, yes, I understand; keep the thing close, my dear Douce; make friends with the colonel’s lawyer; play with him a little, till I can run down.”

”Besides, you see, you are such a good man of business, my lord—that you see, that—yes, really—there must be time to draw out the purchase-money—sell out at a prop—prop—”

”To be sure, to be sure! Bless me, how late it is! I am afraid my carriage is ready. I must go to Madame de L——’s.”

Mr. Douce, who seemed to have much more to say, was forced to keep it for another time, and to take his leave. Lord Vargrave went to Madame de L——’s. His position in what is called Exclusive Society was rather peculiar. By those who affected to be the best judges, the frankness of his manner and the easy oddity of his conversation were pronounced at variance with the tranquil serenity of thorough breeding. But still he was a great favourite both with fine ladies and dandies. His handsome keen countenance, his talents, his politics, his intrigues, and an animated boldness in his bearing, compensated for his constant violation of all the minutiae of orthodox conventionalism.

At this house he met Colonel Maltravers, and took an opportunity to renew his acquaintance with that gentleman. He then referred, in a confidential whisper, to the communication he had received touching Lisle Court.

”Yes,” said the colonel, ”I suppose I must sell the place, if I can do so quietly. To be sure, when I first spoke to my lawyer it was in a moment

of vexation, on hearing that the — railroad was to go through the park, but I find that I overrated that danger. Still, if you will do me the honour to go and look over the place, you will find very good shooting; and when you come back, you can see if it will suit you. Don't say anything about it when you are there; it is better not to publish my intention all over the county. I shall have Sir Gregory Gubbins offering to buy it if you do!"

"You may depend on my discretion. Have you heard anything of your brother lately?"

"Yes; I fancy he is going to Switzerland. He would soon be in England, if he heard I was going to part with Lisle Court!"

"What, it would vex him so?"

"I fear it would; but he has a nice old place of his own, not half so large, and therefore not half so troublesome as Lisle Court."

"Ay! and he did talk of selling that nice old place."

"Selling Burleigh! you surprise me. But really country places in England are a bore. I suppose he has his Gubbins as well as myself!"

Here the chief minister of the government adorned by Lord Vargrave's virtues passed by, and Lumley turned to greet him.

The two ministers talked together most affectionately in a close whisper,—so affectionately, that one might have seen, with half an eye, that they hated each other like poison!

CHAPTER V.

INSPICERE tanquam in speculum, in vitas omnium
Jubeo.—TERENCE.

"I bid you look into the lives of all men, as it were into a mirror."

ERNEST MALTRAVERS still lingered at Paris: he gave up all notion of proceeding farther. He was, in fact, tired of travel. But there was another reason that chained him to that "Navel of the Earth,"—there is not anywhere a better sounding-board to London rumours than the English quartier between the Boulevard des Italiennes and the Tuileries; here, at all events, he should soonest learn the worst: and every day, as he took up the English newspapers, a sick feeling of apprehension and fear

came over him. No! till the seal was set upon the bond, till the Rubicon was passed, till Miss Cameron was the wife of Lord Vargrave, he could neither return to the home that was so eloquent with the recollections of Evelyn, nor, by removing farther from England, delay the receipt of an intelligence which he vainly told himself he was prepared to meet.

He continued to seek such distractions from thought as were within his reach; and as his heart was too occupied for pleasures which had, indeed, long since palled, those distractions were of the grave and noble character which it is a prerogative of the intellect to afford to the passions.

De Montaigne was neither a Doctrinaire nor a Republican,—and yet, perhaps, he was a little of both. He was one who thought that the tendency of all European States is towards Democracy; but he by no means looked upon Democracy as a panacea for all legislative evils. He thought that, while a writer should be in advance of his time, a statesman should content himself with marching by its side; that a nation could not be ripened, like an exotic, by artificial means; that it must be developed only by natural influences. He believed that forms of government are never universal in their effects. Thus, De Montaigne conceived that we were wrong in attaching more importance to legislative than to social reforms. He considered, for instance, that the surest sign of our progressive civilization is in our growing distaste to capital punishments. He believed, not in the ultimate *perfection* of mankind, but in their progressive *perfectibility*. He thought that improvement was indefinite; but he did not place its advance more under Republican than under Monarchical forms. "Provided," he was wont to say, "all our checks to power are of the right kind, it matters little to what hands the power itself is confided."

