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Title: The Disowned — Volume 02

Author: Baron Edward Bulwer Lytton Lytton

Release date: March 1, 2005 [EBook #7632]

Most recently updated: December 30, 2020

Language: English

*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE DISOWNED — VOLUME 02 ***

This eBook was produced by Tapio Riikonen

and David Widger

CHAPTER XI.

He who would know mankind must be at home with all men.

STEPHEN MONTAGUE.

We left Clarence safely deposited in his little lodgings. Whether from the heat of his apartment or the restlessness a migration of beds produces in certain constitutions, his slumbers on the first night of his arrival were disturbed and brief. He rose early and descended to the parlour; Mr. de Warens, the nobly appellated foot-boy, was laying the breakfast-cloth. From three painted shelves which constituted the library of "Copperas Bower," as its owners gracefully called their habitation, Clarence took down a book very prettily bound; it was "Poems by a Nobleman." No sooner had he read two pages than he did exactly what the reader would have done, and restored the volume respectfully to its place. He then drew his chair towards the window, and wistfully eyed sundry ancient nursery maids, who were leading their infant charges to the "fresh fields and pastures new" of what is now the Regent's Park.

In about an hour Mrs. Copperas descended, and mutual compliments were exchanged; to her succeeded Mr. Copperas, who was well scolded for his laziness: and to them, Master Adolphus Copperas, who was also chidingly termed a naughty darling for the same offence. Now then Mrs. Copperas prepared the tea, which she did in the approved method adopted by all ladies to whom economy is dearer than renown, namely, the least possible quantity of the soi-disant Chinese plant was first sprinkled by the least possible quantity of hot water; after this mixture had become as black and as bitter as it could possibly be without any adjunct from the apothecary's skill, it was suddenly drenched with a copious diffusion, and as suddenly poured forth—weak, washy, and abominable,—into four cups, severally appertaining unto the four partakers of the matutinal nectar.

Then the conversation began to flow. Mrs. Copperas was a fine lady, and a sentimentalist,—very observant of the little niceties of phrase and manner. Mr. Copperas was a stock-jobber and a wit,—loved a good hit in each capacity; was very round, very short, and very much like a John Dory; and saw in the features and mind of the little Copperas the exact representative of himself.

"Adolphus, my love," said Mrs. Copperas, "mind what I told you, and sit upright. Mr. Linden, will you allow me to cut you a leetle piece of this roll?"

"Thank you," said Clarence, "I will trouble you rather for the whole of it."

Conceive Mrs. Copperas's dismay! From that moment she saw herself eaten out of house and home; besides, as she afterwards observed to her friend Miss Barbara York, the "vulgarity of such an amazing appetite!"

"Any commands in the city, Mr. Linden?" asked the husband; "a coach will pass by our door in a few minutes,—must be on 'Change in half an hour. Come, my love, another cup of tea; make haste; I have scarcely a moment to take my fare for the inside, before coachee takes his for the outside. Ha! ha! ha! Mr. Linden."

"Lord, Mr. Copperas," said his helpmate, "how can you be so silly? setting such an example to your son, too; never mind him, Adolphus, my love; fie, child! a'n't you ashamed of yourself? never put the spoon in your cup till you have done tea: I must really send you to school to learn manners. We have a very pretty little collection of books here, Mr. Linden, if you would like to read an hour or two after breakfast,—child, take your hands out of your pockets,—all the best English classics I believe, —'Telemachus,' and Young's 'Night Thoughts,' and 'Joseph Andrews,' and the 'Spectator,' and Pope's Iliad, and Creech's Lucretius; but you will look over them yourself! This is Liberty Hall, as well as Copperas Bower, Mr. Linden!"

"Well, my love," said the stock-jobber, "I believe I must be off. Here Tom, Tom (Mr. de Warens had just entered the room with some more hot water, to weaken still further "the poor remains of what was once"—the tea!), Tom, just run out and stop the coach; it will be by in five minutes."

"Have not I prayed and besought you, many and many a time, Mr. Copperas," said the lady, rebukingly, "not to call De Warens by his Christian name? Don't you know that all people in genteel life, who only keep one servant, invariably call him by his surname, as if he were the butler, you know?"

"Now, that is too good, my love," said Copperas. "I will call poor Tom by any surname you please, but I really can't pass him off for a butler! Ha—ha—ha—you must excuse me there, my love!"

"And pray, why not, Mr. Copperas? I have known many a butler bungle more at a cork than he does; and pray tell me who did you ever see wait better at dinner?"

"He wait at dinner, my love! it is not he who waits."

"Who then, Mr. Copperas?"

"Why we, my love; it's we who wait for dinner; but that's the cook's fault, not his."

"Pshaw! Mr. Copperas; Adolphus, my love, sit upright, darling."

Here De Warens cried from the bottom of the stairs,— "Measter, the coach be coming up."

"There won't be room for it to turn then," said the facetious Mr. Copperas, looking round the apartment as if he took the words literally.

"What coach is it, boy?"

Now that was not the age in which coaches scoured the city every half hour, and Mr. Copperas knew the name of the coach as well as he knew his own.

"It be the Swallow coach, sir."

"Oh, very well: then since I have swallowed in the roll, I will now roll in the Swallow—ha—ha—ha! Good-by, Mr. Linden."

No sooner had the witty stock-jobber left the room than Mrs. Copperas seemed to expand into a new existence. "My husband, sir," said she, apologetically, "is so odd, but he's an excellent sterling character; and that, you know, Mr. Linden, tells more in the bosom of a family than all the shining qualities which captivate the imagination. I am sure, Mr. Linden, that the moralist is right in admonishing us to prefer the gold to the tinsel. I have now been married some years, and every year seems happier than the last; but then, Mr. Linden, it is such a pleasure to contemplate the growing graces of the sweet pledge of our mutual love.—Adolphus, my dear, keep your feet still, and take your hands out of your pockets!"

A short pause ensued.

"We see a great deal of company," said Mrs. Copperas, pompously, "and of the very best description. Sometimes we are favoured by the society of the great Mr. Talbot, a gentleman of immense fortune and quite the courtier: he is, it is true, a little eccentric in his dress: but then he was a celebrated beau in his young days. He is our next neighbour; you can see his house out of the window, just across the garden—there! We have also, sometimes, our humble board graced by a very elegant friend of mine, Miss Barbara York, a lady of very high connections, her first cousin was a lord mayor.—Adolphus, my dear, what are you about? Well, Mr. Linden, you will find your retreat quite undisturbed; I must go about the household affairs; not that I do anything more than superintend, you know, sir; but I think no lady should be above consulting her husband's interests; that's what I call true old English conjugal affection. Come, Adolphus, my dear."

And Clarence was now alone. "I fear," thought he, "that I shall get on very indifferently with these people. But it will not do for me to be misanthropical, and (as Dr. Latinus was wont to say) the great merit of philosophy, when we cannot command circumstances, is to reconcile us to them."

CHAPTER XII.

A retired beau is one of the most instructive spectacles in the world.

STEPHEN MONTAGUE.

It was quite true that Mrs. Copperas saw a great deal of company, for at a certain charge, upon certain days, any individual might have the honour of sharing her family repast; and many, of various callings, though chiefly in commercial life, met at her miscellaneous board. Clarence must, indeed, have been difficult to please, or obtuse of observation, if, in the variety of her guests, he had not found something either to interest or amuse him. Heavens! what a motley group were accustomed, twice in the week, to assemble there! the little dining-parlour seemed a human oven; and it must be owned that Clarence was no slight magnet of attraction to the female part of the guests. Mrs. Copperas's bosom friend in especial, the accomplished Miss Barbara York, darted the most tender glances on the handsome young stranger; but whether or not a nose remarkably prominent and long prevented the glances from taking full effect, it is certain that Clarence seldom repaid them with that affectionate ardour which Miss Barbara York had ventured to anticipate. The only persons indeed for whom he felt any sympathetic attraction were of the same sex as himself. The one was Mr. Talbot, the old gentleman whom Mrs. Copperas had described as the perfect courtier; the other, a young artist of the name of Warner. Talbot, to Clarence's great astonishment (for Mrs. Copperas's eulogy had prepared him for something eminently displeasing) was a man of birth, fortune, and manners peculiarly graceful and attractive. It is true, however, that, despite of his vicinity, and Mrs. Copperas's urgent solicitations, he very seldom honoured her with his company, and he always cautiously sent over his servant in the morning to inquire the names and number of her expected guests; nor was he ever known to share the plenteous board of the stock-jobber's lady whenever any other partaker of its dainties save Clarence and the young artist were present. The latter, the old gentleman really liked; and as for one truly well born and well bred there is no vulgarity except in the mind, the slender means, obscure birth, and struggling profession of Warner were circumstances which, as they increased the merit of a gentle manner and a fine mind, spoke rather in his favour than the reverse. Mr. Talbot was greatly struck by Clarence Linden's conversation and appearance; and indeed there was in Talbot's tastes so strong a bias to aristocratic externals that Clarence's air alone would have been sufficient to win the good graces of a man who had, perhaps, more than most courtiers of his time, cultivated the arts of manner and the secrets of address.

"You will call upon me soon?" said he to Clarence, when, after dining one day with the Copperases and their inmate, he rose to return home. And Clarence, delighted with the urbanity and liveliness of his new acquaintance, readily promised that he would.

Accordingly the next day Clarence called upon Mr. Talbot. The house, as Mrs. Copperas had before said, adjoined her own, and was only separated from it by a garden. It was a dull mansion of brick, which had disdained the frippery of paint and whitewashing, and had indeed been built many years previously to the erection of the modern habitations which surrounded it. It was, therefore, as a consequence of this priority of birth, more sombre than the rest, and had a peculiarly forlorn and solitary look. As Clarence approached the door, he was struck with the size of the house; it was of very considerable extent, and in the more favourable situations of London, would have passed for a very desirable and spacious tenement. An old man, whose accurate precision of dress bespoke the tastes of the master, opened the door, and after ushering Clarence through two long, and, to his surprise, almost

splendidly furnished rooms, led him into a third, where, seated at a small writing-table, he found Mr. Talbot. That person, one whom Clarence then little thought would hereafter exercise no small influence over his fate, was of a figure and countenance well worthy the notice of a description.

His own hair, quite white, was carefully and artificially curled, and gave a Grecian cast to features whose original delicacy, and exact though small proportions, not even age could destroy. His eyes were large, black, and sparkled with almost youthful vivacity; and his mouth, which was the best feature he possessed, developed teeth white and even as rows of ivory. Though small and somewhat too slender in the proportions of his figure, nothing could exceed the ease and the grace of his motions and air; and his dress, though singularly rich in its materials, eccentric in its fashion, and from its evident study, unseemly to his years, served nevertheless to render rather venerable than ridiculous a mien which could almost have carried off any absurdity, and which the fashion of the garb peculiarly became. The tout ensemble was certainly that of a man who was still vain of his exterior, and conscious of its effect; and it was as certainly impossible to converse with Mr. Talbot for five minutes without merging every less respectful impression in the magical fascination of his manner.

"I thank you, Mr. Linden," said Talbot, rising, "for your accepting so readily an old man's invitation. If I have felt pleasure in discovering that we were to be neighbours, you may judge what that pleasure is to-day at finding you my visitor."

Clarence, who, to do him justice, was always ready at returning a fine speech, replied in a similar strain, and the conversation flowed on agreeably enough. There was more than a moderate collection of books in the room, and this circumstance led Clarence to allude to literary subjects; these Mr. Talbot took up with avidity, and touched with a light but graceful criticism upon many of the then modern and some of the older writers. He seemed delighted to find himself understood and appreciated by Clarence, and every moment of Linden's visit served to ripen their acquaintance into intimacy. At length they talked upon Copperas Bower and its inmates.

