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CHAPTER LXVIII.

We will examine if those accidents,
Which common fame calls injuries, happen to him
Deservedly or no.—The New Inn.

FROM LORD ULSWATER TO LADY WESTBOROUGH.

Forgive me, dearest Lady Westborough, for my violence: you know and will allow for the infirmities of my temper. I have to make you and Lady Flora one request, which I trust you will not refuse me.

Do not see or receive any communication from Mr. Linden till Wednesday; and on that day at the hour of twelve suffer me to meet him at your house. I will then either prove him to be the basest of impostors, or, if I fail in this and Lady Flora honours my rival with one sentiment of preference, I will without a murmur submit to her decree and my rejection. Dare I trust that this petition will be accorded to one who is, with great regard and esteem, etc.

"This is fortunate," said Lady Westborough gently to her daughter, who, leaning her head on her mother's bosom, suffered hopes, the sweeter for their long sleep, to divide, if not wholly to possess, her heart. "We shall have now time well and carefully to reflect over what will be best for your future happiness. We owe this delay to one to whom you have been affianced. Let us, therefore, now merely write to Mr. Linden, to inform him of Lord Ulswater's request; and to say that if he will meet his lordship at the time appointed, we, that is I, shall be happy to see him."

Lady Flora sighed, but she saw the reasonableness of her mother's proposal, and pressing Lady Westborough's hand murmured her assent.

"At all events," thought Lady Westborough, as she wrote to Clarence, "the affair can but terminate to advantage. If Lord Ulswater proves Mr. Linden's unworthiness, the suit of the latter is of course at rest forever: if not, and Mr. Linden be indeed all that he asserts, my daughter's choice cannot be an election of reproach; Lord Ulswater promises peaceably to withdraw his pretensions; and though Mr. Linden

may not possess his rank or fortune, he is certainly one with whom, if of ancient blood, any family would be proud of an alliance."

Blending with these reflections a considerable share of curiosity and interest in a secret which partook so strongly of romance, Lady Westborough despatched her note to Clarence. The answer returned was brief, respectful, and not only acquiescent in but grateful for the proposal.

With this arrangement both Lady Westborough and Lady Flora were compelled, though with very different feelings, to be satisfied; and an agreement was established between them, to the effect that if Linden's name passed unblemished through the appointed ordeal Lady Flora was to be left to, and favoured in, her own election; while, on the contrary, if Lord Ulswater succeeded in the proof he had spoken of, his former footing in the family was to be fully re-established and our unfortunate adventurer forever discarded.

To this Lady Flora readily consented; for with a sanguine and certain trust in her lover's truth and honour, which was tenfold more strong for her late suspicions, she would not allow herself a doubt as to the result; and with an impatience, mingled with a rapturous exhilaration of spirit, which brought back to her the freshness and radiancy of her youngest years, she counted the hours and moments to the destined day.

While such was the state of affairs at Westborough Park, Clarence was again on horseback and on another excursion. By the noon of the day following that which had seen his eventful meeting with Lady Flora, he found himself approaching the extreme boundaries of the county in which Mordaunt Court and the memorable town of W—— were situated. The characteristics of the country were now materially changed from those which gave to the vicinity of Algernon's domains its wild and uncultivated aspect.

As Clarence slowly descended a hill of considerable steepness and length, a prospect of singular and luxurious beauty opened to his view. The noblest of England's rivers was seen, through "turfs and shades and flowers," pursuing "its silver-winding way." On the opposite banks lay, embosomed in the golden glades of autumn, the busy and populous town that from the height seemed still and lifeless as an enchanted city, over which the mid-day sun hung like a guardian spirit. Behind, in sweeping diversity, stretched wood and dale, and fields despoiled of their rich harvest, yet still presenting a yellow surface to the eye; and ever and anon some bright patch of green, demanding the gaze as if by a lingering spell from the past spring; while, here and there, spire and hamlet studded the landscape, or some lowly cot lay, backed by the rising ground or the silent woods, white and solitary, and sending up its faint tribute of smoke in spires to the altars of Heaven. The river was more pregnant of life than its banks: barge and boat were gliding gayly down the wave, and the glad oar of the frequent and slender vessels consecrated to pleasure was seen dimpling the water, made by distance smoother than glass.

On the right side of Clarence's road, as he descended the hill, lay wide plantations of fir and oak, divided from the road by a park paling, the uneven sides of which were covered with brown moss, and which, at rare openings in the young wood, gave glimpses of a park, seemingly extending over great space, the theatre of many a stately copse and oaken grove, which might have served the Druids with fane and temple meet for the savage sublimity of their worship.

Upon these unfrequent views, Clarence checked his horse, and gazed, with emotions sweet yet bitter, over the pales, along the green expanse which they contained. And once, when through the trees he caught a slight glimpse of the white walls of the mansion they adorned, all the years of his childhood seemed to rise on his heart, thrilling to its farthest depths with a mighty and sorrowful yet sweet melody, and—

"Singing of boyhood back, the voices of his home."

Home! yes, amidst those groves had the April of his life lavished its mingled smiles and tears! There was the spot hallowed by his earliest joys! and the scene of sorrows still more sacred than joys! and now, after many years, the exiled boy came back, a prosperous and thoughtful man, to take but one brief glance of that home which to him had been less hospitable than a stranger's dwelling, and to find a witness among those who remembered him of his very birth and identity!

He wound the ascent at last, and entering a small town at the foot of the hill, which was exactly facing the larger one on the opposite shore of the river, put up his horse at one of the inns, and then, with a beating heart, remounted the hill, and entering the park by one of its lodges found himself once more in the haunts of his childhood.

CHAPTER LXIX.

Oh, the steward, the steward: I might have guessed as much.

Tales of the Crusaders.

The evening was already beginning to close, and Clarence was yet wandering in the park, and retracing, with his heart's eye, each knoll and tree and tuft once so familiar to his wanderings.

At the time we shall again bring him personally before the reader, he was leaning against an iron fence that, running along the left wing of the house, separated the pleasure-grounds from the park, and gazing with folded arms and wistful eyes upon the scene on which the dusk of twilight was gradually gathering.

The house was built originally in the reign of Charles II.; it had since received alteration and additions, and now presented to the eye a vast pile of Grecian or rather Italian architecture, heterogeneously blended with the massive window, the stiff coping, and the heavy roof which the age immediately following the Revolution introduced. The extent of the building and the grandeur of the circling demesnes were sufficient to render the mansion imposing in effect; while, perhaps, the style of the architecture was calculated to conjoin a stately comfort with magnificence, and to atone in solidity for any deficiency in grace.

At a little distance from the house, and placed on a much more commanding site, were some ancient and ivy-grown ruins, now scanty indeed and fast mouldering into decay, but sufficient to show the antiquarian the remains of what once had been a hold of no ordinary size and power. These were the wrecks of the old mansion, which was recorded by tradition to have been reduced to this state by accidental fire, during the banishment of its loyal owner in the time of the Protectorate. Upon his return the present house was erected.

As Clarence was thus stationed he perceived an elderly man approach towards him. "This is fortunate," said he to himself,—"the very person I have been watching for. Well, years have passed lightly over old Wardour: still the same precise garb, the same sturdy and slow step, the same upright form."

The person thus designated now drew near enough for parlance; and, in a tone a little authoritative, though very respectful, inquired if Clarence had any business to transact with him.

"I beg pardon," said Clarence, slouching his hat over his face, "for lingering so near the house at this hour: but I have seen it many years ago, and indeed been a guest within its walls; and it is rather my interest for an old friend, than my curiosity to examine a new one, which you are to blame for my trespass."

"Oh, sir," answered Mr. Wardour, a short and rather stout man, of about sixty-four, attired in a chocolate coat, gray breeches, and silk stockings of the same dye, which, by the waning light, took a sombrero and sadder hue, "oh, sir, pray make no apology. I am only sorry the hour is so late that I cannot offer to show you the interior of the house: perhaps, if you are staying in the neighbourhood, you would like to see it to-morrow. You were here, I take it, sir, in my old lord's time?"

"I was!—upon a visit to his second son: we had been boys together."

"What! Master Clinton?" cried the old man, with extreme, animation; and then, suddenly changing his voice, added, in a subdued and saddened tone, "Ah, poor young gentleman, I wonder where he is now?"

"Why, is he not in this country?" asked Clarence.

"Yes—no—that is, I can't exactly say where he is; I wish I could: poor Master Clinton! I loved him as my own son."

"You surprise me," said Clarence. "Is there anything in the fate of Clinton L'Estrange that calls forth your pity? If so, you would gratify a much better feeling than curiosity if you would inform me of it. The fact is that I came here to seek him; for I have been absent from the country many years, and on my return my first inquiry was for my old friend and schoolfellow. None knew anything of him in London, and I imagined therefore that he might have settled down into a country gentleman. I was fully prepared to find him marshalling the fox-hounds or beating the preserves; and you may consequently imagine my mortification on learning at my inn that he had not been residing here for many years; further I know not!"

"Ay, ay, sir," said the old steward, who had listened very attentively to Clarence's detail, "had you

pressed one of the village gossips a little closer, you would doubtless have learned more. But 't is a story I don't much love telling, although formerly I could have talked of Master Clinton by the hour together to any one who would have had the patience to listen to me."

"You have really created in me a very painful desire to learn more," said Clarence; "and, if I am not intruding on any family secrets, you would oblige me greatly by whatever information you may think proper to afford to an early and attached friend of the person in question."

"Well, sir, well," replied Mr. Wardour, who, without imputation on his discretion, loved talking as well as any other old gentleman of sixty- four, "if you will condescend to step up to my house, I shall feel happy and proud to converse with a friend of my dear young master; and you are heartily welcome to the information I can give you."

"I thank you sincerely," said Clarence; "but suffer me to propose, as an amendment to your offer, that you accompany me for an hour or two to my inn."

"Nay, sir," answered the old gentleman, in a piqued tone, "I trust you will not disdain to honour me with your company. Thank Heaven, I can afford to be hospitable now and then."

Clarence, who seemed to have his own reasons for the amendment he had proposed, still struggled against this offer, but was at last, from fear of offending the honest steward, obliged to accede.

Striking across a path, which led through a corner of the plantation to a space of ground containing a small garden, quaintly trimmed in the Dutch taste, and a brick house of moderate dimensions, half overgrown with ivy and jessamine, Clarence and his inviter paused at the door of the said mansion, and the latter welcomed his guest to his abode.

"Pardon me," said Clarence, as a damsel in waiting opened the door, "but a very severe attack of rheumatism obliges me to keep on my hat: you will, I hope, indulge me in my rudeness."

"To be sure, to be sure, sir. I myself suffer terribly from rheumatism in the winter; though you look young, sir, very young, to have an old man's complaint. Ah, the people of my day were more careful of themselves, and that is the reason we are such stout fellows in our age."

And the worthy steward looked complacently down at legs which very substantially filled their comely investments. "True, sir," said Clarence, laying his hand upon that of the steward, who was just about to open the door of an apartment; "but suffer me at least to request you not to introduce me to any of the ladies of your family. I could not, were my very life at stake, think of affronting them by not doffing my hat. I have the keenest sense of what is due to the sex, and I must seriously entreat you, for the sake of my health during the whole of the coming winter, to suffer our conversation not to take place in their presence."

"Sir, I honour your politeness," said the prim little steward: "I, myself, like every true Briton, reverence the ladies; we will therefore retire to my study. Mary, girl," turning to the attendant, "see that we have a nice chop for supper in half an hour; and tell your mistress that I have a gentleman of quality with me upon particular business, and must not be disturbed."

With these injunctions, the steward led the way to the farther end of the house, and, having ushered his guest into a small parlour, adorned with sundry law-books, a great map of the estate, a print of the late owner of it, a rusty gun slung over the fireplace, two stuffed pheasants, and a little mahogany buffet,—having, we say, led Clarence to this sanctuary of retiring stewardship, he placed a seat for him and said,—"Between you and me, sir, be it respectfully said, I am not sorry that our little confabulation should pass alone. Ladies are very delightful, very delightful, certainly: but they won't let one tell a story one's own way; they are fidgety, you know, sir,—fidgety, nothing more; 't is a trifle, but it is unpleasant. Besides, my wife was Master Clinton's foster-mother, and she can't hear a word about him, without running on into a long rigmarole of what he did as a baby, and so forth. I like people to be chatty, sir, but not garrulous; I can't bear garrulity, at least in a female. But, suppose, sir, we defer our story till after supper? A glass of wine or warm punch makes talk glide more easily; besides, sir, I want something to comfort me when I talk about Master Clinton. Poor gentleman, he was so comely, so handsome!"