"AEGina and Athens," said he, "were republics—commercial and maritime—placed under the same sky, surrounded by the same neighbours, and rent by the same struggles between Oligarchy and Democracy. Yet, while one left the world an immortal heirloom of genius, where are the poets, the philosophers, the statesmen of the other? Arrian tells us of republics in India, still supposed to exist by modern investigators; but they are not more productive of liberty of thought, or ferment of intellect, than the principalities. In Italy there were commonwealths as liberal as the Republic of Florence; but they did not produce a Machiavelli or a Dante. What daring thought, what gigantic speculation, what democracy of wisdom and genius, have sprung up amongst the despotisms of Germany! You cannot educate two individuals so as to produce the same results from both; you cannot, by similar constitutions (which are the education of nations) produce the same results from different communities. The proper object of statesmen should be to give every facility to the people to develop themselves, and every facility to philosophy to dispute and discuss as to the ultimate objects to be obtained. But you cannot, as a practical legislator, place your country under a melon-frame: it must grow of its own accord."

I do not say whether or not De Montaigne was wrong! but Maltravers saw at least that he was faithful to his theories; that all his motives were sincere, all his practice pure. He could not but allow, too, that in his occupations and labours, De Montaigne appeared to feel a sublime enjoyment; that, in linking all the powers of his mind to active and useful objects, De Montaigne was infinitely happier than the Philosophy of Indifference, the scorn of ambition, had made Maltravers. The influence exercised by the large-souled and practical Frenchman over the fate and the history of Maltravers was very peculiar.

De Montaigne had not, apparently and directly, operated upon his friend's outward destinies; but he had done so indirectly, by operating on his mind. Perhaps it was he who had consolidated the first wavering and uncertain impulses of Maltravers towards literary exertion; it was he who had consoled him for the mortifications at the earlier part of his career; and now, perhaps he might serve, in the full vigour of his intellect, permanently to reconcile the Englishman to the claims of life.

There were, indeed, certain conversations which Maltravers held with De Montaigne, the germ and pith of which it is necessary that I should place before the reader,—for I write the inner as well as the outer history of a man; and the great incidents of life are not brought about only by the dramatic agencies of others, but also by our own reasonings and habits of thought. What I am now about to set down may be wearisome, but it is not episodic; and I promise that it shall be the last didactic conversation in the work.

One day Maltravers was relating to De Montaigne all that he had been planning at Burleigh for the improvement of his peasantry, and all his theories respecting Labour-Schools and Poor-rates, when De Montaigne abruptly turned round, and said,—

”You have, then, really found that in your own little village your exertions—exertions not very arduous, not demanding a tenth part of your time—have done practical good?”

”Certainly I think so,” replied Maltravers, in some surprise.

”And yet it was but yesterday that you declared that all the labours of Philosophy and Legislation were labours vain; their benefits equivocal and uncertain; that as the sea, where it loses in one place, gains in another, so civilization only partially profits us, stealing away one virtue while it yields another, and leaving the large proportions of good and evil eternally the same.”

”True; but I never said that man might not relieve individuals by individual exertion: though he cannot by abstract theories—nay, even by practical action in the wide circle—benefit the mass.”

”Do you not employ on behalf of individuals the same moral agencies that wise legislation or sound philosophy would adopt towards the multitude? For example, you find that the children of your village are happier, more orderly, more obedient, promise to be wiser and better men in their own station of life, from the new, and, I grant, excellent system of school discipline and teaching that you have established. What you have done in one village, why should not legislation do throughout a kingdom? Again, you find that, by simply holding out hope and emulation to industry, by making stern distinctions between the energetic and the idle, the independent exertion and the pauper-mendicancy, you have found a lever by which you have literally moved and shifted the little world around you. But what is the difference here between the rules of a village lord and the laws of a wise legislature? The moral feelings you have appealed to exist universally, the moral remedies you have practised are as open to legislation as to the individual proprietor.”