"You will find your host and hostess," said the gentleman, "certainly of a different order from the persons with whom it is easy to see you have associated; but, at your happy age, a year or two may be very well thrown away upon observing the manners and customs of those whom, in later life, you may often be called upon to conciliate or perhaps to control. That man will never be a perfect gentleman who lives only with gentlemen. To be a man of the world, we must view that world in every grade and in every perspective. In short, the most practical art of wisdom is that which extracts from things the very quality they least appear to possess; and the actor in the world, like the actor on the stage, should find 'a basket-hilted sword very convenient to carry milk in.' [See the witty inventory of a player's goods in the "Tatler."] As for me, I have survived my relations and friends. I cannot keep late hours, nor adhere to the unhealthy customs of good society; nor do I think that, to a man of my age and habits, any remuneration would adequately repay the sacrifice of health or comfort. I am, therefore, well content to sink into a hermitage in an obscure corner of this great town, and only occasionally to revive my 'past remembrances of higher state,' by admitting a few old acquaintances to drink my bachelor's tea and talk over the news of the day. Hence, you see, Mr. Linden, I pick up two or three novel anecdotes of state and scandal, and maintain my importance at Copperas Bower by retailing them second-hand. Now that you are one of the inmates of that abode, I shall be more frequently its guest. By the by, I will let you into a secret: know that I am somewhat a lover of the marvellous, and like to indulge a little embellishing exaggeration in any place where there is no chance of finding me out. Mind, therefore, my dear Mr. Linden, that you take no ungenerous advantage of this confession; but suffer me, now and then, to tell my stories my own way, even when you think truth would require me to tell them in another."

"Certainly," said Clarence, laughing; "let us make an agreement: you shall tell your stories as you please, if you will grant me the same liberty in paying my compliments; and if I laugh aloud at the stories, you shall promise me not to laugh aloud at the compliments."

"It is a bond," said Talbot; "and a very fit exchange of service it is. It will be a problem in human nature to see who has the best of it: you shall pay your court by flattering the people present, and I mine by abusing those absent. Now, in spite of your youth and curling locks, I will wager that I succeed the best; for in vanity there is so great a mixture of envy that no compliment is like a judicious abuse: to enchant your acquaintance, ridicule his friends."

"Ah, sir," said Clarence, "this opinion of yours is, I trust, a little in the French school, where brilliancy is more studied than truth, and where an ill opinion of our species always has the merit of passing for profound."

Talbot smiled, and shook his head. "My dear young friend," said he, "it is quite right that you, who are coming into the world, should think well of it; and it is also quite right that I, who am going out of it, should console myself by trying to despise it. However, let me tell you, my young friend, that he whose

opinion of mankind is not too elevated will always be the most benevolent, because the most indulgent, to those errors incidental to human imperfection to place our nature in too flattering a view is only to court disappointment, and end in misanthropy. The man who sets out with expecting to find all his fellow-creatures heroes of virtue will conclude by condemning them as monsters of vice; and, on the contrary, the least exacting judge of actions will be the most lenient. If God, in His own perfection, did not see so many frailties in us, think you He would be so gracious to our virtues?"

"And yet," said Clarence, "we remark every day examples of the highest excellence."

"Yes," replied Talbot, "of the highest but not of the most constant excellence. He knows very little of the human heart who imagines we cannot do a good action; but, alas! he knows still less of it who supposes we can be always doing good actions. In exactly the same ratio we see every day the greatest crimes are committed; but we find no wretch so depraved as to be always committing crimes. Man cannot be perfect even in guilt."

In this manner Talbot and his young visitor conversed, till Clarence, after a stay of unwarrantable length, rose to depart.

"Well," said Talbot, "if we now rightly understand each other, we shall be the best friends in the world. As we shall expect great things from each other sometimes, we will have no scruple in exacting a heroic sacrifice every now and then; for instance, I will ask you to punish yourself by an occasional *tete-a-tete* with an ancient gentleman; and, as we can also by the same reasoning pardon great faults in each other, if they are not often committed, so I will forgive you, with all my heart, whenever you refuse my invitations, if you do not refuse them often. And now farewell till we meet again."

It seemed singular and almost unnatural to Linden that a man like Talbot, of birth, fortune, and great fastidiousness of taste and temper, should have formed any sort of acquaintance, however slight and distant, with the facetious stock-jobber and his wife; but the fact is easily explained by a reference to the vanity which we shall see hereafter made the ruling passion of Talbot's nature. This vanity, which branching forth into a thousand eccentricities, displayed itself in the singularity of his dress, the studied yet graceful warmth of his manner, his attention to the minutiae of life, his desire, craving and insatiate, to receive from every one, however insignificant, his obolus of admiration,—this vanity, once flattered by the obsequious homage it obtained from the wonder and reverence of the Copperases, reconciled his taste to the disgust it so frequently and necessarily conceived; and, having in great measure resigned his former acquaintance and wholly outlived his friends, he was contented to purchase the applause which had become to him a necessary of life at the humble market more immediately at his command.

There is no dilemma in which Vanity cannot find an expedient to develop its form, no stream of circumstances in which its buoyant and light nature will not rise to float upon the surface. And its ingenuity is as fertile as that of the player who (his wardrobe allowing him no other method of playing the fop) could still exhibit the prevalent passion for distinction by wearing stockings of different colours.

CHAPTER XIII.

Who dares

Interpret then my life for me as 't were

One of the undistinguishable many?

COLERIDGE: *Wallenstein*.

The first time Clarence had observed the young artist, he had taken a deep interest in his appearance. Pale, thin, undersized, and slightly deformed, the sanctifying mind still shed over the humble frame a spell more powerful than beauty. Absent in manner, melancholy in air, and never conversing except upon subjects on which his imagination was excited, there was yet a gentleness about him which could not fail to conciliate and prepossess; nor did Clarence omit any opportunity to soften his reserve, and wind himself into his more intimate acquaintance. Warner, the only support of an aged and infirm grandmother (who had survived her immediate children), was distantly related to Mrs. Copperase; and that lady extended to him, with ostentatious benevolence, her favour and support. It is true that she did not impoverish the young Adolphus to enrich her kinsman, but she allowed him a seat at her hospitable board, whenever it was not otherwise filled; and all that she demanded in return

was a picture of herself, another of Mr. Copperas, a third of Master Adolphus, a fourth of the black cat, and from time to time sundry other lesser productions of his genius, of which, through the agency of Mr. Brown, she secretly disposed at a price that sufficiently remunerated her for whatever havoc the slender appetite of the young painter was able to effect.

By this arrangement, Clarence had many opportunities of gaining that intimacy with Warner which had become to him an object; and though the painter, constitutionally diffident and shy, was at first averse to, and even awed by, the ease, boldness, fluent speech, and confident address of a man much younger than himself, yet at last he could not resist the being decoyed into familiarity; and the youthful pair gradually advanced from companionship into friendship. There was a striking contrast between the two: Clarence was bold and frank, Warner close and timid. Both had superior abilities; but the abilities of Clarence were for action, those of Warner for art: both were ambitious; but the ambition of Clarence was that of circumstances rather than character. Compelled to carve his own fortunes without sympathy or aid, he braced his mind to the effort, though naturally too gay for the austerity, and too genial for the selfishness of ambition. But the very essence of Warner's nature was the feverish desire of fame: it poured through his veins like lava; it preyed as a worm upon his cheek; it corroded his natural sleep; it blackened the colour of his thoughts; it shut out, as with an impenetrable wall, the wholesome energies and enjoyments and objects of living men; and, taking from him all the vividness of the present, all the tenderness of the past, constrained his heart to dwell forever and forever amidst the dim and shadowy chimeras of a future he was fated never to enjoy.

But these differences of character, so far from disturbing, rather cemented their friendship; and while Warner (notwithstanding his advantage of age) paid involuntary deference to the stronger character of Clarence, he, in his turn, derived that species of pleasure by which he was most gratified, from the affectionate and unenvious interest Clarence took in his speculations of future distinction, and the unwearied admiration with which he would sit by his side, and watch the colours start from the canvas, beneath the real though uncultured genius of the youthful painter.

Hitherto, Warner had bounded his attempts to some of the lesser efforts of the art; he had now yielded to the urgent enthusiasm of his nature, and conceived the plan of an historical picture. Oh! what sleepless nights, what struggles of the teeming fancy with the dense brain, what labours of the untiring thought wearing and intense as disease itself, did it cost the ambitious artist to work out in the stillness of his soul, and from its confused and conflicting images, the design of this long meditated and idolized performance! But when it was designed; when shape upon shape grew and swelled, and glowed from the darkness of previous thought upon the painter's mind; when, shutting his eyes in the very credulity of delight, the whole work arose before him, glossy with its fresh hues, bright, completed, faultless, arrayed as it were, and decked out for immortality,—oh! then what a full and gushing moment of rapture broke like a released stream upon his soul! What a recompense for wasted years, health, and hope! What a coronal to the visions and transports of Genius: brief, it is true, but how steeped in the very halo of a light that might well be deemed the glory of heaven!

But the vision fades, the gorgeous shapes sweep on into darkness, and, waking from his reverie, the artist sees before him only the dull walls of his narrow chamber; the canvas stretched a blank upon its frame; the works, maimed, crude, unfinished, of an inexperienced hand, lying idly around; and feels himself—himself, but one moment before the creator of a world of wonders, the master spirit of shapes glorious and majestic beyond the shapes of men—dashed down from his momentary height, and despoiled both of his sorcery and his throne.

It was just in such a moment that Warner, starting up, saw Linden (who had silently entered his room) standing motionless before him.

"Oh, Linden!" said the artist, "I have had so superb a dream,—a dream which, though I have before snatched some such vision by fits and glimpses, I never beheld so realized, so perfect as now; and—but you shall see, you shall judge for yourself; I will sketch out the design for you;" and, with a piece of chalk and a rapid hand, Warner conveyed to Linden the outline of his conception. His young friend was eager in his praise and his predictions of renown, and Warner listened to him with a fondness which spread over his pale cheek a richer flush than lover ever caught from the whispers of his beloved.

"Yes," said he, as he rose, and his sunken and small eye flashed out with a feverish brightness, "yes, if my hand does not fail my thought, it shall rival even—" Here the young painter stopped short, abashed at that indiscretion of enthusiasm about to utter to another the hoarded vanities hitherto locked in his heart of hearts as a sealed secret, almost from himself.

"But come," said Clarence, affectionately, "your hand is feverish and dry, and of late you have seemed more languid than you were wont,— come, Warner, you want exercise: it is a beautiful evening, and you shall explain your picture still further to me as we walk."

Accustomed to yield to Clarence, Warner mechanically and abstractedly obeyed; they walked out into the open streets.

"Look around us," said Warner, pausing, "look among this toiling and busy and sordid mass of beings who claim with us the fellowship of clay. The poor labour; the rich feast: the only distinction between them is that of the insect and the brute; like them they fulfil the same end and share the same oblivion; they die, a new race springs up, and the very grass upon their graves fades not so soon as their memory. Who that is conscious of a higher nature would not pine and fret himself away to be confounded with these? Who would not burn and sicken and parch with a delirious longing to divorce himself from so vile a herd? What have their petty pleasures and their mean aims to atone for the abasement of grinding down our spirits to their level? Is not the distinction from their blended and common name a sufficient recompense for all that ambition suffers or foregoes? Oh, for one brief hour (I ask no more) of living honour, one feeling of conscious, unfearing certainty that Fame has conquered Death! and then for this humble and impotent clay, this drag on the spirit which it does not assist but fetter, this wretched machine of pains and aches, and feverish throbbings, and vexed inquietudes, why, let the worms consume it, and the grave hide—for Fame there is no grave."

At that moment one of those unfortunate women who earn their polluted sustenance by becoming the hypocrites of passions abruptly accosted them.

"Miserable wretch!" said Warner, loathingly, as he pushed her aside; but Clarence, with a kindlier feeling, noticed that her haggard cheek was wet with tears, and that her frame, weak and trembling, could scarcely support itself; he, therefore, with that promptitude of charity which gives ere it discriminates put some pecuniary assistance in her hand and joined his comrade.

"You would not have spoken so tauntingly to the poor girl had you remarked her distress," said Clarence.

"And why," said Warner, mournfully, "why be so cruel as to prolong, even for a few hours, an existence which mercy would only seek to bring nearer to the tomb? That unfortunate is but one of the herd, one of the victims to pleasures which debase by their progress and ruin by their end. Yet perhaps she is not worse than the usual followers of love,—of love, that passion the most worshipped, yet the least divine,—selfish and exacting,—drawing its aliment from destruction, and its very nature from tears."