"Did you think so?" said Clarence, turning towards the fire.

"Think so!" ejaculated the steward, almost angrily; and forthwith he launched out into an encomium on the perfections, personal, moral, and mental, of Master Clinton which lasted till the gentle Mary entered to lay the cloth. This reminded the old steward of the glass of wine which was so efficacious in making talk glide easily; and, going to the buffet before mentioned, he drew forth two bottles, both of port. Having carefully and warily decanted both, he changed the subject of his praise; and, assuring

Clarence that the wine he was about to taste was at least as old as Master Clinton, having been purchased in joyous celebration of the young gentleman's birthday, he whiled away the minutes with a glowing eulogy on its generous qualities, till Mary entered with the supper.

Clarence, with an appetite sharpened, despite his romance, by a long fast, did ample justice to the fare; and the old steward, warming into familiarity with the virtues of the far-famed port, chatted and laughed in a strain half simple and half shrewd.

The fire being stirred up to a free blaze, the hearth swept, and all the tokens of supper, save and except the kingly bottle and its subject glasses, being removed, the steward and his guest drew closer to each other, and the former began his story.

CHAPTER LXX.

The actors are at hand, and by their show
You shall know all that you are like to know.
Midsummer-Night's Dream.

"You know, probably, sir, that my late lord was twice married; by his first wife he had three children, only one of whom, the youngest, though now the present earl, survived the first period of infancy. When Master Francis, as we always called him, in spite of his accession to the title of viscount, was about six years old, my lady died, and a year afterwards my lord married again. His second wife was uncommonly handsome: she was a Miss Talbot (a Catholic), daughter of Colonel Talbot, and niece to the celebrated beau, Squire Talbot of Scarsdale Park. Poor lady! they say that she married my lord through a momentary pique against a former lover. However that may be, she was a fine, high-spirited creature: very violent in temper, to be sure, but generous and kind when her passion was over; and however haughty to her equals charitable and compassionate to the poor."

"She had but one son, Master Clinton. Never, sir, shall I forget the rejoicings that were made at his birth: for my lord doted on his second wife, and had disliked his first, whom he had married for her fortune; and it was therefore natural that he should prefer the child of the present wife to Master Francis. Ah, it is sad to think how love can change! Well, sir, my lord seemed literally to be wrapped up in the infant: he nursed it and fondled it, and hung over it, as if he had been its mother rather than its father. My lady desired that it might be christened by one of her family names; and my lord consenting, it was called Clinton. (The wine is with you, sir! Do observe that it has not changed colour in the least, notwithstanding its age.)"

"My lord was fond of a quiet, retired life; indeed, he was a great scholar, and spent the chief part of his time among his books. Dr. Latinas, the young gentleman's tutor, said his lordship made Greek verses better than Dr. Latinas could make English ones, so you may judge of his learning. But my lady went constantly to town, and was among the gayest of the gay; nor did she often come down here without bringing a whole troop of guests. Lord help us, what goings on there used to be at the great house!—such dancing and music, and dining and supping, and shooting-parties, fishing-parties, gypsy-parties: you would have thought all England was merrymaking there."

"But my lord, though he indulged my lady in all her whims and extravagance, seldom took much share in them himself. He was constantly occupied with his library and children, nor did he ever suffer either Master Francis or Master Clinton to mix with the guests. He kept them very close at their studies, and when the latter was six years old, I do assure you, sir, he could say his *Propria quae maribus* better than I can. (You don't drink, sir.) When Master Francis was sixteen, and Master Clinton eight, the former was sent abroad on his travels with a German tutor, and did not return to England for many years afterwards; meanwhile Master Clinton grew up to the age of fourteen, increasing in comeliness and goodness. He was very fond of his studies, much more so than Master Francis had been, and was astonishingly forward for his years. So my lord loved him better and better, and would scarcely ever suffer him to be out of his sight."

"When Master Clinton was about the age I mentioned, namely, fourteen, a gentleman of the name of Sir Clinton Manners became a constant visitor at the house. Report said that he was always about my lady in London at Ranelagh, and the ball-rooms and routs, and all the fine places; and certainly he was scarcely ever from her side in the pleasure parties at the Park. But my lady said that he was a cousin of hers, and an old playmate in childhood, and so he was; and unhappily for her, something more too. My

lord, however, shut up in his library, did not pay any attention to my lady's intimacy with Sir Clinton; on the contrary, as he was a cousin and friend of hers, his lordship seemed always happy to see him, and was the only person in the neighbourhood who had no suspicion of what was going on."

"Oh, sir, it is a melancholy story, and I can scarcely persuade myself to tell it. (It is really delicious wine this-six-and-twenty years old last birthday—to say nothing of its age before I bought it.) Ah! well, sir, the blow came at last like a thunderclap: my lady, finding disguise was in vain, went off with Sir Clinton. Letters were discovered which showed that they had corresponded for years; that he was her lover before marriage; that she, in a momentary passion with him, had accepted my lord's offer; that she had always repented her precipitation; and that she had called her son after his name: all this, and much more, sir, did my lord learn, as it were, at a single blow."

"He obtained a divorce, and Sir Clinton and my lady went abroad. But from that time my lord was never the same man. Always proud and gloomy, he now became intolerably violent and morose. He shut himself up, saw no company of any description, rarely left the house, and never the park; and, from being one of the gayest places in the country, sir, the mansion became as dreary and deserted as if it had been haunted. (It is for you to begin the second bottle, sir.)"

"But the most extraordinary change in my lord was in his conduct to Master Clinton: from doting upon him, to a degree that would have spoilt any temper less sweet than my poor young master's, he took the most violent aversion to him. From the circumstance of his name, and the long intimacy existing between my lady and her lover, his lordship would not believe that Master Clinton was his own child; and indeed I must confess there seemed good ground for his suspicions. Besides this, Master Clinton took very much after his mother. He had her eyes, hair, and beautiful features, so that my lord could never see him without being reminded of his disgrace; therefore whenever the poor young gentleman came into his presence, he would drive him out with oaths and threats which rang through the whole house. He could not even bear that he should have any attendance or respect from the servants, for he considered him quite as an alien like, and worse than a stranger; and his lordship's only delight seemed to consist in putting upon him every possible indignity and affront. But Master Clinton was a high-spirited young gentleman; and, after having in vain endeavoured to soothe my lord by compliance and respect, he at last utterly avoided his lordship's presence."

"He gave up his studies in a great measure, and wandered about the park and woods all day and sometimes even half the night; his mother's conduct and his father's unkindness seemed to prey upon his health and mind, and at last he grew almost as much altered as my lord. From being one of the merriest boys possible, full of life and spirits, he became thoughtful and downcast, his step lost its lightness, and his eye all the fire which used once quite to warm one's heart when one looked at it; in short, sir, the sins of the mother were visited as much upon the child as the husband. (Not the least tawny, sir, you see, though it is so old!)"

"My lord at first seemed to be glad that he now never saw his son, but, by degrees, I think he missed the pleasure of venting his spleen upon him; and so he ordered my young master not to stir out without his leave, and confined him closer than ever to his studies. (Well, sir, if it were not for this port I could not get out another sentence.) There used then to be sad scenes between them: my lord was a terribly passionate man, and said things sharper than a two-edged sword, as the psalms express it; and though Master Clinton was one of the mildest and best-tempered boys imaginable, yet he could not at all times curb his spirit; and, to my mind, when a man is perpetually declaring he is not your father, one may now and then be forgiven in forgetting that you are to behave as his son."

"Things went on in this way sadly enough for about three years and a half, when Master Clinton was nearly eighteen. One evening, after my lord had been unusually stormy, Master Clinton's spirit warmed, I suppose, and, from word to word, the dispute increased, till my lord, in a furious rage, ordered in the servants, and told them to horsewhip his son. Imagine, sir, what a disgrace to that noble house! But there was not one of them who would not rather have cut off his right hand than laid a finger upon Master Clinton, so greatly was he beloved; and, at last, my lord summoned his own gentleman, a German, six feet high, entirely devoted to his lordship, and commanded him, upon pain of instant dismissal, to make use in his presence of a horsewhip which he put into his hand."

"The German did not dare refuse, so he approached Master Clinton. The servants were still in the room, and perhaps they would have been bold enough to rescue Master Clinton, had there been any need of their assistance; but he was a tall youth, as bold as a hero, and, when the German approached, he caught him by the throat, threw him down, and very nearly strangled him; he then, while my lord was speechless with rage, left the room, and did not return all night. (What a body it has, sir—ah!)"

"The next morning I was in a little room adjoining my lord's study, looking over some papers and maps. His lordship did not know of my presence, but was sitting alone at breakfast, when Master Clinton suddenly entered the study; the door leading to my room was ajar, and I heard all the

conversation that ensued."

"My lord asked him very angrily how he had dared absent himself all night; but Master Clinton, making no reply to this question, said, in a very calm, loud voice, which I think I hear now, 'My lord, after the insult you have offered to me, it is perhaps unnecessary to observe that nothing could induce me to remain under your roof. I come, therefore, to take my last leave of you.'"

"He paused, and my lord (probably like me, being taken by surprise) making no reply, he continued, 'You have often told me, my lord, that I am not your son; if this be possible, so much the more must you rejoice at the idea of ridding your presence of an intruder.' 'And how, sir, do you expect to live, except upon my bounty?' exclaimed my lord. 'You remember,' answered my young master, 'that a humble dependant of my mother's family, who had been our governess in childhood, left me at her death the earnings of her life. I believe they amount to nearly a thousand pounds; I look to your lordship's honour either for the principal or the yearly interest, as may please you best: further I ask not from you.' 'And do you think, sir,' cried my lord, almost screaming with passion, 'that upon that beggarly pittance you shall go forth to dishonour more than it is yet dishonoured the name of my ancient house? Do you think, sir, that that name to which you have no pretension, though the law iniquitously grants it you, shall be sullied either with trade or robbery? for to one or the other you must necessarily be driven.' 'I foresaw your speech, my lord, and am prepared with an answer. Far be it from me to thrust myself into any family, the head of which thinks proper to reject me; far be it from me to honour my humble fortunes with a name which I am as willing as yourself to disown: I purpose, therefore, to adopt a new one; and, whatever may be my future fate, that name will screen me both from your remembrance and the world's knowledge. Are you satisfied now, my lord?'"

"His lordship did not answer for some minutes: at last, he said sneeringly, 'Go, boy, go! I am delighted to hear you have decided so well. Leave word with my steward where you wish your clothes to be sent to you: Heaven forbid I should rob you either of your wardrobe or your princely fortune. Wardour will transmit to you the latter, even to the last penny, by the same conveyance as that which is honoured by the former. And now good-morning, sir; yet stay, and mark my words: never dare to re-enter my house, or to expect an iota more of fortune or favour from me. And, hark you, sir: if you dare violate your word; if you dare, during my life, at least, assume a name which you were born to sully,—my curse, my deepest, heartiest, eternal curse, be upon your head in this world and the next!' 'Fear not, my lord: my word is pledged,' said the young gentleman; and the next moment I heard his parting step in the hall."

"Sir, my heart was full (your glass is empty!) and my head spun round as if I were on a precipice: but I was determined my young master should not go till I had caught another glimpse of his dear face; so I gently left the room I was in, and, hastening out of the house by a private entrance, met Master Clinton in the park, not very far from the spot where I saw you, sir, just now. To my surprise there was no sign of grief or agitation upon his countenance. I had never seen him look so proud, or for years so happy."

"'Wardour,' said he, in a gay tone, when he saw me, 'I was going to your house: my father has at last resolved that I should, like my brother, commence my travels; and I wish to leave with you the address of the place to which my clothes, etc., will be sent.'

"I could not contain any longer when I heard this, sir: I burst into tears, confessed that I had accidentally heard his conversation with my lord, and besought him not to depart so hastily, and with so small a fortune; but he shook his head and would not hear me. 'Believe me, my good Wardour,' said he, 'that since my unhappy mother's flight, I have never felt so elated or so happy as I do now: one should go through what I have done, to learn the rapture of independence.' He then told me to have his luggage sent to him, under his initials of C. L., at the Golden Fleece, the principal inn in the town of W—, which, you know, sir, is at the other end of the county, on the road to London; and then, kindly shaking me by the hand, he broke away from me: but he turned back before he had got three paces, and said (and then, for the first time, the pride of his countenance fell, and the tears stood in his eyes), 'Wardour, do not divulge what you have heard: put as good a face upon my departure as you can, and let the blame, if any, fall upon me, not upon your lord; after all he is to be pitied, not blamed, and I can never forget that he once loved me.' He did not wait for my answer,—perhaps he did not like to show me how much he was affected,—but hurried down the park, and I soon lost sight of him. My lord that very morning sent for me, demanded what address his son had left, and gave me a letter, enclosing, I suppose, a bill for my poor young master's fortune, ordering it to be sent with the clothes immediately."

