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CHAPTER LIX

Change and time take together their flight.—Golden Violet.

One evening in autumn, about three years after the date of our last chapter, a stranger on horseback, in deep mourning, dismounted at the door of the Golden Fleece, in the memorable town of W—. He walked into the taproom, and asked for a private apartment and accommodation for the night. The landlady, grown considerably plumper than when we first made her acquaintance, just lifted up her eyes to the stranger's face, and summoning a short stout man (formerly the waiter, now the second helpmate of the comely hostess), desired him, in a tone which partook somewhat more of the authority indicative of their former relative situations than of the obedience which should have characterized their present, "to show the gentleman to the Griffin, No. 4."

The stranger smiled as the sound greeted his ears, and he followed not so much the host as the hostess's spouse into the apartment thus designated. A young lady, who some eight years ago little thought that she should still be in a state of single blessedness, and who always honoured with an attentive eye the stray travellers who, from their youth, loneliness, or that ineffable air which usually designates the unmarried man, might be in the same solitary state of life, turned to the landlady and said,—

"Mother, did you observe what a handsome gentleman that was?"

"No," replied the landlady; "I only observed that he brought no servant"

"I wonder," said the daughter, "if he is in the army? he has a military air!"

"I suppose he has dined," muttered the landlady to herself, looking towards the larder.

"Have you seen Squire Mordaunt within a short period of time?" asked, somewhat abruptly, a little thick-set man, who was enjoying his pipe and negus in a sociable way at the window-seat. The characteristics of this personage were, a spruce wig, a bottle nose, an elevated eyebrow, a snuff-

coloured skin and coat, and an air of that consequential self-respect which distinguishes the philosopher who agrees with the French sage, and sees "no reason in the world why a man should not esteem himself."

"No, indeed, Mr. Bossolton," returned the landlady; "but I suppose that, as he is now in the Parliament House, he will live less retired. It is a pity that the inside of that noble old Hall of his should not be more seen; and after all the old gentleman's improvements too! They say that the estate now, since the mortgages were paid off, is above 10,000 pounds a year, clear!"

"And if I am not induced into an error," rejoined Mr. Bossolton, refilling his pipe, "old Vavasour left a great sum of ready money besides, which must have been an aid, and an assistance, and an advantage, mark me, Mistress Merrylack, to the owner of Mordaunt Hall, that has escaped the calculation of your faculty,—and the—and the— faculty of your calculation!"

"You mistake, Mr. Boss," as, in the friendliness of diminutives, Mrs. Merrylack sometimes styled the grandiloquent practitioner, "you mistake: the old gentleman left all his ready money in two bequests,—the one to the College of —, in the University of Cambridge, and the other to an hospital in London. I remember the very words of the will; they ran thus, Mr. Boss. 'And whereas my beloved son, had he lived, would have been a member of the College of — in the University of Cambridge, which he would have adorned by his genius, learning, youthful virtue, and the various qualities which did equal honour to his head and heart, and would have rendered him alike distinguished as the scholar and the Christian, I do devise and bequeath the sum of thirty-seven thousand pounds sterling, now in the English Funds,' etc; and then follows the manner in which he will have his charity vested and bestowed, and all about the prize which shall be forever designated and termed 'The Vavasour Prize,' and what shall be the words of the Latin speech which shall be spoken when the said prize be delivered, and a great deal more to that effect: so, then, he passes to the other legacy, of exactly the same sum, to the hospital, usually called and styled —, in the city of London, and says, 'And whereas we are assured by the Holy Scriptures, which, in these days of blasphemy and sedition, it becomes every true Briton and member of the Established Church to support, that "charity doth cover a multitude of sins," so I do give and devise,' etc., 'to be forever termed in the deeds,' etc., 'of the said hospital, "The Vavasour Charity;" and always provided that on the anniversary of the day of my death a sermon shall be preached in the chapel attached to the said hospital by a clergyman of the Established Church, on any text appropriate to the day and deed so commemorated.' But the conclusion is most beautiful, Mr. Bossolton: 'And now having discharged my duties, to the best of my humble ability, to my God, my king, and my country, and dying in the full belief of the Protestant Church, as by law established, I do set my hand and seal,' etc."

"A very pleasing and charitable and devout and virtuous testament or will, Mistress Merrylack," said Mr. Bossolton; "and in a time when anarchy with gigantic strides does devastate and devour and harm the good old customs of our ancestors and forefathers, and tramples with its poisonous breath the Magna Charta and the glorious revolution, it is beautiful, ay, and sweet, mark you, Mrs. Merrylack, to behold a gentleman of the aristocratic classes or grades supporting the institutions of his country with such remarkable energy of sentiments and with—and with, Mistress Merrylack, with sentiments of such remarkable energy."

"Pray," said the daughter, adjusting her ringlets by a little glass which hung over the tap, "how long has Mr. Mordaunt's lady been dead?"

"Oh! she died just before the squire came to the property," quoth the mother. "Poor thing! she was so pretty! I am sure I cried for a whole hour when I heard it! I think it was three years last month when it happened. Old Mr. Vavasour died about two months afterwards."

"The afflicted husband" (said Mr. Bossolton, who was the victim of a most fiery Mrs. Boss at home) "went into foreign lands or parts, or, as it is vulgarly termed, the Continent, immediately after an event or occurrence so fatal to the cup of his prosperity and the sunshine of his enjoyment, did he not, Mrs. Merrylack?"

"He did. And you know, Mr. Boss, he only returned about six months ago."

"And of what borough or burgh or town or city is he the member and representative?" asked Mr. Jeremiah Bossolton, putting another lump of sugar into his negus. "I have heard, it is true, but my memory is short; and, in the multitude and multifariousness of my professional engagements, I am often led into a forgetfulness of matters less important in their variety, and less—less various in their importance."

"Why," answered Mrs. Merrylack, "somehow or other, I quite forget too; but it is some distant borough. The gentleman wanted him to stand for the county, but he would not hear of it; perhaps he did not like the publicity of the thing, for he is mighty reserved."

"Proud, haughty, arrogant, and assumptious!" said Mr. Bossolton, with a puff of unusual length.

"Nay, nay," said the daughter (young people are always the first to defend), "I'm sure he's not proud: he does a mort of good, and has the sweetest smile possible! I wonder if he'll marry again! He is very young yet, not above two or three and thirty." (The kind damsel would not have thought two or three and thirty very young some years ago; but we grow wonderfully indulgent to the age of other people as we grow older ourselves!)

"And what an eye he has!" said the landlady. "Well, for my part,— but, bless me. Here, John, John, John, waiter, husband I mean,— here's a carriage and four at the door. Lizzy, dear, is my cap right?"

And mother, daughter, and husband all flocked, charged with simper, courtesy, and bow, to receive their expected guests. With a disappointment which we who keep not inns can but very imperfectly conceive, the trio beheld a single personage,—a valet, descend from the box, open the carriage door, and take out—a desk! Of all things human, male or female, the said carriage was utterly empty.

The valet bustled up to the landlady: "My master's here, ma'am, I think; rode on before!"

"And who is your master?" asked Mrs. Merrylack, a thrill of alarm, and the thought of No. 4, coming across her at the same time.

"Who!" said the valet, rubbing his hands; "who!—why, Clarence Talbot Linden, Esq., of Scarsdale Park, county of York, late Secretary of Legation at the court of —, now M.P., and one of his Majesty's Under Secretaries of State."

"Mercy upon us!" cried the astounded landlady, "and No. 4! only think of it. Run, John,—John,—run, light a fire (the night's cold, I think) in the Elephant, No. 16; beg the gentleman's pardon; say it was occupied till now; ask what he'll have for dinner,—fish, flesh, fowl, steaks, joints, chops, tarts; or, if it's too late (but it's quite early yet; you may put back the day an hour or so), ask what he'll have for supper; run, John, run: what's the oaf staying for? run, I tell you! Pray, sir, walk in (to the valet, our old friend Mr. Harrison)—you'll be hungry after your journey, I think; no ceremony, I beg."

"He's not so handsome as his master," said Miss Elizabeth, glancing at Harrison discontentedly; "but he does not look like a married man, somehow. I'll just step up stairs and change my cap: it would be but civil if the gentleman's gentleman sups with us."

Meanwhile Clarence, having been left alone in the quiet enjoyment of No. 4, had examined the little apartment with an interest not altogether unmingled with painful reflections. There are few persons, however fortunate, who can look back to eight years of their life, and not feel somewhat of disappointment in the retrospect; few persons, whose fortunes the world envy, to whom the token of past time suddenly obtruded on their remembrance does not awaken hopes destroyed and wishes deceived which that world has never known. We tell our triumphs to the crowd, but our own hearts are the sole confidants of our sorrows. "Twice," said Clarence to himself, "twice before have I been in this humble room; the first was when, at the age of eighteen, I was just launched into the world,—a vessel which had for its only hope the motto of the chivalrous Sidney,—

'Aut viam inveniam, aut—faciam;'

["I will either find my way, or—make it.]

yet, humble and nameless as I was, how well I can recall the exaggerated ambition, nay, the certainty of success, as well as its desire, which then burned within me. I smile now at the overweening vanity of those hopes,—some, indeed, realized, but how many nipped and withered forever! seeds, of which a few fell upon rich ground and prospered, but of which how far the greater number were scattered: some upon the wayside, and were devoured by immediate cares; some on stony places, and when the sun of manhood was up they were scorched, and because they had no root withered away; and some among thorns, and the thorns sprang up and choked them. I am now rich, honoured, high in the favour of courts, and not altogether unknown or unesteemed *arbitrio popularis aurae*: and yet I almost think I was happier when, in that flush of youth and inexperience, I looked forth into the wide world, and imagined that from every corner would spring up a triumph for my vanity or an object for my affections. The next time I stood in this little spot, I was no longer the dependant of a precarious charity, or the idle adventurer who had no stepping-stone but his ambition. I was then just declared the heir of wealth, which I could not rationally have hoped for five years before, and which was in itself sufficient to satisfy the aspirings of ordinary men. But I was corroded with anxieties for the object of my love, and regret for the friend whom I had lost: perhaps the eagerness of my heart for the one rendered me, for the moment, too little mindful of the other; but, in after years, memory took ample atonement for that temporary suspension of her duties. How often have I recalled, in this world of cold ties and false

hearts, that true and generous friend, from whose lessons my mind took improvement, and from whose warnings example; who was to me, living, a father, and from whose generosity whatever worldly advantages I have enjoyed or distinctions I have gained are derived! Then I was going, with a torn yet credulous heart, to pour forth my secret and my passion to her, and, within one little week thence, how shipwrecked of all hope, object, and future happiness I was! Perhaps, at that time, I did not sufficiently consider the excusable cautions of the world: I should not have taken such umbrage at her father's letter; I should have revealed to him my birth and accession of fortune; nor bartered the truth of certain happiness for the trials and manoeuvres of romance. But it is too late to repent now. By this time my image must be wholly obliterated from her heart: she has seen me in the crowd, and passed me coldly by; her cheek is pale, but not for me; and in a little, little while, she will be another's, and lost to me forever! Yet have I never forgotten her through change or time, the hard and harsh projects of ambition, the labours of business, or the engrossing schemes of political intrigue. Never! but this is a vain and foolish subject of reflection now."

And not the less reflecting upon it for that sage and veracious recollection, Clarence turned from the window, against which he had been leaning, and drawing one of the four chairs to the solitary table, he sat down, moody and disconsolate, and leaning his face upon his hands, pursued the confused yet not disconnected thread of his meditations.

The door abruptly opened, and Mr. Merrylack appeared.

"Dear me, sir!" cried he, "a thousand pities you should have been put here, sir! Pray step upstairs, sir; the front drawing-room is just vacant, sir; what will you please to have for dinner, sir?" etc., according to the instructions of his wife. To Mr. Merrylack's great dismay, Clarence, however, resolutely refused all attempts at locomotion, and contenting himself with entrusting the dinner to the discretion of the landlady, desired to be left alone till it was prepared.

Now, when Mr. John Merrylack returned to the taproom, and communicated the stubborn adherence to No. 4 manifested by its occupier, our good hostess felt exceedingly discomposed. "You are so stupid, John," said she: "I'll go and expostulate like with him;" and she was rising for that purpose when Harrison, who was taking particularly good care of himself, drew her back; "I know my master's temper better than you do, ma'am," said he; "and when he is in the humour to be stubborn, the very devil himself could not get him out of it. I dare say he wants to be left to himself: he is very fond of being alone now and then; state affairs, you know" (added the valet, mysteriously touching his forehead), "and even I dare not disturb him for the world; so make yourself easy, and I'll go to him when he has dined, and I supped. There is time enough for No. 4 when we have taken care of number one. Miss, your health!"

The landlady, reluctantly overruled in her design, reseated herself.

"Mr. Clarence Linden, M. P., did you say, sir?" said the learned Jeremiah: "surely, I have had that name or appellation in my books, but I cannot, at this instant of time, recall to my recollection the exact date and circumstance of my professional services to the gentleman so designated, styled, or, I may say, termed."

"Can't say, I am sure, sir," said Harrison; "lived with my master many years; never had the pleasure of seeing you before, nor of travelling this road,—a very hilly road it is, sir. Miss, this negus is as bright as your eyes and as warm as my admiration."

"Oh, sir!"

"Pray," said Mr. Merrylack, who like most of his tribe was a bit of a politician; "is it the Mr. Linden who made that long speech in the House the other day?"

"Precisely, sir. He is a very eloquent gentleman, indeed: pity he speaks so little; never made but that one long speech since he has been in the House, and a capital one it was too. You saw how the prime minister complimented him upon it. 'A speech,' said his lordship, 'which had united the graces of youthful genius with the sound calculations of matured experience.'"

"Did the prime minister really so speak?" said Jeremiah "what a beautiful, and noble, and sensible compliment! I will examine my books when I go home,—'the graces of youthful genius with the sound calculations of matured experience!'"

"If he is in the Parliament House," quoth the landlady, "I suppose he will know our Mr. Mordaunt, when the squire takes his seat next—what do you call it—sessions?"

"Know Mr. Mordaunt!" said the valet. "It is to see him that we have come down here. We intended to have gone there to-night, but Master thought it too late, and I saw he was in a melancholy humour: we

therefore resolved to come here; and so Master took one of the horses from the groom, whom we have left behind with the other, and came on alone. I take it, he must have been in this town before, for he described the inn so well.—Capital cheese this! as mild,—as mild as your sweet smile, miss."

"Oh, sir!"

