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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK ERNEST MALTRAVERS — VOLUME 05 ***

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BOOK V.

PARODY.

My hero, turned author, lies mute in this section,
You may pass by the place if you're bored by reflection:
But if honest enough to be fond of the Muse,
Stay, and read where you're able, and sleep where you choose.
THEOC. /Epig. in Hippon/.

CHAPTER I.

"My genius spreads her wing,
And flies where Britain courts the western spring.

* * * * *

Pride in their port, defiance in their eye,
I see the lords of human kind pass by,
Intent on high designs."-GOLDSMITH.

I HAVE no respect for the Englishman who re-enters London after long residence abroad without a pulse that beats quick and a heart that heaves high. The public buildings are few, and, for the most part, mean; the monuments of antiquity not comparable to those which the pettiest town in Italy can boast of; the palaces are sad rubbish; the houses of our peers and princes are shabby and shapeless heaps of brick. But what of all this? the spirit of London is in her thoroughfares—her population! What wealth—what cleanliness—what order—what animation! How majestic, and yet how vivid, is the life that runs through her myriad veins! How, as the lamps blaze upon you at night, and street after street glides by your wheels, each so regular in its symmetry, so equal in its civilization—how all speak of the CITY OF FREEMEN.

Yes, Maltravers felt his heart swell within him as the post-horses whirled on his dingy carriage—over Westminster Bridge—along Whitehall—through Regent Street—towards one of the quiet and private-house-like hotels that are scattered round the neighbourhood of Grosvenor Square.

Ernest's arrival had been expected. He had written from Paris to Cleveland to announce it; and Cleveland had, in reply, informed him that he had engaged apartments for him at Mivart's. The smiling waiters ushered him into a spacious and well-aired room—the armchair was already wheeled by the fire—a score or so of letters strewed the table, together with two of the evening papers. And how eloquently of busy England do those evening papers speak! A stranger might have felt that he wanted no friend to welcome him—the whole room smiled on him a welcome.

Maltravers ordered his dinner and opened his letters: they were of no importance; one from his steward, one from his banker, another about the county races, a fourth from a man he had never heard of, requesting the vote and powerful interest of Mr. Maltravers for the county of B———, should the rumour of a dissolution be verified; the unknown candidate referred Mr. Maltravers to his "well-known public character." From these epistles Ernest turned impatiently, and perceived a little three-cornered note which had hitherto escaped his attention. It was from Cleveland, intimating that he was in town; that his health still precluded his going out, but that he trusted to see his dear Ernest as soon as he arrived.

Maltravers was delighted at the prospect of passing his evening so agreeably; he soon despatched his dinner and his newspapers, and walked in the brilliant lamplight of a clear frosty evening of early December in London, to his friend's house in Curzon Street: a small house, bachelor-like and unpretending; for Cleveland spent his moderate though easy fortune almost entirely at his country villa. The familiar face of the old valet greeted Ernest at the door, and he only paused to hear that his guardian was nearly recovered to his usual health, ere he was in the cheerful drawing-room, and—since Englishmen do not embrace—returning the cordial gripe of the kindly Cleveland.

"Well, my dear Ernest," said Cleveland, after they had gone through the preliminary round of questions and answers, "here you are at last: Heaven be praised; and how well you are looking—how much you are improved! It is an excellent period of the year for your /debut/ in London. I shall have time to make you intimate with people before the whirl of 'the season' commences."

"Why, I thought of going to Burleigh, my country-place. I have not seen it since I was a child."

"No, no! you have had solitude enough at Como, if I may trust to your letter; you must now mix with the great London world; and you will enjoy Burleigh the more in the summer."

"I fancy this great London world will give me very little pleasure; it may be pleasant enough to young men just let loose from college, but your crowded ball-rooms and monotonous clubs will be wearisome to one who has grown fastidious before his time. /J'ai vecu beaucoup dans peu d'annees. I have drawn in youth too much upon the capital of existence to be highly delighted with the ostentatious parsimony with which our great men economise pleasure."

"Don't judge before you have gone through the trial," said Cleveland: "there is something in the opulent splendour, the thoroughly sustained magnificence, with which the leaders of English fashion conduct even the most insipid amusements, that is above contempt. Besides, you need not necessarily live with the butterflies. There are plenty of bees that will be very happy to make your acquaintance. Add to this, my dear Ernest, the pleasure of being made of—of being of importance in your own country. For you are young, well-born, and sufficiently handsome to be an object of interest to mothers and to daughters; while your name, and property, and interest, will make you courted by men who want to borrow your money and obtain your influence in your county. No, Maltravers, stay in London—amuse yourself your first year, and decide on your occupation and career the next; but reconnoitre before you give battle."

Maltravers was not ill-pleased to follow his friend's advice, since by so doing he obtained his friend's guidance and society. Moreover, he deemed it wise and rational to see, face to face, the eminent men in England, with whom, if he fulfilled his promise to De Montaigne, he was to run the race of honourable rivalry. Accordingly, he consented to Cleveland's propositions.

"And have you," said he, hesitating, as he loitered by the door after the stroke of twelve had warned him to take his leave—"have you never heard anything of my—my—the unfortunate Alice Darvil?"

"Who?—Oh, that poor young woman; I remember!—not a syllable."

Maltravers sighed deeply and departed.

CHAPTER II.

"Je trouve que c'est une folie de vouloir etudier le monde en simple spectateur. * * * Dans l'ecole du monde, comme dans cette de l'amour, il faut commencer par pratiquer cc qu'on veut apprendre."*
—ROUSSEAU.

* I find that it is a folly to wish to study the world like a simple spectator. * * * In the school of the world, as in that of love, it is necessary to begin by practising what we wish to learn.