”Yes; but when you apply to a nation the same principles which regenerate a village, new counterbalancing principles arise. If I give education to my peasants, I send them into the world with advantages _superior_ to their fellows,—advantages which, not being common to their class, enable them to _outstrip_ their fellows. But if this education were universal to the whole tribe, no man would have an advantage superior to the others; the knowledge they would have acquired being shared by all, would leave all as they now are, hewers of wood and drawers of water: the principle of individual hope, which springs from knowledge, would soon be baffled by the vast competition that _universal_ knowledge would produce. Thus by the universal improvement would be engendered a universal discontent.

”Take a broader view of the subject. Advantages given to the _few_ around me—superior wages, lighter toils, a greater sense of the dignity of man—are not productive of any change in society. Give these advantages to the _whole mass_ of the labouring classes, and what in the small orbit is the desire of the _individual_ to rise becomes in the large circumference the desire of the _class_ to rise; hence social restlessness, social change, revolution, and its hazards. For revolutions are produced but by the aspirations of one order, and the resistance of the other. Consequently, legislative improvement differs widely from individual amelioration; the same principle, the same agency, that purifies the small body, becomes destructive when applied to the large one. Apply the flame to the log on the hearth, or apply it to the forest, is there no distinction in the result? The breeze that freshens the fountain passes to the ocean, current impels current, wave urges wave, and the breeze becomes the storm.”

”Were there truth in this train of argument,” replied De Montaigne, ”had we ever abstained from communicating to the Multitude the enjoyments and advantages of the Few, had we shrunk from the good, because the good is a parent of the change and its partial ills, what now would be society? Is

there no difference in collective happiness and virtue between the painted Picts and the Druid worship, and the glorious harmony, light, and order of the great English nation?"

"The question is popular," said Maltravers, with a smile; "and were you my opponent in an election, would be cheered on any hustings in the kingdom. But I have lived among savage tribes,—savage, perhaps, as the race that resisted Caesar; and their happiness seems to me, not perhaps the same as that of the few whose sources of enjoyment are numerous, refined, and, save by their own passions, unalloyed; but equal to that of the mass of men in States the most civilized and advanced. The artisans, crowded together in the fetid air of factories, with physical ills gnawing at the core of the constitution, from the cradle to the grave; drudging on from dawn to sunset and flying for recreation to the dread excitement of the dram-shop, or the wild and vain hopes of political fanaticism,—are not in my eyes happier than the wild Indians with hardy frames and calm tempers, seasoned to the privations for which you pity them, and uncursed with desires of that better state never to be theirs. The Arab in his desert has seen all the luxuries of the pasha in his harem; but he envies them not. He is contented with his barb, his tent, his desolate sands, and his spring of refreshing water.

"Are we not daily told, do not our priests preach it from their pulpits, that the cottage shelters happiness equal to that within the palace? Yet what the distinction between the peasant and the prince, differing from that between the peasant and the savage? There are more enjoyments and more privations in the one than in the other; but if, in the latter case, the enjoyments, though fewer, be more keenly felt,—if the privations, though apparently sharper, fall upon duller sensibilities and hardier frames,—your gauge of proportion loses all its value. Nay, in civilization there is for the multitude an evil that exists not in the savage state. The poor man sees daily and hourly all the vast disparities produced by civilized society; and reversing the divine parable, it is Lazarus who from afar, and from the despondent pit, looks upon Dives in the lap of Paradise: therefore, his privations, his sufferings, are made more keen by comparison with the luxuries of others. Not so in the desert and the forest. There but small distinctions, and those softened by immemorial and hereditary usage—that has in it the sanctity of religion—separate the savage from his chief. The fact is, that in civilization we behold a splendid aggregate,—literature and science, wealth and luxury, commerce and glory; but we see not the million victims crushed beneath the wheels of the machine,—the health sacrificed, the board breadless, the jails filled, the hospitals reeking, the human life poisoned in every spring, and poured forth like water! Neither do we remember all the steps, marked by desolation, crime, and bloodshed, by which this barren summit has been reached. Take the history of any civilized state,—England, France, Spain before she rotted back into second childhood, the Italian Republics, the Greek Commonwealths, the Empress of the Seven Hills—what struggles, what persecutions, what crimes, what massacres! Where, in the page of

history, shall we look back and say, 'Here improvement has diminished the sum of evil'? Extend, too, your scope beyond the State itself: each State has won its acquisitions by the woes of others. Spain springs above the Old World on the blood-stained ruins of the New; and the groans and the gold of Mexico produce the splendours of the Fifth Charles!