"Pray, Mistress Merrylack," said Mr. Jeremiah Bossolton, depositing his pipe on the table, and awakening from a profound revery, in which for the last five minutes his senses had been buried, "pray, Mistress Merrylack, do you not call to your mind or your reminiscence or your— your recollection, a young gentleman, equally comely in his aspect and blandiloquent (ehem!) in his address, who had the misfortune to have his arm severely contused and afflicted by a violent kick from Mr. Mordaunt's horse, even in the yard in which your stables are situated, and who remained for two or three days in your house or tavern or hotel? I do remember that you were grievously perplexed because of his name, the initials of which only he gave or entrusted or communicated to you, until you did exam—"

"I remember," interrupted Miss Elizabeth, "I remember well,—a very beautiful young gentleman, who had a letter directed to be left here, addressed to him by the letters C. L., and who was afterwards kicked, and who admired your cap, Mother, and whose name was Clarence Linden. You remember it well enough, Mother, surely?"

"I think I do, Lizzy," said the landlady, slowly; for her memory, not so much occupied as her daughter's by beautiful young gentlemen, struggled slowly amidst dim ideas of the various travellers and visitors with whom her house had been honoured, before she came, at last, to the reminiscence of Clarence Linden, "I think I do; and Squire Mordaunt was very attentive to him; and he broke one of the panes of glass in No. 8 and gave me half a guinea to pay for it. I do remember perfectly, Lizzy. So that is the Mr. Linden now here?—only think!"

"I should not have known him, certainly," said Miss Elizabeth; "he is grown so much taller, and his hair looks quite dark now, and his face is much thinner than it was; but he's very handsome still; is he not, sir?" turning to the valet.

"Ah! ah! well enough," said Mr. Harrison, stretching out his right leg, and falling away a little to the left, in the manner adopted by the renowned Gil Blas, in his address to the fair Laura, "well enough; but he's a little too tall and thin, I think."

Mr. Harrison's faults in shape were certainly not those of being too tall and thin.

"Perhaps so!" said Miss Elizabeth, who scented the vanity by a kindred instinct, and had her own reasons for pampering it, "perhaps so!"

"But he is a great favourite with the ladies all the same; however, he only loves one lady. Ah, but I must not say who, though I know. However, she is so handsome: such eyes, they would go through you like a skewer; but not like yours,—yours, miss, which I vow and protest are as bright as a service of plate."

"Oh, sir!"

And amidst these graceful compliments the time slipped away, till Clarence's dinner and his valet's supper being fairly over, Mr. Harrison presented himself to his master, a perfectly different being in attendance to what he was in companionship: flippancy, impertinence, forwardness, all merged in the steady, sober, serious demeanour which characterize the respectful and well-bred domestic.

Clarence's orders were soon given. They were limited to the appurtenances of writing; and as soon as Harrison reappeared with his master's writing-desk, he was dismissed for the night.

Very slowly did Clarence settle himself to his task, and attempt to escape the ennui of his solitude, or the restlessness of thought feeding upon itself, by inditing the following epistle:—

TO THE DUKE OF HAVERFIELD.

I was very unfortunate, my dear Duke, to miss seeing you, when I called in Arlington Street the evening before last, for I had a great deal to say to you,—something upon public and a little upon private affairs. I will reserve the latter, since I only am the person concerned, for a future opportunity. With respect to the former—

And now, having finished the political part of my letter, let me congratulate you most sincerely upon your approaching marriage with Miss Trevanion. I do not know her myself; but I remember that she was the bosom friend of Lady Flora Ardenne, whom I have often heard speak of her in the highest and

most affectionate terms, so that I imagine her brother could not better atone to you for dishonestly carrying off the fair Julia some three years ago, than by giving you his sister in honourable and orthodox exchange,—the gold amour for the brazen.

As for my lot, though I ought not, at this moment, to dim yours by dwelling upon it, you know how long, how constantly, how ardently I have loved Lady Flora Ardenne; how, for her sake, I have refused opportunities of alliance which might have gratified to the utmost that worldliness of heart which so many who saw me only in the crowd have been pleased to impute to me. You know that neither pleasure, nor change, nor the insult I received from her parents, nor the sudden indifference which I so little deserved from herself, has been able to obliterate her image. You will therefore sympathize with me, when I inform you that there is no longer any doubt of her marriage with Borodaile (or rather Lord Ulswater, since his father's death), as soon as the sixth month of his mourning expires; to this period only two months remain.

Heavens! when one thinks over the past, how incredulous one could become to the future: when I recall all the tokens of love I received. from that woman, I cannot persuade myself that they are now all forgotten, or rather, all lavished upon another.

But I do not blame her: may she be happier with him than she could have been with me! and that hope shall whisper peace to regrets which I have been foolish to indulge so long, and it is perhaps well for me that they are about to be rendered forever unavailing.

I am staying at an inn, without books, companions, or anything to beguile time and thought, but this pen, ink, and paper. You will see, therefore, a reason and an excuse for my scribbling on to you, till my two sheets are filled, and the hour of ten (one can't well go to bed earlier) arrived.

You remember having often heard me speak of a very extraordinary man whom I met in Italy, and with whom I became intimate. He returned to England some months ago; and on hearing it my desire of renewing our acquaintance was so great that I wrote to invite myself to his house. He gave me what is termed a very obliging answer, and left the choice of time to myself. You see now, most noble Festus, the reason of my journey hitherwards.

His house, a fine old mansion, is situated about five or six miles from this town: and as I arrived here late in the evening, and knew that his habits were reserved and peculiar, I thought it better to take "mine ease in my inn" for this night, and defer my visit to Mordaunt Court till to-morrow morning. In truth, I was not averse to renewing an old acquaintance,—not, as you in your malice would suspect, with my hostess, but with her house. Some years ago, when I was eighteen, I first made a slight acquaintance with Mordaunt at this very inn, and now, at twenty-six, I am glad to have one evening to myself on the same spot, and retrace here all that has since happened to me.

Now do not be alarmed: I am not going to inflict upon you the unquiet retrospect with which I have just been vexing myself; no, I will rather speak to you of my acquaintance and host to be. I have said that I first met Mordaunt some years since at this inn,—an accident, for which his horse was to blame, brought us acquainted,—I spent a day at his house, and was much interested in his conversation; since then, we did not meet till about two years and a half ago, when we were in Italy together. During the intermediate interval Mordaunt had married; lost his property by a lawsuit; disappeared from the world (whither none knew) for some years; recovered the estate he had lost by the death of his kinsman's heir, and shortly afterwards by that of the kinsman himself; and had become a widower, with one only child, a beautiful little girl of about four years old. He lived in perfect seclusion, avoided all intercourse with society, and seemed so perfectly unconscious of having ever seen me before, whenever in our rides or walks we met, that I could not venture to intrude myself on a reserve so rigid and unbroken as that which characterized his habits and life.

The gloom and loneliness, however, in which Mordaunt's days were spent, were far from partaking of that selfishness so common, almost so necessarily common, to recluses. Wherever he had gone in his travels through Italy, he had left light and rejoicing behind him. In his residence at —, while unknown to the great and gay, he was familiar with the outcast and the destitute. The prison, the hospital, the sordid cabins of want, the abodes (so frequent in Italy, that emporium of artists and poets) where genius struggled against poverty and its own improvidence,—all these were the spots to which his visits were paid, and in which "the very stones prated of his whereabouts." It was a strange and striking contrast to compare the sickly enthusiasm of those who flocked to Italy to lavish their sentiments on statues, and their wealth on the modern impositions palmed upon their taste as the masterpieces of ancient art,—it was a noble contrast, I say, to compare that ludicrous and idle enthusiasm with the quiet and wholesome energy of mind and heart which led Mordaunt, not to pour forth worship and homage to the unconscious monuments of the dead but to console, to relieve, and to sustain the woes, the wants, the feebleness of the living.

Yet while he was thus employed in reducing the miseries and enlarging the happiness of others, the most settled melancholy seemed to mark himself "as her own." Clad in the deepest mourning, a stern and unbroken gloom sat forever upon his countenance. I have observed, that if in his walks or rides any one, especially of the better classes, appeared to approach, he would strike into a new path. He could not bear even the scrutiny of a glance or the fellowship of a moment: and his mien, high and haughty, seemed not only to repel others, but to contradict the meekness and charity which his own actions so invariably and unequivocally displayed. It must, indeed, have been a powerful exertion of principle over feeling which induced him voluntarily to seek the abodes and intercourse of the rude beings he blessed and relieved.

We met at two or three places to which my weak and imperfect charity had led me, especially at the house of a sickly and distressed artist: for in former life I had intimately known one of that profession; and I have since attempted to transfer to his brethren that debt of kindness which an early death forbade me to discharge to himself. It was thus that I first became acquainted with Mordaunt's occupations and pursuits; for what ennobled his benevolence was the remarkable obscurity in which it was veiled. It was in disguise and in secret that his generosity flowed; and so studiously did he conceal his name, and hide even his features, during his brief visits to "the house of mourning," that only one like myself, a close and minute investigator of whatever has once become an object of interest, could have traced his hand in the various works of happiness it had aided or created.

One day, among some old ruins, I met him with his young daughter. By great good-fortune I preserved the latter, who had wandered away from her father, from a fall of loose stones, which would inevitably have crushed her. I was myself much hurt by my effort, having received upon my shoulder a fragment of the falling stones; and thus our old acquaintance was renewed, and gradually ripened into intimacy; not, I must own, without great patience and constant endeavour on my part; for his gloom and lonely habits rendered him utterly impracticable of access to any (as Lord Aspeden would say) but a diplomatist. I saw a great deal of him during the six months I remained in Italy, and—but you know already how warmly I admire his extraordinary powers and venerate his character—Lord Aspeden's recall to England separated us.

A general election ensued. I was returned for ——. I entered eagerly into domestic politics; your friendship, Lord Aspeden's kindness, my own wealth and industry, made my success almost unprecedentedly rapid. Engaged heart and hand in those minute yet engrossing labours for which the aspirant in parliamentary and state intrigue must unhappily forego the more enlarged though abstruser speculations of general philosophy, and of that morality which may be termed universal, politics, I have necessarily been employed in very different pursuits from those to which Mordaunt's contemplations are devoted, yet have I often recalled his maxims, with admiration at their depth, and obtained applause for opinions which were only imperfectly filtered from the pure springs of his own.

It is about six months since he has returned to England, and he has very lately obtained a seat in Parliament: so that we may trust soon to see his talents displayed upon a more public and enlarged theatre than they hitherto have been; and though I fear his politics will be opposed to ours, I anticipate his public debut with that interest which genius, even when adverse to one's self, always inspires. Yet I confess that I am desirous to see and converse with him once more in the familiarity and kindness of private intercourse. The rage of party, the narrowness of sectarian zeal, soon exclude from our friendship all those who differ from our opinions; and it is like sailors holding commune for the last time with each other, before their several vessels are divided by the perilous and uncertain sea, to confer in peace and retirement for a little while with those who are about to be launched with us on that same unquiet ocean where any momentary caprice of the winds may disjoin us forever, and where our very union is only a sympathy in toil and a fellowship in danger.

Adieu, my dear duke! it is fortunate for me that our public opinions are so closely allied, and that I may so reasonably calculate in private upon the happiness and honour of subscribing myself your affectionate friend, C. L.

Such was the letter to which we shall leave the explanation of much that has taken place within the last three years of our tale, and which, in its tone, will serve to show the kindness and generosity of heart and feeling that mingled (rather increased than abated by the time which brought wisdom) with the hardy activity and resolute ambition that characterized the mind of our "Disowned." We now consign him to such repose as the best bedroom in the Golden Fleece can afford, and conclude the chapter.

CHAPTER LX.

Though the wilds of enchantment all vernal and bright,
In the days of delusion by fancy combined
With the vanishing phantoms of love and delight,
Abandon my soul, like a dream of the night,
And leave but a desert behind,

Be hush'd my dark spirit, for Wisdom condemns
When the faint and the feeble deplore;
Be strong as the rock of the ocean that stems
A thousand wild waves on the shore.—CAMPBELL.

"Shall I order the carriage round, sir?" said Harrison; "it is past one."

"Yes; yet stay: the day is fine; I will ride; let the carriage come on in the evening; see that my horse is saddled; you looked to his mash last night?"

"I did, sir. He seems wonderfully fresh: would you please to have me stay here with the carriage, sir, till the groom comes on with the other horse?"

"Ay, do: I don't know yet how far strange servants may be welcome where I am going."

"Now, that's lucky!" said Harrison to himself, as he shut the door: "I shall have a good five hours' opportunity of making my court here. Miss Elizabeth is really a very pretty girl, and might not be a bad match. I don't see any brothers; who knows but she may succeed to the inn—hem! A servant may be ambitious as well as his master, I suppose."

So meditating, Harrison sauntered to the stables; saw (for he was an admirable servant, and could, at a pinch, dress a horse as well as its master) that Clarence's beautiful steed received the utmost nicety of grooming which the ostler could bestow; led it himself to the door; held the stirrup for his master, with the mingled humility and grace of his profession, and then strutted away—"pride on his brow and glory in his eye"—to be the cynosure and oracle of the taproom.

Meanwhile Linden rode slowly onwards. As he passed that turn of the town by which he had for the first time entered it, the recollection of the eccentric and would-be gypsy flashed upon him. "I wonder," thought he, "where that singular man is now, whether he still preserves his itinerant and woodland tastes,—

'Si flumina sylvasque inglorius amet,'
["If, unknown to fame, he love the streams and the woods."]

or whether, as his family increased in age or number, he has turned from his wanderings, and at length found out 'the peaceful hermitage?' How glowingly the whole scene of that night comes across me,—the wild tents, their wilder habitants, the mingled bluntness, poetry, honest good-nature, and spirit of enterprise which constituted the chief's nature; the jovial meal and mirth round the wood fire, and beneath the quiet stars, and the eagerness and zest with which I then mingled in the merriment. Alas! how ill the fastidiousness and refinement of after days repay us for the elastic, buoyant, ready zeal with which our first youth enters into whatever is joyous, without pausing to ask if its cause and nature be congenial to our habits or kindred to our tastes. After all, there really was something philosophical in the romance of the jovial gypsy, childish as it seemed; and I should like much to know if the philosophy has got the better of the romance, or the romance, growing into habit, become commonplace and lost both its philosophy and its enthusiasm. Well, after I leave Mordaunt, I will try and find out my old friend."