ERNEST MALTRAVERS was now fairly launched upon the wide ocean of London. Amongst his other property was a house in Seamore Place—that quiet, yet central street, which enjoys the air without the dust of the park. It had been hitherto let, and, the tenant now quitting very opportunely, Maltravers was delighted to secure so pleasant a residence: for he was still romantic enough to desire to look out upon trees and verdure rather than brick houses. He indulged only in two other luxuries: his love of music tempted him to an opera-box, and he had that English feeling which prides itself in the possession of beautiful horses,—a feeling that enticed him into an extravagance on this head that baffled the competition and excited the envy of much richer men. But four thousand a year goes a great way with a single man who does not gamble, and is too philosophical to make superfluities wants.

The world doubled his income, magnified his old country-seat into a superb chateau, and discovered that his elder brother, who was only three or four years older than himself, had no children. The world was very courteous to Ernest Maltravers.

It was, as Cleveland said, just at that time of year when people are at leisure to make new acquaintances. A few only of the most difficult houses in town were open; and their doors were cheerfully expanded to the accomplished ward of the popular Cleveland. Authors and statesmen, and orators, and philosophers—to all he was presented;—all seemed pleased with him, and Ernest became the fashion before he was conscious of the distinction. But he had rightly foreboded. He had commenced life too soon; he was disappointed; he found some persons he could admire, some whom he could like, but none with whom he could grow intimate, or for whom he could feel an interest. Neither his heart nor his imagination was touched; all appeared to him like artificial machines; he was discontented with things like life, but in which something or other was wanting. He more than ever recalled the brilliant graces of Valerie de Ventadour, which had thrown a charm over the most frivolous circles; he even missed the perverse and fantastic vanity of Castruccio. The mediocre poet seemed to him at least less mediocre than the worldlings about him. Nay, even the selfish good spirits and dry shrewdness of Lumley Ferrers would have been an acceptable change to the dull polish and unrevealed egotism of jealous wits and party politicians. "If these are the flowers of the parterre, what must be the weeds?" said Maltravers to himself, returning from a party at which he had met half a score of the most orthodox lions.

He began to feel the aching pain of satiety.

But the winter glided away—the season commenced, and Maltravers was whirled on with the rest into the bubbling vortex.

CHAPTER III.

"And crowds commencing mere vexation,
Retirement sent its invitation."—SHENSTONE.

THE tench, no doubt, considers the pond in which he lives as the Great World. There is no place, however stagnant, which is not the great world to the creatures that move about, in it. People who have lived all their lives in a village still talk of the world as if they had ever seen it! An old woman in a hovel does not put her nose out of her door on a Sunday without thinking she is going amongst the pomps and vanities of the great world. /Ergo/, the great world is to all of us the little circle in which we live. But as fine people set the fashion, so the circle of fine people is called the Great World /par excellence/. Now this great world is not a bad thing when we thoroughly understand it; and the London great world is at least as good as any other. But then we scarcely do understand that or anything else in our /beaux jours/,—which, if they are sometimes the most exquisite, are also often the most melancholy and the most wasted portion of our life. Maltravers had not yet found out either /the set/ that pleased him or the species of amusement that really amused. Therefore he drifted on and about the vast whirlpool, making plenty of friends—going to balls and dinners—and bored with both as men are who have no object in society. Now the way society is enjoyed is to have a pursuit, a /metier/ of some kind, and then to go into the world, either to make the individual object a social pleasure, or to obtain a reprieve from some toilsome avocation. Thus, if you are a politician—politics at once make an object in your closet,

and a social tie between others and yourself when you are in the world. The same may be said of literature, though in a less degree; and though, as fewer persons care about literature than politics, your companions must be more select. If you are very young, you are fond of dancing; if you are very profligate, perhaps you are fond of flirtations with your friend's wife. These last are objects in their way: but they don't last long, and, even with the most frivolous, are not occupations that satisfy the whole mind and heart, in which there is generally an aspiration after something useful. It is not vanity alone that makes a man of the /mode/ invent a new bit or give his name to a new kind of carriage; it is the influence of that mystic yearning after utility, which is one of the master-ties between the individual and the species.

Maltravers was not happy—that is a lot common enough; but he was not amused—and that is a sentence more insupportable. He lost a great part of his sympathy with Cleveland, for, when a man is not amused, he feels an involuntary contempt for those who are. He fancies they are pleased with trifles which his superior wisdom is compelled to disdain. Cleveland was of that age when we generally grow social—for by being rubbed long and often against the great loadstone of society, we obtain, in a thousand little minute points, an attraction in common with our fellows. Their petty sorrows and small joys—their objects of interest or employment, at some time or other have been ours. We gather up a vast collection of moral and mental farthings of exchange: and we scarcely find any intellect too poor, but what we can deal with it in some way. But in youth, we are egotists and sentimentalists, and Maltravers belonged to the fraternity who employ

"The heart in passion and the head in rhymes."

At length—just when London begins to grow most pleasant—when flirtations become tender, and water-parties numerous—when birds sing in the groves of Richmond, and whitebait refresh the statesman by the shores of Greenwich,—Maltravers abruptly fled from the gay metropolis, and arrived, one lovely evening in July, at his own ivy-grown porch of Burleigh.