"Behold England, the wise, the liberal, the free England—through what struggles she has passed; and is she yet contented? The sullen oligarchy of the Normans; our own criminal invasions of Scotland and France; the plundered people, the butchered kings; the persecutions of the Lollards; the wars of Lancaster and York; the new dynasty of the Tudors, that at once put back Liberty, and put forward Civilization! the Reformation, cradled in the lap of a hideous despot, and nursed by violence and rapine; the stakes and fires of Mary, and the craftier cruelties of Elizabeth,—England, strengthened by the desolation of Ireland, the Civil Wars, the reign of hypocrisy, followed by the reign of naked vice; the nation that beheaded the graceful Charles gaping idly on the scaffold of the lofty Sidney; the vain Revolution of 1688, which, if a jubilee in England, was a massacre in Ireland; the bootless glories of Marlborough; the organized corruption of Walpole, the frantic war with our own American sons, the exhausting struggles with Napoleon!

"Well, we close the page; we say, Lo! a thousand years of incessant struggles and afflictions! millions have perished, but Art has survived; our boors wear stockings, our women drink tea, our poets read Shakspeare, and our astronomers improve on Newton! Are we now contented? No! more restless than ever. New classes are called into power; new forms of government insisted on. Still the same catchwords,—Liberty here, Religion there; Order with one faction, Amelioration with the other. Where is the goal, and what have we gained? Books are written, silks are woven, palaces are built,—mighty acquisitions for the few—but the peasant is a peasant still! The crowd are yet at the bottom of the wheel; better off, you say. No, for they are not more contented! The artisan is as anxious for change as ever the serf was; and the steam-engine has its victims as well as the sword.

"Talk of legislation: all isolated laws pave the way to wholesale changes in the form of government! Emancipate Catholics, and you open the door to democratic principle, that Opinion should be free. If free with the sectarian, it should be free with the elector. The Ballot is a corollary from the Catholic Relief-bill. Grant the Ballot, and the new corollary of enlarged suffrage. Suffrage enlarged is divided but by a yielding surface (a circle widening in the waters) from universal suffrage. Universal suffrage is Democracy. Is Democracy better than the aristocratic commonwealth? Look at the Greeks, who knew both forms; are they agreed which is the best? Plato, Thucydides, Xenophon, Aristophanes—the Dreamer, the Historian, the Philosophic Man of Action, the penetrating Wit—have no ideals in Democracy. Algernon Sidney, the martyr of liberty, allows no government to the multitude. Brutus died for a republic, but a republic of Patricians! What form of government is

then the best? All dispute, the wisest cannot agree. The many still say 'a Republic;' yet, as you yourself will allow, Prussia, the Despotism, does all that Republics do. Yes, but a good despot is a lucky accident; true, but a just and benevolent Republic is as yet a monster equally short-lived. When the People have no other tyrant, their own public opinion becomes one. No secret espionage is more intolerable to a free spirit than the broad glare of the American eye.

"A rural republic is but a patriarchal tribe—no emulation, no glory; peace and stagnation. What Englishman, what Frenchman, would wish to be a Swiss? A commercial republic is but an admirable machine for making money. Is man created for nothing nobler than freighting ships and speculating on silk and sugar? In fact, there is no certain goal in legislation; we go on colonizing Utopia, and fighting phantoms in the clouds. Let us content ourselves with injuring no man, and doing good only in our own little sphere. Let us leave States and senates to fill the sieve of the Danaides, and roll up the stone of Sisyphus."

"My dear friend," said De Montaigne, "you have certainly made the most of an argument, which, if granted, would consign government to fools and knaves, and plunge the communities of mankind into the Slough of Despond. But a very commonplace view of the question might suffice to shake your system. Is life, mere animal life, on the whole, a curse or a blessing?"