With this resolution Clarence's thoughts took a new channel, and he soon entered upon Mordaunt's domain. As he rode through the park where brake and tree were glowing in the yellow tints which Autumn, like Ambition, gilds ere it withers, he paused for a moment to recall the scene as he last beheld it. It was then spring—spring in its first and flushest glory—when not a blade of grass but sent a perfume to the air, the happy air,—

"Making sweet music while the young leaves danced:"

when every cluster of the brown fern, that now lay dull and motionless around him, and amidst which the melancholy deer stood afar off gazing upon the intruder, was vocal with the blithe melodies of the infant year,—the sharp, yet sweet, voices of birds,—and (heard at intervals) the chirp of the merry

grasshopper or the hum of the awakened bee. He sighed, as he now looked around, and recalled the change both of time and season; and with that fondness of heart which causes man to knit his own little life to the varieties of time, the signs of heaven, or the revolutions of Nature, he recognized something kindred in the change of scene to the change of thought and feeling which years had wrought in the beholder.

Awaking from his reverie, he hastened his horse's pace, and was soon within sight of the house. Vavasour, during the few years he had possessed the place, had conducted and carried through improvements and additions to the old mansion, upon a scale equally costly and judicious. The heavy and motley magnificence of the architecture in which the house had been built remained unaltered; but a wing on either side, though exactly corresponding in style to the intermediate building, gave, by the long colonnade which ran across the one and the stately windows which adorned the other, an air not only of grander extent, but more cheerful lightness to the massy and antiquated pile. It was, assuredly, in the point of view by which Clarence now approached it, a structure which possessed few superiors in point of size and effect; and harmonized so well with the nobly extent of the park, the ancient woods, and the venerable avenues, that a very slight effort of imagination might have poured from the massive portals the pageantries of old days, and the gay galliard of chivalric romance with which the scene was in such accordance, and which in a former age it had so often witnessed.

Ah, little could any one who looked upon that gorgeous pile, and the broad lands which, beyond the boundaries of the park, swelled on the hills of the distant landscape, studded at frequent intervals with the spires and villages, which adorned the wide baronies of Mordaunt,— little could he who thus gazed around have imagined that the owner of all he surveyed had passed the glory and verdure of his manhood in the bitterest struggles with gnawing want, rebellious pride, and urgent passion, without friend or aid but his own haughty and supporting virtue, sentenced to bear yet in his wasted and barren heart the sign of the storm he had resisted, and the scathed token of the lightning he had braved. None but Crauford, who had his own reasons for taciturnity, and the itinerant broker, easily bribed into silence, had ever known of the extreme poverty from which Mordaunt had passed to his rightful possessions. It was whispered, indeed, that he had been reduced to narrow and straitened circumstances; but the whisper had been only the breath of rumour, and the imagined poverty far short of the reality: for the pride of Mordaunt (the great, almost the sole, failing in his character) could not endure that all he had borne and baffled should be bared to the vulgar eye; and by a rare anomaly of mind, indifferent as he was to renown, he was morbidly susceptible of shame.

When Clarence rang at the ivy-covered porch, and made inquiry for Mordaunt, he was informed that the latter was in the park, by the river, where most of his hours during the day-time were spent.

"Shall I send to acquaint him that you are come, sir?" said the servant.

"No," answered Clarence, "I will leave my horse to one of the grooms, and stroll down to the river in search of your master."

Suiting the action to the word, he dismounted, consigned his steed to the groom, and following the direction indicated to him, bent his way to the "river."

As he descended the hill, the brook (for it did not deserve, though it received, a higher name) opened enchantingly upon his view. Amidst the fragrant reed and the wild-flower, still sweet though fading, and tufts of tedded grass, all of which, when crushed beneath the foot, sent a mingled tribute to its sparkling waves, the wild stream took its gladsome course, now contracted by gloomy firs, which, bending over the water, cast somewhat of their own sadness upon its surface; now glancing forth from the shade, as it "broke into dimples and laughed in the sun;" now washing the gnarled and spreading roots of some lonely ash, which, hanging over it still and droopingly, seemed— the hermit of the scene—to moralize on its noisy and various wanderings; now winding round the hill and losing itself at last amidst thick copses, where day did never more than wink and glimmer, and where, at night, its waters, brawling through their stony channel, seemed like a spirit's wail, and harmonized well with the scream of the gray owl wheeling from her dim retreat, or the moaning and rare sound of some solitary deer.

As Clarence's eye roved admiringly over the scene before him, it dwelt at last upon a small building situated on the wildest part of the opposite bank; it was entirely overgrown with ivy, and the outline only remained to show the Gothic antiquity of the architecture. It was a single square tower, built none knew when or wherefore, and, consequently, the spot of many vagrant guesses and wild legends among the surrounding gossips. On approaching yet nearer, he perceived, alone and seated on a little mound beside the tower, the object of his search.

Mordaunt was gazing with vacant yet earnest eye upon the waters beneath; and so intent was either his mood or look that he was unaware of Clarence's approach. Tears fast and large were rolling from those haughty eyes, which men who shrank from their indifferent glance little deemed were capable of

such weak and feminine emotion. Far, far through the aching void of time were the thoughts of the reft and solitary mourner; they were dwelling, in all the vivid and keen intensity of grief which dies not, upon the day when, about that hour and on that spot, he sat with Isabel's young cheek upon his bosom, and listened to a voice now only heard in dreams. He recalled the moment when the fatal letter, charged with change and poverty, was given to him, and the pang which had rent his heart as he looked around upon a scene over which spring had just then breathed, and which he was about to leave to a fresh summer and a new lord; and then that deep, fond, half-fearful gaze with which Isabel had met his eye, and the feeling, proud even in its melancholy, with which he had drawn towards his breast all that earth had left to him, and thanked God in his heart of hearts that she was spared.

"And I am once more master," thought he, "not only of all I then held, but of all which my wealthier forefathers possessed. But she who was the sharer of my sorrows and want,—oh, where is she? Rather, ah, rather a hundredfold that her hand was still clasped in mine, her spirit supporting me through poverty and trial, and her soft voice murmuring the comfort that steals away care, than to be thus heaped with wealth and honour, and alone,—alone, where never more can come love or hope, or the yearnings of affection or the sweet fulness of a heart that seems fathomless in its tenderness, yet overflows! Had my lot, when she left me, been still the steepings of bitterness, the stings of penury, the moody silence of hope, the damp and chill of sunless and aidless years, which rust the very iron of the soul away; had my lot been thus, as it had been, I could have borne her death, I could have looked upon her grave, and wept not,—nay, I could have comforted my own struggles with the memory of her escape; but thus, at the very moment of prosperity, to leave the altered and promising earth, 'to house with darkness and with death;' no little gleam of sunshine, no brief recompense for the agonizing past, no momentary respite between tears and the tomb. Oh, Heaven! what—what avail is a wealth which comes too late, when she, who could alone have made wealth bliss, is dust; and the light that should have gilded many and happy days flings only a ghastly glare upon the tomb?"

Starting from these reflections, Mordaunt half-unconsciously rose, and dashing the tears from his eyes, was about to plunge into the neighbouring thicket, when, looking up, he beheld Clarence, now within a few paces of him. He started, and seemed for one moment irresolute whether to meet or shun his advance, but probably deeming it too late for the latter, he banished, by one of those violent efforts with which men of proud and strong minds vanquish emotion, all outward sign of the past agony; and hastening towards his guest, greeted him with a welcome which, though from ordinary hosts it might have seemed cold, appeared to Clarence, who knew his temper, more cordial than he had ventured to anticipate.

CHAPTER LXI.

Mr father urged me sair,
But my mither didna speak,
Though she looked into my face,
Till my heart was like to break.—Auld Robin Gray.

"It is rather singular," said Lady Westborough to her daughter as they sat alone one afternoon in the music-room at Westborough Park,—"it is rather singular that Lord Ulswater should not have come yet. He said he should certainly be here before three o'clock."

"You know, Mamma, that he has some military duties to detain him at W—," answered Lady Flora, bending over a drawing in which she appeared to be earnestly engaged.

"True, my dear, and it was very kind in Lord — to quarter the troop he commands in his native county; and very fortunate that W—, being his head-quarters, should also be so near us. But I cannot conceive that any duty can be sufficiently strong to detain him from you," added Lady Westborough, who had been accustomed all her life to a devotion unparalleled in this age. "You seem very indulgent, Flora."

"Alas! she should rather say very indifferent," thought Lady Flora: but she did not give her thought utterance; she only looked up at her mother for a moment, and smiled faintly.

Whether there was something in that smile or in the pale cheek of her daughter that touched her we know not, but Lady Westborough was touched: she threw her arms round Lady Flora's neck, kissed her fondly, and said, "You do not seem well to-day, my love, are you?"

"Oh!—very—very well," answered Lady Flora, returning her mother's caress, and hiding her eyes, to which the tears had started.

"My child," said Lady Westborough, "you know that both myself and your father are very desirous to see you married to Lord Ulswater,—of high and ancient birth, of great wealth, young, unexceptionable in person and character, and warmly attached to you, it would be impossible even for the sanguine heart of a parent to ask for you a more eligible match. But if the thought really does make you wretched,—and yet,— how can it?"

"I have consented," said Flora, gently; "all I ask is, do not speak to me more of the—the event than you can avoid."

Lady Westborough pressed her hand, sighed, and replied not.

The door opened, and the marquis, who had within the last year become a cripple, with the great man's malady, dire podagra, was wheeled in on his easy-chair; close behind him followed Lord Ulswater.

"I have brought you," said the marquis, who piqued himself on a vein of dry humour,— "I have brought you, young lady, a consolation for my ill humours. Few gouty old fathers make themselves as welcome as I do; eh, Ulswater?"

"Dare I apply to myself Lord Westborough's compliment?" said the young nobleman, advancing towards Lady Flora; and drawing his seat near her, he entered into that whispered conversation so significant of courtship. But there was little in Lady Flora's manner by which an experienced eye would have detected the bride elect: no sudden blush, no downcast, yet sidelong look, no trembling of the hand, no indistinct confusion of the voice, struggling with unanalyzed emotions. No: all was calm, cold, listless; her cheek changed not tint nor hue, and her words, clear and collected, seemed to contradict whatever the low murmurs of her betrothed might well be supposed to insinuate. But, even in his behaviour, there was something which, had Lady Westborough been less contented than she was with the externals and surface of manner, would have alarmed her for her daughter. A cloud, sullen and gloomy, sat upon his brow; and his lip alternately quivered with something like scorn, or was compressed with a kind of stifled passion. Even in the exultation that sparkled in his eye, when he alluded to their approaching marriage, there was an expression that almost might have been termed fierce, and certainly was as little like the true orthodox ardour of "gentle swain," as Lady Flora's sad and half unconscious coldness resembled the diffident passion of the "blushing maiden."

"You have considerably passed the time in which we expected you, my lord," said Lady Westborough, who, as a beauty herself, was a little jealous of the deference due to the beauty of her daughter.

"It is true.," said Lord Ulswater, glancing towards the opposite glass, and smoothing his right eyebrow with his forefinger, "it is true, but I could not help it. I had a great deal of business to do with my troop: I have put them into a new manoeuvre. Do you know, my lord [turning to the marquis], I think it very likely the soldiers may have some work on the — of this month?"

"Where, and wherefore?" asked Lord Westborough, whom a sudden twinge forced into the laconic.

"At W—. Some idle fellows hold a meeting there on that day; and if I may judge by bills and advertisements, chalkings on the walls, and, more than all popular rumour, I have no doubt but what riot and sedition are intended: the magistrates are terribly frightened. I hope we shall have some cutting and hewing: I have no patience with the rebellious dogs."

"For shame! for shame!" cried Lady Westborough, who, though a worldly, was by no means an unfeeling, woman "the poor people are misguided; they mean no harm."

Lord Ulswater smiled scornfully. "I never dispute upon politics, but at the head of my men," said he, and turned the conversation.

Shortly afterwards Lady Flora, complaining of indisposition, rose, left the apartment, and retired to her own room. There she sat motionless and white as death for more than an hour. A day or two afterwards Miss Trevanion received the following letter from her:—

Most heartily, most truly do I congratulate you, my dearest Eleanor, upon your approaching marriage. You may reasonably hope for all that happiness can afford; and though you do affect (for I do not think that you feel) a fear lest you should not be able to fix a character, volatile and light, like your lover's; yet when I recollect his warmth of heart and high sense, and your beauty, gentleness, charms of conversation, and purely disinterested love for one whose great worldly advantages might so easily bias or adulterate affection, I own that I have no dread for your future fate, no feeling that can at all darken

the brightness of anticipation. Thank you, dearest, for the delicate kindness with which you allude to my destiny: me indeed you cannot congratulate as I can you. But do not grieve for me, my generous Eleanor: if not happy, I shall, I trust, be at least contented. My poor father implored me with tears in his eyes; my mother pressed my hand, but spoke not; and I, whose affections were withered and hopes strewn, should I not have been hard-hearted indeed if they had not wrung from me a consent? And oh should I not be utterly lost, if in that consent which blessed them I did not find something of peace and consolation?

Yes, dearest, in two months, only two months, I shall be Lord Ulswater's wife; and when we meet, you shall look narrowly at me, and see if he or you have any right to complain of me.

Have you seen Mr. Linden lately? Yet do not answer the question: I ought not to cherish still that fatal clinging interest for one who has so utterly forgotten me. But I do rejoice in his prosperity; and when I hear his praises, and watch his career, I feel proud that I should once have loved him! Oh, how could he be so false, so cruel, in the very midst of his professions of undying, unswerving faith to me; at the very moment when I was ill, miserable, wasting my very heart, for anxiety on his account,—and such a woman too! And had he loved me, even though his letter was returned, would not his conscience have told him he deserved it, and would he not have sought me out in person, and endeavoured to win from my folly his forgiveness? But without attempting to see me, or speak to me, or soothe a displeasure so natural, to leave the country in silence, almost in disdain; and when we met again, to greet me with coldness and hauteur, and never betray, by word, sign, or look, that he had ever been to me more than the merest stranger! Fool! Fool! that I am, to waste another thought upon him; but I will not, and ought not to do so. In two months I shall not even have the privilege of remembrance.

I wish, Eleanor,—for I assure you that I have tried and tried,—that I could find anything to like and esteem (since love is out of the question) in this man, who seems so great, and, to me, so unaccountable a favourite with my parents. His countenance and voice are so harsh and stern; his manner at once so self-complacent and gloomy; his very sentiments so narrow, even in their notions of honour; his very courage so savage, and his pride so constant and offensive,—that I in vain endeavour to persuade myself of his virtues, and recur, at least, to the unwearying affection for me which he professes. It is true that he has been three times refused; that I have told him I cannot love him; that I have even owned former love to another: he still continues his suit, and by dint of long hope has at length succeeded. But at times I could almost think that he married me from very hate, rather than love: there is such an artificial smoothness in his stern voice, such a latent meaning in his eye; and when he thinks I have not noticed him, I have, on suddenly turning towards him, perceived so dark and lowering an expression upon his countenance that my heart has died within me for very fear.