What a soft, fresh, delicious evening it was! He had quitted his carriage at the lodge, and followed it across the small but picturesque park alone and on foot. He had not seen the place since childhood—he had quite forgotten its aspect. He now wondered how he could have lived anywhere else. The trees did not stand in stately avenues, nor did the antlers of the deer wave above the sombre fern; it was not the domain of a grand seigneur, but of an old, long-descended English squire. Antiquity spoke in the moss-grown palings in the shadowy groves, in the sharp gable-ends and heavy mullions of the house, as it now came in view, at the base of a hill covered with wood—and partially veiled by the shrubs of the neglected pleasure-ground, separated from the park by the invisible ha-ha. There, gleamed in the twilight the watery face of the oblong fish-pool, with its old-fashioned willows at each corner—there, grey and quaint, was the monastic dial—and there was the long terrace walk, with discoloured and broken vases, now filled with the orange or the aloe, which, in honour of his master's arrival, the gardener had extracted from the dilapidated green-house. The very evidence of neglect around, the very weeds and grass on the half-obliterated road, touched Maltravers with a sort of pitying and remorseful affection for his calm and sequestered residence. And it was not with his usual proud step and erect crest that he passed from the porch to the solitary library, through a line of his servants:—the two or three old retainers belonging to the place were utterly unfamiliar to him, and they had no smile for their stranger lord.

CHAPTER IV.

> "/Lucian./ He that is born to be a man neither should nor can be anything nobler, greater, and better than a man.
>
> "/Peregrine./ But, good Lucian, for the very reason that he may not become less than a man, he should be always striving to be more."—WIELAND'S /Peregrinus Proteus/.

IT was two years from the date of the last chapter before Maltravers again appeared in general society. These two years had sufficed to produce a revolution in his fate. Ernest Maltravers had lost the happy rights of the private individual; he had given himself to the Public; he had surrendered his name to men's tongues, and was a thing that all had a right to praise, to blame, to scrutinise, to spy. Ernest Maltravers had become an author.

Let no man tempt Gods and Columns, without weighing well the consequences of his experiment. He who publishes a book, attended with a moderate success, passes a mighty barrier. He will often look back with a sigh of regret at the land he has left for ever. The beautiful and decent obscurity of hearth and home is gone. He can no longer feel the just indignation of manly pride when he finds himself ridiculed or reviled. He has parted with the shadow of his life. His motives may be misrepresented, his

character belied; his manners, his person, his dress, the "very trick of his walk" are all fair food for the cavil and the caricature. He can never go back, he cannot even pause; he has chosen his path, and all the natural feelings that make the nerve and muscle of the active being urge him to proceed. To stop short is to fail. He has told the world that he will make a name; and he must be set down as a pretender, or toil on till the boast be fulfilled. Yet Maltravers thought nothing of all this when, intoxicated with his own dreams and aspirations, he desired to make a world his confidant; when from the living nature, and the lore of books, and the mingled result of inward study and external observation, he sought to draw forth something that might interweave his name with the pleasurable associations of his kind. His easy fortune and lonely state gave him up to his own thoughts and contemplations; they suffused his mind, till it ran over upon the page which makes the channel that connects the solitary Fountain with the vast Ocean of Human Knowledge. The temperament of Maltravers was, as we have seen, neither irritable nor fearful. He formed himself, as a sculptor forms, with a model before his eyes and an ideal in his heart. He endeavoured, with labour and patience, to approach nearer and nearer with every effort to the standard of such excellence as he thought might ultimately be attained by a reasonable ambition; and when, at last, his judgment was satisfied, he surrendered the product with a tranquil confidence to a more impartial tribunal.

His first work was successful; perhaps for this reason—that it bore the stamp of the Honest and the Real. He did not sit down to report of what he had never seen, to dilate on what he had never felt. A quiet and thoughtful observer of life, his descriptions were the more vivid, because his own first impressions were not yet worn away. His experience had sunk deep; not on the arid surface of matured age, but in the fresh soil of youthful emotions. Another reason, perhaps, that obtained success for his essay was, that he had more varied and more elaborate knowledge than young authors think it necessary to possess. He did not, like Cesarini, attempt to make a show of words upon a slender capital of ideas. Whether his style was eloquent or homely; it was still in him a faithful transcript of considered and digested thought. A third reason—and I dwell on these points not more to elucidate the career of Maltravers than as hints which may be useful to others—a third reason why Maltravers obtained a prompt and favourable reception from the public was, that he had not hackneyed his peculiarities of diction and thought in that worst of all schools for the literary novice—the columns of a magazine. Periodicals form an excellent mode of communication between the public and an author /already/ established, who has lost the charm of novelty, but gained the weight of acknowledged reputation; and who, either upon politics or criticism, seeks for frequent and continuous occasions to enforce his peculiar theses and doctrines. But, upon the young writer, this mode of communication, if too long continued, operates most injuriously both as to his future prospects and his own present taste and style. With respect to the first, it familiarises the public to his mannerism (and all writers worth reading have mannerism) in a form to which the said public are not inclined to attach much weight. He forestalls in a few months what ought to be the effect of years; namely, the wearying a world soon nauseated with the /toujours perdrix/. With respect to the last, it induces a man to write for momentary effects; to study a false smartness of style and reasoning; to bound his ambition of durability to the last day of the month; to expect immediate returns for labour; to recoil at the "hope deferred" of serious works on which judgment is slowly formed. The man of talent who begins young at periodicals, and goes on long, has generally something crude and stunted about both his compositions and his celebrity. He grows the oracle of small coteries; and we can rarely get out of the impression that he is cockneyfied and conventional. Periodicals sadly mortgaged the claims that Hazlitt, and many others of his contemporaries, had upon a vast reversionary estate of Fame. But I here speak too politically; to some the /res angustoe domi/ leave no option. And, as Aristotle and the Greek proverb have it, we cannot carve out all things with the knife of the Delphic cutler.