"The generality of men in all countries," answered Maltravers, "enjoy existence, and apprehend death; were it otherwise, the world had been made by a Fiend, and not a God!"

"Well, then, observe how the progress of society cheats the grave! In great cities, where the effect of civilization must be the most visible, the diminution of mortality in a corresponding ratio with the increase of civilization is most remarkable. In Berlin, from the year 1747 to 1755, the annual mortality was as one to twenty-eight; but from 1816 to 1822, it was as one to thirty-four! You ask what England has gained by her progress in the arts? I will answer you by her bills of mortality. In London, Birmingham, and Liverpool, deaths have decreased in less than a century from one to twenty, to one to forty (precisely one-half!). Again, whenever a community—nay, a single city, decreases in civilization, and in its concomitants, activity and commerce, its mortality instantly increases. But if civilization be favourable to the prolongation of life, must it not be favourable to all that blesses life,—to bodily health, to mental cheerfulness, to the capacities for enjoyment? And how much more grand, how much more sublime, becomes the prospect of gain, if we reflect that, to each life thus called forth, there is a soul, a destiny beyond the grave, multiplied immortalities! What an apology for the continued progress of States! But you say that, however we advance, we continue impatient and dissatisfied: can you really suppose that, because man in every state is discontented with his lot, there is no difference in the *degree* and *quality* of his discontent, no distinction between pining for bread and longing for the

moon? Desire is implanted within us, as the very principle of existence; the physical desire fills the world, and the moral desire improves it. Where there is desire, there must be discontent: if we are satisfied with all things, desire is extinct. But a certain degree of discontent is not incompatible with happiness, nay, it has happiness of its own; what happiness like hope,—what is hope but desire? The European serf, whose seigneur could command his life, or insist as a right on the chastity of his daughter, desires to better his condition. God has compassion on his state; Providence calls into action the ambition of leaders, the contests of faction, the movement of men's aims and passions: a change passes through society and legislation, and the serf becomes free! He desires still, but what? No longer personal security, no longer the privileges of life and health; but higher wages, greater comforts, easier justice for diminished wrongs. Is there no difference in the quality of that desire? Was one a greater torment than the other is? Rise a scale higher: a new class is created—the Middle Class,—the express creature of Civilization. Behold the burgher and the citizen, and still struggling, still contending, still desiring, and therefore still discontented. But the discontent does not prey upon the springs of life: it is the discontent of *hope*., not *despair*.; it calls forth faculties, energies, and passions, in which there is more joy than sorrow. It is this desire which makes the citizen in private life an anxious father, a careful master, an *active*., and therefore not an unhappy, man. You allow that individuals can effect individual good: this very restlessness, this very discontent with the exact place that he occupies, makes the citizen a benefactor in his narrow circle. Commerce, better than Charity, feeds the hungry and clothes the naked. Ambition, better than brute affection, gives education to our children, and teaches them the love of industry, the pride of independence, the respect for others and themselves!

”In other words, a deference to such qualities as can best fit them to get on in the world, and make the most money!”

”Take that view if you will; but the wiser, the more civilized the State, the worse chances for the rogue to get on! There may be some art, some hypocrisy, some avarice,—nay, some hardness of heart,—in paternal example and professional tuition. But what are such sober infirmities to the vices that arise from defiance and despair? Your savage has his virtues, but they are mostly physical,—fortitude, abstinence, patience: mental and moral virtues must be numerous or few, in proportion to the range of ideas and the exigencies of social life. With the savage, therefore, they must be fewer than with civilized men; and they are consequently limited to those simple and rude elements which the safety of his state renders necessary to him. He is usually hospitable; sometimes honest. But vices are necessary to his existence as well as virtues: he is at war with a tribe that may destroy his own; and treachery without scruple, cruelty without remorse, are essential to him; he feels their necessity, and calls them *virtues*! Even the half-civilized man, the Arab whom you praise, imagines he has a necessity

for your money; and his robberies become virtues to him. But in civilized States, vices are at least not necessary to the existence of the majority; they are not, therefore, worshipped as virtues. Society unites against them; treachery, robbery, massacre, are not essential to the strength or safety of the community: they exist, it is true, but they are not cultivated, but punished. The thief in St. Giles's has the virtues of your savage: he is true to his companions, he is brave in danger, he is patient in privation; he practises the virtues necessary to the bonds of his calling and the tacit laws of his vocation. He might have made an admirable savage: but surely the mass of civilized men are better than the thief?"