"Nay," said Clarence, "you confound the two loves, the Eros and the Anteros; gods whom my good tutor was wont so sedulously to distinguish: you surely do not inveigh thus against all love?"

"I cry you mercy," said Warner, with something of sarcasm in his pensiveness of tone. "We must not dispute; so I will hold my peace: but make love all you will; what are the false smiles of a lip which a few years can blight as an autumn leaf? what the homage of a heart as feeble and mortal as your own? Why, I, with a few strokes of a little hair and an idle mixture of worthless colours, will create a beauty in whose mouth there shall be no hollowness, in whose lip there shall be no fading; there, in your admiration, you shall have no need of flattery and no fear of falsehood; you shall not be stung with jealousy nor maddened with treachery; nor watch with a breaking heart over the waning bloom, and departing health, till the grave open, and your perishable paradise is not. No: the mimic work is mightier than the original, for it outlasts it; your love cannot wither it, or your desertion destroy; your very death, as the being who called it into life, only stamps it with a holier value."

"And so then," said Clarence, "you would seriously relinquish, for the mute copy of the mere features, those affections which no painting can express?"

"Ay," said the painter, with an energy unusual to his quiet manner, and slightly wandering in his answer from Clarence's remark, "ay, one serves not two mistresses: mine is the glory of my art. Oh! what are the cold shapes of this tame earth, where the footsteps of the gods have vanished, and left no trace, the blemished forms, the debased brows, and the jarring features, to the glorious and gorgeous images which I can conjure up at my will? Away with human beauties, to him whose nights are haunted with the forms of angels and wanderers from the stars, the spirits of all things lovely and exalted in the universe: the universe as it was; when to fountain, and stream, and hill, and to every tree which the summer clothed, was allotted the vigil of a Nymph! when through glade, and by waterfall, at glossy noontide, or under the silver stars, the forms of Godhead and Spirit were seen to walk; when the sculptor modelled his mighty work from the beauty and strength of Heaven, and the poet lay in the shade to dream of the Naiad and the Faun, and the Olympian dwellers whom he walked in rapture to behold; and the painter, not as now, shaping from shadow and in solitude the dim glories of his heart, caught at once his inspiration from the glow of earth and its living wanderers, and, lo, the canvas breathed! Oh! what are the dull realities and the abortive offspring of this altered and humbled world—the world of meaner and dwarfish men—to him whose realms are peopled with visions like these?"

And the artist, whose ardour, long excited and pent within, had at last thus audibly, and to Clarence's astonishment, burst forth, paused, as if to recall himself from his wandering enthusiasm. Such moments of excitement were indeed rare with him, except when utterly alone, and even then, were almost invariably followed by that depression of spirit by which all over-wrought susceptibility is succeeded. A change came over his face, like that of a cloud when the sunbeam which gilded leaves it; and, with a slight sigh and a subdued tone, he resumed,—

"So, my friend, you see what our art can do even for the humblest professor, when I, a poor, friendless, patronless artist, can thus indulge myself by forgetting the present. But I have not yet explained to you the attitude of my principal figure;" and Warner proceeded once more to detail the particulars of his intended picture. It must be confessed that he had chosen a fine though an arduous subject: it was the Trial of Charles the First; and as the painter, with the enthusiasm of his profession and the eloquence peculiar to himself, dwelt upon the various expressions of the various forms which that extraordinary judgment-court afforded, no wonder that Clarence forgot, with the artist himself, the disadvantages Warner had to encounter in the inexperience of an unregulated taste and an imperfect professional education.

CHAPTER XIV.

All manners take a tincture from our own,
Or come discoloured through our passions shown.—POPE.

What! give up liberty, property, and, as the Gazeteer says, lie down to be saddled with wooden shoes?
—Vicar of Wakefield.

There was something in the melancholy and reflective character of Warner resembling that of Mordaunt; had they lived in these days perhaps both the artist and the philosopher had been poets. But (with regard to the latter) at that time poetry was not the customary vent for deep thought or passionate feeling. Gray, it is true, though unjustly condemned as artificial and meretricious in his style, had infused into the scanty works which he has bequeathed to immortality a pathos and a richness foreign to the literature of the age; and, subsequently, Goldsmith, in the affecting yet somewhat enervate simplicity of his verse, had obtained for Poetry a brief respite from a school at once declamatory and powerless, and led her forth for a "Sunshine Holiday" into the village green and under the hawthorn shade. But, though the softer and meeker feelings had struggled into a partial and occasional vent, those which partook more of passion and of thought, the deep, the wild, the fervid, were still without "the music of a voice." For the after century it was reserved to restore what we may be permitted to call the spirit of our national literature; to forsake the clinquant of the French mimickers of classic gold; to exchange a thrice-adulterated Hippocrene for the pure well of Shakspeare and of Nature; to clothe philosophy in the gorgeous and solemn majesty of appropriate music; and to invest passion with a language as burning as its thought and rapid as its impulse. At that time reflection found its natural channel in metaphysical inquiry or political speculation; both valuable, perhaps, but neither profound. It was a bold, and a free, and an inquisitive age, but not one in which thought ran over its set and stationary banks, and watered even the common flowers of verse: not one in which Lucretius could have embodied the dreams of Epicurus; Shakspeare lavished the mines of a superhuman wisdom upon his fairy palaces and enchanted isles; or the Beautifier [Wordsworth] of this common earth have called forth

"The motion of the spirit that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought;"

or Disappointment and Satiety have hallowed their human griefs by a pathos wrought from whatever is magnificent and grand and lovely in the unknown universe; or the speculations of a great but visionary mind [Shelley] have raised, upon subtlety and doubt, a vast and irregular pile of verse, full of dim-lighted cells, and winding galleries, in which what treasures lie concealed! That was an age in which poetry took one path and contemplation another; those who were addicted to the latter pursued it in its orthodox roads; and many, whom Nature, perhaps intended for poets, the wizard Custom converted into speculators or critics.

It was this which gave to Algernon's studies their peculiar hue; while, on the other hand, the taste for the fine arts which then universally prevailed, directed to the creations of painting, rather than those of poetry, more really congenial to his powers, the intense imagination and passion for glory which

marked and pervaded the character of the artist.

But as we have seen that that passion for glory made the great characteristic difference between Clarence and Warner, so also did that passion terminate any resemblance which Warner bore to Algernon Mordaunt. With the former a rank and unwholesome plant, it grew up to the exclusion of all else; with the latter, subdued and regulated, it sheltered, not withered, the virtues by which it was surrounded. With Warner, ambition was a passionate desire to separate himself by fame from the herd of other men; with Mordaunt, to bind himself by charity yet closer to his kind: with the one, it produced a disgust to his species; with the other, a pity and a love: with the one, power was the badge of distinction; with the other, the means to bless! But our story lingers.

It was now the custom of Warner to spend the whole day at his work, and wander out with Clarence, when the evening darkened, to snatch a brief respite of exercise and air. Often, along the lighted and populous streets, would the two young and unfriended competitors for this world's high places roam with the various crowd, moralizing as they went or holding dim conjecture upon their destinies to be. And often would they linger beneath the portico of some house where, "haunted with great resort," Pleasure and Pomp held their nightly revels, to listen to the music that, through the open windows, stole over the rare exotics with which wealth mimics the southern scents, and floated, mellowing by distance, along the unworthy streets; and while they stood together, silent and each feeding upon separate thoughts, the artist's pale lip would curl with scorn, as he heard the laugh and the sounds of a frivolous and hollow mirth ring from the crowd within, and startle the air from the silver spell which music had laid upon it. "These," would he say to Clarence, "these are the dupes of the same fever as ourselves: like us, they strive and toil and vex their little lives for a distinction from their race. Ambition comes to them, as to all: but they throw for a different prize than we do; theirs is the honour of a day, ours is immortality; yet they take the same labour and are consumed by the same care. And, fools that they are, with their gilded names and their gaudy trappings, they would shrink in disdain from that comparison with us which we, with a juster fastidiousness, blush at this moment to acknowledge."

From these scenes they would rove on, and, both delighting in contrast, enter some squalid and obscure quarter of the city. There, one night, quiet observers of their kind, they paused beside a group congregated together by some common cause of obscene merriment or unholy fellowship—a group on which low vice had set her sordid and hideous stamp—to gaze and draw strange humours or a motley moral from that depth and ferment of human nature into whose sink the thousand streams of civilization had poured their dregs and offal.

"You survey these," said the painter, marking each with the curious eye of his profession: "they are a base horde, it is true; but they have their thirst of fame, their aspirations even in the abyss of crime or the loathsomeness of famished want. Down in yon cellar, where a farthing rushlight glimmers upon haggard cheeks, distorted with the idiocy of drink; there, in that foul attic, from whose casement you see the beggar's rags hang to dry, or rather to crumble in the reeking and filthy air; farther on, within those walls which, black and heavy as the hearts they hide, close our miserable prospect,—there, even there, in the mildewed dungeon, in the felon's cell, on the very scaffold's self, Ambition hugs her own hope or scowls upon her own despair. Yes! the inmates of those walls had their perilous game of honour, their 'hazard of the die,' in which vice was triumph and infamy success. We do but share their passion, though we direct it to a better object."

Pausing for a moment, as his thoughts flowed into a somewhat different channel of his character, Warner continued, "We have now caught a glimpse of the two great divisions of mankind; they who riot in palaces, and they who make mirth hideous in rags and hovels: own that it is but a poor survey in either. Can we be contemptible with these or loathsome with those? Or rather have we not a nobler spark within us, which we have but to fan into a flame that shall burn forever, when these miserable meteors sink into the corruption from which they rise?"

"But," observed Clarence, "these are the two extremes; the pinnacle of civilization, too worn and bare for any more noble and vigorous fruit, and the base upon which the cloud descends in rain and storm. Look to the central portion of society; there the soil is more genial, and its produce more rich."

"Is it so, in truth?" answered Warner; "pardon me, I believe not: the middling classes are as human as the rest. There is the region, the heart, of Avarice,—systematized, spreading, rotting, the very fungus and leprosy of social states; suspicion, craft, hypocrisy, servility to the great, oppression to the low, the waxlike mimicry of courtly vices, the hardness of flint to humble woes; thought, feeling, the faculties and impulses of man, all ulcered into one great canker, Gain,—these make the general character of the middling class, the unleavened mass of that mediocrity which it has been the wisdom of the shallow to applaud. Pah! we too are of this class, this potter's earth, this paltry mixture of mud and stone; but we, my friend, we will knead gold into our clay."

"But look," said Clarence, pointing to the group before them, "look, yon wretched mother, whose

voice an instant ago uttered the coarsest accents of maudlin and intoxicated prostitution, is now fostering her infant, with a fondness stamped upon her worn cheek and hollow eye, which might shame the nice maternity of nobles; and there, too, yon wretch whom, in the reckless effrontery of hardened abandonment, we ourselves heard a few minutes since boast of his dexterity in theft, and openly exhibit its token,—look, he is now, with a Samaritan's own charity, giving the very goods for which his miserable life was risked to that attenuated and starving stripling! No, Warner, no! even this mass is not unleavened. The vilest infamy is not too deep for the Seraph Virtue to descend and illumine its abyss!"

"Out on the weak fools!" said the artist, bitterly: "it would be something, if they could be consistent even in crime!" and, placing his arm in Linden's, he drew him away.

As the picture grew beneath the painter's hand, Clarence was much struck with the outline and expression of countenance given to the regicide Bradshaw.

"They are but an imperfect copy of the living original from whom I have borrowed them," said Warner, in answer to Clarence's remark upon the sternness of the features. "But that original—a relation of mine, is coming here to-day: you shall see him."

While Warner was yet speaking, the person in question entered. His were, indeed, the form and face worthy to be seized by the painter. The peculiarity of his character made him affect a plainness of dress unusual to the day, and approaching to the simplicity, but not the neatness, of Quakerism. His hair—then, with all the better ranks, a principal object of cultivation—was wild, dishevelled, and, in wiry flakes of the sablest hue, rose abruptly from a forehead on which either thought or passion had written its annals with an iron pen; the lower part of the brow, which overhung the eye, was singularly sharp and prominent; while the lines, or rather furrows, traced under the eyes and nostrils, spoke somewhat of exhaustion and internal fatigue. But this expression was contrasted and contradicted by the firmly compressed lip; the lighted, steady, stern eye; the resolute and even stubborn front, joined to proportions strikingly athletic and a stature of uncommon height.