The second work that Maltravers put forth, at an interval of eighteen months from the first, was one of a graver and higher nature; it served to confirm his reputation: and that is success enough for a second work, which is usually an author's "/pons asinorum/." He who, after a triumphant first book, does not dissatisfy the public with a second, has a fair chance of gaining a fixed station in literature. But now commenced the pains and perils of the after-birth. By a maiden effort an author rarely makes enemies. His fellow-writers are not yet prepared to consider him as a rival; if he be tolerably rich, they unconsciously trust that he will not become a regular, or, as they term it, "a professional" author: he did something just to be talked of; he may write no more, or his second book may fail. But when that second book comes out, and does not fail, they begin to look about them; envy wakens, malice begins. And all the old school—gentlemen who have retired on their pensions of renown—regard him as an intruder: then the sneer, then the frown, the caustic irony, the biting review, the depreciating praise. The novice begins to think that he is further from the goal than before he set out upon the race.

Maltravers had, upon the whole, a tolerably happy temperament; but he was a very proud man, and he had the nice soul of a courageous, honourable, punctilious gentleman. He thought it singular that society should call upon him, as a gentleman, to shoot his best friend, if that friend affronted him with a rude word; and yet that, as an author, every fool and liar might, with perfect impunity, cover reams of

paper with the most virulent personal abuse of him.

It was one evening in the early summer that, revolving anxious and doubtful thoughts, Ernest sauntered gloomily along his terrace,

"And watched with wistful eyes the setting sun."

when he perceived a dusty travelling carriage whirled along the road by the ha-ha, and a hand waved in recognition from the open window. His guests had been so rare, and his friends were so few, that Maltravers could not conjecture who was his intended visitant. His brother, he knew, was in London. Cleveland, from whom he had that day heard, was at his villa. Ferrers was enjoying himself in Vienna. Who could it be? We may say of solitude what we please; but, after two years of solitude, a visitor is a pleasurable excitement. Maltravers retraced his steps, entered his house, and was just in time to find himself almost in the arms of De Montaigne.

CHAPTER V.

"Quid tam dextro pede concipis ut te,
Conatus non poeniteat, votique peracti?"*—JUV.

* What, under such happy auspices do you conceive that you may not repent of your endeavour and accomplished wish?

"YES," said De Montaigne, "in my way I also am fulfilling my destiny. I am a member of the /Chambre des Deputes/, and on a visit to England upon some commercial affairs. I found myself in your neighbourhood, and, of course, could not resist the temptation: so you must receive me as your guest for some days."

"I congratulate you cordially on your senatorial honours. I have already heard of your rising name."

"I return the congratulations with equal warmth. You are bringing my prophecies to pass. I have read your works with increased pride at our friendship."

Maltravers sighed slightly, and half turned away.

"The desire of distinction," said he, after a pause, "grows upon us till excitement becomes disease. The child who is born with the mariner's instinct laughs with glee when his paper bark skims the wave of a pool. By and by nothing will content him but the ship and the ocean.—Like the child is the author."

"I am pleased with your simile," said De Montaigne, smiling. "Do not spoil it, but go on with your argument."

Maltravers continued: "Scarcely do we win the applause of a moment, ere we summon the past and conjecture the future. Our contemporaries no longer suffice for competitors, our age for the Court to pronounce on our claims: we call up the Dead as our only true rivals—we appeal to Posterity as our sole just tribunal. Is this vain in us? Possibly. Yet such vanity humbles. 'Tis then only we learn all the difference between Reputation and Fame—between To-Day and Immortality!"

"Do you think," replied De Montaigne, "that the dead did not feel the same when they first trod the path that leads to the life beyond life? Continue to cultivate the mind, to sharpen by exercise the genius, to attempt to delight or to instruct your race; and even supposing you fall short of every model you set before you—supposing your name moulder with your dust, still yon will have passed life more nobly than the unlaborious herd. Grant that you win not that glorious accident, 'a name below,' how can you tell but what you may have fitted yourself for high destiny and employ in the world not of men, but of spirits? The powers of the mind are things that cannot be less immortal than the mere sense of identity; their acquisitions accompany us through the Eternal Progress; and we may obtain a lower or a higher grade hereafter, in proportion as we are more or less fitted by the exercise of our intellect to comprehend and execute the solemn agencies of God. The wise man is nearer to the angels than the fool is. This may be an apocryphal dogma, but it is not an impossible theory."

"But we may waste the sound enjoyments of actual life in chasing the hope you justly allow to be 'apocryphal;' and our knowledge may go for nothing in the eyes of the Omniscient."

"Very well," said De Montaigne, smiling; "but answer me honestly. By the pursuits of intellectual ambition do you waste the sound enjoyments of life? If so, you do not pursue the system rightly. Those pursuits ought only to quicken your sense for such pleasures as are the true relaxations of life. And this, with you peculiarly, since you are fortunate enough not to depend for subsistence upon literature;

—did you do so, I might rather advise you to be a trunkmaker than an author. A man ought not to attempt any of the highest walks of Mind and Art, as the mere provision of daily bread; not literature alone, but everything else of the same degree. He ought not to be a statesman, or an orator, or a philosopher, as a thing of pence and shillings: and usually all men, save the poor poet, feel this truth insensibly."

"This may be fine preaching," said Maltravers; "but you may be quite sure that the pursuit of literature is a pursuit apart from the ordinary objects of life, and you cannot command the enjoyments of both."

"I think otherwise," said De Montaigne; "but it is not in a country house eighty miles from the capital, without wife, guests, or friends, that the experiment can be fairly made. Come, Maltravers, I see before you a brave career, and I cannot permit you to halt at the onset."