Had my mother been the least less kind, my father the least less urgent, I think, nay, I know, I could not have gained such a victory over myself as I have done in consenting to the day. But enough of this. I did not think I should have run on so long and so foolishly; but we, dearest, have been children and girls and women together: we have loved each other with such fondness and unreserve that opening my heart to you seems only another phrase for thinking aloud.

However, in two months I shall have no right even to thoughts; perhaps I may not even love you: till then, dearest Eleanor, I am, as ever, your affectionate and faithful friend, F. A.

Had Lord Westborough, indeed, been "less urgent," or her mother "less kind," nothing could ever have wrung from Lady Flora her consent to a marriage so ungenial and ill-omened.

Thrice had Lord Ulswater (then Lord Borodaile) been refused, before finally accepted; and those who judge only from the ordinary effects of pride would be astonished that he should have still persevered. But his pride was that deep-rooted feeling which, so far from being repelled by a single blow, fights stubbornly and doggedly onward, till the battle is over and its object gained. From the moment he had resolved to address Lady Flora Ardenne he had also resolved to win her. For three years, despite of a refusal, first gently, then more peremptorily, urged, he fixed himself in her train. He gave out that he was her affianced. In all parties, in all places, he forced himself near her, unheeding alike of her frowns or indifference; and his rank, his hauteur, his fierceness of mien, and acknowledged courage kept aloof all the less arrogant and hardy pretenders to Lady Flora's favour. For this, indeed, she rather thanked than blamed him; and it was the only thing which in the least reconciled her modesty to his advances or her pride to his presumption.

He had been prudent as well as bold. The father he had served, and the mother he had won. Lord Westborough, addicted a little to politics, a good deal to show, and devotedly to gaming, was often greatly and seriously embarrassed. Lord Ulswater, even during the life of his father (who was lavishly generous to him), was provided with the means of relieving his intended father-in-law's necessities; and caring little for money in comparison to a desired object, he was willing enough, we do not say to bribe, but to influence, Lord Westborough's consent. These matters of arrangement were by no means

concealed from the marchioness, who, herself ostentatious and profuse, was in no small degree benefited by them; and though they did not solely procure, yet they certainly contributed to conciliate, her favour.

Few people are designedly and systematically wicked: even the worst find good motives for bad deeds, and are as intent upon discovering glosses for conduct to deceive themselves as to delude others. What wonder, then, that poor Lady Westborough, never too rigidly addicted to self-examination, and viewing all things through a very worldly medium, saw only, in the alternate art and urgency employed against her daughter's real happiness, the various praiseworthy motives of permanently disentangling Lady Flora from an unworthy attachment, of procuring for her an establishment proportioned to her rank, and a husband whose attachment, already shown by such singular perseverance, was so likely to afford her everything which, in Lady Westborough's eyes, constituted felicity?

All our friends, perhaps, desire our happiness; but then it must invariably be in their own way. What a pity that they do not employ the same zeal in making us happy in ours!

CHAPTER LXII.

If thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding;
If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures:
Then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God.—Proverbs ii. 3, 4, 5.

While Clarence was thus misjudged by one whose affections and conduct he, in turn, naturally misinterpreted; while Lady Flora was alternately struggling against and submitting to the fate which Lady Westborough saw approach with gladness, the father with indifference, and the bridegroom with a pride that partook less of rapture than revenge,—our unfortunate lover was endeavouring to glean, from Mordaunt's conversation and example, somewhat of that philosophy so rare except in the theories of the civilized and the occasional practice of the barbarian, which, though it cannot give us a charm against misfortune, bestows, at least, upon us the energy to support it.

We have said already that when the first impression produced by Mordaunt's apparent pride and coldness wore away, it required little penetration to discover the benevolence and warmth of his mind. But none ignorant of his original disposition, or the misfortunes of his life, could ever have pierced the depth of his self-sacrificing nature, or measured the height of his lofty and devoted virtue. Many men may perhaps be found who will give up to duty a cherished wish or even a darling vice; but few will ever renounce to it their rooted tastes, or the indulgence of those habits which have almost become by long use their happiness itself. Naturally melancholy and thoughtful, feeding the sensibilities of his heart upon fiction, and though addicted to the cultivation of reason rather than fancy, having perhaps more of the deeper and acuter characteristics of the poet than those calm and half-callous properties of nature supposed to belong to the metaphysician and the calculating moralist, Mordaunt was above all men fondly addicted to solitude, and inclined to contemplations less useful than profound. The untimely death of Isabel, whom he had loved with that love which is the vent of hoarded and passionate musings long nourished upon romance, and lavishing the wealth of a soul that overflows with secreted tenderness upon the first object that can bring reality to fiction,—that event had not only darkened melancholy into gloom, but had made loneliness still more dear to his habits by all the ties of memory and all the consecrations of regret. The companionless wanderings; the midnight closet; the thoughts which, as Hume said of his own, could not exist in the world, but were all busy with life in seclusion,—these were rendered sweeter than ever to a mind for which the ordinary objects of the world were now utterly loveless; and the musings of solitude had become, as it were, a rightful homage and offering to the dead. We may form, then, some idea of the extent to which, in Mordaunt's character, principle predominated over inclination, and regard for others over the love of self, when we see him tearing his spirit from its beloved retreats and abstracted contemplations, and devoting it to duties from which its fastidious and refined characteristics were particularly calculated to revolt. When we have considered his attachment to the hermitage, we can appreciate the virtue which made him among the most active citizens in the great world; when we have considered the natural selfishness of grief, the pride of philosophy, the indolence of meditation, the eloquence of wealth, which says, "Rest, and toil not," and the temptation within, which says, "Obey the voice,"—when we have considered these, we can perhaps

do justice to the man who, sometimes on foot and in the coarsest attire, travelled from inn to inn and from hut to hut; who made human misery the object of his search and human happiness of his desire; who, breaking aside an aversion to rude contact, almost feminine in its extreme, voluntarily sought the meanest companions, and subjected himself to the coarsest intrusions; for whom the wail of affliction or the moan of hunger was as a summons which allowed neither hesitation nor appeal; who seemed possessed of a ubiquity for the purposes of good almost resembling that attributed to the wanderer in the magnificent fable of Melmoth for the temptations to evil; who, by a zeal and labour that brought to habit and inclination a thousand martyrdoms, made his life a very hour-glass, in which each sand was a good deed or a virtuous design.

Many plunge into public affairs, to which they have had a previous distaste, from the desire of losing the memory of a private affliction; but so far from wishing to heal the wounds of remembrance by the anodynes which society can afford, it was only in retirement that Mordaunt found the flowers from which balm could be distilled. Many are through vanity magnanimous, and benevolent from the selfishness of fame but so far from seeking applause where he bestowed favour, Mordaunt had sedulously shrouded himself in darkness and disguise. And by that increasing propensity to quiet, so often found among those addicted to lofty or abstruse contemplation, he had conquered the ambition of youth with the philosophy of a manhood that had forestalled the affections of age. Many, in short, have become great or good to the community by individual motives easily resolved into common and earthly elements of desire; but they who inquire diligently into human nature have not often the exalted happiness to record a character like Mordaunt's, actuated purely by a systematic principle of love, which covered mankind, as heaven does earth, with an atmosphere of light extending to the remotest corners and penetrating the darkest recesses.

It was one of those violent and gusty evenings which give to an English autumn something rude, rather than gentle, in its characteristics, that Mordaunt and Clarence sat together,

"And sowed the hours with various seeds of talk."

The young Isabel, the only living relic of the departed one, sat by her father's side upon the floor; and though their discourse was far beyond the comprehension of her years, yet did she seem to listen with a quiet and absorbed attention. In truth, child as she was, she so loved, and almost worshipped, her father that the very tones of his voice had in them a charm which could always vibrate, as it were, to her heart; and hush her into silence; and that melancholy and deep though somewhat low voice, when it swelled or trembled with thought,— which in Mordaunt was feeling,—made her sad, she knew not why; and when she heard it, she would creep to his side, and put her little hand on his, and look up to him with eyes in whose tender and glistening blue the spirit of her mother seemed to float. She was serious and thoughtful and loving beyond the usual capacities of childhood; perhaps her solitary condition and habits of constant intercourse with one so grave as Mordaunt, and who always, when not absent on his excursions of charity, loved her to be with him, had given to her mind a precocity of feeling, and tintured the simplicity of infancy with what ought to have been the colours of after years. She was not inclined to the sports of her age; she loved, rather, and above all else, to sit by Mordaunt's side and silently pore over some books or feminine task, and to steal her eyes every now and then away from her employment, in order to watch his motions or provide for whatever her vigilant kindness of heart imagined he desired. And often, when he saw her fairy and lithe form hovering about him and attending on his wants, or her beautiful countenance glow with pleasure, when she fancied she supplied them, he almost believed that Isabel yet lived, though in another form, and that a love so intense and holy as hers had been, might transmigrate, but could not perish.

The young Isabel had displayed a passion for music so early that it almost seemed innate; and as, from the mild and wise education she received, her ardour had never been repelled on the one hand or overstrained on the other, so, though she had but just passed her seventh year, she had attained to a singular proficiency in the art,— an art that suited well with her lovely face and fond feelings and innocent heart; and it was almost heavenly, in the literal acceptance of the word, to hear her sweet though childish voice swell along the still pure airs of summer, and to see her angelic countenance all rapt and brilliant with the enthusiasm which her own melodies created.

Never had she borne the bitter breath of unkindness, nor writhed beneath that customary injustice which punishes in others the sins of our own temper and the varied fretfulness of caprice; and so she had none of the fears and meannesses and acted untruths which so usually pollute and debase the innocence of childhood. But the promise of her ingenuous brow (over which the silken hair flowed, parted into two streams of gold), and of the fearless but tender eyes, and of the quiet smile which sat forever upon the rosy mouth, like Joy watching Love, was kept in its fullest extent by the mind, from which all thoughts, pure, kind, and guileless, flowed like waters from a well which a spirit has made holy for its own dwelling.

On this evening we have said that she sat by her father's side and listened, though she only in part drank in its sense, to his conversation with his guest.

The room was of great extent and surrounded with books, over which at close intervals the busts of the departed Great and the immortal Wise looked down. There was the sublime beauty of Plato, the harsher and more earthly countenance of Tully, the only Roman (except Lucretius) who might have been a Greek. There the mute marble gave the broad front of Bacon (itself a world), and there the features of Locke showed how the mind wears away the links of flesh with the file of thought. And over other departments of those works which remind us that man is made little lower than the angels, the stern face of the Florentine who sung of hell contrasted with the quiet grandeur enthroned on the fair brow of the English poet,—"blind but bold,"— and there the glorious but genial countenance of him who has found in all humanity a friend, conspicuous among sages and minstrels, claimed brotherhood with all.

The fire burned clear and high, casting a rich twilight (for there was no other light in the room) over that Gothic chamber, and shining cheerily upon the varying countenance of Clarence and the more contemplative features of his host. In the latter you might see that care and thought had been harsh but not unhallowed companions. In the lines which crossed his expanse of brow, time seemed to have buried many hopes; but his mien and air, if loftier, were gentler than in younger days; and though they had gained somewhat in dignity, had lost greatly in reserve.

There was in the old chamber, with its fretted roof and ancient "garniture," the various books which surrounded it, walls that the learned built to survive themselves, and in the marble likenesses of those for whom thought had won eternity, joined to the hour, the breathing quiet, and the hearth-light, by whose solitary rays we love best in the eves of autumn to discourse on graver or subtler themes,— there was in all this a spell which seemed particularly to invite and to harmonize with that tone of conversation, some portions of which we are now about to relate.

"How loudly," said Clarence, "that last gust swept by; you remember that beautiful couplet in Tibullus,—

*'Quam juvat immites ventos audire cubantem,
Et dominam tenero detinuisse sinu.'*
["Sweet on our couch to hear the winds above,
And cling with closer heart to her we love."]

"Ay," answered Mordaunt, with a scarcely audible sigh, "that is the feeling of the lover at the immites ventos, but we sages of the lamp make our mistress Wisdom, and when the winds rage without it is to her that we cling. See how, from the same object, different conclusions are drawn! The most common externals of nature, the wind and the wave, the stars and the heavens, the very earth on which we tread, never excite in different bosoms the same ideas; and it is from our own hearts, and not from an outward source, that we draw the hues which colour the web of our existence."

"It is true," answered Clarence. "You remember that in two specks of the moon the enamoured maiden perceived two unfortunate lovers, while the ambitious curate conjectured that they were the spires of a cathedral? But it is not only to our feelings, but also to our reasonings, that we give the colours which they wear. The moral, for instance, which to one man seems atrocious, to another is divine. On the tendency of the same work what three people will agree? And how shall the most sanguine moralist hope to benefit mankind when he finds that, by the multitude, his wisest endeavours to instruct are often considered but as instruments to pervert?"

"I believe," answered Mordaunt, "that it is from our ignorance that our contentions flow: we debate with strife and with wrath, with bickering and with hatred; but of the thing debated upon we remain in the profoundest darkness. Like the labourers of Babel, while we endeavour in vain to express our meaning to each other, the fabric by which, for a common end, we would have ascended to heaven from the ills of earth remains forever unadvanced and incomplete. Let us hope that knowledge is the universal language which shall reunite us. As, in their sublime allegory, the Ancients signified that only through virtue we arrive at honour, so let us believe that only through knowledge can we arrive at virtue!"

"And yet," said Clarence, "that seems a melancholy truth for the mass of the people, who have no time for the researches of wisdom."

"Not so much so as at first we might imagine," answered Mordaunt: "the few smooth all paths for the many. The precepts of knowledge it is difficult to extricate from error but, once discovered, they gradually pass into maxims; and thus what the sage's life was consumed in acquiring becomes the acquisition of a moment to posterity. Knowledge is like the atmosphere: in order to dispel the vapour

and dislodge the frost, our ancestors felled the forest, drained the marsh, and cultivated the waste, and we now breathe without an effort, in the purified air and the chastened climate, the result of the labour of generations and the progress of ages! As to-day, the common mechanic may equal in science, however inferior in genius, the friar [Roger Bacon] whom his contemporaries feared as a magician, so the opinions which now startle as well as astonish may be received hereafter as acknowledged axioms, and pass into ordinary practice. We cannot even tell how far the sanguine theories of certain philosophers [See Condorcet "On the Progress of the Human Mind," written some years after the supposed date of this conversation, but in which there is a slight, but eloquent and affecting, view of the philosophy to which Mordaunt refers.] deceive them when they anticipate, for future ages, a knowledge which shall bring perfection to the mind, baffle the diseases of the body, and even protract to a date now utterly unknown the final destination of life: for Wisdom is a palace of which only the vestibule has been entered; nor can we guess what treasures are hid in those chambers of which the experience of the past can afford us neither analogy nor clew."