Maltravers was struck, and paused a little before he replied; and then he shifted his ground. "But at least all our laws, all our efforts, must leave the multitude in every State condemned to a labour that deadens intellect, and a poverty that embitters life."

"Supposing this were true, still there are multitudes besides the multitude. In each State Civilization produces a middle class, more numerous to-day than the whole peasantry of a thousand years ago. Would Movement and Progress be without their divine uses, even if they limited their effect to the production of such a class? Look also to the effect of art, and refinement, and just laws, in the wealthier and higher classes. See how their very habits of life tend to increase the sum of enjoyment; see the mighty activity that their very luxury, the very frivolity of their pursuits, create! Without an aristocracy, would there have been a middle class? Without a middle class, would there ever have been an interposition between lord and slave? Before commerce produces a middle class, Religion creates one. The Priesthood, whatever its errors, was the curb to Power. But, to return to the multitude,—you say that in all times they are left the same. Is it so? I come to statistics again: I find that not only civilization, but liberty, has a prodigious effect upon human life. It is, as it were, by the instinct of self-preservation that liberty is so passionately desired by the multitude. A negro slave, for instance, dies annually as one to five or six, but a free African in the English service only as one to thirty-five! Freedom is not, therefore, a mere abstract dream, a beautiful name, a Platonic aspiration: it is interwoven with the most practical of all blessings,—life itself! And can you say fairly that by laws labour cannot be lightened and poverty diminished? We have granted already that since there are degrees in discontent, there is a difference between the peasant and the serf: how know you what the peasant a thousand years hence may be? Discontented, you will say,—still discontented. Yes; but if he had not been discontented, he would have been a serf still! Far from quelling this desire to better himself, we ought to hail it as the source of his perpetual progress. That desire to him is often like imagination to the poet, it transports him into the Future—

'Crura sonant ferro, sed canit inter opus.'

It is, indeed, the gradual transformation from the desire of Despair to the desire of Hope, that makes the difference between man and man, between misery and bliss."

"And then comes the crisis. Hope ripens into deeds; the stormy revolution, perhaps the armed despotism; the relapse into the second infancy of States!"

"Can we, with new agencies at our command, new morality, new wisdom, predicate of the Future by the Past? In ancient States, the mass were slaves; civilization and freedom rested with oligarchies; in Athens twenty thousand citizens, four hundred thousand slaves! How easy decline, degeneracy, overthrow in such States,—a handful of soldiers and philosophers without a People! Now we have no longer barriers to the circulation of the blood of States. The absence of slavery, the existence of the Press; the healthful proportions of kingdoms, neither too confined nor too vast, have created new hopes, which history cannot destroy. As a proof, look to all late revolutions: in England the Civil Wars, the Reformation,—in France her awful Saturnalia, her military despotism! Has either nation fallen back? The deluge passes, and, behold, the face of things more glorious than before! Compare the French of to-day with the French of the old _regime_. You are silent; well, and if in all States there is ever some danger of evil in their activity, is that a reason why you are to lie down inactive; why you are to leave the crew to battle for the helm? How much may individuals by the diffusion of their own thoughts in letters or in action regulate the order of vast events,—now prevent, now soften, now animate, now guide! And is a man to whom Providence and Fortune have imparted such prerogatives to stand aloof, because he can neither foresee the Future nor create Perfection? And you talk of no certain and definite goal! How know we that there is a certain and definite goal, even in heaven? How know we that excellence may not be illimitable? Enough that we improve, that we proceed. Seeing in the great design of earth that benevolence is an attribute of the Designer, let us leave the rest to Posterity and to God."