"You do not see all the calumnies that are already put forth against me, to say nothing of all the assurances (and many by clever men) that there is nothing in me!"

"Dennis was a clever man, and said the same thing of your Pope. Madame de Sevigne was a clever woman, but she thought Racine would never be very famous. Milton saw nothing in the first efforts of Dryden that made him consider Dryden better than a rhymester. Aristophanes was a good judge of poetry, yet how ill he judged of Euripides! But all this is commonplace, and yet you bring arguments that a commonplace answers in evidence against yourself."

"But it is unpleasant not to answer attacks—not to retaliate on enemies."

"Then answer attacks, and retaliate on enemies."

"But would that be wise?"

"If it give you pleasure—it would not please /me/."

"Come, De Montaigne, you are reasoning Socratically. I will ask you plainly and bluntly, would you advise an author to wage war on his literary assailants, or to despise them?"

"Both; let him attack but few, and those rarely. But it is his policy to show that he is one whom it is better not to provoke too far. The author always has the world on his side against the critics, if he choose his opportunity. And he must always recollect that he is 'A STATE' in himself, which must sometimes go to war in order to procure peace. The time for war or for peace must be left to the State's own diplomacy and wisdom."

"You would make us political machines."

"It would make every man's conduct more or less mechanical; for system is the triumph of mind over matter; the just equilibrium of all the powers and passions may seem like machinery. Be it so. Nature meant the world—the creation—man himself, for machines."

"And one must even be in a passion mechanically, according to your theories."

"A man is a poor creature who is not in a passion sometimes; but a very unjust, or a very foolish one, if he be in a passion with the wrong person, and in the wrong place and time. But enough of this, it is growing late."

"And when will Madame visit England?"

"Oh, not yet, I fear. But you will meet Cesarini in London this year or the next. He is persuaded that you did not see justice done to his poems, and is coming here as soon as his indolence will let him, to proclaim your treachery in a biting preface to some toothless satire."

"Satire!"

"Yes; more than one of your poets made their way by a satire, and Cesarini is persuaded he shall do the same. Castruccio is not as far-sighted as his namesake, the Prince of Lucca. Good night, my dear Ernest."

CHAPTER VI.

"When with much pains this boasted learning's got,

'Tis an affront to those who have it not."
CHURCHILL: /The Author/.

THERE was something in De Montaigne's conversation, which, without actual flattery, reconciled Maltravers to himself and his career. It served less, perhaps, to excite than to sober and brace his mind. De Montaigne could have made no man rash, but he could have made many men energetic and persevering. The two friends had some points in common; but Maltravers had far more prodigality of nature and passion about him—had more of flesh and blood, with the faults and excellences of flesh and blood. De Montaigne held so much to his favourite doctrine of moral equilibrium, that he had really reduced himself in much to a species of clockwork. As impulses are formed from habits, so the regularity of De Montaigne's habits made his impulses virtuous and just, and he yielded to them as often as a hasty character might have done; but then those impulses never urged to anything speculative or daring. De Montaigne could not go beyond a certain defined circle of action. He had no sympathy for any reasonings based purely on the hypotheses of the imagination: he could not endure Plato, and he was dumb to the eloquent whispers of whatever was refining in poetry or mystical in wisdom.

Maltravers, on the contrary, not disdaining Reason, ever sought to assist her by the Imaginative Faculty, and held all philosophy incomplete and unsatisfactory that bounded its inquiries to the limits of the Known and Certain. He loved the inductive process; but he carried it out to Conjecture as well as Fact. He maintained that, by a similar hardihood, all the triumphs of science, as well as art, had been accomplished—that Newton, that Copernicus, would have done nothing if they had not imagined as well as reasoned, guessed as well as ascertained. Nay, it was an aphorism with him, that the very soul of philosophy is conjecture. He had the most implicit confidence in the operations of the mind and the heart properly formed, and deemed that the very excesses of emotion and thought, in men well trained by experience and study, are conducive to useful and great ends. But the more advanced years, and the singularly practical character of De Montaigne's views, gave him a superiority in argument over Maltravers which the last submitted to unwillingly. While, on the other hand, De Montaigne secretly felt that his young friend reasoned from a broader base, and took in a much wider circumference; and that he was, at once, more liable to failure and error, and more capable of new discovery and of intellectual achievement. But their ways in life being different, they did not clash; and De Montaigne, who was sincerely interested in Ernest's fate, was contented to harden his friend's mind against the obstacles in his way, and leave the rest to experiment and to Providence. They went up to London together: and De Montaigne returned to Paris. Maltravers appeared once more in the haunts of the gay and great. He felt that his new character had greatly altered his position. He was no longer courted and caressed for the same vulgar and adventitious circumstances of fortune, birth, and connections, as before—yet for circumstances that to him seemed equally unflattering. He was not sought for his merit, his intellect, his talents; but for his momentary celebrity. He was an author in fashion, and run after as anything else in fashion might have been. He was invited, less to be talked to than to be stared at. He was far too proud in his temper, and too pure in his ambition, to feel his vanity elated by sharing the enthusiasm of the circles with a German prince or an industrious flea. Accordingly he soon repelled the advances made to him, was reserved and supercilious to fine ladies, refused to be the fashion, and became very unpopular with the literary exclusives. They even began to run down the works, because they were dissatisfied with the author. But Maltravers had based his experiments upon the vast masses of the general Public. He had called the PEOPLE of his own and other countries to be his audience and his judges; and all the coteries in the world could have not injured him. He was like the member for an immense constituency, who may offend individuals, so long as he keep his footing with the body at large. But while he withdrew himself from the insipid and the idle, he took care not to become separated from the world. He formed his own society according to his tastes: took pleasure in the manly and exciting topics of the day; and sharpened his observation and widened his sphere as an author, by mixing freely and boldly with all classes as a citizen. But literature became to him as art to the artist—as his mistress to the lover—an engrossing and passionate delight. He made it his glorious and divine profession—he loved it as a profession—he devoted to its pursuits and honours his youth, cares, dreams—his mind, and his heart, and his soul. He was a silent but intense enthusiast in the priesthood he had entered. From LITERATURE he imagined had come all that makes nations enlightened and men humane. And he loved Literature the more, because her distinctions were not those of the world—because she had neither ribbands, nor stars, nor high places at her command. A name in the deep gratitude and hereditary delight of men—this was the title she bestowed. Hers was the Great Primitive Church of the world, without Popes or Muftis—sinecures, pluralities and hierarchies. Her servants spoke to the earth as the prophets of old, anxious only to be heard and believed. Full of this fanaticism, Ernest Maltravers pursued his way in the great procession of the myrtle-bearers to the sacred shrine. He carried the thyrsus, and he believed in the god. By degrees his fanaticism worked in him the philosophy which De Montaigne would have derived from sober calculation; it made him indifferent to the thorns in the path, to the storms in the sky. He learned to despise the enmity he provoked, the calumnies that assailed him. Sometimes he was silent, but