"It was, then," said Clarence, who wished to draw his companion into speaking of himself, "it was, then, from your addiction to studies not ordinarily made the subject of acquisition that you date (pardon me) your generosity, your devotedness, your feeling for others, and your indifference to self?"

"You flatter me," said Mordaunt, modestly (and we may be permitted to crave attention to his reply, since it unfolds the secret springs of a character so singularly good and pure), "you flatter me: but I will answer you as if you had put the question without the compliment; nor, perhaps, will it be wholly uninformative, as it will certainly be new, to sketch, without recurrence to events or what I may call exterior facts, a brief and progressive History of One Human Mind."

"Our first era of life is under the influence of the primitive feelings: we are pleased, and we laugh; hurt, and we weep: we vent our little passions the moment they are excited: and so much of novelty have we to perceive, that we have little leisure to reflect. By and by, fear teaches us to restrain our feelings: when displeased, we seek to revenge the displeasure, and are punished; we find the excess of our joy, our sorrow, our anger, alike considered criminal, and chidden into restraint. From harshness we become acquainted with deceit: the promise made is not fulfilled, the threat not executed, the fear falsely excited, and the hope wilfully disappointed; we are surrounded by systematized delusion, and we imbibe the contagion."

"From being forced into concealing thoughts which we do conceive, we begin to affect those which we do not: so early do we learn the two main tasks of life, To Suppress and To Feign, that our memory will not carry us beyond that period of artifice to a state of nature when the twin principles of veracity and belief were so strong as to lead the philosophers of a modern school into the error of terming them innate." [Reid: On the Human Mind.]

"It was with a mind restless and confused, feelings which were alternately chilled and counterfeited (the necessary results of my first tuition), that I was driven to mix with others of my age. They did not like me, nor do I blame them. 'Les manieres que l'on neglige comme de petites choses, sont souvent ce qui fait que les hommes decident de vous en bien ou en mal. ["Those manners which one neglects as trifling are often the cause of the opinion, good or bad, formed of you by men.]" Manner is acquired so imperceptibly that we have given its origin to Nature, as we do the origin of all else for which our ignorance can find no other source. Mine was unprepossessing: I was disliked, and I returned the feeling; I sought not, and I was shunned. Then I thought that all were unjust to me, and I grew bitter and sullen and morose: I cased myself in the stubbornness of pride; I pored over the books which spoke of the worthlessness of man; and I indulged the discontent of myself by brooding over the frailties of my kind."

"My passions were strong: they told me to suppress them. The precept was old, and seemed wise: I attempted to enforce it. I had already begun, in earlier infancy, the lesson: I had now only to renew it. Fortunately I was diverted from this task, or my mind in conquering its passions would have conquered its powers. I learned in after lessons that the passions are not to be suppressed; they are to be directed; and, when directed, rather to be strengthened than subdued."

"Observe how a word may influence a life: a man whose opinion I esteemed, made of me the casual and trite remark, that 'my nature was one of which it was impossible to augur evil or good: it might be extreme in either.' This observation roused me into thought: could I indeed be all that was good or evil? had I the choice, and could I hesitate which to choose? But what was good and what was evil? That seemed the most difficult inquiry."

"I asked and received no satisfactory reply: in the words of Erasmus, 'Totius negotii caput ac fontem ignorant, divinant, ac delirant omnes;' ["All ignore, guess, and rave about the head and fountain of the whole question at issue.]" so I resolved myself to inquire and to decide. I subjected to my scrutiny the moralist and the philosopher. I saw that on all sides they disputed, but I saw that they grew virtuous in

the dispute: they uttered much that was absurd about the origin of good, but much more that was exalted in its praise; and I never rose from any work which treated ably upon morals, whatever were its peculiar opinions, but I felt my breast enlightened and my mind ennobled by my studies. The professor of one sect commanded me to avoid the dogmatist of another as the propagator of moral poison; and the dogmatist retaliated on the professor: but I avoided neither; I read both, and turned all 'into honey and fine gold.' No inquiry into wisdom, however superficial, is undeserving attention. The vagaries of the idlest fancy will often chance, as it were, upon the most useful discoveries of truth, and serve as a guide to after and to slower disciples of wisdom; even as the peckings of birds in an unknown country indicate to the adventurous seamen the best and the safest fruits."

"From the works of men I looked into their lives; and I found that there was a vast difference (though I am not aware that it has before been remarked) between those who cultivated a talent, and those who cultivated the mind: I found that the mere men of genius were often erring or criminal in their lives; but that vice or crime in the disciples of philosophy was strikingly unfrequent and rare. The extremest culture of reason had not, it is true, been yet carried far enough to preserve the labourer from follies of opinion, but a moderate culture had been sufficient to deter him from the vices of life. And only to the sons of Wisdom, as of old to the sages of the East, seemed given the unerring star, which, through the travail of Earth and the clouds of Heaven, led them at the last to their God!"

"When I gleaned this fact from biography, I paused, and said, 'Then must there be something excellent in Wisdom, if it can even in its most imperfect disciples be thus beneficial to morality.' Pursuing this sentiment, I redoubled my researches, and, behold, the object of my quest was won! I had before sought a satisfactory answer to the question, 'What is Virtue?' from men of a thousand tenets, and my heart had rejected all I had received. 'Virtue,' said some, and my soul bowed reverently to the dictate, 'Virtue is Religion.' I heard and humbled myself before the Divine Book. Let me trust that I did not humble myself in vain! But the dictate satisfied less than it awed; for either it limited Virtue to the mere belief, or by extending it to the practice, of Religion, it extended also the inquiry to the method in which the practice should be applied. But with the first interpretation of the dictate who could rest contented?—for while, in the perfect enforcement of the tenets of our faith, all virtue may be found, so in the passive and the mere belief in its divinity, we find only an engine as applicable to evil as to good: the torch which should illumine the altar has also lighted the stake, and the zeal of the persecutor has been no less sincere than the heroism of the martyr. Rejecting, therefore, this interpretation, I accepted the other: I felt in my heart, and I rejoiced as I felt it, that in the practice of Religion the body of all virtue could be found. But, in that conviction, had I at once an answer to my inquiries? Could the mere desire of good be sufficient to attain it; and was the attempt at virtue synonymous with success? On the contrary, have not those most desirous of obeying the precepts of God often sinned the most against their spirit, and has not zeal been frequently the most ardent when crime was the most rife? [There can be no doubt that they who exterminated the Albigenses, established the Inquisition, lighted the fires at Smithfield, were actuated, not by a desire to do evil, but (monstrous as it may seem) to do good; not to counteract, but to enforce what they believed the wishes of the Almighty; so that a good intention, without the enlightenment to direct it to a fitting object, may be as pernicious to human happiness as one the most fiendish. We are told of a whole people who used to murder their guests, not from ferocity or interest, but from the pure and praiseworthy motive of obtaining the good qualities, which they believed, by the murder of the deceased, devolved upon them!] But what, if neither sincerity nor zeal was sufficient to constitute goodness; what if in the breasts of the best-intentioned crime had been fostered the more dangerously because the more disguised,—what ensued? That the religion which they professed, they believed, they adored, they had also misunderstood; and that the precepts to be drawn from the Holy Book they had darkened by their ignorance or perverted by their passions! Here then, at once, my enigma was solved; here then, at once, I was led to the goal of my inquiry! Ignorance and the perversion of passion are but the same thing, though under different names; for only by our ignorance are our passions perverted. Therefore, what followed?—that, if by ignorance the greatest of God's gifts had been turned to evil, Knowledge alone was the light by which even the pages of Religion should be read. It followed that the Providence that knew that the nature it had created should be constantly in exercise, and that only through labour comes improvement, had wisely ordained that we should toil even for the blessing of its holiest and clearest laws. It had given us in Religion, as in this magnificent world, treasures and harvests which might be called forth in incalculable abundance; but had decreed that through our exertions only should they be called forth a palace more gorgeous than the palaces of enchantment was before us, but its chambers were a labyrinth which required a clew."

"What was that clew? Was it to be sought for in the corners of earth, or was it not beneficially centred in ourselves? Was it not the exercise of a power easy for us to use, if we would dare to do so? Was it not the simple exertion of the discernment granted to us for all else? Was it not the exercise of our reason? 'Reason!' cried the Zealot, 'pernicious and hateful instrument, it is fraught with peril to yourself and to others: do not think for a moment of employing an engine so fallacious and so dangerous.' But I listened

not to the Zealot: could the steady and bright torch which, even where the Star of Bethlehem had withheld its diviner light, had guided some patient and unwearied steps to the very throne of Virtue, become but a deceitful meteor to him who kindled it for the aid of Religion, and in an eternal cause? Could it be perilous to task our reason, even to the utmost, in the investigation of the true utility and hidden wisdom of the works of God, when God himself had ordained that only through some exertion of our reason should we know either from Nature or Revelation that He himself existed? 'But,' cried the Zealot again, 'but mere mortal wisdom teaches men presumption, and presumption doubt.' 'Pardon me,' I answered; 'it is not Wisdom, but Ignorance, which teaches men presumption: Genius may be sometimes arrogant, but nothing is so diffident as Knowledge.' 'But,' resumed the Zealot, 'those accustomed to subtle inquiries may dwell only on the minutiae of faith,—inexplicable, because useless to explain, and argue from those minutiae against the grand and universal truth.' Pardon me again: it is the petty not the enlarged mind which prefers casuistry to conviction; it is the confined and short sight of Ignorance which, unable to comprehend the great bearings of truth, pries only into its narrow and obscure corners, occupying itself in scrutinizing the atoms of a part, while the eagle eye of Wisdom contemplates, in its widest scale, the luminous majesty of the whole. Survey our faults, our errors, our vices,—fearful and fertile field! Trace them to their causes: all those causes resolve themselves into one,—Ignorance! For as we have already seen that from this source flow the abuses of Religion, so also from this source flow the abuses of all other blessings,—of talents, of riches, of power; for we abuse things, either because we know not their real use, or because, with an equal blindness, we imagine the abuse more adapted to our happiness. But as ignorance, then, is the sole spring of evil, so, as the antidote to ignorance is knowledge, it necessarily follows that, were we consummate in knowledge, we should be perfect in good. He, therefore, who retards the progress of intellect countenances crime,—nay, to a State, is the greatest of criminals; while he who circulates that mental light more precious than the visual is the holiest improver and the surest benefactor of his race. Nor let us believe, with the dupes, of a shallow policy, that there exists upon the earth one prejudice that can be called salutary or one error beneficial to perpetrate. As the petty fish which is fabled to possess the property of arresting the progress of the largest vessel to which it clings, even so may a single prejudice, unnoticed or despised, more than the adverse blast or the dead calm, delay the bark of Knowledge in the vast seas of Time."

"It is true that the sanguineness of philanthropists may have carried them too far; it is true (for the experiment has not yet been made) that God may have denied to us, in this state, the consummation of knowledge, and the consequent perfection in good; but because we cannot be perfect are we to resolve we will be evil? One step in knowledge is one step from sin: one step from sin is one step nearer to Heaven: Oh! never let us be deluded by those who, for political motives, would adulterate the divinity of religious truths; never let us believe that our Father in Heaven rewards most the one talent unemployed, or that prejudice and indolence and folly find the most favour in His sight! The very heathen has bequeathed to us a nobler estimate of His nature; and the same sentence which so sublimely declares 'TRUTH IS THE BODY OF GOD' declares also 'AND LIGHT IS HIS SHADOW.'" [Plato.]

"Persuaded, then, that knowledge contained the key to virtue, it was to knowledge that I applied. The first grand lesson which it taught me was the solution of a phrase most hackneyed, least understood; namely, 'common-sense.' [Koinonoaemosunae, sensus communis.] It is in the Portico of the Greek sage that that phrase has received its legitimate explanation; it is there we are taught that 'common-sense' signifies 'the sense of the common interest.' Yes! it is the most beautiful truth in morals that we have no such thing as a distinct or divided interest from our race. In their welfare is ours; and, by choosing the broadest paths to effect their happiness, we choose the surest and the shortest to our own. As I read and pondered over these truths, I was sensible that a great change was working a fresh world out of the former materials of my mind. My passions, which before I had checked into uselessness, or exerted to destruction, now started forth in a nobler shape, and prepared for a new direction: instead of urging me to individual aggrandizement, they panted for universal good, and coveted the reward of Ambition only for the triumphs of Benevolence."

"This is one stage of virtue; I cannot resist the belief that there is a higher: it is when we begin to love virtue, not for its objects, but itself. For there are in knowledge these two excellences: first, that it offers to every man, the most selfish and the most exalted, his peculiar inducement to good. It says to the former, 'Serve mankind, and you serve yourself;' to the latter, 'In choosing the best means to secure your own happiness, you will have the sublime inducement of promoting the happiness of mankind.'"

"The second excellence of Knowledge is that even the selfish man, when he has once begun to love Virtue from little motives, loses the motives as he increases the love; and at last worships the deity, where before he only coveted the gold upon its altar."

"And thus I learned to love Virtue solely for its own beauty. I said with one who, among much dross, has many particles of ore, 'If it be not estimable in itself, I can see nothing estimable in following it for

the sake of a bargain.' [Lord Shaftesbury.]

"I looked round the world, and saw often Virtue in rags and Vice in purple: the former conduces to happiness, it is true, but the happiness lies within and not in externals. I contemned the deceitful folly with which writers have termed it poetical justice to make the good ultimately prosperous in wealth, honour, fortunate love, or successful desires. Nothing false, even in poetry, can be just; and that pretended moral is, of all, the falsest. Virtue is not more exempt than Vice from the ills of fate, but it contains within itself always an energy to resist them, and sometimes an anodyne to soothe,— to repay your quotation from Tibullus,—

'Crura sonant ferro, sed canit inter opus!'"

["The chains clank on its limbs, but it sings amidst its tasks."]

"When in the depths of my soul I set up that divinity of this nether earth, which Brutus never really understood, if, because unsuccessful in its efforts, he doubted its existence, I said in the proud prayer with which I worshipped it, 'Poverty may humble my lot, but it shall not debase thee; Temptation may shake my nature, but not the rock on which thy temple is based; Misfortune may wither all the hopes that have blossomed around thine altar, but I will sacrifice dead leaves when the flowers are no more. Though all that I have loved perish, all that I have coveted fade away, I may murmur at fate, but I will have no voice but that of homage for thee! Nor, while thou smilest upon my way, would I exchange with the loftiest and happiest of thy foes! More bitter than aught of what I then dreamed have been my trials, but I have fulfilled my vow!'"