"Well, Wolfe," said the young painter to the person we have described, "it is indeed a kindness to give me a second sitting."

"Tusk, boy!" answered Wolfe, "all men have their vain points, and I own that I am not ill pleased that these rugged features should be assigned, even in fancy, to one of the noblest of those men who judged the mightiest cause in which a country was ever plaintiff, a tyrant criminal, and a world witness!" While Wolfe was yet speaking his countenance, so naturally harsh, took a yet sterner aspect, and the artist, by a happy touch, succeeded in transferring it to the canvas.

"But, after all," continued Wolfe, "it shames me to lend aid to an art frivolous in itself, and almost culpable in times when Freedom wants the head to design, and perhaps the hand to execute, far other and nobler works than the blazoning of her past deeds upon perishable canvas."

A momentary anger at the slight put upon his art crossed the pale brow of the artist; but he remembered the character of the man and continued his work in silence. "You consider then, sir, that these are times in which liberty is attacked?" said Clarence.

"Attacked!" repeated Wolfe,— "attacked!" and then suddenly sinking his voice into a sort of sneer, "why, since the event which this painting is designed to commemorate, I know not if we have ever had one solitary gleam of liberty break along the great chaos of jarring prejudice and barbarous law which we term forsooth a glorious constitution. Liberty attacked! no, boy; but it is a time when liberty may be gained."

Perfectly unacquainted with the excited politics of the day, or the growing and mighty spirit which then stirred through the minds of men, Clarence remained silent; but his evident attention flattered the fierce republican, and he proceeded.

"Ay," he said slowly, and as if drinking in a deep and stern joy from his conviction in the truth of the words he uttered,— "ay, I have wandered over the face of the earth, and I have warmed my soul at the fires which lay hidden under its quiet surface; I have been in the city and the desert,—the herded and banded crimes of the Old World, and the scattered but bold hearts which are found among the savannahs of the New; and in either I have beheld that seed sown which, from a mustard grain, too scanty for a bird's beak, shall grow up to be a shelter and a home for the whole family of man. I have looked upon the thrones of kings, and lo, the anointed ones were in purple and festive pomp; and I looked beneath the thrones, and I saw Want and Hunger, and despairing Wrath gnawing the foundations away. I have stood in the streets of that great city where Mirth seems to hold an eternal jubilee, and beheld the noble riot while the peasant starved; and the priest built altars to Mammon,

piled from the earnings of groaning Labour and cemented with blood and tears. But I looked farther, and saw, in the rear, chains sharpened into swords, misery ripening into justice, and famine darkening into revenge; and I laughed as I beheld, for I knew that the day of the oppressed was at hand."

Somewhat awed by the prophetic tone, though revolted by what seemed to him the novelty and the fierceness of the sentiments of the republican, Clarence, after a brief pause, said,—

"And what of our own country?"

Wolfe's brow darkened. "The oppression here," said he, "has not been so weighty, therefore the reaction will be less strong; the parties are more blended, therefore their separation will be more arduous; the extortion is less strained, therefore the endurance will be more meek; but, soon or late, the struggle must come: bloody will it be, if the strife be even; gentle and lasting, if the people predominate."

"And if the rulers be the strongest?" said Clarence.

"The struggle will be renewed," replied Wolfe, doggedly.

"You still attend those oratorical meetings, cousin, I think?" said Warner.

"I do," said Wolfe; "and if you are not so utterly absorbed in your vain and idle art as to be indifferent to all things nobler, you will learn yourself to take interest in what concerns—I will not say your country, but mankind. For you, young man" (and the republican turned to Clarence), "I would fain hope that life has not already been diverted from the greatest of human objects; if so, come to-morrow night to our assembly, and learn from worthier lips than mine the precepts and the hopes for which good men live or die."

"I will come at all events to listen, if not to learn," said Clarence, eagerly, for his curiosity was excited. And the republican, having now fulfilled the end of his visit, rose and departed.

CHAPTER XV.

Bound to suffer persecution
And martyrdom with resolution,
T'oppose himself against the hate
And vengeance of the incensed state.—Hudibras.

Born of respectable though not wealthy parents, John Wolfe was one of those fiery and daring spirits which, previous to some mighty revolution, Fate seems to scatter over various parts of the earth, even those removed from the predestined explosion,—heralds of the events in which they are fitted though not fated to be actors. The period at which he is presented to the reader was one considerably prior to that French Revolution so much debated and so little understood. But some such event, though not foreseen by the common, had been already foreboded by the more enlightened, eye; and Wolfe, from a protracted residence in France among the most discontented of its freer spirits, had brought hope to that burning enthusiasm which had long made the pervading passion of his existence.

Bold to ferocity, generous in devotion to folly in self-sacrifice, unflinching in his tenets to a degree which rendered their ardour ineffectual to all times, because utterly inapplicable to the present, Wolfe was one of those zealots whose very virtues have the semblance of vice, and whose very capacities for danger become harmless from the rashness of their excess.

It was not among the philosophers and reasoners of France that Wolfe had drawn strength to his opinions: whatever such companions might have done to his tenets, they would at least have moderated his actions. The philosopher may aid or expedite a change; but never does the philosopher in any age or of any sect countenance a crime. But of philosophers Wolfe knew little, and probably despised them for their temperance: it was among fanatics—ignorant, but imaginative—that he had strengthened the love without comprehending the nature of republicanism. Like Lucian's painter, whose flattery portrayed the one-eyed prince in profile, he viewed only that side of the question in which there was no defect, and gave beauty to the whole by concealing the half. Thus, though on his return to England herding with the common class of his reforming brethren, Wolfe possessed many peculiarities and distinctions

of character which, in rendering him strikingly adapted to the purpose of the novelist, must serve as a caution to the reader not to judge of the class by the individual.

With a class of Republicans in England there was a strong tendency to support their cause by reasoning. With Wolfe, whose mind was little wedded to logic, all was the offspring of turbulent feelings, which, in rejecting argument, substituted declamation for syllogism. This effected a powerful and irreconcilable distinction between Wolfe and the better part of his comrades; for the habits of cool reasoning, whether true or false, are little likely to bias the mind towards those crimes to which Wolfe's unregulated emotions might possibly urge him, and give to the characters to which they are a sort of common denominator something of method and much of similarity. But the feelings—those orators which allow no calculation and baffle the tameness of comparison—rendered Wolfe alone, unique, eccentric in opinion or action, whether of vice or virtue.

Private ties frequently moderate the ardour of our public enthusiasm. Wolfe had none. His nearest relation was Warner, and it may readily be supposed that with the pensive and contemplative artist he had very little in common. He had never married, nor had ever seemed to wander from his stern and sterile path, in the most transient pursuit of the pleasures of sense. Inflexibly honest, rigidly austere,—in his moral character his bitterest enemies could detect no flaw,—poor, even to indigence, he had invariably refused all overtures of the government; thrice imprisoned and heavily fined for his doctrines, no fear of a future, no remembrance of the past punishment could ever silence his bitter eloquence or moderate the passion of his distempered zeal; kindly, though rude, his scanty means were ever shared by the less honest and disinterested followers of his faith; and he had been known for days to deprive himself of food, and for nights of shelter, for the purpose of yielding food and shelter to another.

Such was the man doomed to forsake, through a long and wasted life, every substantial blessing, in pursuit of a shadowy good; with the warmest benevolence in his heart, to relinquish private affections, and to brood even to madness over public offences; to sacrifice everything in a generous though erring devotion for that freedom whose cause, instead of promoting, he was calculated to retard; and, while he believed himself the martyr of a high and uncompromising virtue, to close his career with the greatest of human crimes.

CHAPTER XVI.

Faith, methinks his humour is good, and his purse will buy good company.—The Parson's Wedding.

When Clarence returned home, after the conversation recorded in our last chapter, he found a note from Talbot, inviting him to meet some friends of the latter at supper that evening. It was the first time Clarence had been asked, and he looked forward with some curiosity and impatience to the hour appointed in the note.

It is impossible to convey any idea of the jealous rancour felt by Mr. and Mrs. Copperas on hearing of this distinction,—a distinction which "the perfect courtier" had never once bestowed upon themselves.

Mrs. Copperas tossed her head, too indignant for words; and the stock-jobber, in the bitterness of his soul, affirmed, with a meaning air, "that he dared say, after all, that the old gentleman was not so rich as he gave out."

On entering Talbot's drawing-room, Clarence found about seven or eight people assembled; their names, in proclaiming the nature of the party, indicated that the aim of the host was to combine aristocracy and talent. The literary acquirements and worldly tact of Talbot, joined to the adventitious circumstances of birth and fortune, enabled him to effect this object, so desirable in polished society, far better than we generally find it effected now. The conversation of these guests was light and various. The last bon mot of Chesterfield, the last sarcasm of Horace Walpole, Goldsmith's "Traveller," Shenstone's "Pastorals," and the attempt of Mrs. Montagu to bring Shakspeare into fashion,—in all these subjects the graceful wit and exquisite taste of Talbot shone pre-eminent; and he had almost succeeded in convincing a profound critic that Gray was a poet more likely to live than Mason, when the servant announced supper.

That was the age of suppers! Happy age! Meal of ease and mirth; when Wine and Night lit the lamp of Wit! Oh, what precious things were said and looked at those banquets of the soul! There epicurism was in the lip as well as the palate, and one had humour for a hors d'oeuvre and repartee for an

entremet. At dinner there is something too pompous, too formal, for the true ease of Table Talk. One's intellectual appetite, like the physical, is coarse but dull. At dinner one is fit only for eating; after dinner only for politics. But supper was a glorious relic of the ancients. The bustle of the day had thoroughly wound up the spirit, and every stroke upon the dial-plate of wit was true to the genius of the hour. The wallet of diurnal anecdote was full, and craved unloading. The great meal—that vulgar first love of the appetite—was over, and one now only flattered it into coquetting with another. The mind, disengaged and free, was no longer absorbed in a cutlet or burdened with a joint. The gourmand carried the nicety of his physical perception to his moral, and applauded a bon mot instead of a bonne bouche.

Then, too, one had no necessity to keep a reserve of thought for the after evening; supper was the final consummation, the glorious funeral pyre of day. One could be merry till bedtime without an interregnum. Nay, if in the ardour of convivialism one did,—I merely hint at the possibility of such an event,—if one did exceed the narrow limits of strict ebriety, and open the heart with a ruby key, one had nothing to dread from the cold, or, what is worse, the warm looks of ladies in the drawing-room; no fear that an imprudent word, in the amatory fondness of the fermented blood, might expose one to matrimony and settlements. There was no tame, trite medium of propriety and suppressed confidence, no bridge from board to bed, over which a false step (and your wine-cup is a marvellous corrupter of ambulatory rectitude) might precipitate into an irrecoverable abyss of perilous communication or unwholesome truth. One's pillow became at once the legitimate and natural bourne to "the overheated brain;" and the generous rashness of the coenatorial reveller was not damped by untimeous caution or ignoble calculation.

But "we have changed all that now." Sobriety has become the successor of suppers; the great ocean of moral encroachment has not left us one little island of refuge. Miserable supper-lovers that we are, like the native Indians of America, a scattered and daily disappearing race, we wander among strange customs, and behold the innovating and invading Dinner spread gradually over the very space of time in which the majesty of Supper once reigned undisputed and supreme!

O, ye heavens, be kind,
And feel, thou earth, for this afflicted race.—WORDSWORTH.

As he was sitting down to the table, Clarence's notice was arrested by a somewhat suspicious and displeasing occurrence. The supper room was on the ground floor, and, owing to the heat of the weather, one of the windows, facing the small garden, was left open. Through this window Clarence distinctly saw the face of a man look into the room for one instant, with a prying and curious gaze, and then as instantly disappear. As no one else seemed to remark this incident, and the general attention was somewhat noisily engrossed by the subject of conversation, Clarence thought it not worth while to mention a circumstance for which the impertinence of any neighbouring servant or drunken passer-by might easily account. An apprehension, however, of a more unpleasant nature shot across him, as his eye fell upon the costly plate which Talbot rather ostentatiously displayed, and then glanced to the single and aged servant, who was, besides his master, the only male inmate of the house. Nor could he help saying to Talbot, in the course of the evening, that he wondered he was not afraid of hoarding so many articles of value in a house at once so lonely and ill guarded.