sometimes he retorted. Like a soldier who serves a cause, he believed that when the cause was injured in his person, the weapons confided to his hands might be wielded without fear and without reproach. Gradually he became feared as well as known. And while many abused him, none could contemn.

It would not suit the design of this work to follow Maltravers step by step in his course. I am only describing the principal events, not the minute details, of his intellectual life. Of the character of his works it will be enough to say that, whatever their faults, they were original—they were his own. He did not write according to copy, nor compile from commonplace books. He was an artist, it is true,—for what is genius itself but art? but he took laws, and harmony, and order, from the great code of Truth and Nature: a code that demands intense and unrelaxing study—though its first principles are few and simple: that study Maltravers did not shrink from. It was a deep love of truth that made him a subtle and searching analyst, even in what the dull world considers trifles; for he knew that nothing in literature is in itself trifling—that it is often but a hairsbreadth that divides a truism from a discovery. He was the more original, because he sought rather after the True than the New. No two minds are ever the same; and therefore any man who will give us fairly and frankly the results of his own impressions, uninfluenced by the servilities of imitation, will be original. But it was not from originality, which really made his predominant merit, that Maltravers derived his reputation, for his originality was not of that species which generally dazzles the vulgar—it was not extravagant nor /bizarre/—he affected no system and no school. Many authors of his day seemed more novel and /unique/ to the superficial. Profound and durable invention proceeds by subtle and fine gradations—it has nothing to do with those jerks and starts, those convulsions and distortions, which belong not to the vigour and health, but to the epilepsy and disease, of Literature.

CHAPTER VII.

"Being got out of town, the first thing I did was to give my mule her head."—/Gil Blas/.

ALTHOUGH the character of Maltravers was gradually becoming more hard and severe,—although as his reason grew more muscular, his imagination lost something of its early bloom, and he was already very different from the wild boy who had set the German youths in a blaze, and had changed into a Castle of Indolence the little cottage tenanted with Poetry and Alice,—he still preserved many of his old habits; he loved, at frequent intervals, to disappear from the great world—to get rid of books and friends, and luxury and wealth, and make solitary excursions, sometimes on foot, sometimes on horseback, through this fair garden of England.

It was one soft May-day that he found himself on such an expedition, slowly riding through one of the green lanes of ———shire. His cloak and his saddle-bags comprised all his baggage, and the world was before him "where to choose his place of rest." The lane wound at length into the main road, and just as he came upon it he fell in with a gay party of equestrians.

Foremost of its cavalcade rode a lady in a dark green habit, mounted on a thoroughbred English horse, which she managed with so easy a grace that Maltravers halted in involuntary admiration. He himself was a consummate horseman, and he had the quick eye of sympathy for those who shared the accomplishment. He thought, as he gazed, that he had never seen but one woman whose air and mien on horseback were so full of that nameless elegance which skill and courage in any art naturally bestow —that woman was Valerie de Ventadour. Presently, to his great surprise, the lady advanced from her companions, neared Maltravers, and said, in a voice which he did not at first distinctly recognise—" Is it possible?—do I see Mr. Maltravers?"

She paused a moment, and then threw aside her veil, and Ernest beheld—Madame de Ventadour! By this time a tall, thin gentleman had joined the Frenchwoman.

"Has /madame/ met with an acquaintance?" said he; "and, if so, will she permit me to partake her pleasure?"

The interruption seemed a relief to Valerie;—she smiled and coloured.

"Let me introduce you to Mr. Maltravers. Mr. Maltravers, this is my host, Lord Doningdale."

The two gentlemen bowed, the rest of the cavalcade surrounded the trio, and Lord Doningdale, with a stately yet frank courtesy, invited Maltravers to return with the party to his house, which was about four miles distant. As may be supposed, Ernest readily accepted the invitation. The cavalcade proceeded, and Maltravers hastened to seek an explanation from Valerie. It was soon given. Madame de Ventadour had a younger sister, who had lately married a son of Lord Doningdale. The marriage had been solemnized in Paris, and Monsieur and Madame de Ventadour had been in England a week on a

visit to the English peer.

The /rencontre/ was so sudden and unexpected that neither recovered sufficient self-possession for fluent conversation. The explanation given, Valerie sank into a thoughtful silence, and Maltravers rode by her side equally taciturn, pondering on the strange chance which, after the lapse of years, had thrown them again together.