"I believe that alone to be a true description of Virtue which makes it all-sufficient to itself, that alone a just portraiture of its excellence which does not lessen its internal power by exaggerating its outward advantages, nor degrade its nobility by dwelling only on its rewards. The grandest moral of ancient lore has ever seemed to me that which the picture of Prometheus affords; in whom neither the shaking earth, nor the rending heaven, nor the rock without, nor the vulture within, could cause regret for past benevolence, or terror for future evil, or envy, even amidst tortures, for the dishonourable prosperity of his insulter! [Mercury.—See the "Prometheus" of Aeschylus.] Who that has glowed over this exalted picture will tell us that we must make Virtue prosperous in order to allure to it, or clothe Vice with misery in order to revolt us from its image? Oh! who, on the contrary, would not learn to adore Virtue, from the bitterest sufferings of such a votary, a hundredfold more than he would learn to love Vice from the gaudiest triumphs of its most fortunate disciples?"

Something there was in Mordaunt's voice and air, and the impassioned glow of his countenance, that, long after he had ceased, thrilled in Clarence's heart, "like the remembered tone of a mute lyre." And when a subsequent event led him at rash moments to doubt whether Virtue was indeed the chief good, Linden recalled the words of that night and the enthusiasm with which they were uttered, repented that in his doubt he had wronged the truth, and felt that there is a power in the deep heart of man to which even Destiny is submitted!

CHAPTER LXIII.

Will you hear the letter?

.....

This is the motley-minded gentleman that I have before met in the forest.—As You Like It.

A morning or two after the conversation with which our last chapter concluded, Clarence received the following letter from the Duke of Haverfield:—

Your letter, my dear Linden, would have been answered before, but for an occurrence which is generally supposed to engross the whole attention of the persons concerned in it. Let me see,—ay, three,— yes, I have been exactly three days married! Upon my honour, there is much less in the event than one would imagine; and the next time it happens I will not put myself to such amazing trouble and inconvenience about it. But one buys wisdom only by experience. Now, however, that I have communicated to you the fact, I expect you, in the first place, to excuse my negligence for not writing before; for (as I know you are fond of the literae humaniores, I will give the sentiment the dignity of a quotation)—

"Un veritable amant ne connoit point d'amis;"

["A true lover recognizes no friends."—CORNEILLE.]

and though I have been three days married, I am still a lover! In the second place, I expect you to be very grateful that, all things considered, I write to you so soon; it would indeed not be an ordinary inducement that could make me "put pen to paper" (is not that the true vulgar, commercial, academical, metaphorical, epistolary style?) so shortly after the fatal ceremony. So, had I nothing to say but in reply to your comments on state affairs (hang them!) or in applause of your Italian friend, of whom I say, as Charles II. said of the honest yeoman, "I can admire virtue, though I can't imitate it," I think it highly probable that your letter might still remain in a certain box of tortoise-shell and gold (formerly belonging to the great Richelieu, and now in my possession), in which I at this instant descry, "with many a glance of woe and boding dire," sundry epistles, in manifold handwritings, all classed under the one fearful denomination,— "unanswered."

No, my good Linden, my heart is inditing of a better matter than this. Listen to me, and then stay at your host's or order your swiftest steed, as seems most meet to you.

You said rightly that Miss Trevanion, now her Grace of Haverfield, was the intimate friend of Lady Flora Ardenne. I have often talked to her—namely, Eleanor, not Lady Flora—about you, and was renewing the conversation yesterday, when your letter, accidentally lying before me, reminded me of you.

Sundry little secrets passed in due conjugal course from her possession into mine. I find that you have been believed by Lady Flora to have played the perfidious with La Meronville; that she never knew of your application to her father! and his reply; that, on the contrary, she accused you of indifference in going abroad without attempting to obtain an interview or excuse your supposed infidelity; that her heart is utterly averse to a union with that odious Lord Boro—bah! I mean Lord Ulswater; and that—prepare, Linden—she still cherishes your memory, even through time, change, and fancied desertion, with a tenderness which—which—deuce take it, I never could write sentiment: but you understand me; so I will not conclude the phrase. "Nothing in oratory," said my cousin D—, who was, *entre nous*, more honest than eloquent, "like a break!"—"down! you should have added," said I.

I now, my dear Linden, leave you to your fate. For my part, though I own Lord Ulswater is a lord whom ladies in love with the *et ceteras* of married pomp might well desire, yet I do think it would be no difficult matter for you to eclipse him. I cannot, it is true, advise you to run away with Lady Flora. Gentlemen don't run away with the daughters of gentlemen; but, without running away, you may win your betrothed and Lord Ulswater's intended. A distinguished member of the House of Commons, owner of Scarsdale, and representative of the most ancient branch of the Talbots,—*mon Dieu!* you might marry a queen dowager, and decline settlements!

And so, committing thee to the guidance of that winged god, who, if three days afford any experience, has made thy friend forsake pleasure only to find happiness, I bid thee, most gentle Linden, farewell. HAVERFIELD.

Upon reading this letter, Clarence felt as a man suddenly transformed. From an exterior of calm and apathy, at the bottom of which lay one bitter and corroding recollection, he passed at once into a state of emotion, wild, agitated, and confused; yet, amidst all, was foremost a burning and intense hope, which for long years he had not permitted himself to form.

He descended into the breakfast parlour. Mordaunt, whose hours of appearing, though not of rising, were much later than Clarence's, was not yet down; and our lover had full leisure to form his plans, before his host made his entree.

"Will you ride to-day?" said Mordaunt; "there are some old ruins in the neighbourhood well worth the trouble of a visit."

"I grieve to say," answered Clarence, "that I must take my leave of you. I have received intelligence this morning which may greatly influence my future life, and by which I am obliged to make an excursion to another part of the country, nearly a day's journey, on horseback."

Mordaunt looked at his guest, and conjectured by his heightened colour, and an embarrassment which he in vain endeavoured to conceal, that the journey might have some cause for its suddenness and despatch which the young senator had his peculiar reasons for concealing. Algernon contented himself, therefore, with expressing his regret at Linden's abrupt departure, without incurring the indiscreet hospitality of pressing a longer sojourn beneath his roof.

Immediately after breakfast, Clarence's horse was brought to the door, and Harrison received orders to wait with the carriage at W— until his master returned. Not a little surprised, we trow, was the worthy valet at his master's sudden attachment to equestrian excursions. Mordaunt accompanied his

visitor through the park, and took leave of him with a warmth which sensibly touched Clarence, in spite of the absence and excitement of his thoughts; indeed, the unaffected and simple character of Linden, joined to his acute, bold, and cultivated mind, had taken strong hold of Mordaunt's interest and esteem.

It was a mild autumnal morning, but thick clouds in the rear prognosticated rain; and the stillness of the wind, the low flight of the swallows, and the lowing of the cattle, slowly gathering towards the nearest shelter within their appointed boundaries, confirmed the inauspicious omen. Clarence had passed the town of W—, and was entering into a road singularly hilly, when he "was aware," as the quaint old writers of former days expressed themselves, of a tall stranger, mounted on a neat well-trimmed galloway, who had for the last two minutes been advancing towards a closely parallel line with Clarence, and had, by sundry glances and hems, denoted a desire of commencing acquaintance and conversation with his fellow traveller.

At last he summoned courage, and said, with a respectful, though somewhat free, air, "That is a very fine horse of yours, sir; I have seldom seen so fast a walker: if all his other paces are equally good, he must be quite a treasure."

All men have their vanities. Clarence's was as much in his horse's excellence as his own; and, gratified even with the compliment of a stranger, he replied to it by joining in the praise, though with a modest and measured forbearance, which the stranger, if gifted with penetration, could easily have discerned was more affected than sincere.

"And yet, sir;" resumed Clarence's new companion, "my little palfrey might perhaps keep pace with your steed; look, I lay the rein on his neck, and, you see, he rivals—by heaven, he outwalks—yours."

Not a little piqued and incensed, Linden also relaxed his rein, and urged his horse to a quicker step: but the lesser competitor not only sustained, but increased, his superiority; and it was only by breaking into a trot that Linden's impatient and spirited steed could overtake him. Hitherto Clarence had not honoured his new companion with more than a rapid and slight glance; but rivalry, even in trifles, begets respect, and our defeated hero now examined him with a more curious eye.

The stranger was between forty and fifty,—an age in which, generally, very little of the boy has survived the advance of manhood; yet was there a hearty and frank exhilaration in the manner and look of the person we describe which is rarely found beyond the first stage of youth. His features were comely and clearly cut, and his air and appearance indicative of a man who might equally have belonged to the middle or the upper orders. But Clarence's memory, as well as attention, was employed in his survey of the stranger; and he recognized, in a countenance on which time had passed very lightly, an old and oft-times recalled acquaintance. However, he did not immediately make himself known. "I will first see," thought he, "whether he can remember his young guest in the bronzed stranger after eight years' absence."

"Well," said Clarence, as he approached the owner of the palfrey, who was laughing with childish glee at his conquest, "well, you have won, sir; but the tortoise might beat the hare in walking, and I content myself with thinking that at a trot or a gallop the result of a race would have been very different."

"I am not so sure of that, sir," said the sturdy stranger, patting the arched neck of his little favourite: "if you would like to try either, I should have no objection to venture a trifling wager on the event."

"You are very good," said Clarence, with a smile in which urbanity was a little mingled with contemptuous incredulity; "but I am not now at leisure to win your money: I have a long day's journey before me, and must not tire a faithful servant; yet I do candidly confess that I think" (and Clarence's recollection of the person he addressed made him introduce the quotation) "that my horse

'Excels a common one

In shape, in courage, colour, pace, and bone.'"

"Eh, sir," cried our stranger, as his eyes sparkled at the verses: "I would own that your horse were worth all the horses in the kingdom, if you brought Will Shakspeare to prove it. And I am also willing to confess that your steed does fairly merit the splendid praise which follows the lines you have quoted,—

'Round hoofed, short jointed, fetlocks shag and long,
Broad breast, full eyes, small head, and nostril wide,
High crest, short ears, straight legs, and passing strong,
Thin mane, thick tale, broad buttock, tender hide.'"

"Come," said Clarence, "your memory has atoned for your horse's victory, and I quite forgive your conquest in return for your compliment; but suffer me to ask how long you have commenced cavalier. The Arab's tent is, if I err not, more a badge of your profession than the Arab's steed."

King Cole (for the stranger was no less a person) looked at his companion in surprise. "So you know me, then, sir! Well, it is a hard thing for a man to turn honest, when people have so much readier a recollection of his sins than his reform."

"Reform!" quoth Clarence, "am I then to understand that your Majesty has abdicated your dominions under the greenwood tree?"

"You are," said Cole, eying his acquaintance inquisitively; "you are."

'I fear no more the heat of the sun,
Nor the furious winter's rages;
I my worldly task have done,
Home am gone, and ta'en my wages.'"

"I congratulate you," said Clarence: "but only in part; for I have often envied your past state, and do not know enough of your present to say whether I should equally envy that."

"Why," answered Cole, "after all, we commit a great error in imagining that it is the living wood or the dead wall which makes happiness. 'My mind to me a kingdom is;' and it is that which you must envy, if you honour anything belonging to me with that feeling."

"The precept is both good and old," answered Clarence; "yet I think it was not a very favourite maxim of yours some years ago. I remember a time when you thought no happiness could exist out of 'dingle and bosky dell.' If not very intrusive on your secrets, may I know how long you have changed your sentiments and manner of life? The reason of the change I dare not presume to ask."

"Certainly," said the quondam gypsy, musingly, "certainly I have seen your face before, and even the tone of your voice strikes me as not wholly unfamiliar: yet I cannot for the life of me guess whom I have the honour of addressing. However, sir, I have no hesitation in answering your questions. It was just five years ago, last summer, when I left the Tents of Kedar. I now reside about a mile hence. It is but a hundred yards off the high road, and if you would not object to step aside and suffer a rasher, or aught else, to be 'the shoeing-horn to draw on a cup of ale,' as our plain forefathers were wont wittily to say, why, I shall be very happy to show you my habitation. You will have a double welcome, from the circumstance of my having been absent from home for the last three days."

Clarence, mindful of his journey, was about to decline the invitation, when a few heavy drops falling began to fulfil the cloudy promise of the morning. "Trust," said Cole, "one who has been for years a watcher of the signs and menaces of the weather: we shall have a violent shower immediately. You have now no choice but to accompany me home."

"Well," said Clarence, yielding with a good grace, "I am glad of so good an excuse for intruding on your hospitality."

'O sky!

Why didst thou promise such a beauteous day,
And make me travel forth without my cloak?"

"Bravo!" cried the ex-chief, too delighted to find a comrade so well acquainted with Shakspeare's sonnets to heed the little injustice Clarence had done the sky, in accusing it of a treachery its black clouds had by no means deserved. "Bravo, sir; and now, my palfrey against your steed,—trot, eh? or gallop?"

"Trot, if it must be so," said Clarence, superciliously; "but I am a few paces before you."

"So much the better," cried the jovial chief. "Little John's mettle will be the more up: on with you, sir; he who breaks into a canter loses; on!"

And Clarence slightly touching his beautiful steed, the race was begun. At first his horse, which was a remarkable stepper, as the modern Messrs. Anderson and Dyson would say, greatly gained the advantage. "To the right," cried the ci-devant gypsy, as Linden had nearly passed a narrow lane which led to the domain of the ex-king. The turn gave "Little John" an opportunity which he seized to advantage; and, to Clarence's indignant surprise, he beheld Cole now close behind, now beside, and now—now—before! In the heat of the moment he put spurs rather too sharply to his horse, and the spirited animal immediately passed his competitor, but—in a canter!

"Victoria!" cried Cole, keeping back his own steed. "Victoria! confess it!"

"Pshaw," said Clarence, petulantly.

"Nay, sir, never mind it," quoth the retired sovereign; "perhaps it was but a venial transgression of your horse, and on other ground I should not have beat you."

It is very easy to be generous when one is quite sure one is the victor. Clarence felt this, and, muttering out something about the sharp angle in the road, turned abruptly from all further comment on the subject by saying, "We are now, I suppose, entering your territory. Does not this white gate lead to your new (at least new to me) abode?"

"It does," replied Cole, opening the said gate, and pausing as if to suffer his guest and rival to look round and admire. The house, in full view, was of red brick, small and square, faced with stone copings, and adorned in the centre with a gable roof, on which was a ball of glittering metal. A flight of stone steps led to the porch, which was of fair size and stately, considering the proportions of the mansion: over the door was a stone shield of arms, surmounted by a stag's head; and above this heraldic ornament was a window of great breadth, compared to the other conveniences of a similar nature. On either side of the house ran a slight iron fence, the protection of sundry plots of gay flowers and garden shrubs, while two peacocks were seen slowly stalking towards the enclosure to seek a shelter from the increasing shower. At the back of the building, thick trees and a rising hill gave a meet defence from the winds of winter; and, in front, a sloping and small lawn afforded pasture for few sheep and two pet deer. Towards the end of this lawn were two large fishponds, shaded by rows of feathered trees. On the margin of each of these, as if emblematic of ancient customs, was a common tent; and in the intermediate space was a rustic pleasure-house, fenced from the encroaching cattle, and half hid by surrounding laurel and the parasite ivy.