"Ill guarded!" said Talbot, rather affronted, "why, I and my servant always sleep here!"

To this Clarence thought it neither prudent nor well-bred to offer further remark.

CHAPTER XVII.

Meetings or public calls he never missed,
To dictate often, always to assist.

.....

To his experience and his native sense,
He joined a bold, imperious eloquence;
The grave, stern look of men informed and wise,
A full command of feature, heart and eyes,
An awe-compelling frown, and fear-inspiring size.—CRABBE.

The next evening Clarence, mindful of Wolfe's invitation, inquired from Warner (who repaid the

contempt of the republican for the painter's calling by a similar feeling for the zealot's) the direction of the oratorical meeting, and repaired there alone. It was the most celebrated club (of that description) of the day, and well worth attending, as a gratification to the curiosity, if not an improvement to the mind.

On entering, he found himself in a long room, tolerably well lighted, and still better filled. The sleepy countenances of the audience, the whispered conversation carried on at scattered intervals, the listless attitudes of some, the frequent yawns of others, the eagerness with which attention was attracted to the opening door, when it admitted some new object of interest, the desperate resolution with which some of the more energetic turned themselves towards the orator, and then, with a faint shake of the head, turned themselves again hopelessly away,—were all signs that denoted that no very eloquent declaimer was in possession of the "house." It was, indeed, a singularly dull, monotonous voice which, arising from the upper end of the room, dragged itself on towards the middle, and expired with a sighing sound before it reached the end. The face of the speaker suited his vocal powers; it was small, mean, and of a round stupidity, without anything even in fault that could possibly command attention or even the excitement of disapprobation: the very garments of the orator seemed dull and heavy, and, like the Melancholy of Milton, had a "leaden look." Now and then some words, more emphatic than others,—stones breaking, as it were with a momentary splash, the stagnation of the heavy stream,—produced from three very quiet, unhappy-looking persons seated next to the speaker, his immediate friends, three single isolated "hears!"

"The force of friendship could no further go."

At last, the orator having spoken through, suddenly stopped; the whole meeting seemed as if a weight had been taken from it; there was a general buzz of awakened energy, each stretched his limbs, and resettled himself in his place,—

"And turning to his neighbour said,
'Rejoice!'"

A pause ensued, the chairman looked round, the eyes of the meeting followed those of the president, with a universal and palpable impatience, towards an obscure corner of the room: the pause deepened for one moment, and then was broken; a voice cried "Wolfe!" and at that signal the whole room shook with the name. The place which Clarence had taken did not allow him to see the object of these cries, till he rose from his situation, and, passing two rows of benches, stood forth in the middle space of the room; then, from one to one went round the general roar of applause; feet stamped, hands clapped, umbrellas set their sharp points to the ground, and walking-sticks thumped themselves out of shape in the universal clamour. Tall, gaunt, and erect, the speaker possessed, even in the mere proportions of his frame, that physical power which never fails, in a popular assembly, to gain attention to mediocrity and to throw dignity over faults. He looked very slowly round the room, remaining perfectly still and motionless, till the clamour of applause had entirely subsided, and every ear, Clarence's no less eagerly than the rest, was strained, and thirsting to catch the first syllables of his voice.

It was then with a low, very deep, and somewhat hoarse tone, that he began; and it was not till he had spoken for several minutes that the iron expression of his face altered, that the drooping hand was raised, and that the suppressed, yet powerful, voice began to expand and vary in its volume. He had then entered upon a new department of his subject. The question was connected with the English constitution, and Wolfe was now preparing to put forth, in long and blackened array, the alleged evils of an aristocratical form of government. Then it was as if the bile and bitterness of years were poured forth in a terrible and stormy wrath,—then his action became vehement, and his eye flashed forth unutterable fire: his voice, solemn, swelling, and increasing with each tone in its height and depth, filled, as with something palpable and perceptible, the shaking walls. The listeners,—a various and unconnected group, bound by no tie of faith or of party, many attracted by curiosity, many by the hope of ridicule, some abhorring the tenets expressed, and nearly all disapproving their principles or doubting their wisdom,—the listeners, certainly not a group previously formed or moulded into enthusiasm, became rapt and earnest; their very breath forsook them.

Linden had never before that night heard a public speaker; but he was of a thoughtful and rather calculating mind, and his early habits of decision, and the premature cultivation of his intellect, rendered him little susceptible, in general, to the impressions of the vulgar: nevertheless, in spite of himself, he was hurried away by the stream, and found that the force and rapidity of the speaker did not allow him even time for the dissent and disapprobation which his republican maxims and fiery denunciations perpetually excited in a mind aristocratic both by creed and education. At length after a peroration of impetuous and magnificent invective, the orator ceased.

In the midst of the applause that followed, Clarence left the assembly; he could not endure the thought that any duller or more commonplace speaker should fritter away the spell which yet bound

and engrossed his spirit.

CHAPTER XVIII.

At the bottom of the staircase was a small door, which gave way before Nigel, as he precipitated himself upon the scene of action, a cocked pistol in one hand, etc.—Fortunes of Nigel.

The night, though not utterly dark, was rendered capricious and dim by alternate wind and rain; and Clarence was delayed in his return homeward by seeking occasional shelter from the rapid and heavy showers which hurried by. It was during one of the temporary cessations of the rain that he reached Copperas Bower; and, while he was searching in his pockets for the key which was to admit him, he observed two men loitering about his neighbour's house. The light was not sufficient to give him more than a scattered and imperfect view of their motions. Somewhat alarmed, he stood for several moments at the door, watching them as well as he was able; nor did he enter the house till the loiterers had left their suspicious position, and, walking onwards, were hid entirely from him by the distance and darkness.

"It really is a dangerous thing for Talbot," thought Clarence, as he ascended to his apartment, "to keep so many valuables, and only one servant, and that one as old as himself too. However, as I am by no means sleepy, and my room is by no means cool, I may as well open my window, and see if those idle fellows make their re-appearance." Suiting the action to the thought, Clarence opened his little casement, and leaned wistfully out.

He had no light in his room, for none was ever left for him. This circumstance, however, of course enabled him the better to penetrate the dimness and haze of the night; and, by the help of the fluttering lamps, he was enabled to take a general though not minute survey of the scene below.

I think I have before said that there was a garden between Talbot's house and Copperas Bower; this was bounded by a wall, which confined Talbot's peculiar territory of garden, and this wall, describing a parallelogram, faced also the road. It contained two entrances,—one the principal adytus, in the shape of a comely iron gate, the other a wooden door, which, being a private pass, fronted the intermediate garden before mentioned and was exactly opposite to Clarence's window.

Linden had been more than ten minutes at his post, and had just begun to think his suspicions without foundation and his vigil in vain, when he observed the same figures he had seen before advance slowly from the distance and pause by the front gate of Talbot's mansion.

Alarmed and anxious, he redoubled his attention; he stretched himself, as far as his safety would permit, out of the window; the lamps, agitated by the wind, which swept by in occasional gusts, refused to grant to his straining sight more than an inaccurate and unsatisfying survey. Presently, a blast, more violent than ordinary, suspended as it were the falling columns of rain and left Clarence in almost total darkness; it rolled away, and the momentary calm which ensued enabled him to see that one of the men was stooping by the gate, and the other standing apparently on the watch at a little distance. Another gust shook the lamps and again obscured his view; and when it had passed onward in its rapid course, the men had left the gate, and were in the garden beneath his window. They crept cautiously, but swiftly, along the opposite wall, till they came to the small door we have before mentioned; here they halted, and one of them appeared to occupy himself in opening the door. Now, then, fear was changed into certainty, and it seemed without doubt that the men, having found some difficulty or danger in forcing the stronger or more public entrance, had changed their quarter of attack. No more time was to be lost; Clarence shouted aloud, but the high wind probably prevented the sound reaching the ears of the burglars, or at least rendered it dubious and confused. The next moment, and before Clarence could repeat his alarm, they had opened the door, and were within the neighbouring garden, beyond his view. Very young men, unless their experience has outstripped their youth, seldom have much presence of mind; that quality, which is the opposite to surprise, comes to us in those years when nothing seems to us strange or unexpected. But a much older man than Clarence might have well been at a loss to know what conduct to adopt in the situation in which our hero was placed. The visits of the watchman to that (then) obscure and ill-inhabited neighborhood were more regulated by his indolence than his duty; and Clarence knew that it would be in vain to listen for his cry or tarry for his assistance. He himself was utterly unarmed, but the stock-jobber had a pair of horse-pistols, and as this recollection flashed upon him, the pause of deliberation ceased.

With a swift step he descended the first flight of stairs, and pausing at the chamber door of the faithful couple, knocked upon its panels with a loud and hasty summons. The second repetition of the noise produced the sentence, uttered in a very trembling voice, of "Who's there?"

"It is I, Clarence Linden," replied our hero; "lose no time in opening the door."

This answer seemed to reassure the valorous stock-jobber. He slowly undid the bolt, and turned the key.

"In Heaven's name, what do you want, Mr. Linden?" said he.

"Ay," cried a sharp voice from the more internal recesses of the chamber, "what do you want, sir, disturbing us in the bosom of our family and at the dead of night?"

With a rapid voice, Clarence repeated what he had seen, and requested the broker to accompany him to Talbot's house, or at least to lend him his pistols.

"He shall do no such thing," cried Mrs. Copperas. "Come here, Mr. C., and shut the door directly."

"Stop, my love," said the stock-jobber, "stop a moment."

"For God's sake," cried Clarence, "make no delay; the poor old man may be murdered by this time."

"It's no business of mine," said the stock-jobber. "If Adolphus had not broken the rattle I would not have minded the trouble of springing it; but you are very much mistaken if you think I am going to leave my warm bed in order to have my throat cut."

"Then give me your pistols," cried Clarence; "I will go alone."

"I shall commit no such folly," said the stock-jobber; "if you are murdered, I may have to answer it to your friends and pay for your burial. Besides, you owe us for your lodgings: go to your bed, young man, as I shall to mine." And, so saying, Mr. Copperas proceeded to close the door.

But enraged at the brutality of the man and excited by the urgency of the case, Clarence did not allow him so peaceable a retreat. With a strong and fierce grasp, he seized the astonished Copperas by the throat, and shaking him violently, forced his own entrance into the sacred nuptial chamber.

"By Heaven," cried Linden, in a savage and stern tone, for his blood was up. "I will twist your coward's throat, and save the murderer his labour, if you do not instantly give me up your pistols."

The stock-jobber was panic-stricken. "Take them," he cried, in the extremest terror; "there they are on the chimney-piece close by."

"Are they primed and loaded?" said Linden, not relaxing his gripe.

"Yes, yes!" said the stock-jobber, "loose my throat, or you will choke me!" and at that instant, Clarence felt himself clasped by the invading hands of Mrs. Copperas.

"Call off your wife," said he, "or I will choke you!" and he tightened his hold, "and tell her to give me the pistols."

The next moment Mrs. Copperas extended the debated weapons towards Clarence. He seized them, flung the poor stock-jobber against the bedpost, hurried down stairs, opened the back door, which led into the garden, flew across the intervening space, arrived at the door, and entering Talbot's garden, paused to consider what was the next step to be taken.

A person equally brave as Clarence, but more cautious, would not have left the house without alarming Mr. de Warens, even in spite of the failure with his master; but Linden only thought of the pressure of time and the necessity of expedition, and he would have been a very unworthy hero of romance had he felt fear for two antagonists, with a brace of pistols at his command and a high and good action in view.

After a brief but decisive halt, he proceeded rapidly round the house, in order to ascertain at which part the ruffians had admitted themselves, should they (as indeed there was little doubt) have already effected their entrance.