Lord Doningdale, who at first lingered with his other visitors, now joined them, and Maltravers was struck with his high-bred manner, and a singular and somewhat elaborate polish in his emphasis and expression. They soon entered a noble park, which attested far more care and attention than are usually bestowed upon those demesnes, so peculiarly English. Young plantations everywhere contrasted the venerable groves—new cottages of picturesque design adorned the outskirts—and obelisks and columns, copied from the antique, and evidently of recent workmanship, gleamed upon them as they neared the house—a large pile, in which the fashion of Queen Anne's day had been altered into the French roofs and windows of the architecture of the Tuileries. "You reside much in the country, I am sure, my lord," said Maltravers.

"Yes," replied Lord Doningdale, with a pensive air, "this place is greatly endeared to me. Here his Majesty Louis XVIII., when in England, honoured me with an annual visit. In compliment to him, I sought to model my poor mansion into an humble likeness of his own palace, so that he might as little as possible miss the rights he had lost. His own rooms were furnished exactly like those he had occupied at the Tuileries. Yes, the place is endeared to me—I think of the old times with pride. It is something to have sheltered a Bourbon in his misfortunes."

"It cost /milord/ a vast sum to make these alterations," said Madame de
Ventadour, glancing archly at Maltravers.

"Ah, yes," said the old lord; and his face, lately elated, became overcast—"nearly three hundred thousand pounds: but what then?—'Les souvenirs, madame, sont sans prix/!'"

"Have you visited Paris since the restoration, Lord Doningdale," asked
Maltravers.

His lordship looked at him sharply, and then turned his eye to Madame de
Ventadour.

"Nay," said Valerie; laughing, "I did not dictate the question."

"Yes," said Lord Doningdale, "I have been at Paris."

"His Majesty must have been delighted to return your lordship's hospitality."

Lord Doningdale looked a little embarrassed, and made no reply, but put his horse into a canter.

"You have galled our host," said Valerie, smiling. "Louis XVIII. and his friends lived here as long as they pleased, and as sumptuously as they could; their visits half ruined the owner, who is the model of a /gentilhomme/ and /preux chevalier/. He went to Paris to witness their triumph; he expected, I fancy, the order of the St. Esprit. Lord Doningdale has royal blood in his veins. His Majesty asked him once to dinner, and, when he took leave, said to him, 'We are happy, Lord Doningdale, to have thus requited our obligations to your lordship.' Lord Doningdale went back in dudgeon, yet he still boasts of his /souvenirs/, poor man."

"Princes are not grateful, neither are republics," said Maltravers.

"Ah, who is grateful," rejoined Valerie, "except a dog and a woman?"

Maltravers found himself ushered into a vast dressing-room, and was informed, by a French valet, that in the country Lord Doningdale dined at six—the first bell would ring in a few minutes. While the valet was speaking, Lord Doningdale himself entered the room. His lordship had learned, in the meanwhile, that Maltravers was of the great and ancient commoner's house whose honours were centred in his brother; and yet more, that he was the Mr. Maltravers whose writings every one talked of, whether for praise or abuse. Lord Doningdale had the two characteristics of a high-bred gentleman of the old school—respect for birth and respect for talent; he was, therefore, more than ordinarily courteous to Ernest, and pressed him to stay some days with so much cordiality, that Maltravers could not but assent. His travelling toilet was scanty, but Maltravers thought little of dress.

CHAPTER VIII.

"It is the soul that sees. The outward eyes
Present the object, but the mind descries;
And thence delight, disgust, or cool indifference rise.
"CRABBE.

WHEN Maltravers entered the enormous saloon, hung with damask, and decorated with the ponderous enrichments and furniture of the time of Louis XIV. (that most showy and barbarous of all tastes, which has nothing in it of the graceful, nothing of the picturesque, and which, nowadays, people who should know better imitate with a ludicrous servility), he found sixteen persons assembled. His host stepped up from a circle which surrounded him, and formally presented his new visitor to the rest. He was struck with the likeness which the sister of Valerie bore to Valerie herself; but it was a sobered and chastened likeness—less handsome, less impressive. Mrs. George Herbert—such was the name she now owned—was a pretty, shrinking, timid girl, fond of her husband, and mightily awed by her father-in-law. Maltravers sat by her, and drew her into conversation. He could not help pitying the poor lady, when he found she was to live altogether at Doningdale Park—remote from all the friends and habits of her childhood—alone, so far as the affections were concerned, with a young husband, who was passionately fond of field-sports, and who, from the few words Ernest exchanged with him, seemed to have only three ideas—his dogs, his horses, and his wife. Alas! the last would soon be the least in importance. It is a sad position—that of a lively young Frenchwoman entombed in an English country-house! Marriages with foreigners are seldom fortunate experiments. But Ernest's attention was soon diverted from the sister by the entrance of Valerie herself, leaning on her husband's arm. Hitherto he had not very minutely observed what change time had effected in her—perhaps he was half afraid. He now gazed at her with curious interest. Valerie was still extremely handsome, but her face had grown sharper, her form thinner and more angular; there was something in her eye and lip, discontented, restless, almost querulous:—such is the too common expression in the face of those born to love, and condemned to be indifferent. The little sister was more to be envied of the two—come what may, she loved her husband, such as he was, and her heart might ache, but it was not with a void.

Monsieur de Ventadour soon shuffled up to Maltravers—his nose longer than ever.

"Hein—hein—how d'ye do—how d'ye do?—charmed to see you—saw madame before me—hein—hein—I suspect—I suspect—"

"Mr. Maltravers, will you give Madame de Ventadour your arm?" said Lord Doningdale, as he stalked on to the dining-room with a duchess on his own.