All together there was a quiet and old-fashioned comfort, and even luxury, about the place, which suited well with the eccentric character of the abdicated chief; and Clarence, as he gazed around, really felt that he might perhaps deem the last state of the owner not worse than the first.

Unmindful of the rain, which now began to pour fast and full, Cole suffered "Little John's" rein to fall over his neck, and the spoiled favourite to pluck the smooth grass beneath, while he pointed out to Clarence the various beauties of his seat.

"There, sir," said he, "by those ponds in which, I assure you, old Isaac might have fished with delight, I pass many a summer's day. I was always a lover of the angle, and the farthest pool is the most beautiful bathing-place imaginable;—as glorious Geoffrey Chaucer says,—

'The gravel's gold; the water pure as glass,
The baukes round the well environing;
And softe as velvet the younge grass
That thereupon lustily come springing.'"

"And in that arbour, Lucy—that is, my wife—sits in the summer evenings with her father and our children; and then—ah! see our pets come to welcome me," pointing to the deer, who had advanced within a few yards of him, but, intimidated by the stranger, would not venture within reach—"Lucy loved choosing her favourites among animals which had formerly been wild, and, faith, I loved it too. But you observe the house, sir: it was built in the reign of Queen Anne; it belonged to my mother's family; but my father sold it, and his son five years ago rebought it. Those arms belonged to my maternal ancestry. Look, look at the peacocks creeping along: poor pride theirs that can't stand the shower! But, egad, that reminds me of the rain. Come, sir, let us make for our shelter." And, resuming their progress, a minute more brought them to the old-fashioned porch. Cole's ring summoned a man, not decked in "livery gay," but, "clad in serving frock," who took the horses with a nod, half familiar, half respectful, at his master's injunctions of attention and hospitality to the stranger's beast; and then our old acquaintance, striking through a small low hall, ushered Clarence into the chief sitting-room of the mansion.

CHAPTER LXIV.

We are not poor; although we have
No roofs of cedar, nor our brave
Baiae, nor keep
Account of such a flock of sheep,
Nor bullocks fed

To lard the shambles; barbles bred
To kiss our hands; nor do we wish
For Pollio's lampreys in our dish.

If we can meet and so confer
Both by a shining salt-cellar,
 And have our roof,
Although not arched, yet weather-proof,
 And ceiling free
From that cheap candle-bawdery,
We'll eat our bean with that full mirth
As we were lords of all the earth.

HERRICK, from HORACE.

On entering the room, Clarence recognized Lucy, whom eight years had converted into a sleek and portly matron of about thirty-two, without stealing from her countenance its original expression of mingled modesty and good-nature. She hastened to meet her husband, with an eager and joyous air of welcome seldom seen on matrimonial faces after so many years of wedlock.

A fine, stout boy, of about eleven years old, left a crossbow, which on his father's entrance he had appeared earnestly employed in mending, to share with his mother the salutations of the Returned. An old man sat in an armchair by the fire, gazing on the three with an affectionate and gladdening eye, and playfully detaining a child of about four years old, who was struggling to escape to dear "papa"!

The room was of oak wainscot, and the furniture plain, solid, and strong, and cast in the fashion still frequently found in those country houses which have remained unaltered by innovation since the days of George II.

Three rough-coated dogs, of a breed that would have puzzled a connoisseur, gave themselves the rousing shake, and, deserting the luxurious hearth, came in various welcome to their master.

One rubbed himself against Cole's sturdy legs, murmuring soft rejoicings: he was the grandsire of the canine race, and his wick of life burned low in the socket. Another sprang up almost to the face of his master, and yelled his very heart out with joy; that was the son, exulting in the vigour of matured doghood; and the third scrambled and tumbled over the others, uttering his paeans in a shrill treble, and chiding most snappishly at his two progenitors for interfering with his pretensions to notice; that was the infant dog, the little reveller in puppy childishness! Clarence stood by the door, with his fine countenance smiling benevolently at the happiness he beheld, and congratulating himself that for one moment the group had forgot that he was a stranger.

As soon as our gypsy friend had kissed his wife, shaken hands with his eldest hope, shaken his head at his youngest, smiled his salutation at the father-in-law, and patted into silence the canine claimants of his favour, he turned to Clarence, and saying, half bashfully, half good-humouredly, "See what a troublesome thing it is to return home, even after three days' absence. Lucy, dearest, welcome a new friend!" he placed a chair by the fireside for his guest, and motioned him to be seated.

The chief expression of Clarence's open and bold countenance was centred in the eyes and forehead; and, as he now doffed his hat, which had hitherto concealed that expression, Lucy and her husband recognized him simultaneously.

"I am sure, sir," cried the former, "that I am glad to see you once more!"

"Ah! my young guest under the gypsy awning!" exclaimed the latter, shaking him heartily by the hand: "where were my eyes that they did not recognize you before?"

"Eight years," answered Clarence, "have worked more change with me and my friend here" (pointing to the boy, whom he had left last so mere a child) "than they have with you and his blooming mother. The wonder is, not that you did not remember me before, but that you remember me now!"

"You are altered, sir, certainly," said the frank chief. "Your face is thinner, and far graver, and the smooth cheeks of the boy (for, craving your pardon, you were little more then) are somewhat darkened by the bronzed complexion with which time honours the man."

And the good Cole sighed, as he contrasted Linden's ardent countenance and elastic figure, when he had last beheld him, with the serious and thoughtful face of the person now before him: yet did he inly own that years, if they had in some things deteriorated from, had in others improved the effect of Clarence's appearance; they had brought decision to his mien and command to his brow, and had enlarged, to an ampler measure of dignity and power, the proportions of his form. Something, too,

there was in his look, like that of a man who has stemmed fate and won success; and the omen of future triumph, which our fortune-telling chief had drawn from his features when first beheld, seemed already in no small degree to have been fulfilled.

Having seen her guest stationed in the seat of honour opposite her father, Lucy withdrew for a few moments, and, when she reappeared, was followed by a neat-handed sort of Phillis for a country-maiden, bearing such kind of "savoury messes" as the house might be supposed to afford.

"At all events, mine host," said Clarence, "you did not desert the flesh-pots of Egypt when you forsook its tents."

"Nay," quoth the worthy Cole, seating himself at the table, "either under the roof or the awning we may say, in the words of the old epilogue,—[To the play of "All Fools," by Chapman.]

'We can but bring you meat and set you stools,
And to our best cheer say,
You all are welcome.'

"We are plain people still; but if you can stay till dinner, you shall have a bottle of such wine as our fathers' honest souls would have rejoiced in."

"I am truly sorry that I cannot tarry with you, after so fair a promise," replied Clarence; "but before night I must be many miles hence."

Lucy came forward timidly. "Do you remember this ring, sir?" said she (presenting one); "you dropped it in my boy's frock when we saw you last."

"I did so," answered Clarence. "I trust that he will not now disdain a stranger's offering. May it be as ominous of good luck to him as my night in your caravan has proved to me!"

"I am heartily glad to hear that you have prospered," said Cole; "now, let us fall to."

CHAPTER LXV.

Out of these convertites

There is much matter to be heard and learned.—SHAKSPEARE.

"If you are bent upon leaving us so soon," said the honest Cole, as Clarence, refusing all further solicitation to stay, seized the opportunity which the cessation of the rain afforded him, and rose to depart, "if you are bent upon leaving us so soon, I will accompany you back again into the main road, as in duty bound."

"What, immediately on your return!" said Clarence. "No, no; not a step. What would my fair hostess say to me if I suffered it?"

"Rather, what would she say to me if I neglected such a courtesy? Why, sir, when I meet one who knows Shakspeare's sonnets, to say nothing of the lights of the lesser stars, as well as you, only once in eight years, do you not think I would make the most of him? Besides, it is but a quarter of a mile to the road, and I love walking after a shower."

"I am afraid, Mrs. Cole," said Clarence, "that I must be selfish enough to accept the offer." And Mrs. Cole, blushing and smiling her assent and adieu, Clarence shook hands with the whole party, grandfather and child included, and took his departure.

As Cole was now a pedestrian, Linden threw the rein over his arm, and walked on foot by his host's side.

"So," said he, smiling, "I must not inquire into the reasons of your retirement?"

"On the contrary," replied Cole: "I have walked with you the more gladly from my desire of telling them to you; for we all love to seem consistent, even in our chimeras. About six years ago, I confess that I began to wax a little weary of my wandering life: my child, in growing up, required playmates; shall I own that I did not like him to find them among the children of my own comrades? The old scamps were good enough for me, but the young ones were a little too bad for my son. Between you

and me only be it said, my juvenile hope was already a little corrupted. The dog Mim—you remember Mim, sir—secretly taught him to filch as well as if he had been a bantling of his own; and, faith, our smaller goods and chattels, especially of an edible nature, began to disappear, with a rapidity and secrecy that our itinerant palace could very ill sustain. Among us (i.e. gypsies) there is a law by which no member of the gang may steal from another: but my little heaven-instructed youth would by no means abide by that distinction; and so boldly designed and well executed were his rogueries that my paternal anxiety saw nothing before him but Botany Bay on the one hand and Newgate courtyard on the other."

"A sad prospect for the heir apparent!" quoth Clarence.

"It was so!" answered Cole; "and it made me deliberate. Then, as one gets older one's romance oozes out a little in rheums and catarrhs. I began to perceive that, though I had been bred I had not been educated as a gypsy; and, what was worse, Lucy, though she never complained, felt that the walls of our palace were not exempt from the damps of winter, nor our royal state from the Caliban curses of—

'Cramps and
Side stitches that do pen our breath up.'"

"She fell ill; and during her illness I had sundry bright visions of warm rooms and coal fires, a friend with whom I could converse upon Chaucer, and a tutor for my son who would teach him other arts than those of picking pockets and pilfering larders. Nevertheless, I was a little ashamed of my own thoughts; and I do not know whether they would have been yet put into practice, but for a trifling circumstance which converted doubt and longing into certainty."

"Our crank cuffs had for some time looked upon me with suspicion and coldness: my superior privileges and comforts they had at first forgiven, on account of my birth and my generosity to them; but by degrees they lost respect for the one and gratitude for the other; and as I had in a great measure ceased from participating in their adventures, or, during Lucy's illness, which lasted several months, joining in their festivities, they at length considered me as a drone in a hive, by no means compensating by my services as an ally for my admittance into their horde as a stranger. You will easily conceive, when this once became the state of their feelings towards me, with how ill a temper they brooked the lordship of my stately caravan and my assumption of superior command. Above all, the women, who were very much incensed at Lucy's constant seclusion from their orgies, fanned the increasing discontent; and, at last, I verily believe that no eyesore could have been more grievous to the Egyptians than my wooden habitation and the smoke of its single chimney."

"From ill-will the rascals proceeded to ill acts; and one dark night, when we were encamped on the very same ground as that which we occupied when we received you, three of them, Mim at their head, attacked me in mine own habitation. I verily believe, if they had mastered me, they would have robbed and murdered us all; except perhaps my son, whom they thought ill-used by depriving him of Mim's instructive society. Howbeit, I was still stirring when they invaded me, and, by the help of the poker and a tolerably strong arm, I repelled the assailants; but that very night I passed from the land of Egypt, and made with all possible expedition to the nearest town, which was, as you may remember, W—."

"Here, the very next day, I learned that the house I now inhabit was to be sold. It had (as I before said) belonged to my mother's family, and my father had sold it a little before his death. It was the home from which I had been stolen, and to which I had been returned: often in my star-lit wanderings had I flown to it in thought; and now it seemed as if Providence itself, in offering to my age the asylum I had above all others coveted for it, was interested in my retirement from the empire of an ungrateful people and my atonement in rest for my past sins in migration."

"Well, sir, in short, I became the purchaser of the place you have just seen, and I now think that, after all, there is more happiness in reality than romance: like the laverock, here will I build my nest,—

'Here give my weary spirit rest,
And raise my low-pitched thoughts above
Earth, or what poor mortals love.'"

"And your son," said Clarence, "has he reformed?"

"Oh, yes," answered Cole. "For my part, I believe the mind is less evil than people say it is; its great characteristic is imitation, and it will imitate the good as well as the bad, if we will set the example. I thank Heaven, sir, that my boy now might go from Dan to Beersheba and not filch a groat by the way."

"What do you intend him for?" said Clarence.

"Why, he loves adventure, and, faith, I can't break him of that, for I love it too; so I think I shall get him a commission in the army, in order to give him a fitting and legitimate sphere wherein to indulge his propensities."

"You could not do better," said Clarence. "But your fine sister, what says she to your amendment?"

"Oh! she wrote me a long letter of congratulation upon it and every other summer she is graciously pleased to pay me a visit of three months long; at which time, I observe, that poor Lucy is unusually smart and uncomfortable. We sit in the best room, and turn out the dogs; my father-in-law smokes his pipe in the arbour, instead of the drawing-room; and I receive sundry hints, all in vain, on the propriety of dressing for dinner. In return for these attentions on our part, my sister invariably brings my boy a present of a pair of white gloves, and my wife a French ribbon of the newest pattern; in the evening, instead of my reading Shakspeare, she tells us anecdotes of high life, and, when she goes away, she gives us, in return for our hospitality, a very general and very gingerly invitation to her house. Lucy sometimes talks to me about accepting it; but I turn a deaf ear to all such overtures, and so we continue much better friends than we should be if we saw more of each other."

"And how long has your father-in-law been with you?"

"Ever since we have been here. He gave up his farm, and cultivates mine for me; for I know nothing of those agricultural matters. I made his coming a little surprise, in order to please Lucy: you should have witnessed their meeting."

"I think I have now learned all particulars," said Clarence; "it only remains for me to congratulate you: but are you, in truth, never tired of the monotony and sameness of domestic life?"

"Yes! and then I do, as I have just done, saddle Little John, and go on an excursion of three or four days, or even weeks, just as the whim seizes me; for I never return till I am driven back by the yearning for home, and the feeling that after all one's wanderings there is no place like it. Whether in private life or public, sir, in parting with a little of one's liberty one gets a great deal of comfort in exchange."