He found the shutters of one of the principal rooms on the ground-floor had been opened, and through the aperture he caught the glimpse of a moving light, which was suddenly obscured. As he was about to enter, the light again flashed out: he drew back just in time, carefully screened himself behind the shutter, and, through one of the chinks, observed what passed within. Opposite to the window was

a door which conducted to the hall and principal staircase; this door was open, and in the hall at the foot of the stairs Clarence saw two men; one carried a dark lantern, from which the light proceeded, and some tools, of the nature of which Clarence was naturally ignorant: this was a middle-sized muscular man, dressed in the rudest garb of an ordinary labourer; the other was much taller and younger, and his dress was of a rather less ignoble fashion.

"Hist! hist!" said the taller one, in a low tone, "did you not hear a noise, Ben?"

"Not a pin fall; but stow your whids, man!"

This was all that Clarence heard in a connected form; but as the wretches paused, in evident doubt how to proceed, he caught two or three detached words, which his ingenuity readily formed into sentences. "No, no! sleeps to the left—old man above—plate chest; we must have the blunt too. Come, track up the dancers, and douse the glim." And at the last words the light was extinguished, and Clarence's quick and thirsting ear just caught their first steps on the stairs; they died away, and all was hushed.

It had several times occurred to Clarence to rush from his hiding- place, and fire at the ruffians, and perhaps that measure would have been the wisest he could have taken; but Clarence had never discharged a pistol in his life, and he felt, therefore, that his aim must be uncertain enough to render a favourable position and a short distance essential requisites. Both these were, at present, denied to him; and although he saw no weapons about the persons of the villains, yet he imagined they would not have ventured on so dangerous an expedition without firearms; and if he failed, as would have been most probable, in his two shots, he concluded that, though the alarm would be given, his own fate would be inevitable.

If this was reasoning upon false premises, for housebreakers seldom or never carry loaded firearms, and never stay for revenge, when their safety demands escape, Clarence may be forgiven for not knowing the customs of housebreakers, and for not making the very best of an extremely novel and dangerous situation.

No sooner did he find himself in total darkness than he bitterly reproached himself for his late backwardness, and, inwardly resolving not again to miss any opportunity which presented itself, he entered the window, groped along the room into the hall, and found his way very slowly and after much circumlocution to the staircase.

He had just gained the summit, when a loud cry broke upon the stillness: it came from a distance, and was instantly hushed; but he caught at brief intervals, the sound of angry and threatening voices. Clarence bent down anxiously, in the hope that some solitary ray would escape through the crevice of the door within which the robbers were engaged. But though the sounds came from the same floor as that on which he now trod, they seemed far and remote, and not a gleam of light broke the darkness.

He continued, however, to feel his way in the direction from which the sounds proceeded, and soon found himself in a narrow gallery; the voices seemed more loud and near, as he advanced; at last he distinctly heard the words—

"Will you not confess where it is placed?"

"Indeed, indeed," replied an eager and earnest voice, which Clarence recognized as Talbot's, "this is all the money I have in the house,— the plate is above,—my servant has the key,—take it,—take all,— but save his life and mine."

"None of your gammon," said another and rougher voice than that of the first speaker: "we know you have more blunt than this,—a paltry sum of fifty pounds, indeed!"

"Hold!" cried the other ruffian, "here is a picture set with diamonds, that will do, Ben. Let go the old man."

Clarence was now just at hand, and probably from a sudden change in the position of the dark lantern within, a light abruptly broke from beneath the door and streamed along the passage.

"No, no, no!" cried the old man, in a loud yet tremulous voice,— "no, not that, anything else, but I will defend that with my life."

"Ben, my lad," said the ruffian, "twist the old fool's neck we have no more time to lose."

At that very moment the door was flung violently open, and Clarence Linden stood within three paces of the reprobates and their prey. The taller villain had a miniature in his hand, and the old man clung to his legs with a convulsive but impotent clasp; the other fellow had already his gripe upon Talbot's neck,

and his right hand grasped a long case-knife.

With a fierce and flashing eye, and a cheek deadly pale with internal and resolute excitement, Clarence confronted the robbers.

"Thank Heaven," cried he, "I am not too late!" And advancing yet another step towards the shorter ruffian, who struck mute with the suddenness of the apparition, still retained his grasp of the old man, he fired his pistol, with a steady and close aim; the ball penetrated the wretch's brain, and without sound or sigh, he fell down dead, at the very feet of his just destroyer. The remaining robber had already meditated, and a second more sufficed to accomplish, his escape. He sprang towards the door: the ball whizzed beside him, but touched him not. With a safe and swift step, long inured to darkness, he fled along the passage; and Linden, satisfied with the vengeance he had taken upon his comrade, did not harass him with an unavailing pursuit.

Clarence turned to assist Talbot. The old man was stretched upon the floor insensible, but his hand grasped the miniature which the plunderer had dropped in his flight and terror, and his white and ashen lip was pressed convulsively upon the recovered treasure.

Linden raised and placed him on his bed, and while employed in attempting to revive him, the ancient domestic, alarmed by the report of the pistol, came, poker in hand, to his assistance. By little and little they recovered the object of their attention. His eyes rolled wildly round the room, and he muttered,—"Off, off! ye shall not rob me of my only relic of her,—where is it?—have you got it?—the picture, the picture!"

"It is here, sir, it is here," said the old servant; "it is in your own hand."

Talbot's eye fell upon it; he gazed at it for some moments, pressed it to his lips, and then, sitting erect and looking wildly round, he seemed to awaken to the sense of his late danger and his present deliverance.

CHAPTER XIX.

Ah, fleeter far than fleetest storm or steed,
Or the death they bear,
The heart which tender thought clothes like a dove
With the wings of care!
In the battle, in the darkness, in the need,
Shall mine cling to thee!
Nor claim one smile for all the comfort, love,
It may bring to thee!—SHELLEY.

LETTER FROM ALGERNON MORDAUNT TO ISABEL ST. LEGER.

You told me not to write to you. You know how long, but not how uselessly I have obeyed you. Did you think, Isabel, that my love was of that worldly and common order which requires a perpetual aliment to support it? Did you think that, if you forbade the stream to flow visibly, its sources would be exhausted, and its channel dried up? This may be the passion of others; it is not mine. Months have passed since we parted, and since then you have not seen me; this letter is the first token you have received from a remembrance which cannot die. But do you think that I have not watched and tended upon you, and gladdened my eyes with gazing on your beauty when you have not dreamed that I was by? Ah, Isabel, your heart should have told you of it; mine would, had you been so near me!

You receive no letters from me, it is true: think you that my hand and heart are therefore idle? No. I write to you a thousand burning lines: I pour out my soul to you; I tell you of all I suffer; my thoughts, my actions, my very dreams, are all traced upon the paper. I send them not to you, but I read them over and over, and when I come to your name, I pause and shut my eyes, and then "Fancy has her power," and lo! "you are by my side!"

Isabel, our love has not been a holiday and joyous sentiment; but I feel a solemn and unalterable conviction that our union is ordained.

Others have many objects to distract and occupy the thoughts which are once forbidden a single

direction, but we have none. At least, to me you are everything. Pleasure, splendour, ambition, all are merged into one great and eternal thought, and that is you!

Others have told me, and I believed them, that I was hard and cold and stern: so perhaps I was before I knew you, but now I am weaker and softer than a child. There is a stone which is of all the hardest and the chilliest, but when once set on fire it is unquenchable. You smile at my image, perhaps, and I should smile if I saw it in the writing of another; for all that I have ridiculed in romance as exaggerated seems now to me too cool and too commonplace for reality.

But this is not what I meant to write to you; you are ill, dearest and noblest Isabel, you are ill! I am the cause, and you conceal it from me; and you would rather pine away and die than suffer me to lose one of those worldly advantages which are in my eyes but as dust in the balance,—it is in vain to deny it. I heard from others of your impaired health; I have witnessed it myself. Do you remember last night, when you were in the room with your relations, and they made you sing,—a song too which you used to sing to me, and when you came to the second stanza your voice failed you, and you burst into tears, and they, instead of soothing, reproached and chid you, and you answered not, but wept on? Isabel, do you remember that a sound was heard at the window and a groan? Even they were startled, but they thought it was the wind, for the night was dark and stormy, and they saw not that it was I: yes, my devoted, my generous love, it was I who gazed upon you, and from whose heart that voice of anguish was wrung; and I saw your cheek was pale and thin, and that the canker at the core had preyed upon the blossom.

Think you, after this, that I could keep silence or obey your request? No, dearest, no! Is not my happiness your object? I have the vanity to believe so; and am I not the best judge how that happiness is to be secured? I tell you, I say it calmly, coldly, dispassionately,—not from the imagination, not even from the heart, but solely from the reason,—that I can bear everything rather than the loss of you; and that if the evil of my love scathe and destroy you, I shall consider and curse myself as your murderer! Save me from this extreme of misery, my—yes, my Isabel! I shall be at the copse where we have so often met before, to-morrow, at noon. You will meet me; and if I cannot convince you, I will not ask you to be persuaded. A. M.

And Isabel read this letter, and placed it at her heart, and felt less miserable than she had done for months; for, though she wept, there was sweetness in the tears which the assurance of his love and the tenderness of his remonstrance had called forth. She met him: how could she refuse? and the struggle was past. Though not "convinced" she was "persuaded;" for her heart, which refused his reasonings, melted at his reproaches and his grief. But she would not consent to unite her fate with him at once, for the evils of that step to his interests were immediate and near; she was only persuaded to permit their correspondence and occasional meetings, in which, however imprudent they might be for herself, the disadvantages to her lover were distant and remote. It was of him only that she thought; for him she trembled; for him she was the coward and the woman; for herself she had no fears, and no forethought.

And Algernon was worthy of this devoted love, and returned it as it was given. Man's love, in general, is a selfish and exacting sentiment: it demands every sacrifice and refuses all. But the nature of Mordaunt was essentially high and disinterested, and his honour, like his love, was not that of the world: it was the ethereal and spotless honour of a lofty and generous mind, the honour which custom can neither give nor take away; and, however impatiently he bore the deferring of a union, in which he deemed that he was the only sufferer, he would not have uttered a sigh or urged a prayer for that union, could it, in the minutest or remotest degree, have injured or degraded her.

These are the hearts and natures which make life beautiful; these are the shrines which sanctify love; these are the diviner spirits for whom there is kindred and commune with everything exalted and holy in heaven and earth. For them Nature unfolds her hoarded poetry and her hidden spells; for their steps are the lonely mountains, and the still woods have a murmur for their ears; for them there is strange music in the wave, and in the whispers of the light leaves, and rapture in the voices of the birds: their souls drink, and are saturated with the mysteries of the Universal Spirit, which the philosophy of old times believed to be God Himself. They look upon the sky with a gifted vision, and its dove-like quiet descends and overshadows their hearts; the Moon and the Night are to them wells of Castalian inspiration and golden dreams; and it was one of them who, gazing upon the Evening Star, felt in the inmost sanctuary of his soul its mysterious harmonies with his most worshipped hope, his most passionate desire, and dedicated it to—LOVE.

CHAPTER XX.

Maria. Here's the brave old man's love,
Bianca. That loves the young man.

The Woman's Prize; or, The Tamer Tamed.

"No, my dear Clarence, you have placed confidence in me, and it is now my duty to return it; you have told me your history and origin, and I will inform you of mine, but not yet. At present we will talk of you. You have conferred upon me what our universal love of life makes us regard as the greatest of human obligations; and though I can bear a large burden of gratitude, yet I must throw off an atom or two in using my little power in your behalf. Nor is this all: your history has also given you another tie upon my heart, and, in granting you a legitimate title to my good offices, removes any scruple you might otherwise have had in accepting them."

"I have just received this letter from Lord ——, the minister for foreign affairs: you will see that he has appointed you to the office of attache at ——. You will also oblige me by looking over this other letter at your earliest convenience; the trifling sum which it contains will be repeated every quarter; it will do very well for an attache: when you are an ambassador, why, we must equip you by a mortgage on Scarsdale; and now, my dear Clarence, tell me all about the Copperases."

I need not say who was the speaker of the above sentences: sentences apparently of a very agreeable nature; nevertheless, Clarence seemed to think otherwise, for the tears gushed into his eyes, and he was unable for several moments to reply.

"Come, my young friend," said Talbot, kindly; "I have no near relations among whom I can choose a son I like better than you, nor you any at present from whom you might select a more desirable father: consequently, you must let me look upon you as my own flesh and blood; and, as I intend to be a very strict and peremptory father, I expect the most silent and scrupulous obedience to my commands. My first parental order to you is to put up those papers, and to say nothing more about them; for I have a great deal to talk to you about upon other subjects."