"Sir, I have never seen or heard aught of the dear gentleman since; you must forgive me, I cannot help tears, sir—(the wine is with you)."

"But the mother, the mother!" said Clarence, earnestly; "what became of her? she died abroad, two years since, did she not?"

"She did, sir," answered the honest steward, refilling his glass. "They say that she lived very unhappily with Sir Clinton, who did not marry her; till all of a sudden she disappeared, none knew whither."

Clarence redoubled his attention.

"At last," resumed the steward, "two years ago, a letter came from her to my lord; she was a nun in some convent (in Italy I think) to which she had, at the time of her disappearance, secretly retired. The letter was written on her death-bed, and so affectingly, I suppose, that even my stern lord was in tears for several days after he received it. But the principal passage in it was relative to her son: it assured my lord (for so with his own lips he told me just before he died, some months ago) that Master Clinton was in truth his son, and that it was not till she had been tempted many years after her marriage that she had fallen; she implored my lord to believe this 'on the word of one for whom earth and earth's objects were no more;' those were her words."

"Six months ago, when my lord lay on the bed from which he never rose, he called me to him and said, "Wardour, you have always been the faithful servant of our house, and warmly attached to my second son; tell my poor boy, if ever you see him, that I did at last open my eyes to my error and acknowledge him as my child; tell him that I have desired his brother (who was then, sir, kneeling by my lord's side), as he values my blessing, to seek him out and repair the wrong I have done him; and add that my best comfort in death was the hope of his forgiveness."

"Did he, did he say that?" exclaimed Clarence, who had been violently agitated during the latter part of this recital, and now sprang from his seat. "My father, my father! would that I had borne with thee more! mine, mine was the fault; from thee should have come the forgiveness!"

The old steward sat silent and aghast. At that instant his wife entered, with a message of chiding at the lateness of the hour upon her lip, but she started back when she saw Clarence's profile, as he stood leaning against the wall.

"Good heavens!" cried she, "is it, is it,—yes, it is my young master, my own foster-son!"

Rightly had Clarence conjectured, when he had shunned her presence. Years had indeed wrought a change in his figure and face; acquaintance, servant, friend, relation,—the remembrance of his features had passed from all: but she who had nursed him as an infant on her lap and fed him from her breast, she who had joined the devotion of clanship to the fondness of a mother, knew him at a glance. "Yes," cried he, as he threw himself into her withered and aged arms, "it is I, the child you reared, come, after many years, to find too late, when a father is no more, that he had a right to a father's home."

CHAPTER LXXI.

Let us go in,
And charge us there upon inter'gatories.—SHAKSPEARE.

"But did not any one recognize you in your change of name?" said the old foster-mother, looking fondly upon Clarence, as he sat the next morning by her side. "How could any one forget so winsome a face who had once seen it?"

"You don't remember," said Clarence (as we will yet continue to call our hero), smiling, "that your husband had forgotten it."

"Ay, sir," cried the piqued steward, "but that was because you wore your hat slouched over your eyes: if you had taken off that, I should have known you directly."

"However that may be," said Clarence, unwilling to dwell longer on an occurrence which he saw hurt the feelings of the kind Mr. Wardour, "it is very easy to explain how I preserved my incognito. You recollect that my father never suffered me to mix with my mother's guests: so that I had no chance of their remembering me, especially as during the last three years and a half no stranger had ever entered our walls. Add to this that I was in the very time of life in which a few years work the greatest change, and on going to London I was thrown entirely among people who could never have seen me before. Fortunately for me, I became acquainted with my mother's uncle; circumstances subsequently led me to disclose my birth to him, upon a promise that he would never call me by any other name than

that which I had assumed. He, who was the best, the kindest, the most generous of human beings, took a liking to me. He insisted not only upon his relationship to me, as my grand-uncle, but upon the justice of repairing to me the wrongs his unhappy niece had caused me. The delicacy of his kindness, the ties of blood, and an accident which had enabled me to be of some service to him, all prevented my resisting the weight of obligation with which he afterwards oppressed me. He procured me an appointment abroad: I remained there four years. When I returned, I entered, it is true, into very general society: but four years had, as you may perceive, altered me greatly; and even had there previously existed any chance of my being recognized, that alteration would probably have been sufficient to insure my secret."

"But your brother,—my present lord,—did you never meet him, sir?"

"Often, my good mother; but you remember that I was little more than six years old when he left England, and when he next saw me I was about two and twenty: it would have been next to a miracle, or, at least, would have required the eyes of love like yours, to have recalled me to memory after such an absence."

"Well—to turn to my story—I succeeded, partly as his nearest relation, but principally from an affection dearer than blood, to the fortune of my grand-uncle, Mr. Talbot. Fate prospered with me: I rose in the world's esteem and honour, and soon became prouder of my borrowed appellation than of all the titles of my lordly line. Circumstances occurring within the last week which it will be needless to relate, but which may have the greatest influence over my future life, made it necessary to do what I had once resolved I would never do,—prove my identity and origin. Accordingly I came here to seek you."

"But why did not my honoured young master disclose himself last night?" asked the steward.

"I might say," answered Clarence, "because I anticipated great pleasure in a surprise; but I had another reason; it was this: I had heard of my poor father's death, and I was painfully anxious to learn if at the last he had testified any relenting towards me, and yet more so to ascertain the manner of my unfortunate mother's fate. Both abroad and in England, I had sought tidings of her everywhere, but in vain; in mentioning my mother's retiring into a convent, you have explained the reason why my efforts were so fruitless. With these two objects in view, I thought myself more likely to learn the whole truth as a stranger than in my proper person; for in the latter case, I deemed it probable that your delicacy and kindness might tempt you to conceal whatever was calculated to wound my feelings, and to exaggerate anything that might tend to flatter or to soothe them. Thank Heaven, I now learn that I have a right to the name my boyhood bore, and that my birth is not branded with the foulest of private crimes, and that in death my father's heart yearned to his too hasty but repentant son. Enough of this: I have now only to request you, my friend, to accompany me, before daybreak on Wednesday morning, to a place several miles hence. Your presence there will be necessary to substantiate the proof for which I came hither."

"With all my heart, sir," cried the honest steward; "and after Wednesday you will, I trust, assume your rightful name."

"Certainly," replied Clarence; "since I am no longer 'the Disowned.'"

Leaving Clarence now for a brief while to renew his acquaintance with the scenes of his childhood, and to offer the tribute of his filial tears to the ashes of a father whose injustice had been but "the stinging of a heart the world had stung," we return to some old acquaintances in the various conduct of our drama.

CHAPTER LXXII.

Upon his couch the veiled Mokanna lay.—The Veiled Prophet.

The autumn sun broke through an apartment in a villa in the neighbourhood of London, furnished with the most prodigal yet not tasteless attention to luxury and show, within which, beside a table strewn with newspapers, letters, and accounts, lay Richard Crauford, extended carelessly upon a sofa which might almost have contented the Sybarite who quarrelled with a rose-leaf. At his elbow was a bottle half emptied and a wineglass just filled. An expression of triumph and enjoyment was visible upon his handsome but usually inexpressive countenance.

"Well," said he, taking up a newspaper, "let us read this paragraph again. What a beautiful sensation it is to see one's name in print. 'We understand that Richard Crauford, Esq., M. P. for —, is to be raised to the dignity of the peerage. There does not perhaps exist in the country a gentleman more universally beloved and esteemed' (mark that, Dicky Crauford). 'The invariable generosity with which his immense wealth has been employed, his high professional honour, the undeviating and consistent integrity of his political career' (ay, to be sure, it is only your honest fools who are inconsistent: no man can deviate who has one firm principle, self-interest), 'his manly and energetic attention to the welfare of religion' (he! he! he!), 'conjoined to a fortune almost incalculable, render this condescension of our gracious Sovereign no less judicious than deserved! We hear that the title proposed for the new peer is that of Viscount Innisdale, which, we believe, was formerly in the noble family of which Mr. Crauford is a distant branch.'

"He! he! he! Bravo! bravo! Viscount Innisdale, noble family, distant branch,—the devil I am! What an ignoramus my father was not to know that! Why, rest his soul, he never knew who his grandfather was; but the world shall not be equally ignorant of that important point. Let me see, who shall be Viscount Innisdale's great-grandfather? Well, well, whoever he is, here's long life to his great-grandson! 'Incalculable fortune!' Ay, ay, I hope at all events it will never be calculated. But now for my letters. Bah! this wine is a thought too acid for the cellars of Viscount Innisdale! What, another from Mother H —! Dark eyes, small mouth, sings like an angel, eighteen! Pish! I am too old for such follies now: 't is not pretty for Viscount Innisdale. Humph! Lisbon, seven hundred pounds five shillings and seven-pence —half-penny, is it, or farthing? I must note that down. Loan for King of Prussia. Well, must negotiate that to-morrow. Ah, Hockit, the wine-merchant, pipe of claret in the docks, vintage of 17—. Bravo! all goes smooth for Viscount Innisdale! Pish! from my damnable wife! What a pill for my lordship! What says she?"

DAWLISH, DEVONSHIRE. You have not, my dearest Richard, answered my letters for months. I do not, however, presume to complain of your silence; I know well that you have a great deal to occupy your time, both in business and pleasure. But one little line, dear Richard,—one little line, surely that is not too much now and then. I am most truly sorry to trouble you again about money; and you must know that I strive to be as saving as possible; ("Pish—curse the woman; sent her twenty pounds three months ago!") but I really am so distressed, and the people here are so pressing; and, at all events, I cannot bear the thought of your wife being disgraced. Pray, forgive me, Richard, and believe how painful it is in me to say so much. I know you will answer this! and, oh, do, do tell me how you are.

Ever your affectionate wife, CAROLINE CRAUFORD.

"Was there ever poor man so plagued? Where's my note book? Mem.— Send Car. to-morrow 20 pounds to last her the rest of the year. Mem. —Send Mother H—, 100 pounds. Mem.—Pay Hockit's bill, 830 pounds. Bless me, what shall I do with Viscountess Innisdale? Now, if I were not married, I would be son-in-law to a duke. Mem.—Go down to Dawlish, and see if she won't die soon. Healthy situation, I fear,— devilish unlucky,—must be changed. Mem.—Swamps in Essex. Who's that?"

A knock at the door disturbed Mr. Crauford in his meditations. He started up, hurried the bottle and glass under the sofa, where the descending drapery completely hid them; and, taking up a newspaper, said in a gentle tone, "Come in." A small thin man, bowing at every step, entered.

"Ah! Bradley, is it you, my good fellow?" said Crauford: "glad to see you,—a fine morning: but what brings you from town so early?"

"Why, sir," answered Mr. Bradley, very obsequiously, "something unpleasant has—"

"Merciful Heaven!" cried Crauford, blanched into the whiteness of death, and starting up from the sofa with a violence which frightened the timid Mr. Bradley to the other end of the room, "the counting-house, the books,—all safe?"

"Yes, sir, yes, at present, but—"

"But what, man?"

"Why, honoured sir," returned Mr. Bradley, bowing to the ground, "your partner, Mr. Jessopp, has been very inquisitive about the accounts. He says Mr. Da Costa, the Spanish merchant, has been insinuating very unpleasant hints, and that he must have a conversation with you at your earliest convenience; and when, sir, I ventured to remonstrate about the unreasonableness of attending to what Mr. Da Costa said, Mr. Jessopp was quite abusive, and declared that there seemed some very mysterious communication between you (begging your pardon, sir) and me, and that he did not know what business I, who had no share in the firm, had to interfere."

"But," said Crauford, "you were civil to him; did not reply hotly, eh! my good Bradley?"

"Lord forbid, sir; Lord forbid, that I should not know my place better, or that I should give an unbecoming word to the partner of my honoured benefactor. But, sir, if I dare venture to say so, I think Mr. Jessopp is a little jealous or so of you; he seemed quite in a passion at the paragraph in the paper about my honoured master's becoming a lord."

"Right, honest Bradley, right; he is jealous: we must soothe him. Go, my good fellow, go to him with my compliments, and say that I will be with him by one. Never fear this business will be easily settled."

And, bowing himself out of the room, Bradley withdrew. Left alone, a dark cloud gathered over the brow of Mr. Crauford.