"You have disturbed many of my theories," said Maltravers, candidly; "and I will reflect on our conversation; but, after all, is every man to aspire to influence others; to throw his opinion into the great scales in which human destinies are weighed? Private life is not criminal. It is no virtue to write a book, or to make a speech. Perhaps, I should be as well engaged in returning to my country village, looking at my schools, and wrangling with the parish overseers—"

"Ah," interrupted the Frenchman, laughing; "if I have driven you to this point, I will go no further. Every state of life has its duties; every man must be himself the judge of what he is most fit for. It is quite enough that he desires to be active, and labours to be useful; that he acknowledges the precept, 'Never to be weary in well-doing.' The divine appetite once fostered, let it select its own food. But the man who, after fair trial of his capacities, and with all opportunity for their

full development before him, is convinced that he has faculties which private life cannot wholly absorb, must not repine that Human Nature is not perfect, when he refuses even to exercise the gifts he himself possesses.”

Now these arguments have been very tedious; in some places they have been old and trite; in others they may appear too much to appertain to the abstract theory of first principles. Yet from such arguments, *pro* and *con*, unless I greatly mistake, are to be derived corollaries equally practical and sublime,—the virtue of Action, the obligations of Genius, and the philosophy that teaches us to confide in the destinies, and labour in the service, of mankind.

CHAPTER VI.

I'LL tell you presently her very picture;
Stay—yes, it is so—Lelia.
—The Captain—, Act V. sc. I.

MALTRAVERS had not shrunk into a system of false philosophy from wayward and sickly dreams, from resolute self-delusion; on the contrary, his errors rested on his convictions: the convictions disturbed, the errors were rudely shaken.

But when his mind began restlessly to turn once more towards the duties of active life; when he recalled all the former drudgeries and toils of political conflict, or the wearing fatigues of literature, with its small enmities, its false friendships, and its meagre and capricious rewards,—ah, then, indeed, he shrank in dismay from the thoughts of the solitude at home! No lips to console in dejection, no heart to sympathize in triumph, no love within to counterbalance the hate without,—and the best of man, his household affections, left to wither away, or to waste themselves on ideal images, or melancholy remembrance.

It may, indeed, be generally remarked (contrary to a common notion), that the men who are most happy at home are the most active abroad. The animal spirits are necessary to healthful action; and dejection and the sense of solitude will turn the stoutest into dreamers. The hermit is the antipodes of the citizen; and no gods animate and inspire us like the Lares.

One evening, after an absence from Paris of nearly a fortnight, at De Montaigne's villa, in the neighbourhood of St. Cloud, Maltravers, who, though he no longer practised the art, was not less fond than heretofore of music, was seated in Madame de Ventadour's box at the Italian Opera;

and Valerie, who was above all the woman's jealousy of beauty, was expatiating with great warmth of eulogium upon the charms of a young English lady whom she had met at Lady G——'s the preceding evening.

"She is just my beau-ideal of the true English beauty," said Valerie: "it is not only the exquisite fairness of the complexion, nor the eyes so purely blue,—which the dark lashes relieve from the coldness common to the light eyes of the Scotch and German,—that are so beautifully national, but the simplicity of manner, the unconsciousness of admiration, the mingled modesty and sense of the expression. No, I have seen women more beautiful, but I never saw one more lovely: you are silent; I expected some burst of patriotism in return for my compliment to your countrywoman!"

"But I am so absorbed in that wonderful Pasta—"

"You are no such thing; your thoughts are far away. But can you tell me anything about my fair stranger and her friends? In the first place, there is a Lord Doltimore, whom I knew before—you need say nothing about him; in the next there is his new married bride, handsome, dark—but you are not well!"

"It was the draught from the door; go on, I beseech you, the young lady, the friend, her name?"

"Her name I do not remember; but she was engaged to be married to one of your statesmen, Lord Vargrave; the marriage is broken off—I know not if that be the cause of a certain melancholy in her countenance,—a melancholy I am sure not natural to its Hebe-like expression. But who have just entered the opposite box? Ah, Mr. Maltravers, do look, there is the beautiful English girl!"

And Maltravers raised his eyes, and once more beheld the countenance of Evelyn Cameron!