And by these and similar kind-hearted and delicate remonstrances, the old man gained his point. From that moment Clarence looked upon him with the grateful and venerating love of a son; and I question very much, if Talbot had really been the father of our hero, whether he would have liked so handsome a successor half so well.

The day after this arrangement, Clarence paid his debt to the Copperases and removed to Talbot's house. With this event commenced a new era in his existence: he was no longer an outcast and a wanderer; out of alien ties he had wrought the link of a close and even paternal friendship; life, brilliant in its prospects and elevated in its ascent, opened flatteringly before him; and the fortune and courage which had so well provided for the present were the best omens and auguries for the future.

One evening, when the opening autumn had made its approaches felt, and Linden and his new parent were seated alone by a blazing fire, and had come to a full pause in their conversation, Talbot, shading his face with the friendly pages of the "Whitehall Evening Paper," as if to protect it from the heat, said,

"I told you, the other day, that I would give you, at some early opportunity, a brief sketch of my life. This confidence is due to you in return for yours; and since you will soon leave me, and I am an old man, whose life no prudent calculation can fix, I may as well choose the present time to favour you with my confessions."

Clarence expressed and looked his interest, and the old man thus commenced,—

THE HISTORY OF A VAIN MAN.

I was the favourite of my parents, for I was quick at my lessons, and my father said I inherited my genius from him; and comely in my person, and my mother said that my good looks came from her. So the honest pair saw in their eldest son the union of their own attractions, and thought they were making much of themselves when they lavished their caresses upon me. They had another son, poor Arthur,— I think I see him now! He was a shy, quiet, subdued boy, of a very plain personal appearance. My father and mother were vain, showy, ambitious people of the world, and they were as ashamed of my brother as they were proud of myself. However, he afterwards entered the army and distinguished himself highly. He died in battle, leaving an only daughter, who married, as you know, a nobleman of high rank. Her subsequent fate it is now needless to relate.

Petted and pampered from my childhood, I grew up with a profound belief in my own excellences, and a feverish and irritating desire to impress every one who came in my way with the same idea. There is a sentence in Sir William Temple, which I have often thought of with a painful conviction of its

truth: "A restlessness in men's minds to be something they are not, and to have something they have not, is the root of all immorality." [And of all good.—AUTHOR.] At school, I was confessedly the cleverest boy in my remove; and, what I valued equally as much, I was the best cricketer of the best eleven. Here, then, you will say my vanity was satisfied,—no such thing! There was a boy who shared my room, and was next me in the school; we were, therefore, always thrown together. He was a great stupid, lubberly cub, equally ridiculed by the masters and disliked by the boys. Will you believe that this individual was the express and almost sole object of my envy? He was more than my rival, he was my superior; and I hated him with all the unleavened bitterness of my soul.

I have said he was my superior: it was in one thing. He could balance a stick, nay, a cricket-bat, a poker, upon his chin, and I could not; you laugh, and so can I now, but it was no subject of laughter to me then. This circumstance, trifling as it may appear to you, poisoned my enjoyment. The boy saw my envy, for I could not conceal it; and as all fools are malicious, and most fools ostentatious, he took a particular pride and pleasure in displaying his dexterity and showing off my discontent. You can form no idea of the extent to which this petty insolence vexed and disquieted me. Even in my sleep, the clumsy and grinning features of this tormenting imp haunted me like a spectre: my visions were nothing but chins and cricket-bats; walking-sticks, sustaining themselves upon human excrescences, and pokers dancing a hornpipe upon the tip of a nose. I assure you that I have spent hours in secret seclusion, practising to rival my hated comrade, and my face—see how one vanity quarrels with another—was little better than a mass of bruises and discolorations.

I actually became so uncomfortable as to write home, and request to leave the school. I was then about sixteen, and my indulgent father, in granting my desire, told me that I was too old and too advanced in my learning to go to any other academic establishment than the University. The day before I left the school, I gave, as was usually the custom, a breakfast to all my friends; the circumstance of my tormentor's sharing my room obliged me to invite him among the rest. However, I was in high spirits, and being a universal favourite with my schoolfellows, I succeeded in what was always to me an object of social ambition, and set the table in a roar; yet, when our festival was nearly expired, and I began to allude more particularly to my approaching departure, my vanity was far more gratified, for my feelings were far more touched, by observing the regret and receiving the good wishes of all my companions. I still recall that hour as one of the proudest and happiest of my life; but it had its immediate reverse. My evil demon put it into my tormentor's head to give me one last parting pang of jealousy. A large umbrella happened accidentally to be in my room; Crompton—such was my schoolfellow's name—saw and seized it. "Look here, Talbot," said he, with his taunting and hideous sneer, "you can't do this;" and placing the point of the umbrella upon his forehead, just above the eyebrow, he performed various antics round the room.

At that moment I was standing by the fireplace, and conversing with two boys upon whom, above all others, I wished to leave a favourable impression. My foolish soreness on this one subject had been often remarked; and, as I turned in abrupt and awkward discomposure from the exhibition, I observed my two schoolfellows smile and exchange looks. I am not naturally passionate, and even at that age I had in ordinary cases great self-command; but this observation, and the cause which led to it, threw me off my guard. Whenever we are utterly under the command of one feeling, we cannot be said to have our reason: at that instant I literally believe I was beside myself. What! in the very flush of the last triumph that that scene would ever afford me; amidst the last regrets of my early friends, to whom I fondly hoped to bequeath a long and brilliant remembrance, to be thus bearded by a contemptible rival, and triumphed over by a pitiful yet insulting superiority; to close my condolences with laughter; to have the final solemnity of my career thus terminating in mockery; and ridicule substituted as an ultimate reminiscence in the place of an admiring regret; all this, too, to be effected by one so long hated, one whom I was the only being forbidden the comparative happiness of despising? I could not brook it; the insult, the insulter, were too revolting. As the unhappy buffoon approached me, thrusting his distorted face towards mine, I seized and pushed him aside, with a brief curse and a violent hand. The sharp point of the umbrella slipped; my action gave it impetus and weight; it penetrated his eye, and—spare me, spare me the rest. [This instance of vanity, and indeed the whole of Talbot's history, is literally from facts.]

The old man bent down, and paused for a few moments before he resumed.

Crompton lost his eye, but my punishment was as severe as his. People who are very vain are usually equally susceptible, and they who feel one thing acutely will so feel another. For years, ay, for many years afterwards, the recollection of my folly goaded me with the bitterest and most unceasing remorse. Had I committed murder, my conscience could scarce have afflicted me more severely. I did not regain my self-esteem till I had somewhat repaired the injury I had done. Long after that time Crompton was in prison, in great and overwhelming distress. I impoverished myself to release him; I sustained him and his family till fortune rendered my assistance no longer necessary; and no triumphs were ever more sweet to me than the sacrifice I was forced to submit to, in order to restore him to

prosperity.

It is natural to hope that this accident had at least the effect of curing me of my fault; but it requires philosophy in yourself, or your advisers, to render remorse of future avail. How could I amend my fault, when I was not even aware of it? Smarting under the effects, I investigated not the cause, and I attributed to irascibility and vindictiveness what had a deeper and more dangerous origin.

At college, in spite of all my advantages of birth, fortune, health, and intellectual acquirements, I had many things besides the one enemy of remorse to corrode my tranquillity of mind. I was sure to find some one to excel me in something, and this was enough to embitter my peace. Our living Goldsmith is my favourite poet, and I perhaps insensibly venerate the genius the more because I find something congenial in the infirmities of the man. I can fully credit the anecdotes recorded of him. I, too, could once have been jealous of a puppet handling a spontoon; I, too, could once have been miserable if two ladies at the theatre were more the objects of attention than myself! You, Clarence, will not despise me for this confession; those who knew me less would. Fools! there is no man so great as not to have some littleness more predominant than all his greatness. Our virtues are the dupes, and often only the playthings, of our follies! smile, but it is mournfully, in looking back to that day. Though rich, high-born, and good-looking, I possessed not one of these three qualities in that eminence which could alone satisfy my love of superiority and desire of effect. I knew this somewhat humiliating truth, for, though vain, I was not conceited. Vanity, indeed, is the very antidote to conceit; for while the former makes us all nerve to the opinion of others, the latter is perfectly satisfied with its opinion of itself.

I knew this truth, and as Pope, if he could not be the greatest of poets, resolved to be the most correct, so I strove, since I could not be the handsomest, the wealthiest, and the noblest of my contemporaries, to excel them, at least, in the grace and consummateness of manner; and in this after incredible pains, after diligent apprenticeship in the world and intense study in the closet, I at last flattered myself that I had succeeded. Of all success, while we are yet in the flush of youth and its capacities of enjoyment, I can imagine none more intoxicating or gratifying than the success of society, and I had certainly some years of its triumph and eclat. I was courted, followed, flattered, and sought by the most envied and fastidious circles in England and even in Paris; for society, so indifferent to those who disdain it, overwhelms with its gratitude—profuse though brief—those who devote themselves to its amusement. The victim to sameness and ennui, it offers, like the pallid and luxurious Roman, a reward for a new pleasure: and as long as our industry or talent can afford the pleasure, the reward is ours. At that time, then, I reaped the full harvest of my exertions: the disappointment and vexation were of later date.

I now come to the great era of my life,—Love. Among my acquaintance was Lady Mary Walden, a widow of high birth, and noble though not powerful connections. She lived about twenty miles from London in a beautiful retreat; and, though not rich, her jointure, rendered ample by economy, enabled her to indulge her love of society. Her house was always as full as its size would permit, and I was among the most welcome of its visitors. She had an only daughter: even now, through the dim mists of years, that beautiful and fairy form rises still and shining before me, undimmed by sorrow, unfaded by time. Caroline Walden was the object of general admiration, and her mother, who attributed the avidity with which her invitations were accepted by all the wits and fine gentlemen of the day to the charms of her own conversation, little suspected the face and wit of her daughter to be the magnet of attraction. I had no idea at that time of marriage, still less could I have entertained such a notion, unless the step had greatly exalted my rank and prospects.

The poor and powerless Caroline Walden was therefore the last person for whom I had what the jargon of mothers term "serious intentions." However, I was struck with her exceeding loveliness and amused by the vivacity of her manners; moreover, my vanity was excited by the hope of distancing all my competitors for the smiles of the young beauty. Accordingly I laid myself out to please, and neglected none of those subtle and almost secret attentions which, of all flatteries, are the most delicate and successful; and I succeeded. Caroline loved me with all the earnestness and devotion which characterize the love of woman. It never occurred to her that I was only trifling with those affections which it seemed so ardently my intention to win. She knew that my fortune was large enough to dispense with the necessity of fortune with my wife, and in birth she would have equalled men of greater pretensions to myself; added to this, long adulation had made her sensible though not vain of her attractions, and she listened with a credulous ear to the insinuated flatteries I was so well accustomed to instil.

Never shall I forget—no, though I double my present years—the shock, the wildness of despair with which she first detected the selfishness of my homage; with which she saw that I had only mocked her trusting simplicity; and that while she had been lavishing the richest treasures of her heart before the burning altars of Love, my idol had been Vanity and my offerings deceit. She tore herself from the profanation of my grasp; she shrouded herself from my presence. All interviews with me were rejected;

all my letters returned to me unopened; and though, in the repentance of my heart, I entreated, I urged her to accept vows that were no longer insincere, her pride became her punishment, as well as my own. In a moment of bitter and desperate feeling; she accepted the offers of another, and made the marriage bond a fatal and irrevocable barrier to our reconciliation and union.

Oh, how I now cursed my infatuation! how passionately I recalled the past! how coldly I turned from the hollow and false world, to whose service I had sacrificed my happiness, to muse and madden over the prospects I had destroyed and the loving and noble heart I had rejected! Alas! after all, what is so ungrateful as that world for which we renounce so much? Its votaries resemble the Gymnosophists of old, and while they profess to make their chief end pleasure, we can only learn that they expose themselves to every torture and every pain!