"I am on a precipice," thought he; "but if my own brain does not turn giddy with the prospect, all yet may be safe. Cruel necessity, that obliged me to admit another into the business, that foiled me of Mordaunt, and drove me upon this fawning rascal! So, so: I almost think there is a Providence, now that Mordaunt has grown rich; but then his wife died; ay, ay, God saved him, but the devil killed her. [Dieu a puni ce fripon, le diable a noye les autres.—VOLTAIRE: *Candide*.] He! he! he! But, seriously, seriously, there is danger in the very air I breathe! I must away to that envious Jessopp instantly; but first let me finish the bottle."

CHAPTER LXXIII.

A strange harmonious inclination
Of all degrees to reformation.—Hudibras.

About seven miles from W—, on the main road from —, there was in 17— a solitary public-house, which by the by is now a magnificent hotel. Like many of its brethren in the more courtly vicinity of the metropolis, this amoenum hospitium peregrinae gentis then had its peculiar renown for certain dainties of the palate; and various in degree and character were the numerous parties from the neighbouring towns and farms, which upon every legitimate holiday were wont to assemble at the mansion of mine host of the Jolly Angler, in order to feast upon eel-pie and grow merry over the true Herefordshire cider.

But upon that special day on which we are about to introduce our reader into the narrow confines of its common parlour, the said hostelry was crowded with persons of a very different description from the peaceable idlers who were ordinarily wont to empty mine host's larder, and forget the price of corn over the divine inspirations of pomarial nectar. Instead of the indolent, satisfied air of the saturnalian merry-maker, the vagrant angler, or the gentleman farmer, with his comely dame who "walked in silk attire, and siller had to spare;" instead of the quiet yet glad countenances of such hunters of pleasure and eaters of eel-pie, or the more obstreperous joy of urchins let loose from school to taste some brief and perennial recreation, and mine host's delicacies at the same time; instead of these, the little parlour presented a various and perturbed group, upon whose features neither eel-pie nor Herefordshire cider had wrought the relaxation of a holiday or the serenity of a momentary content.

The day to which we now refer was the one immediately preceding that appointed for the far-famed meeting at W—; and many of the patriots, false or real, who journeyed from a distance to attend that rendezvous, had halted at our host's of the Jolly Angler, both as being within a convenient space from the appointed spot, and as a tabernacle where promiscuous intrusion and (haply) immoderate charges were less likely to occur than at the bustling and somewhat extraordinary hotels and inns of the town of W—.

The times in which this meeting was held were those of great popular excitement and discontent; and the purport of the meeting proposed was to petition Parliament against the continuance of the American war and the King against the continuance of his ministers.

Placards of an unusually inflammatory and imprudent nature had given great alarm to the more sober and well-disposed persons in the neighbourhood of W—; and so much fear was felt or assumed upon the occasion that a new detachment of Lord Ulswater's regiment had been especially ordered into the town; and it was generally rumoured that the legal authorities would interfere, even by force, for the dispersion of the meeting in question. These circumstances had given the measure a degree of general and anxious interest which it would not otherwise have excited; and while everybody talked of the danger of attending the assembly, everybody resolved to thrust himself into it.

It was about the goodly hour of noon, and the persons assembled were six in number, all members of the most violent party, and generally considered by friend and foe as embracers of republican tenets. One of these, a little, oily, corpulent personage, would have appeared far too sleek and well fed for a disturber of things existing, had not a freckled, pimpled, and fiery face, a knit brow, and a small black eye of intolerable fierceness belied the steady and contented appearance of his frame and girth. This gentleman, by name Christopher Culpepper, spoke in a quick, muffled, shuffling sort of tone, like the pace of a Welsh pony, somewhat lame, perfectly broken-winded, but an exemplary ambler for all that.

Next to him sat, with hands clasped over his knees, a thin, small man, with a countenance prematurely wrinkled and an air of great dejection. Poor Castleton! his had been, indeed, the bitter lot of a man, honest but weak, who attaches himself, heart and soul, to a public cause which, in his life at least, is hopeless. Three other men were sitting by the open window, disputing, with the most vehement gestures, upon the character of Wilkes; and at the other window, alone, silent, and absorbed, sat a man whose appearance and features were singularly calculated to arrest and to concentrate attention. His raven hair, grizzled with the first advance of age, still preserved its strong, wiry curl and luxuriant thickness. His brows, large, bushy, and indicative of great determination, met over eyes which at that moment were fixed upon vacancy with a look of thought and calmness very unusual to their ordinary restless and rapid glances. His mouth, that great seat of character, was firmly and obstinately shut; and though, at the first observation, its downward curve and iron severity wore the appearance of unmitigated harshness, disdain, and resolve, yet a more attentive deducer of signs from features would not have been able to detect in its expression anything resembling selfishness or sensuality, and in that absence would have found sufficient to redeem the more repellent indications of mind which it betrayed.

Presently the door was opened, and the landlord, making some apology to both parties for having no other apartment unoccupied, introduced a personage whose dress and air, as well as a kind of saddle-bag, which he would not intrust to any other bearer than himself, appeared to denote him as one rather addicted to mercantile than political speculations. Certainly he did not seem much at home among the patriotic reformers, who, having glared upon him for a single moment, renewed, without remark, their several attitudes or occupations.

The stranger, after a brief pause, approached the solitary reformer whom we last described; and making a salutation, half timorous and half familiar, thus accosted him,—

"Your servant, Mr. Wolfe, your servant. I think I had the pleasure of hearing you a long time ago at the Westminster election: very eloquent you were, sir, very!"

Wolfe looked up for an instant at the face of the speaker, and, not recognizing it, turned abruptly away, threw open the window, and, leaning out, appeared desirous of escaping from all further intrusion on the part of the stranger; but that gentleman was by no means of a nature easily abashed.

"Fine day, sir, for the time of year; very fine day, indeed. October is a charming month, as my lamented friend and customer, the late Lady Waddilove, was accustomed to say. Talking of that, sir, as the winter is now approaching, do you not think it would be prudent, Mr. Wolfe, to provide yourself with an umbrella? I have an admirable one which I might dispose of: it is from the effects of the late Lady Waddilove. 'Brown,' said her ladyship, a short time before her death, 'Brown, you are a good creature; but you ask too much for the Dresden vase. We have known each other a long time; you must take fourteen pounds ten shillings, and you may have that umbrella in the corner into the bargain.' Mr. Wolfe, the bargain was completed, and the umbrella became mine: it may now be yours."

And so saying, Mr. Brown, depositing his saddle-bag on the ground, proceeded to unfold an umbrella of singular antiquity and form,—a very long stick, tipped with ivory, being surmounted with about a quarter of a yard of sea-green silk, somewhat discoloured by time and wear.

"It is a beautiful article, sir," said Mr. Brown, admiringly surveying it: "is it not?"

"Pshaw!" said Wolfe, impatiently, "what have I to do with your goods and chattels? Go and palm the cheatings and impositions of your pitiful trade upon some easier gull."

"Cheatings and impositions, Mr. Wolfe!" cried the slandered Brown, perfectly aghast; "I would have you to know, sir, that I have served the first families in the country, ay, and in this county too, and never had such words applied to me before. Sir, there was the late Lady Waddilove, and the respected Mrs. Minden, and her nephew the ambassador, and the Duchess of Pugadale, and Mr. Mordaunt of Mordaunt Court, poor gentleman, though he is poor no more," and Mr. Brown proceeded to enumerate the long list of his customers.

Now, we have stated that Wolfe, though he had never known the rank of Mordaunt, was acquainted

with his real name, and, as the sound caught his ear, he muttered, "Mordaunt, Mordaunt, ay, but not my former acquaintance,—not him who was called Glendower. No, no: the man cannot mean him."

"Yes, sir, but I do mean him," cried Brown, in a rage. "I do mean that Mr. Glendower, who afterwards took another name, but whose real appellation is Mr. Algernon Mordaunt of Mordaunt Court, in this county, sir."

"What description of man is he?" said Wolfe; "rather tall, slender, with an air and mien like a king's, I was going to say, but better than a king's, like a freeman's?"

"Ay, ay—the same," answered Mr. Brown, sullenly; "but why should I tell you? 'Cheating and imposition,' indeed! I am sure my word can be of no avail to you; and I sha' n't stay here any longer to be insulted, Mr. Wolfe, which, I am sure, talking of freemen, no freeman ought to submit to; but as the late Lady Waddilove once very wisely said to me, 'Brown, never have anything to do with those republicans: they are the worst tyrants of all.' Good morning, Mr. Wolfe; gentlemen, your servant; 'cheating and imposition,' indeed! and Mr. Brown banged the door as he departed.

"Wolfe," said Mr. Christopher Culpepper, "who is that man?"

"I know not," answered the republican, laconically, and gazing on the ground, apparently in thought.

"He has the air of a slave," quoth the free Culpepper, and slaves cannot bear the company of freemen; therefore he did right to go, whe-w! Had we a proper and thorough and efficient reform, human nature would not be thus debased by trades and callings and barter and exchange, for all professions are injurious to the character and the dignity of man, whe-w! but, as I shall prove upon the hustings to-morrow, it is in vain to hope for any amendment in the wretched state of things until the people of these realms are fully, freely, and fairly represented, whe-w! Gentlemen, it is past two, and we have not ordered dinner, whe-w!" (N. B.—This ejaculation denotes the kind of snuffle which lent peculiar energy to the dicta of Mr. Culpepper.)

"Ring the bell, then, and summon the landlord," said, very pertinently, one of the three disputants upon the character of Wilkes.

The landlord appeared; dinner was ordered.

"Pray," said Wolfe, "has that man, Mr. Brown I think he called himself, left the inn?"

"He has, sir, for he was mightily offended at something which—"

"And," interrupted Wolfe, "how far hence does Mr. Mordaunt live?"

"About five miles on the other side of W—," answered mine host.

Wolfe rose, seized his hat, and was about to depart.

"Stay, stay," cried citizen Christopher Culpepper; "you will not leave us till after dinner?"

"I shall dine at W—," answered Wolfe, quitting the room.

"Then our reckoning will be heavier," said Culpepper. "It is not handsome in Wolfe to leave us, whe-w! Really I think that our brother in the great cause has of late relaxed in his attentions and zeal to the goddess of our devotions, whe-w!"

"It is human nature!" cried one of the three disputants upon the character of Wilkes.

"It is not human nature!" cried the second disputant, folding his arms doggedly, in preparation for a discussion.

"Contemptible human nature!" exclaimed the third disputant, soliloquizing with a supercilious expression of hateful disdain.

"Poor human nature!" murmured Castleton, looking upward with a sigh; and though we have not given to that gentleman other words than these, we think they are almost sufficient to let our readers into his character.

CHAPTER LXXIV.

Silvis, ubi passim
Palantes error certo de tramite pellit,
Ille sinistrorsum, hic dextrorsum abit; unus utrique
Error, sed variis illudit partibus.—HORACE.

["Wandering in those woods where error evermore forces life's stragglers from the beaten path,—this one deflects to the left, his fellow chooses the exact contrary. The fault is all the same in each, but it excuses itself by a thousand different reasons."]

As Wolfe strode away from the inn, he muttered to himself,—

"Can it be that Mordaunt has suddenly grown rich? If so, I rejoice at it. True, that he was not for our cause, but he had the spirit and the heart which belonged to it. Had he not been bred among the prejudices of birth, or had he lived in stormier times, he might have been the foremost champion of freedom. As it is, I rather lament than condemn. Yet I would fain see him once more. Perhaps prosperity may have altered his philosophy. But can he, indeed, be the same Mordaunt of whom that trading itinerant spoke? Can he have risen to the pernicious eminence of a landed aristocrat? Well, it is worth the journey; for if he have power in the neighbourhood, I am certain that he will exert it for our protection; and, at the worst, I shall escape from the idle words of my compatriots. Oh! if it were possible that the advocates could debase the glory of the cause, how long since should I have flinched from the hardship and the service to which my life is devoted! Self-interest; Envy, that snarls at all above it, without even the beast's courage to bite; Folly, that knows not the substance of Freedom, but loves the glitter of its name; Fear, that falters; Crime, that seeks in licentiousness an excuse; Disappointment, only craving occasion to rail; Hatred; Sourness, boasting of zeal, but only venting the blackness of rancour and evil passion,—all these make our adherents, and give our foes the handle and the privilege to scorn and to despise. But man chooses the object, and Fate only furnishes the tools. Happy for our posterity, that when the object is once gained, the frailty of the tools will be no more!"

Thus soliloquizing, the republican walked rapidly onwards, till a turn of the road brought before his eye the form of Mr. Brown, seated upon a little rough pony, and "whistling as he went for want of thought."