"I thank you truly for your frankness," said Clarence; "it has solved many doubts with respect to you that have often occurred to me. And now we are in the main road, and I must bid you farewell: we part, but our paths lead to the same object; you return to happiness, and I seek it."

"May you find it, and I not lose it, sir," said the wanderer reclaimed; and, shaking hands, the pair parted.

CHAPTER LXVI.

Quicquid agit Rufus, nihil est, nisi Naevia Rufo,
Si gaudet, si flet, si tacet, hanc loquitur;
Coenat, propinat, poscit, negat, annuit, una est Naevia;
si non sit Naevia, mutus erit.
Scriberet hesterna patri cum luce salutem
Naevia lux, inquit, Naevia numen, ave.—MART.

[*"Whatever Rufus does is nothing, except Naevia be at his elbow. Be he joyful or sorrowful, be he even silent, he is still harping upon her. He eats, he drinks, he talks, he denies, he assents; Naevia is his sole theme: no Naevia, and he's dumb. Yesterday at daybreak, he would fain write a letter of salutation to his father: 'Hail, Naevia, light of my eyes,' quoth he; 'hail, Naevia, my divine one.'"*]

"The last time," said Clarence to himself, "that I travelled this road, on exactly the same errand that I travel now, I do remember that I was honoured by the company of one in all respects the opposite to mine honest host; for, whereas in the latter there is a luxuriant and wild eccentricity, an open and blunt simplicity, and a shrewd sense, which looks not after pence, but peace; so, in the mind of the friend of the late Lady Waddilove there was a flat and hedged-in primness and narrowness of thought; an enclosure of bargains and profits of all species,—mustard-pots, rings, monkeys, chains, jars, and plum-coloured velvet inexpressibles; his ideas, with the true alchemy of trade, turned them all into gold: yet was he also as shrewd and acute as he with whose character he contrasts,—equally with him seeking

comfort and gladness, and an asylum for his old age. Strange that all tempers should have a common object, and never a common road to it! But since I have begun the contrast, let me hope that it may be extended in its omen unto me; let me hope that as my encountering with the mercantile Brown brought me ill-luck in my enterprise, thereby signifying the crosses and vexations of those who labour in the cheateries and overreachings which constitute the vocation of the world; so my meeting with the philosophical Cole, who has, both in vagrancy and rest, found cause to boast of happiness, authorities from his studies to favour his inclination to each, and reason to despise what he, with Sir Kenelm Digby, would wisely call—

'The fading blossoms of the earth;'

so my meeting with him may prove a token of good speed to mine errand, and thereby denote prosperity to one who seeks not riches, nor honour, nor the conquest of knaves, nor the good word of fools, but happy love, and the bourne of its quiet home."

Thus, half meditating, half moralizing, and drawing, like a true lover, an omen of fear or hope from occurrences in which plain reason could have perceived neither type nor token, Clarence continued and concluded his day's journey. He put up at the same little inn he had visited three years ago, and watched his opportunity of seeing Lady Flora alone. More fortunate in that respect than he had been before, such opportunity the very next day presented to him.

CHAPTER LXVII.

Duke.—Sir Valentine!

Thur.—Yonder is Silvia, and Silvia's mine.

Val.—Thurio, give back.—The Two Gentlemen of Verona.

"I think, Mamma," said Lady Flora to her mother, "that as the morning is so beautiful, I will go into the pavilion to finish my drawing."

"But Lord Ulswater will be here in an hour, or perhaps less: may I tell him where you are, and suffer him to join you?"

"If you will accompany him," answered Lady Flora, coldly, as she took up her portefeulle and withdrew.

Now the pavilion was a small summer-house of stone, situated in the most retired part of the grounds belonging to Westborough Park. It was a favourite retreat with Lady Flora, even in the winter months, for warm carpeting, a sheltered site, and a fireplace constructed more for comfort than economy made it scarcely less adapted to that season than to the more genial suns of summer.

The morning was so bright and mild that Lady Flora left open the door as she entered; she seated herself at the table, and, unmindful of her pretended employment, suffered the portefeulle to remain unopened. Leaning her cheek upon her hand, she gazed vacantly on the ground, and scarcely felt the tears which gathered slowly to her eyes, but, falling not, remained within the fair lids, chill and motionless, as if the thought which drew them there was born of a sorrow less agitated than fixed and silent.

The shadow of a man darkened the threshold, and there paused.

Slowly did Flora raise her eyes, and the next moment Clarence Linden was by her side and at her feet.

"Flora," said he, in a tone trembling with its own emotions, "Flora, have years indeed separated us forever, or dare I hope that we have misconstrued each other's hearts, and that at this moment they yearn to be united with more than the fondness and fidelity of old? Speak to me, Flora, one word."

But she had sunk on the chair overpowered, surprised, and almost insensible; and it was not for some moments that she could utter words rather wrung from than dictated by her thoughts.

"Cruel and insulting, for what have you come? is it at such a time that you taunt me with the remembrance of my past folly, or your— your—" She paused for a moment, confused and hesitating, but presently recovering herself, rose, and added, in a calmer tone, "Surely you have no excuse for this

intrusion: you will suffer me to leave you."

"No," exclaimed Clarence, violently agitated, "no! Have you not wronged me, stung me, wounded me to the core by your injustice? and will you not hear now how differently I have deserved from you? On a bed of fever and pain I thought only of you; I rose from it animated by the hope of winning you! Though, during the danger of my wound and my consequent illness, your parents alone, of all my intimate acquaintances, neglected to honour with an inquiry the man whom you professed to consecrate with your regard, yet scarcely could my hand trace a single sentence before I wrote to you requesting an interview, in order to disclose my birth and claim your plighted faith! That letter was returned to me unanswered, unopened. My friend and benefactor, whose fortune I now inherit, promised to call upon your father and advocate my cause. Death anticipated his kindness. As soon as my sorrow for his loss permitted me, I came to this very spot! For three days I hovered about your house, seeking the meeting that you would fain deny me now. I could not any longer bear the torturing suspense I endured: I wrote to you; your father answered the letter. Here, here I have it still: read! note well the cool, the damning insult of each line. I see that you knew not of this: I rejoice at it! Can you wonder that, on receiving it, I subjected myself no more to such affronts? I hastened abroad. On my return I met you. Where? In crowds, in the glitter of midnight assemblies, in the whirl of what the vain call pleasure! I observed your countenance, your manner; was there in either a single token of endearing or regretful remembrance? None! I strove to harden my heart; I entered into politics, business, intrigue; I hoped, I longed, I burned to forget you, but in vain!"

"At last I heard that Rumour, though it had long preceded, had not belied, the truth, and that you were to be married,—married to Lord Ulswater! I will not say what I suffered, or how idly I summoned pride to resist affection! But I would not have come now to molest you, Flora, to trouble your nuptial rejoicings with one thought of me, if, forgive me, I had not suddenly dreamed that I had cause to hope you had mistaken, not rejected my heart; that—you turn away, Flora, you blush, you weep! Oh, tell me, by one word, one look, that I was not deceived!"

"No, no, Clarence," said Flora, struggling with her tears: "it is too late, too late now! Why, why did I not know this before? I have promised, I am pledged; in less than two months I shall be the wife of another!"

"Never!" cried Clarence, "never! You promised on a false belief: they will not bind you to such a promise. Who is he that claims you? I am his equal in birth, in the world's name,—and oh, by what worlds his superior in love! I will advance my claim to you in his very teeth,—nay, I will not stir from these domains till you, your father, and my rival, have repaired my wrongs."

"Be it so, sir!" cried a voice behind, and Clarence turned and beheld Lord Ulswater! His dark countenance was flushed with rage, which he in vain endeavoured to conceal; and the smile of scorn that he strove to summon to his lip made a ghastly and unnatural contrast with the lowering of his brow and the fire of his eyes. "Be it so, sir," he said, slowly advancing, and confronting Clarence. "You will dispute my claims to the hand Lady Flora Ardenne has long promised to one who, however unworthy of the gift, knows, at least, how to defend it. It is well; let us finish the dispute elsewhere. It is not the first time we shall have met, if not as rivals, as foes."

Clarence turned from him without reply, for he saw Lady Westborough had just entered the pavilion, and stood mute and transfixed at the door, with surprise, fear, and anger depicted upon her regal and beautiful countenance.

"It is to you, madam," said Clarence, approaching towards her, "that I venture to appeal. Your daughter and I, four long years ago, exchanged our vows: you flattered me with the hope that those vows were not displeasing to you; since then a misunderstanding, deadly to my happiness and to hers, divided us. I come now to explain it. My birth may have seemed obscure; I come to clear it: my conduct doubtful; I come to vindicate it. I find Lord Ulswater my rival. I am willing to compare my pretensions to his. I acknowledge that he has titles which I have not; that he has wealth, to which mine is but competence: but titles and wealth, as the means of happiness, are to be referred to your daughter, to none else. You have only, in an alliance with me, to consider my character and my lineage: the latter flows from blood as pure as that which warms the veins of my rival; the former stands already upon an eminence to which Lord Ulswater in his loftiest visions could never aspire. For the rest, madam, I adjure you, solemnly, as you value your peace of mind, your daughter's happiness, your freedom from the agonies of future remorse and unavailing regret,—I adjure you not to divorce those whom God, who speaks in the deep heart and the plighted vow, has already joined. This is a question in which your daughter's permanent woe or lasting happiness from this present hour to the last sand of life is concerned. It is to her that I refer it: let her be the judge."

And Clarence moved from Lady Westborough, who, agitated, confused, awed by the spell of a power and a nature of which she had not dreamed, stood pale and speechless, vainly endeavouring to reply:

he moved from her towards Lady Flora, who leaned, sobbing and convulsed with contending emotions, against the wall; but Lord Ulswater, whose fiery blood was boiling with passion, placed himself between Clarence and the unfortunate object of the contention.

"Touch her not, approach her not!" he said, with a fierce and menacing tone. "Till you have proved your pretensions superior to mine, unknown, presuming, and probably base-born as you are, you will only pass over my body to your claims."

Clarence stood still for one moment, evidently striving to master the wrath which literally swelled his form beyond its ordinary proportions; and Lady Westborough, recovering herself in the brief pause, passed between the two, and, taking her daughter's arm, led her from the pavilion.

"Stay, madam, for one instant!" cried Clarence, and he caught hold of her robe.

Lady Westborough stood quite erect and still; and, drawing her stately figure to its full height, said with that quiet dignity by which a woman so often stills the angrier passions of men, "I lay the prayer and command of a mother upon you, Lord Ulswater, and on you, sir, whatever be your real rank and name, not to make mine and my daughter's presence the scene of a contest which dishonours both. Still further, if Lady Flora's hand and my approval be an object of desire to either, I make it a peremptory condition with both of you, that a dispute already degrading to her name pass not from word to act. For you, Mr. Linden, if so I may call you, I promise that my daughter shall be left free and unbiased to give that reply to your singular conduct which I doubt not her own dignity and sense will suggest."

"By Heaven!" exclaimed Lord Ulswater, utterly beside himself with rage which, suppressed at the beginning of Lady Westborough's speech, had been kindled into double fury by its conclusion, "you will not suffer Lady Flora, no, nor any one but her affianced bridegroom, her only legitimate defender, to answer this arrogant intruder! You cannot think that her hand, the hand of my future wife, shall trace line or word to one who has so insulted her with his addresses and me with his rivalry."

"Man!" cried Clarence, abruptly, and seizing Lord Ulswater fiercely by the arm, "there are some causes which will draw fire from ice: beware, beware how you incense me to pollute my soul with the blood of a—"

"What!" exclaimed Lord Ulswater.

Clarence bent down and whispered one word in his ear.

Had that word been the spell with which the sorcerers of old disarmed the fiend, it could not have wrought a greater change upon Lord Ulswater's mien and face. He staggered back several paces, the glow of his swarthy cheek faded into a deathlike paleness; the word which passion had conjured to his tongue died there in silence; and he stood with eyes dilated and fixed on Clarence's face, on which their gaze seemed to force some unwilling certainty.

But Linden did not wait for him to recover his self-possession: he hurried after Lady Westborough, who, with her daughter, was hastening home.

"Pardon me, Lady Westborough," he said, as he approached, with a tone and air of deep respect, "pardon me; but will you suffer me to hope that Lady Flora and yourself will, in a moment of greater calmness, consider over all I have said? and—that she—that you, Lady Flora" (added he, changing the object of his address), "will vouchsafe one line of unprejudiced, unbiased reply, to a love which, however misrepresented and calumniated, has in it, I dare to say, nothing that can disgrace her to whom, with an enduring constancy, and undimmed, though unhoping, ardour, it has been inviolably dedicated?"

Lady Flora, though she spoke not, lifted her eyes to his; and in that glance was a magic which made his heart burn with a sudden and flashing joy that atoned for the darkness of years.

"I assure you, sir," said Lady Westborough, touched, in spite of herself, with the sincerity and respect of Clarence's bearing, "that Lady Flora will reply to any letter of explanation or proposal: for myself, I will not even see her answer. Where shall it be sent to you?"

"I have taken my lodgings at the inn by your park gates. I shall remain there till—till—"

Clarence paused, for his heart was full; and, leaving the sentence to be concluded as his listeners pleased, he drew himself aside from their path and suffered them to proceed.

As he was feeding his eyes with the last glimpse of their forms, ere a turn in the grounds snatched them from his view, he heard a rapid step behind, and Lord Ulswater, approaching, laid his hand upon Linden's shoulder, and said calmly,—

"Are you furnished with proof to support the word you uttered?"

"I am!" replied Clarence, haughtily.

"And will you favour me with it?"

"At your leisure, my lord," rejoined Clarence.

"Enough! Name your time and I will attend you."

"On Tuesday: I require till then to produce my witnesses."

"So be it; yet stay: on Tuesday I have military business at W—, some miles hence; the next day let it be; the place of meeting where you please."

"Here, then, my lord," answered Clarence; "you have insulted me grossly before Lady Westborough and your affianced bride, and before them my vindication and answer should be given."

"You are right," said Lord Ulswater; "be it here, at the hour of twelve." Clarence bowed his assent and withdrew. Lord Ulswater remained on the spot, with downcast eyes, and a brow on which thought had succeeded passion.

"If true," said he aloud, though unconsciously, "if this be true, why, then I owe him reparation, and he shall have it at my hands. I owe it to him on my account, and that of one now no more. Till we meet, I will not again see Lady Flora; after that meeting, perhaps I may resign her forever."

And with these words the young nobleman, who, despite of many evil and overbearing qualities, had, as we have said, his redeeming virtues, in which a capricious and unsteady generosity was one, walked slowly to the house; wrote a brief note to Lady Westborough, the purport of which the next chapter will disclose; and then, summoning his horse, flung himself on its back, and rode hastily away.

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