Lord Merton, the man whom Caroline now called husband, was among the wealthiest and most dissipated of his order; and two years after our separation I met once more with the victim of my unworthiness, blazing in "the full front" of courtly splendour, the leader of its gayeties and the cynosure of her followers. Intimate with the same society, we were perpetually cast together, and Caroline was proud of displaying the indifference towards me, which, if she felt not, she had at least learnt artfully to assume. This indifference was her ruin. The depths of my evil passion were again sounded and aroused, and I resolved yet to humble the pride and conquer the coldness which galled to the very quick the morbid acuteness of my self-love. I again attached myself to her train; I bowed myself to the very dust before her. What to me were her chilling reply and disdainful civilities?— only still stronger excitements to persevere.

I spare you and myself the gradual progress of my schemes. A woman may recover her first passion, it is true; but then she must replace it with another. That other was denied to Caroline: she had not even children to engross her thoughts and to occupy her affections; and the gay world, which to many becomes an object, was to her only an escape.

Clarence, my triumph came! Lady Walden (who had never known our secret) invited me to her house: Caroline was there. In the same spot where we had so often stood before, and in which her earliest affections were insensibly breathed away, in that same spot I drew from her colourless and trembling lips the confession of her weakness, the restored and pervading power of my remembrance.

But Caroline was a proud and virtuous woman: even while her heart betrayed her, her mind resisted; and in the very avowal of her unconquered attachment, she renounced and discarded me forever. I was not an ungenerous though a vain man; but my generosity was wayward, tainted, and imperfect. I could have borne the separation; I could have severed myself from her; I could have flown to the uttermost parts of the earth; I could have hoarded there my secret yet unextinguished love, and never disturbed her quiet by a murmur: but then the fiat of separation must have come from me! My vanity could not bear that her lips should reject me, that my part was not to be the nobility of sacrifice, but the submission of resignation. However, my better feelings were aroused, and though I could not stifle I concealed my selfish repinings. We parted: she returned to town; I buried myself in the country; and, amidst the literary studies to which, though by fits and starts, I was passionately devoted, I endeavoured to forget my ominous and guilty love.

But I was then too closely bound to the world not to be perpetually reminded of its events. My retreat was thronged with occasional migrators from London; my books were mingled with the news and scandal of the day. All spoke to me of Lady Merton; not as I loved to picture her to myself, pale and sorrowful, and brooding over my image; but gay, dissipated, the dispenser of smiles, the prototype of joy. I contrasted this account of her with the melancholy and gloom of my own feelings, and I resented her seeming happiness as an insult to myself.

In this angry and fretful mood I returned to London. My empire was soon resumed; and now, Linden, comes the most sickening part of my confessions. Vanity is a growing and insatiable disease: what seems to its desires as wealth to-day, to-morrow it rejects as poverty. I was at first contented to know that I was beloved; by degrees, slow, yet sure, I desired that others should know it also. I longed to display my power over the celebrated and courted Lady Merton; and to put the last crown to my reputation and importance. The envy of others is the food of our own self-love. Oh, you know not, you dream not, of the galling mortifications to which a proud woman, whose love commands her pride, is subjected! I imposed upon Caroline the most humiliating, the most painful trials; I would allow her to see none but those I pleased; to go to no place where I withheld my consent; and I hesitated not to exert and testify my power over her affections, in proportion to the publicity of the opportunity.

Yet, with all this littleness, would you believe that I loved Caroline with the most ardent and engrossing passion? I have paused behind her, in order to kiss the ground she trod on; I have stayed whole nights beneath her window, to catch one glimpse of her passing form, even though I had spent hours of the daytime in her society; and, though my love burned and consumed me like a fire, I would

not breathe a single wish against her innocence, or take advantage of my power to accomplish what I knew from her virtue and pride no atonement could possibly repay. Such are the inconsistencies of the heart, and such, while they prevent our perfection, redeem us from the utterness of vice! Never, even in my wildest days, was I blind to the glory of virtue, yet never, till my latest years, have I enjoyed the faculty to avail myself of my perception. I resembled the mole, which by Boyle is supposed to possess the idea of light, but to be unable to comprehend the objects on which it shines.

Among the varieties of my prevailing sin, was a weakness common enough to worldly men. While I ostentatiously played off the love I had excited I could not bear to show the love I felt. In our country, and perhaps, though in a less degree, in all other highly artificial states, enthusiasm or even feeling of any kind is ridiculous; and I could not endure the thought that my treasured and secret affections should be dragged from their retreat to be cavilled and carped at by—

"Every beardless, vain comparative."

This weakness brought on the catastrophe of my love; for, mark me, Clarence, it is through our weaknesses that our vices are punished! One night I went to a masquerade; and, while I was sitting in a remote corner, three of my acquaintances, whom I recognized, though they knew it not, approached and rallied me upon my romantic attachment to Lady Merton. One of them was a woman of a malicious and sarcastic wit; the other two were men whom I disliked, because their pretensions interfered with mine; they were diners-out and anecdote-mongers. Stung to the quick by their sarcasms and laughter, I replied in a train of mingled arrogance and jest; at last I spoke slightly of the person in question; and these profane and false lips dared not only to disown the faintest love to that being who was more to me than all on earth, but even to speak of herself with ridicule and her affection with disdain.

In the midst of this, I turned and beheld, within hearing, a figure which I knew upon the moment. O Heaven! the burning shame and agony of that glance! It raised its mask—I saw that blanched cheek, and that trembling lip! I knew that the iron had indeed entered into her soul.

Clarence, I never beheld her again alive. Within a week from that time she was a corpse. She had borne much, suffered much, and murmured not; but this shock pressed too hard, came too home, and from the hand of him for whom she would have sacrificed all! I stood by her in death; I beheld my work; and I turned away, a wanderer and a pilgrim upon the face of the earth. Verily, I have had my reward.

The old man paused, in great emotion; and Clarence, who could offer him no consolation, did not break the silence. In a few minutes Talbot continued—

From that time the smile of woman was nothing to me: I seemed to grow old in a single day. Life lost to me all its objects. A dreary and desert blank stretched itself before me: the sounds of creation had only in my ears one voice; the past, the future, one image. I left my country for twenty years, and lived an idle and hopeless man in the various courts of the Continent.

At the age of fifty I returned to England; the wounds of the past had not disappeared, but they were scarred over; and I longed, like the rest of my species, to have an object in view. At that age, if we have seen much of mankind and possess the talents to profit by our knowledge, we must be one of two sects,—a politician or a philosopher. My time was not yet arrived for the latter, so I resolved to become the former; but this was denied me, for my vanity had assumed a different shape. It is true that I cared no longer for the reputation women can bestow; but I was eager for the applause of men, and I did not like the long labour necessary to attain it. I wished to make a short road to my object, and I eagerly followed every turn but the right one, in the hopes of its leading me sooner to my goal.

The great characteristic of a vain man in contradistinction to an ambitious man, his eternal obstacle to a high and honourable fame, is this: he requires for any expenditure of trouble too speedy a reward; he cannot wait for years, and climb, step by step, to a lofty object; whatever he attempts, he must seize at a single grasp. Added to this, he is incapable of an exclusive attention to one end; the universality of his cravings is not contented, unless it devours all; and thus he is perpetually doomed to fritter away his energies by grasping at the trifling baubles within his reach, and in gathering the worthless fruit which a single sun can mature.

This, then, was my fault, and the cause of my failure. I could not give myself up to finance, nor puzzle through the intricacies of commerce: even the common parliamentary drudgeries of constant attendance and late hours were insupportable to me; and so after two or three "splendid orations," as my friends termed them, I was satisfied with the puffs of the pamphleteers and closed my political career. I was now, then, the wit and the conversationalist. With my fluency of speech and variety of information, these were easy distinctions; and the popularity of a dinner-table or the approbation of a literary coterie consoled me for the more public and more durable applause I had resigned.

But even this gratification did not last long. I fell ill; and the friends who gathered round the wit fled from the valetudinarian. This disgusted me, and when I was sufficiently recovered I again returned to the Continent. But I had a fit of misanthropy and solitude upon me, and so it was not to courts and cities, the scenes of former gayeties, that I repaired; on the contrary, I hired a house by one of the most sequestered of the Swiss lakes, and, avoiding the living, I surrendered myself without interruption or control to commune with the dead. I surrounded myself with books and pored with a curious and searching eye into those works which treat particularly upon "man." My passions were over, my love of pleasure and society was dried up, and I had now no longer the obstacles which forbid us to be wise; I unlearned the precepts my manhood had acquired, and in my old age I commenced philosopher; Religion lent me her aid, and by her holy lamp my studies were coned and my hermitage illumined.

There are certain characters which in the world are evil, and in seclusion are good: Rousseau, whom I knew well, is one of them. These persons are of a morbid sensitiveness, which is perpetually galled by collision with others. In short, they are under the dominion of VANITY; and that vanity, never satisfied and always restless in the various competitions of society, produces "envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness!" but, in solitude, the good and benevolent dispositions with which our self-love no longer interferes have room to expand and ripen without being cramped by opposing interests: this will account for many seeming discrepancies in character. There are also some men in whom old age supplies the place of solitude, and Rousseau's antagonist and mental antipodes, Voltaire, is of this order. The pert, the malignant, the arrogant, the lampooning author in his youth and manhood, has become in his old age the mild, the benevolent, and the venerable philosopher. Nothing is more absurd than to receive the characters of great men so implicitly upon the word of a biographer; and nothing can be less surprising than our eternal disputes upon individuals: for no man throughout life is the same being, and each season of our existence contradicts the characteristics of the last.

And now in my solitude and my old age, a new spirit entered within me: the game in which I had engaged so vehemently was over for me; and I joined to my experience as a player my coolness as a spectator; I no longer struggled with my species, and I began insensibly to love them. I established schools and founded charities; and, in secret but active services to mankind, I employed my exertions and lavished my desires.

From this amendment I date the peace of mind and elasticity which I now enjoy; and in my later years the happiness which I pursued in my youth and maturity so hotly, yet so ineffectually, has flown unsolicited to my breast.

About five years ago I came again to England, with the intention of breathing my last in the country which gave me birth. I retired to my family home; I endeavoured to divert myself in agricultural improvements, and my rental was consumed in speculation. This did not please me long: I sought society,—society in Yorkshire! You may imagine the result: I was out of my element; the mere distance from the metropolis, from all genial companionship, sickened me with a vague feeling of desertion and solitude; for the first time in my life I felt my age and my celibacy. Once more I returned to town, a complaint attacked my lungs, the physicians recommended the air of this neighbourhood, and I chose the residence I now inhabit. Without being exactly in London, I can command its advantages, and obtain society as a recreation without buying it by restraint. I am not fond of new faces nor any longer covetous of show; my old servant therefore contented me: for the future, I shall, however, to satisfy your fears, remove to a safer habitation, and obtain a more numerous guard. It is, at all events, a happiness to me that Fate, in casting me here and exposing me to something of danger, has raised up in you a friend for my old age, and selected from this great universe of strangers one being to convince my heart that it has not outlived affection. My tale is done; may you profit by its moral!

When Talbot said that our characters were undergoing a perpetual change he should have made this reservation,—the one ruling passion remains to the last; it may be modified, but it never departs; and it is these modifications which do, for the most part, shape out the channels of our change; or as Helvetius has beautifully expressed it, "we resemble those vessels which the waves still carry towards the south, when the north wind has ceased to blow;" but in our old age, this passion, having little to feed on, becomes sometimes dormant and inert, and then our good qualities rise, as it were from an incubus, and have their sway.

Yet these cases are not common, and Talbot was a remarkable instance, for he was a remarkable man. His mind had not slept while the age advanced, and thus it had swelled as it were from the bondage of its earlier passions and prejudices. But little did he think, in the blindness of self-delusion,—though it was so obvious to Clarence, that he could have smiled if he had not rather inclined to weep at the frailties of human nature,—little did he think that the vanity which had cost him so much remained "a monarch still," undeposed alike by his philosophy, his religion, or his remorse; and that, debarred by circumstances from all wider and more dangerous fields, it still lavished itself upon trifles unworthy of his powers and puerilities dishonouring his age. Folly is a courtesan whom we ourselves seek, whose

favours we solicit at an enormous price, and who, like Lais, finds philosophers at her door scarcely less frequently than the rest of mankind!

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