Wolfe quickened his pace, and soon overtook him.

"You must forgive me, my good man," said he, soothingly; "I meant not to impeach your honesty or your calling. Perhaps I was hasty and peevish; and, in sad earnest, I have much to tease and distract me."

"Well, sir, well," answered Mr. Brown, greatly mollified; "I am sure no Christian can be more forgiving than I am; and, since you are sorry for what you were pleased to say, let us think no more about it. But touching the umbrella, Mr. Wolfe, have you a mind for that interesting and useful relic of the late Lady Waddilove?"

"Not at present, I thank you," said Wolfe, mildly; "I care little for the inclemencies of the heavens, and you may find many to whom your proffered defence from them may be more acceptable. But tell me if the Mr. Mordaunt you mentioned was ever residing in town, and in very indifferent circumstances?"

"Probably he was," said the cautious Brown, who, as we before said, had been bribed into silence, and who now grievously repented that passion had betrayed him into the imprudence of candour; "but I really do not busy myself about other people's affairs. 'Brown,' said the late Lady Waddilove to me, 'Brown, you are a good creature, and never talk of what does not concern you.' Those, Mr. Wolfe, were her ladyship's own words."

"As you please," said the reformer, who did not want shrewdness, and saw that his point was already sufficiently gained; "as you please. And now, to change the subject, I suppose we shall have your attendance at the meeting at W—— to-morrow?"

"Ay," replied the worthy Brown: "I thought it likely I should meet many of my old customers in the town on such a busy occasion; so I went a little out of my way home to London, in order to spend a night or two there. Indeed, I have some valuable articles for Mr. Glumford, the magistrate, who will be in attendance to-morrow."

"They say," observed Wolfe, "that the magistrates, against all law, right, and custom, will dare to interfere with and resist the meeting. Think you report says true?"

"Nay," returned Brown, prudently, "I cannot exactly pretend to decide the question: all I know is that

Squire Glumford said to me, at his own house, five days ago, as he was drawing on his boots, 'Brown,' said he, 'Brown, mark my words, we shall do for those rebellious dogs!'"

"Did he say so?" muttered Wolfe, between his teeth. "Oh, for the old times, or those yet to come, when our answer would have been, or shall be, the sword!"

"And you know," pursued Mr. Brown, "that Lord Ulswater and his regiment are in town, and have even made great preparations against the meeting a week ago."

"I have heard this," said Wolfe; "but I cannot think that any body of armed men dare interrupt or attack a convocation of peaceable subjects, met solely to petition Parliament against famine for themselves and slavery for their children."

"Famine!" quoth Mr. Brown. "Indeed it is very true, very! times are dreadfully bad. I can scarcely get my own living; Parliament certainly ought to do something: but you must forgive me, Mr. Wolfe; it may be dangerous to talk with you on these matters; and, now I think of it, the sooner I get to W—— the better; good morning; a shower's coming on. You won't have the umbrella, then?"

"They dare not," said Wolfe to himself, "no, no,—they dare not attack us; they dare not;" and clenching his fist, he pursued, with a quicker step, and a more erect mien, his solitary way.

When he was about the distance of three miles from W——, he was overtaken by a middle-aged man of a frank air and a respectable appearance. "Good day, sir," said he; "we seem to be journeying the same way: will it be against your wishes to join company?"

Wolfe assented, and the stranger resumed:—

"I suppose, sir, you intend to be present at the meeting at W—— to-morrow? There will be an immense concourse, and the entrance of a new detachment of soldiers, and the various reports of the likelihood of their interference with the assembly, make it an object of some interest and anxiety to look forward to."

"True, true," said Wolfe, slowly, eying his new acquaintance with a deliberate and scrutinizing attention. "It will, indeed, be interesting to see how far an evil and hardy government will venture to encroach upon the rights of the people, which it ruins while it pretends to rule."

"Of a truth," rejoined the other, "I rejoice that I am no politician. I believe my spirit is as free as any cooped in the narrow dungeon of earth's clay can well be; yet I confess that it has drawn none of its liberty from book, pamphlet, speech, or newspaper, of modern times."

"So much the worse for you, sir," said Wolfe, sourly: "the man who has health and education can find no excuse for supineness or indifference to that form of legislation by which his country decays or prospers."

"Why," said the other, gayly, "I willingly confess myself less of a patriot than a philosopher; and as long as I am harmless, I strive very little to be useful, in a public capacity; in a private one, as a father, a husband, and a neighbour, I trust I am not utterly without my value."

"Pish!" cried Wolfe; "let no man who forgets his public duties prate of his private merits. I tell you, man, that he who can advance by a single hair's-breadth the happiness or the freedom of mankind has done more to save his own soul than if he had paced every step of the narrow circle of his domestic life with the regularity of clockwork."

"You may be right," quoth the stranger, carelessly; "but I look on things in the mass, and perhaps see only the superficies, while you, I perceive already, are a lover of the abstract. For my part, Harry Fielding's two definitions seem to me excellent. 'Patriot,—a candidate for a place!' 'Politics,—the art of getting such a place!' Perhaps, sir, as you seem a man of education, you remember the words of our great novelist."

"No!" answered Wolfe, a little contemptuously; "I cannot say that I burden my memory with the deleterious witticisms and shallow remarks of writers of fancy. It has been a mighty and spreading evil to the world that the vain fictions of the poets or the exaggerations of novelists have been hitherto so welcomed and extolled. Better had it been for us if the destruction of the lettered wealth at Alexandria had included all the lighter works which have floated, from their very levity, down the stream of time, an example and a corruption to the degraded geniuses of later days."

The eyes of the stranger sparkled. "Why, you outgoth the Goth!" exclaimed he, sharply. "But you surely preach against what you have not studied. Confess that you are but slightly acquainted with Shakspeare, and Spenser, and noble Dan Chaucer. Ay, if you knew them as well as I do, you would, like

me, give—

"To hem faith and full credence,
And in your heart have hem in reverence."

"Pish!" again muttered Wolfe; and then rejoined aloud, "It grieves me to see time so wasted, and judgment so perverted, as yours appears to have been; but it fills me with pity and surprise, as well as grief, to find that, so far from shame at the effeminacy of your studies, you appear to glory and exult in them."

"May the Lord help me, and lighten thee," said Cole; for it was he. "You are at least not a novelty in human wisdom, whatever you may be in character; for you are far from the only one proud of being ignorant, and pitying those who are not so."

Wolfe darted one of his looks of fire at the speaker, who, nothing abashed, met the glance with an eye, if not as fiery, at least as bold.

"I see," said the republican, "that we shall not agree upon the topics you have started. If you still intrude your society upon me, you will, at least, choose some other subject of conversation."

"Pardon me," said Cole, whose very studies, while they had excited, in their self-defence, his momentary warmth, made him habitually courteous and urbane, "pardon me for my hastiness of expression. I own myself in fault." And, with this apology, our ex-king slid into the new topics which the scenery and the weather afforded him.

Wolfe, bent upon the object of his present mission, made some inquiries respecting Mordaunt; and though Cole only shared the uncertain information of the country gossips as to the past history of that person, yet the little he did know was sufficient to confirm the republican in his belief of Algernon's identity; while the ex-gypsy's account of his rank and reputation in the country made Wolfe doubly anxious to secure, if possible, his good offices and interference on behalf of the meeting. But the conversation was not always restricted to neutral and indifferent ground, but ever and anon wandered into various allusions or opinions from the one, certain to beget retort or controversy in the other.

Had we time and our reader patience, it would have been a rare and fine contrast to have noted more at large the differences of thought and opinion between the companions: each in his several way so ardent for liberty, and so impatient of the control and customs of society; each so enthusiastic for the same object, yet so coldly contemptuous to the enthusiasm of the other. The one guided only by his poetical and erratic tastes, the other solely by dreams, seeming to the world no less baseless, yet, to his own mind, bearing the name of stern judgment and inflexible truth. Both men of active and adventurous spirits, to whom forms were fetters and ceremonies odious; yet, deriving from that mutual similarity only pity for mutual perversion, they were memorable instances of the great differences congeniality itself will occasion, and of the never-ending varieties which minds, rather under the influence of imagination than judgment, will create.

CHAPTER LXXV.

Gratis anhelans, multa agendo, nihil agens.—PHAEDRUS.

["Panting and labouring in vain; doing much,—effecting nothing."]

Upon entering the town, the streets displayed all the bustle and excitement which the approaching meeting was eminently calculated to create in a place ordinarily quiescent and undisturbed: groups of men were scattered in different parts, conversing with great eagerness; while here and there some Demosthenes of the town, impatient of the coming strife, was haranguing his little knot of admiring friends, and preparing his oratorical organs by petty skirmishing for the grand battle of the morrow. Now and then the eye roved upon the gaunt forms of Lord Ulswater's troopers, as they strolled idly along the streets, in pairs, perfectly uninterested by the great event which set all the more peaceable inmates of the town in a ferment, and returning, with a slighting and supercilious glance, the angry looks and muttered anathemas which, ever and anon, the hardier spirits of the petitioning party liberally bestowed upon them.

As Wolfe and his comrade entered the main street, the former was accosted by some one of his compatriots, who, seizing him by the arm, was about to apprise the neighbouring idlers, by a sudden

exclamation, of the welcome entrance of the eloquent and noted republican. But Wolfe perceived and thwarted his design.

"Hush!" said he, in a low voice; "I am only now on my way to an old friend, who seems a man of influence in these parts, and may be of avail to us on the morrow; keep silence, therefore, with regard to my coming till I return. I would not have my errand interrupted."

"As you will," said the brother spirit: "but whom have you here, a fellow-labourer?" and the reformer pointed to Cole, who, with an expression of shrewd humour, blended with a sort of philosophical compassion, stood at a little distance waiting for Wolfe, and eying the motley groups assembled before him.

"No," answered Wolfe; "he is some vain and idle sower of unprofitable flowers; a thing who loves poetry, and, for aught I know, writes it: but that reminds me that I must rid myself of his company; yet stay; do you know this neighbourhood sufficiently to serve me as a guide?"

"Ay," quoth the other; "I was born within three miles of the town."

"Indeed!" rejoined Wolfe; "then perhaps you can tell me if there is any way of reaching a place called Mordaunt Court without passing through the more public and crowded thoroughfares."

"To be sure," rejoined the brother spirit; "you have only to turn to the right up yon hill, and you will in an instant be out of the purlieu and precincts of W—, and on your shortest road to Mordaunt Court; but surely it is not to its owner that you are bound?"

"And why not?" said Wolfe.

"Because," replied the other, "he is the wealthiest, the highest, and, as report says, the haughtiest aristocrat of these parts."

"So much the better, then," said Wolfe, "can he aid us in obtaining a quiet hearing to-morrow, undisturbed by those liveried varlets of hire, who are termed, in sooth, Britain's defence! Much better, when we think of all they cost us to pamper and to clothe, should they be termed Britain's ruin: but farewell for the present; we shall meet to-night; your lodgings—"

"Yonder," said the other, pointing to a small inn opposite; and Wolfe, nodding his adieu, returned to Cole, whose vivacious and restless nature had already made him impatient of his companion's delay.

"I must take my leave of you now," said Wolfe, "which I do with a hearty exhortation that you will change your studies, fit only for effeminate and enslaved minds."

"And I return the exhortation," answered Cole. "Your studies seem to me tenfold more crippling than mine: mine take all this earth's restraints from me, and yours seem only to remind you that all earth is restraint: mine show me whatever worlds the fondest fancy could desire; yours only the follies and chains of this. In short, while 'my mind to me a kingdom is,' yours seems to consider the whole universe itself nothing but a great meeting for the purpose of abusing ministers and demanding reform!"

Not too well pleased by this answer, and at the same time indisposed to the delay of further reply, Wolfe contented himself with an iron sneer of disdain, and, turning on his heel, strode rapidly away in the direction his friend had indicated.

Meanwhile, Cole followed him with his eye till he was out of sight, and then muttered to himself, "Never was there a fitter addition to old Barclay's 'Ship of Fools'! I should not wonder if this man's patriotism leads him from despising the legislature into breaking the law; and, faith, the surest way to the gallows is less through vice than discontent: yet I would fain hope better things for him; for, methinks, he is neither a common declaimer nor an ordinary man."

With these words the honest Cole turned away, and, strolling towards the Golden Fleece, soon found himself in the hospitable mansion of Mistress and Mister Merrylack.

While the ex-king was taking his ease at his inn, Wolfe proceeded to Mordaunt Court. The result of the meeting that there ensued was a determination on the part of Algernon to repair immediately to W—.

CHAPTER LXXVI.

The commons here in Kent are up in arms.—Second Part of Henry VI.

When Mordaunt arrived at W—, he found that the provincial deities (who were all assembled at dinner with the principal inhabitants of the town), in whose hands the fate of the meeting was placed, were in great doubt and grievous consternation. He came in time, first to balance the votes, and ultimately to decide them. His mind, prudent and acute, when turned to worldly affairs, saw at a glance the harmless though noisy nature of the meeting; and he felt that the worst course the government or the county could pursue would be to raise into importance, by violence, what otherwise would meet with ridicule from most and indifference from the rest.

His large estates, his ancient name, his high reputation for talent, joined to that manner, half eloquent and half commanding, which rarely fails of effect when deliberation only requires a straw on either side to become decision,—all these rendered his interference of immediate avail; and it was settled that the meeting should, as similar assemblies had done before, proceed and conclude, undisturbed by the higher powers, so long as no positive act of sedition to the government or danger to the town was committed.

Scarcely was this arrangement agreed upon, before Lord Ulswater, who had hitherto been absent, entered the room in which the magisterial conclave was assembled. Mr. Glumford (whom our readers will possibly remember as the suitor to Isabel St. Leger, and who had at first opposed, and then reluctantly subscribed to, Mordaunt's interference) bustled up to him.

"So, so, my lord," said he, "since I had the honour of seeing your lordship, quite a new sort of trump has been turned up."

"I do not comprehend your metaphorical elegances of speech, Mr. Glumford," said Lord Ulswater.

Mr. Glumford explained. Lord Ulswater's cheek grew scarlet. "So Mr. Mordaunt has effected this wise alteration," said he.

"Nobody else, my lord, nobody else: and I am sure, though your lordship's estates are at the other end of the county, yet they are much larger than his; and since your lordship has a troop at your command, and that sort of thing, I would not, if I were your lordship, suffer any such opposition to your wishes."

Without making a reply to this harangue, Lord Ulswater stalked haughtily up to Mordaunt, who was leaning against the wainscot and conversing with those around him.

"I cannot but conceive, Mr. Mordaunt," said he, with a formal bow, "that I have been misinformed in the intelligence I have just received."

"Lord Ulswater will perhaps inform me to what intelligence he alludes."

"That Mr. Mordaunt, the representative of one of the noblest families in England, has given the encouragement and influence of his name and rank to the designs of a seditious and turbulent mob."

Mordaunt smiled slightly, as he replied, "Your lordship rightly believes that you are misinformed. It is precisely because I would not have the mob you speak of seditious or turbulent that I have made it my request that the meeting of to-morrow should be suffered to pass off undisturbed."

"Then, sir," cried Lord Ulswater, striking the table with a violence which caused three reverend potentates of the province to start back in dismay, "I cannot but consider such interference on your part to the last degree impolitic and uncalled for: these, sir, are times of great danger to the State, and in which it is indispensably requisite to support and strengthen the authority of the law."

"I waive, at present," answered Mordaunt, "all reply to language neither courteous nor appropriate. I doubt not but that the magistrates will decide as is most in accordance with the spirit of that law which, in this and in all times, should be supported."

"Sir," said Lord Ulswater, losing his temper more and more, as he observed that the bystanders, whom he had been accustomed to awe, all visibly inclined to the opinion of Mordaunt, "sir, if your name has been instrumental in producing so unfortunate a determination on the part of the magistrates, I shall hold you responsible to the government for those results which ordinary prudence may calculate upon."

"When Lord Ulswater," said Mordaunt, sternly, "has learned what is due not only to the courtesies of society, but to those legitimate authorities of his country, who (he ventures to suppose) are to be influenced contrary to their sense of duty by any individual, then he may perhaps find leisure to make

himself better acquainted with the nature of those laws which he now so vehemently upholds."

"Mr. Mordaunt, you will consider yourself answerable to me for those words," said Lord Ulswater, with a tone of voice unnaturally calm; and the angry flush of his countenance gave place to a livid paleness. Then, turning on his heel, he left the room.

As he repaired homeward he saw one of his soldiers engaged in a loud and angry contest with a man in the plain garb of a peaceful citizen; a third person, standing by, appeared ineffectually endeavouring to pacify the disputants. A rigid disciplinarian, Lord Ulswater allowed not even party feeling, roused as it was, to conquer professional habits. He called off the soldier, and the man with whom the latter had been engaged immediately came up to Lord Ulswater, with a step as haughty as his own. The third person, who had attempted the peacemaker, followed him.

"I presume, sir," said he, "that you are an officer of this man's regiment."

"I am the commanding officer, sir," said Lord Ulswater, very little relishing the air and tone of the person who addressed him.

"Then," answered the man (who was, indeed, no other than Wolfe, who, having returned to W— with Mordaunt, had already succeeded in embroiling himself in a dispute), "then, sir, I look to you for his punishment and my redress;" and Wolfe proceeded in his own exaggerated language to detail a very reasonable cause of complaint. The fact was that Wolfe, meeting one of his compatriots and conversing with him somewhat loudly, had uttered some words which attracted the spleen of the soldier, who was reeling home very comfortably intoxicated; and the soldier had most assuredly indulged in a copious abuse of the d—d rebel who could not walk the streets without chattering sedition.

Wolfe's friend confirmed the statement.

The trooper attempted to justify himself; but Lord Ulswater saw his intoxication in an instant, and, secretly vexed that the complaint was not on the other side, ordered the soldier to his quarters, with a brief but sure threat of punishment on the morrow. Not willing, however, to part with the "d—d rebel" on terms so flattering to the latter, Lord Ulswater, turning to Wolfe with a severe and angry air, said,—

"As for you, fellow, I believe the whole fault was on your side; and if you dare again give vent to your disaffected ravings, I shall have you sent to prison to tame your rank blood upon bread and water. Begone, and think yourself fortunate to escape now!"

The fierce spirit of Wolfe was in arms on the instant; and his reply, in subjecting him to Lord Ulswater's threat, might at least have prevented his enlightening the public on the morrow, had not his friend, a peaceable, prudent man, seized him by the arm, and whispered, "What are you about? Consider for what you are here: another word may rob the assembly of your presence. A man bent on a public cause must not, on the eve of its trial, enlist in a private quarrel."

"True, my friend, true," said Wolfe, swallowing his rage and eying Lord Ulswater's retreating figure with a menacing look; "but the time may yet come when I shall have license to retaliate on the upstart."

"So be it," quoth the other; "he is our bitterest enemy. You know, perhaps, that he is Lord Ulswater of the — regiment? It has been at his instigation that the magistrates proposed to disturb the meeting. He has been known publicly to say that all who attended the assembly ought to be given up to the swords of his troopers."

"The butchering dastard, to dream even of attacking unarmed men: but enough of him; I must tarry yet in the street to hear what success our intercessor has obtained." And as Wolfe passed the house in which the magisterial conclave sat, Mordaunt came out and accosted him.

"You have sworn to me that your purpose is peaceable," said Mordaunt.

"Unquestionably," answered Wolfe.

"And you will pledge yourself that no disturbance, that can either be effected or counteracted by yourself and friends, shall take place?"

"I will."

"Enough!" answered Mordaunt. "Remember that if you commit the least act that can be thought dangerous I may not be able to preserve you from the military. As it is, your meeting will be unopposed."

Contrary to Lord Ulswater's prediction, the meeting went off as quietly as an elderly maiden's tea-

party. The speakers, even Wolfe, not only took especial pains to recommend order and peace, but avoided, for the most part, all inflammatory enlargement upon the grievances of which they complained. And the sage foreboders of evil, who had locked up their silver spoons, and shaken their heads very wisely for the last week, had the agreeable mortification of observing rather an appearance of good humour upon the countenances of the multitude than that ferocious determination against the lives and limbs of the well-affected which they had so sorrowfully anticipated.

As Mordaunt (who had been present during the whole time of the meeting) mounted his horse and quitted the ground, Lord Ulswater, having just left his quarters, where he had been all day in expectation of some violent act of the orators or the mob demanding his military services, caught sight of him with a sudden recollection of his own passionate threat. There had been nothing in Mordaunt's words which would in our times have justified a challenge; but in that day duels were fought upon the slightest provocation. Lord Ulswater therefore rode up at once to a gentleman with whom he had some intimate acquaintance, and briefly saying that he had been insulted both as an officer and gentleman by Mr. Mordaunt, requested his friend to call upon that gentleman and demand satisfaction.

"To-morrow," said Lord Ulswater, "I have the misfortune to be unavoidably engaged. The next day you can appoint place and time of meeting."

"I must first see the gentleman to whom Mr. Mordaunt may refer me," said the friend, prudently; "and perhaps your honour may be satisfied without any hostile meeting at all."

"I think not," said Lord Ulswater, carelessly, as he rode away; "for Mr. Mordaunt is a gentleman, and gentlemen never apologize."

Wolfe was standing unobserved near Lord Ulswater while the latter thus instructed his proposed second. "Man of blood," muttered the republican; "with homicide thy code of honour, and massacre thine interpretation of law, by violence wouldst thou rule, and by violence mayst thou perish!"

CHAPTER LXXVII.

Jam te premet nox, fabulaeque Manes,
Et domus exilis Plutonis.—HORACE.

["This very hour Death shall overcome thee, and the fabled Manes, and the shadowy Plutonian realms receive thee."]

The morning was dull and heavy as Lord Ulswater mounted his horse, and unattended took his way towards Westborough Park. His manner was unusually thoughtful and absent; perhaps two affairs upon his hands, either of which seemed likely to end in bloodshed, were sufficient to bring reflection even to the mind of a cavalry officer.

He had scarcely got out of the town before he was overtaken by our worthy friend Mr. Glumford. As he had been a firm ally of Lord Ulswater in the contest respecting the meeting, so, when he joined and saluted that nobleman, Lord Ulswater, mindful of past services, returned his greeting with an air rather of condescension than hauteur. To say truth, his lordship was never very fond of utter loneliness, and the respectful bearing of Glumford, joined to that mutual congeniality which sympathy in political views always occasions, made him more pleased with the society than shocked with the intrusion of the squire; so that when Glumford said, "If your lordship's way lies along this road for the next five or six miles, perhaps you will allow me the honour of accompanying you," Lord Ulswater graciously signified his consent to the proposal, and carelessly mentioning that he was going to Westborough Park, slid into that conversation with his new companion which the meeting and its actors afforded.

Turn we for an instant to Clarence. At the appointed hour he had arrived at Westborough Park, and, bidding his companion, the trusty Wardour, remain within the chaise which had conveyed them, he was ushered with a trembling heart, but a mien erect and self-composed, into Lady Westborough's presence; the marchioness was alone.

"I am sensible, sir," said she, with a little embarrassment, "that it is not exactly becoming to my station and circumstances to suffer a meeting of the present nature between Lord Ulswater and yourself to be held within this house; but I could not resist the request of Lord Ulswater, conscious

from his character that it could contain nothing detrimental to the—to the consideration and delicacy due to Lady Flora Ardenne."

Clarence bowed. "So far as I am concerned," said he, "I feel confident that Lady Westborough will not repent of her condescension."

There was a pause.

"It is singular," said Lady Westborough, looking to the clock upon an opposite table, "that Lord Ulswater has not yet arrived."

"It is," said Clarence, scarcely conscious of his words, and wondering whether Lady Flora would deign to appear. Another pause. Lady Westborough felt the awkwardness of her situation.

Clarence made an effort to recover himself.

"I do not see," said he, "the necessity of delaying the explanation I have to offer to your ladyship till my Lord Ulswater deems it suitable to appear. Allow me at once to enter upon a history, told in few words and easily proved."

"Stay," said Lady Westborough, struggling with her curiosity; "it is due to one who has stood in so peculiar a situation in our family to wait yet a little longer for his coming. We will therefore, till the hour is completed, postpone the object of our meeting."

Clarence again bowed and was silent. Another and a longer pause ensued: it was broken by the sound of the clock striking; the hour was completed.

"Now," began Clarence, when he was interrupted by a sudden and violent commotion in the hall. Above all was heard a loud and piercing cry, in which Clarence recognized the voice of the old steward. He rose abruptly, and stood motionless and aghast; his eyes met those of Lady Westborough, who, pale and agitated, lost for the moment all her habitual self-command. The sound increased: Clarence rushed from the room into the hall; the open door of the apartment revealed to Lady Westborough, as to him, a sight which allowed her no further time for hesitation. She hurried after Clarence into the hall, gave one look, uttered one shriek of horror, and fainted.

CHAPTER LXXVIII.

I den.—But thou wilt brave me in these saucy terms. Cade.—Brave thee I ay, by the best blood that ever was broached, and beard thee too.—SHAKSPEARE.

"You see, my lord," said Mr. Glumford to Lord Ulswater, as they rode slowly on, "that as long as those rebellious scoundrels are indulged in their spoutings and meetings, and that sort of thing, that—that there will be no bearing them."

Very judiciously remarked, sir," replied Lord Ulswater. "I wish all gentlemen of birth and consideration viewed the question in the same calm, dispassionate, and profound light that you do. Would to Heaven it were left to me to clear the country of those mutinous and dangerous rascals: I would make speedy and sure work of it."

"I am certain you would, my lord; I am certain you would. It is a thousand pities that pompous fellow Mordaunt interfered yesterday, with his moderation, and policy, and all that sort of thing; so foolish, you know, my lord,—mere theory and romance, and that sort of thing: we should have had it all our own way, if he had not."

Lord Ulswater played with his riding-whip, but did not reply. Mr. Glumford continued,—

"Pray, my lord, did your lordship see what an ugly ill-dressed set of dogs those meetingers were; that Wolfe, above all? Oh, he's a horrid-looking fellow. By the by, he left the town this very morning; I saw him take leave of his friends in the street just before I set out. He is going to some other meeting,—on foot too. Only think of the folly of talking about the policy and prudence and humanity, and that sort of thing, of sparing such a pitiful poor fellow as that; can't afford a chaise, or a stage-coach even, my lord,—positively can't."

"You see the matter exactly in its true light, Mr. Glumford," said his lordship, patting his fine horse, which was somewhat impatient of the slow pace of its companion.

"A very beautiful animal of your lordship," said Mr. Glumford, spurring his own horse,—a heavy, dull quadruped with an obstinate ill-set tail, a low shoulder, and a Roman nose. "I am very partial to horses myself, and love a fine horse as well as anybody." Lord Ulswater cast a glance at his companion's steed, and seeing nothing in its qualities to justify this assertion of attachment to fine horses was silent: Lord Ulswater never flattered even his mistress, much less Mr. Glumford.

"I will tell you, my lord," continued Mr. Glumford, "what a bargain this horse was;" and the squire proceeded, much to Lord Ulswater's discontent, to retail the history of his craft in making the said bargain.

The riders were now entering a part of the road, a little more than two miles from Westborough Park, in which the features of the neighbouring country took a bolder and ruder aspect than they had hitherto worn. On one side of the road, the view opened upon a descent of considerable depth, and the dull sun looked drearily over a valley in which large fallow fields, a distant and solitary spire, and a few stunted and withering trees formed the chief characteristics. On the other side of the road a narrow footpath was separated from the highway by occasional posts; and on this path Lord Ulswater (how the minute and daily occurrences of life show the grand pervading principles of character!) was, at the time we refer to, riding, in preference to the established thoroughfare for equestrian and aurigal travellers. The side of this path farthest from the road was bordered by a steep declivity of stony and gravelly earth, which almost deserved the dignified appellation of a precipice; and it was with no small exertion of dexterous horsemanship that Lord Ulswater kept his spirited and susceptible steed upon the narrow and somewhat perilous path, in spite of its frequent starts at the rugged descent below.

"I think, my lord, if I may venture to say so," said Mr. Glumford, having just finished the narration of his bargain, "that it would be better for you to take the high road just at present; for the descent from the footpath is steep and abrupt, and deuced crumbling! so that if your lordship's horse shied or took a wrong step, it might be attended with unpleasant consequences,—a fall, or that sort of thing."

"You are very good, sir," said Lord Ulswater, who, like most proud people, conceived advice an insult; "but I imagine myself capable of guiding my horse, at least upon a road so excellent as this."

"Certainly, my lord, certainly; I beg your pardon; but—bless me, who is that tall fellow in black, talking to himself yonder, my lord? The turn of the road hides him from you just at present; but I see him well. Ha! ha! what gestures he uses! I dare say he is one of the petitioners, and—yes, my lord, by Jupiter, it is Wolfe himself! You had better (excuse me, my lord) come down from the footpath: it is not wide enough for two people; and Wolfe, I dare say, a d—d rascal, would not get out of the way for the devil himself! He's a nasty, black, fierce-looking fellow; I would not for something meet him in a dark night, or that sort of thing!"

"I do not exactly understand, Mr. Glumford," returned Lord Ulswater, with a supercilious glance at that gentleman, "what peculiarities of temper you are pleased to impute to me, or from what you deduce the supposition that I shall move out of my way for a person like Mr. Woolt, or Wolfe, or whatever be his name."

"I beg your pardon, my lord, I am sure," answered Glumford: "of course your lordship knows best, and if the rogue is impertinent, why, I'm a magistrate, and will commit him; though, to be sure," continued our righteous Daniel, in a lower key, "he has a right to walk upon the footpath without being ridden over, or that sort of thing."

The equestrians were now very near Wolfe, who, turning hastily round, perceived, and immediately recognized Lord Ulswater. "Ah-ha!" muttered he to himself, "here comes the insolent thirster for blood, grudging us seemingly even the meagre comfort of the path which his horse's hoofs are breaking up; yet, thank Heaven," added the republican, looking with a stern satisfaction at the narrowness of the footing, "he cannot very well pass me, and the free lion does not move out of his way for such pampered kine as those to which this creature belongs."

Actuated by this thought, Wolfe almost insensibly moved entirely into the middle of the path, so that with the posts on one side, and the abrupt and undefended precipice, if we may so call it, on the other, it was quite impossible for any horseman to pass the republican, unless over his body.

Lord Ulswater marked the motion, and did not want penetration to perceive the cause. Glad of an opportunity to wreak some portion of his irritation against a member of a body so offensive to his mind, and which had the day before obtained a sort of triumph over his exertions against them, and rendered obstinate in his intention by the pique he had felt at Glumford's caution, Lord Ulswater, tightening his

rein and humming with apparent indifference a popular tune, continued his progress till he was within a foot of the republican. Then, checking his horse for a moment, he called, in a tone of quiet arrogance, to Wolfe to withdraw himself on one side till he had passed.

The fierce blood of the republican, which the least breath of oppression sufficed to kindle, and which yet boiled with the remembrance of Lord Ulswater's threat to him two nights before, was on fire at this command. He stopped short, and turning half round, stood erect in the strength and power of his singularly tall and not ungraceful form. "Poor and proud fool," said he, with a voice of the most biting scorn, and fixing an eye eloquent of ire and menaced danger upon the calmly contemptuous countenance of the patrician, "poor and proud fool, do you think that your privileges have already reached so pleasant a pitch that you may ride over men like dust? Off, fool! the basest peasant in England, degraded as he is, would resist while he ridiculed your arrogance."

Without deigning any reply, Lord Ulswater spurred his horse; the spirited animal bounded forward almost on the very person of the obstructor of the path; with uncommon agility Wolfe drew aside from the danger, seized with a powerful grasp the bridle, and abruptly arresting the horse backed it fearfully towards the descent. Enraged beyond all presence of mind, the fated nobleman, raising his whip, struck violently at the republican. The latter, as he felt the blow, uttered a single shout of such ferocity that it curdled the timorous blood of Glumford, and with a giant and iron hand he backed the horse several paces down the precipice. The treacherous earth crumbled beneath the weight, and Lord Ulswater spurring his steed violently at the same instant that Wolfe so sharply and strongly curbed it, the affrighted animal reared violently, forced the rein from Wolfe, stood erect for a moment of horror to the spectator, and then, as its footing and balance alike failed, it fell backward, and rolled over and over its unfortunate and helpless rider.

"Good heavens!" cried Glumford, who had sat quietly upon his dozing horse, watching the result of the dispute, "what have you done? you have killed his lordship,—positively killed him,—and his horse, too, I dare say. You shall be hanged for this, sir, as sure as I am a magistrate, and that sort of thing."

Unheeding this denunciation, Wolfe had made to the spot where rider and horse lay blent together at the foot of the descent; and assisting the latter to rise, bent down to examine the real effect of his violence. "Methinks," said he, as he looked upon the hueless but still defying features of the horseman, "methinks I have seen that face years before,—but where? Perhaps my dreams have foretold me this."

Lord Ulswater was utterly senseless; and as Wolfe raised him, he saw that the right side of the head was covered with blood, and that one arm seemed crushed and broken. Meanwhile a carriage had appeared, was hailed by Glumford, stopped; and on being informed of the circumstance and the rank of the sufferer, the traveller, a single gentleman, descended, assisted to raise the unhappy nobleman, placed him in the carriage, and, obeying Glumford's instructions, proceeded slowly to Westborough Park.

"But the ruffian, the rebel, the murderer?" said Mr. Glumford, both querulously and inquiringly, looking towards Wolfe, who, without having attempted to assist his victim, stood aloof, with arms folded, and an expression of sated ferocity upon his speaking features.

"Oh! as to him," quoth the traveller, stepping into his carriage, in order to support the mangled man, "you, sir, and my valet can bring him along with you, or take him to the next town, or do, in short, with him just as you please, only be sure he does not escape; drive on, post-boy, very gently." And poor Mr. Glumford found the muscular form of the stern Wolfe consigned to the sole care of himself and a very diminutive man in pea-green silk stockings, who, however excellently well he might perform the office of valet, was certainly by no means calculated in physical powers for the detention of a criminal.

Wolfe saved the pair a world of trouble and anxiety.

"Sir," said he, gravely, turning to Glumford, "you beheld the affray, and whatever its consequences will do me the common justice of witnessing as to the fact of the first aggressor. It will, however, be satisfactory to both of us to seize the earliest opportunity of putting the matter upon a legal footing, and I shall therefore return to W—, to which town you will doubtless accompany me."

"With all my heart!" cried Mr. Glumford, feeling as if a mountain of responsibility were taken from his breast. "And I wish to Heaven you may be transported instead of hanged."

CHAPTER LXXIX.

But gasping heaved the breath that Lara drew,
And dull the film along his dim eye grew.—BYRON.

The light broke partially through the half-closed shutters of the room in which lay Lord Ulswater, who, awakened to sense and pain by the motion of the carriage, had now relapsed into insensibility. By the side of the sofa on which he was laid, knelt Clarence, bathing one hand with tears violent and fast; on the opposite side leaned over, with bald front, and an expression of mingled fear and sorrow upon his intent countenance, the old steward; while, at a little distance, Lord Westborough, who had been wheeled into the room, sat mute in his chair, aghast with bewilderment and horror, and counting every moment to the arrival of the surgeon, who had been sent for. The stranger to whom the carriage belonged stood by the window, detailing in a low voice to the chaplain of the house what particulars of the occurrence he was acquainted with, while the youngest scion of the family, a boy of about ten years, and who in the general confusion had thrust himself unnoticed into the room, stood close to the pair, with open mouth and thirsting ears and a face on which childish interest at a fearful tale was strongly blent with the more absorbed feeling of terror at the truth.

Slowly Lord Ulswater opened his eyes; they rested upon Clarence.

"My brother! my brother!" cried Clarence, in a voice of powerful anguish, "is it thus—thus that you have come hither to—" He stopped in the gushing fulness of his heart. Extricating from Clarence the only hand he was able to use, Lord Ulswater raised it to his brow, as if in the effort to clear remembrance; and then, turning to Wardour, seemed to ask the truth of Clarence's claim,—at least so the old man interpreted the meaning of his eye, and the faint and scarce intelligible words which broke from his lips.

"It is; it is, my honoured lord," cried he, struggling with his emotion; "it is your brother, your lost brother, Clinton L'Estrange." And as he said these words, Clarence felt the damp chill hand of his brother press his own, and knew by that pressure and the smile—kind, though brief from exceeding pain—with which the ill-fated nobleman looked upon him, that the claim long unknown was at last acknowledged, and the ties long broken united, though in death.

The surgeon arrived: the room was cleared of all but Clarence; the first examination was sufficient. Unaware of Clarence's close relationship to the sufferer, the surgeon took him aside. "A very painful operation," said he, "might be performed, but it would only torture, in vain, the last moments of the patient; no human skill can save or even protract his life."

The doomed man, who, though in great pain, was still sensible, stirred. His brother flew towards him. "Flora," he murmured, "let me see her, I implore."

Curbing, as much as he was able, his emotion, and conquering his reluctance to leave the sufferer even for a moment, Clarence flew in search of Lady Flora. He found her; in rapid and hasty words, he signified the wish of the dying man, and hurried her, confused, trembling, and scarce conscious of the melancholy scene she was about to witness, to the side of her affianced bridegroom.

I have been by the death-beds of many men, and I have noted that shortly before death, as the frame grows weaker and weaker, the fiercer passions yield to those feelings better harmonizing with the awfulness of the hour. Thoughts soft and tender, which seem little to belong to the character in the health and vigour of former years, obtain then an empire, brief, indeed, but utter for the time they last; and this is the more impressive because (as in the present instance I shall have occasion to portray) in the moments which succeed and make the very latest of life, the ruling passion, suppressed for an interval by such gentler feelings, sometimes again returns to take its final triumph over that frail clay, which, through existence, it has swayed, agitated, and moulded like wax unto its will.

When Lord Ulswater saw Flora approach and bend weepingly over him, a momentary softness stole over his face. Taking her hand he extended it towards Clarence, and turning to the latter faltered out, "Let this—my—brother—atone—for—;" apparently unable to finish the sentence, he then relaxed his hold and sank upon the pillow; and so still, so apparently breathless did he remain for several minutes, that they thought the latest agony was over.

As, yielding to this impression, Clarence was about to withdraw the scarce conscious Flora from the chamber, words, less tremulous and indistinct than aught which he had yet uttered, broke from Lord Ulswater's lips. Clarence hastened to him; and bending over his countenance saw that even through the rapid changes and shades of death, it darkened with the peculiar characteristics of the unreleased soul within: the brow was knit into more than its wonted sternness and pride; and in the eye which glared upon the opposite wall, the light of the waning life broke into a momentary blaze,—that flash, so rapid and evanescent, before the air drinks in the last spark of the being it has animated, and night—the starless and eternal—falls over the extinguished lamp! The hand of the right arm (which was that

unshattered by the fall) was clenched and raised; but, when the words which came upon Clarence's ear had ceased, it fell heavily by his side, like a clod of that clay which it had then become. In those words it seemed as if, in the confused delirium of passing existence, the brave soldier mingled some dim and bewildered recollection of former battles with that of his last most fatal though most ignoble strife.

"Down, down with them!" he muttered between his teeth, though in a tone startlingly deep and audible; "down with them! No quarter to the infidels! strike for England and Effingham. Ha!—who strives for flight there!—kill him! no mercy, I say,—none!—there, there, I have despatched him; ha! ha! What, still alive?—off, slave, off! Oh, slain! slain in a ditch, by a base-born hind; oh, bitter! bitter! bitter!" And with these words, of which the last, from their piercing anguish and keen despair, made a dread contrast with the fire and defiance of the first, the jaw fell, the flashing and fierce eye glazed and set, and all of the haughty and bold patrician which the earth retained was—dust!

CHAPTER LXXX.

Il n'est jamais permis de deteriorer une ame humaine pour l'avantage des autres, ni de faire un scelerat pour le service des honnetes gens.—ROUSSEAU.

["It is not permitted us to degrade one single soul for the sake of conferring advantage on others, nor to make a rogue for the good of the honest."]

As the reader approaches the termination of this narrative, and looks back upon the many scenes he has passed, perhaps, in the mimic representation of human life, he may find no unfaithful resemblance to the true.

As, amongst the crowd of characters jostled against each other in their course, some drop off at the first, the second, or the third stage, and leave a few only continuing to the last, while Fate chooses her agents and survivors among those whom the bystander, perchance, least noticed as the objects of her selection; and they who, haply, seemed to him, at first, among the most conspicuous as characters, sink, some abruptly, some gradually, into actors of the least importance in events; as the reader notes the same passion, in different strata, producing the most opposite qualities, and gathers from that notice some estimate of the vast perplexity in the code of morals, deemed by the shallow so plain a science; when he finds that a similar and single feeling will produce both the virtue we love and the vice we detest, the magnanimity we admire and the meanness we despise; as the feeble hands of the author force into contrast ignorance and wisdom, the affectation of philosophy and its true essence, coarseness and refinement, the lowest vulgarity of sentiment with an exaltation of feeling approaching to morbidity, the reality of virtue with the counterfeit, the glory of the Divinity with the hideousness of the Idol, sorrow and eager joy, marriage and death, tears and their young successors, smiles; as all, blent together, these varieties of life form a single yet many-coloured web, leaving us to doubt whether, in fortune the bright hue or the dark, in character the base material or the rich, predominate,—the workman of the web could almost reconcile himself to his glaring and great deficiency in art by the fond persuasion that he has, at least in his choice of tint and texture, caught something of the likeness of Nature: but he knows, to the abasement of his vanity, that these enumerated particulars of resemblance to life are common to all, even to the most unskilful of his brethren; and it is not the mere act of copying a true original, but the rare circumstance of force and accuracy in the copy, which can alone constitute a just pretension to merit, or flatter the artist with the hope of a moderate success.

The news of Lord Ulswater's untimely death soon spread around the neighbourhood, and was conveyed to Mordaunt by the very gentleman whom that nobleman had charged with his hostile message. Algernon repaired at once to W—, to gather from Wolfe some less exaggerated account of the affray than that which the many tongues of Rumour had brought to him.

It was no difficult matter to see the precise share of blame to be attached to Wolfe; and, notwithstanding the biased account of Glumford and the strong spirit of party then existing in the country, no rational man could for a moment term the event of a sudden fray a premeditated murder, or the violence of the aggrieved the black offence of a wilful criminal. Wolfe, therefore, soon obtained a release from the confinement to which he had been at first committed; and with a temper still more exasperated by the evident disposition of his auditors to have treated him, had it been possible, with the utmost rigour, he returned to companions well calculated by their converse and bent of mind to inflame the fester of his moral constitution.

It happens generally that men very vehement in any particular opinion choose their friends, not for a general similarity of character, but in proportion to their mutual congeniality of sentiment upon that particular opinion; it happens, also, that those most audibly violent, if we may so speak, upon any opinion, moral or political, are rarely the wisest or the purest of their party. Those with whom Wolfe was intimate were men who shared none of the nobler characteristics of the republican; still less did they participate in or even comprehend the enlightened and benevolent views for which the wise and great men of that sect—a sect to which all philanthropy is, perhaps too fondly, inclined to lean—have been so conspicuously eminent. On the contrary, Wolfe's comrades, without education and consequently without principle, had been driven to disaffection by desperate fortunes and ruined reputations acting upon minds polluted by the ignorance and hardened among the dross of the populace. But the worst can by constant intercourse corrupt the best; and the barriers of good and evil, often confused in Wolfe's mind by the blindness of his passions, seemed, as his intercourse with these lawless and ruffian associates thickened, to be at last utterly broken down and swept away.

Unhappily too—soon after Wolfe's return to London—the popular irritation showed itself in mobs, perhaps rather to be termed disorderly than seditious. The ministers, however, thought otherwise; the military were summoned, and much injury, resulting, it is to be hoped, from accident, not design, ensued to many of the persons assembled. Some were severely wounded by the swords of the soldiers; others maimed and trampled upon by the horses, which shared the agitation or irritability of their riders; and a few, among whom were two women and three children, lost their lives. Wolfe had been one of the crowd; and the scene, melancholy as it really was, and appearing to his temper unredeemed and inexcusable on the part of the soldiers, left on his mind a deep and burning impression of revenge. Justice (as they termed it) was demanded by strong bodies of the people upon the soldiers; but the administration, deeming it politic rather to awe than to conciliate, so far from censuring the military, approved their exertions.

From that time Wolfe appears to have resolved upon the execution of a design which he had long imperfectly and confusedly meditated.

This was no less a crime (and to him did conscientiously seem no less a virtue) than to seize a favourable opportunity for assassinating the most prominent member of the administration, and the one who, above all the rest, was the most odious to the disaffected. It must be urged, in extenuation of the atrocity of this design, that a man perpetually brooding over one scheme, which to him has become the very sustenance of existence, and which scheme, perpetually frustrated, grows desperate by disappointment, acquires a heat of morbid and oblique enthusiasm, which may be not unreasonably termed insanity; and that, at the very time Wolfe reconciled it to his conscience to commit the murder of his fellow creature, he would have moved out of his path for a worm. Assassination, indeed, seemed to him justice; and a felon's execution the glory of martyrdom. And yet, O Fanatic, thou didst anathematize the Duellist as the Man of blood: what is the Assassin?

CHAPTER LXXXI.

And thou that, silent at my knee,
Dost lift to mine thy soft, dark, earnest eyes,
Filled with the love of childhood, which I see
Pure through its depths,—a thing without disguise.
Thou that hast breathed in slumber on my breast,
When I have checked its throbs to give thee rest,
Mine own, whose young thoughts fresh before me rise,
Is it not much that I may guide thy prayer,
And circle thy young soul with free and healthful air?—HEMANS.

The events we have recorded, from the time of Clarence's visit to Mordaunt to the death of Lord Ulswater, took place within little more than a week. We have now to pass in silence over several weeks; and as it was the commencement of autumn when we introduced Clarence and Mordaunt to our reader, so it is the first opening of winter in which we will resume the thread of our narration.

Mordaunt had removed to London; and, although he had not yet taken any share in public business, he was only watching the opportunity to commence a career the brilliancy of which those who knew aught of his mind began already to foretell. But he mixed little, if at all, with the gayer occupants of the world's prominent places. Absorbed alternately in his studies and his labours of good, the halls of

pleasure were seldom visited by his presence; and they who in the crowd knew nothing of him but his name, and the lofty bearing of his mien, recoiled from the coldness of his exterior; and, while they marvelled at his retirement and reserve, saw in both but the moroseness of the student and the gloom of the misanthropist.

But the nobleness of his person; the antiquity of his birth; his wealth, his unblemished character, and the interest thrown over his name by the reputation of talent and the unpenetrated mystery of his life, all powerfully spoke in his favour to those of the gentler sex, who judge us not only from what we are to others, but from what they imagine we can be to them. From such allurements, however, as from all else, the mourner turned only the more deeply to cherish the memory of the dead; and it was a touching and holy sight to mark the mingled excess of melancholy and fondness with which he watched over that treasure in whose young beauty and guileless heart his departed Isabel had yet left the resemblance of her features and her love. There seemed between them to exist even a dearer and closer tie than that of daughter and sire; for, in both, the objects which usually divide the affections of the man or the child had but a feeble charm: Isabel's mind had expanded beyond her years, and Algernon's had outgrown his time; so that neither the sports natural to her age, nor the ambition ordinary to his, were sufficient to wean or to distract the unity of their love. When, after absence, his well-known step trod lightly in the hall, her ear, which had listened and longed and thirsted for the sound, taught her fairy feet to be the first to welcome his return; and when the slightest breath of sickness menaced her slender frame, it was his hand that smoothed her pillow, and his smile that cheered away her pain; and when she sank into sleep she knew that a father's heart watched over her through the long but untiring night; that a father's eye would be the first which, on waking, she would meet.

"Oh! beautiful, and rare as beautiful," was that affection; in the parent no earthlier or harder sternness in authority, nor weakness in doting, nor caprice in love; in the child no fear debasing reverence, yet no familiarity diminishing respect. But Love, whose pride is in serving, seemed to make at once soft and hallowed the offices mutually rendered; and Nature, never counteracted in her dictates, wrought, without a visible effort, the proper channels into which those offices should flow; and that Charity which not only covers sins, but lifts the veil from virtues, whose beauty might otherwise have lain concealed, linked them closer and closer, and threw over that link the sanctity of itself. For it was Algernon's sweetest pleasure to make her young hands the ministers of good to others, and to drink at such times from the rich glow of her angel countenance the purified selfishness of his reward. And when after the divine joy of blessing, which, perhaps, the youngest taste yet more vividly than their sires, she threw her arms around his neck and thanked him with glad tears for the luxury he had bestowed upon her, how could they, in that gushing overflow of heart, help loving each other the more, or feeling that in that love there was something which justified the excess?

Nor have we drawn with too exaggerating a pencil, nor, though Isabel's mind was older than her years, extended that prematureness to her heart. For, where we set the example of benevolence, and see that the example is in nought corrupted, the milk of human kindness will flow not the less readily from the youngest breast, and out of the mouths of babes will come the wisdom of charity and love!

Ever since Mordaunt's arrival in town, he had sought out Wolfe's abode, for the purpose of ministering to the poverty under which he rightly conjectured that the republican laboured. But the habitation of one, needy, distressed, seldom living long in one place, and far less notorious of late than he had formerly been, was not easy to discover; nor was it till after long and vain search that he ascertained the retreat of his singular acquaintance. The day in which he effected this object we shall have hereafter occasion to specify. Meanwhile we return to Mr. Crauford.

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