"And you have left Naples," said Maltravers: "left it for good?"

"We do not think of returning."

"It was a charming place—how I loved it!—how well I remember it!"
Ernest spoke calmly—it was but a general remark.

Valerie sighed gently.

During dinner, the conversation between Maltravers and Madame de Ventadour was vague and embarrassed. Ernest was no longer in love with her—he had outgrown that youthful fancy. She had exercised influence over him—the new influences that he had created had chased away her image. Such is life. Long absences extinguish all the false lights, though not the true ones. The lamps are dead in the banquet-room of yesterday; but a thousand years hence, and the stars we look on to-night will burn as brightly. Maltravers was no longer in love with Valerie. But Valerie—ah, perhaps /hers/ had been true love!

Maltravers was surprised when he came to examine the state of his own feelings—he was surprised to find that his pulse did not beat quicker at the touch of one whose very glance had once thrilled him to the soul—he was surprised, but rejoiced. He was no longer anxious to seek, but to shun excitement, and he was a better and a higher being than he had been on the shores of Naples.

CHAPTER IX.

"Whence that low voice, a whisper from the heart,
That told of days long past?"—WORDSWORTH.

ERNEST stayed several days at Lord Doningdale's, and every day he rode out with Valerie, but it was with a large party; and every evening he conversed with her, but the whole world might have overheard what they said. In fact, the sympathy that had once existed between the young dreamer and the proud,

discontented woman had in much passed away. Awakened to vast and grand objects, Maltravers was a dreamer no more. Inured to the life of trifles she had once loathed, Valerie had settled down into the usages and thoughts of the common world—she had no longer the superiority of earthly wisdom over Maltravers, and his romance was sobered in its eloquence, and her ear dulled to its tone. Still Ernest felt a deep interest in her, and still she seemed to feel a sensitive pride in his career.

One evening Maltravers had joined a circle in which Madame de Ventadour, with more than her usual animation, presided—and to which, in her pretty, womanly, and thoroughly French way, she was lightly laying down the law on a hundred subjects—Philosophy, Poetry, Sevres china, and the balance of power in Europe. Ernest listened to her, delighted, but not enchanted. Yet Valerie was not natural that night—she was speaking from forced spirits.

"Well," said Madame de Ventadour at last, tired, perhaps of the part she had been playing, and bringing to a sudden close an animated description of the then French court—"well, see now if we ought not to be ashamed of ourselves—our talk has positively interrupted the music. Did you see Lord Doningdale stop it with a bow to me, as much as to say, with his courtly reproof, 'It shall not disturb you, madam'? I will no longer be accessory to your crime of bad taste!"

With this the Frenchwoman rose, and, gliding through the circle, retired to the further end of the room. Ernest followed her with his eyes. Suddenly she beckoned to him, and he approached and seated himself by her side.

"Mr. Maltravers," said Valerie, then, with great sweetness in her voice,—"I have not yet expressed to you the delight I have felt from your genius. In absence you have suffered me to converse with you—your books have been to me dear friends; as we shall soon part again, let me now tell you of this, frankly and without compliment."

This paved the way to a conversation that approached more on the precincts of the past than any they had yet known. But Ernest was guarded; and Valerie watched his words and looks with an interest she could not conceal—an interest that partook of disappointment.

"It is an excitement," said Valerie, "to climb a mountain, though it fatigue; and though the clouds may even deny us a prospect from its summit—it is an excitement that gives a very universal pleasure, and that seems almost as if it were the result of a common human instinct which makes us desire to rise—to get above the ordinary thoroughfares and level of life. Some such pleasure you must have in intellectual ambition, in which the mind is the upward traveller."

"It is not the /ambition/ that pleases," replied Maltravers, it is the following a path congenial to our tastes, and made dear to us in a short time by habit. The moments in which we look beyond our work, and fancy ourselves seated beneath the Everlasting Laurel, are few. It is the work itself, whether of action or literature, that interests and excites us. And at length the dryness of toil takes the familiar sweetness of custom. But in intellectual labour there is another charm—we become more intimate with our own nature. The heart and the soul grow friends, as it were, and the affections and the aspirations unite. Thus, we are never without society—we are never alone; all that we have read, learned and discovered, is company to us. This is pleasant," added Maltravers, "to those who have no clear connections in the world without."

"And is that your case?" asked Valerie, with a timid smile.

"Alas, yes! and since I conquered one affection,—Madame de Ventadour, I almost think I have outlived the capacity of loving. I believe that when we cultivate very largely the reason or the imagination, we blunt, to a certain extent, our young susceptibilities to the fair impressions of real life. From 'idleness,' says the old Roman poet, 'Love feeds his torch.'"

"You are too young to talk thus."

"I speak as I feel."

Valerie said no more. Shortly afterwards Lord Doningdale approached them, and proposed that they should make an excursion the next day to see the ruins of an old abbey, some few miles distant.

CHAPTER X.

"If I should meet thee
After long years,
How shall I greet thee?"—BYRON.

IT was a smaller party than usual the next day, consisting only of Lord Doningdale, his son George Herbert, Valerie and Ernest. They were returning from the ruins, and the sun, now gradually approaching the west, threw its slant rays over the gardens and houses of a small, picturesque town, or, perhaps, rather village, on the high North Road. It is one of the prettiest places in England, that town or village, and boasts an excellent old-fashioned inn, with a large and quaint pleasure-garden. It was through the long and straggling street that our little party slowly rode, when the sky became suddenly overcast, and, a few large hailstones falling, gave notice of an approaching storm.

"I told you we should not get safely through the day," said George
Herbert. "Now we are in for it."

"George, that is a vulgar expression," said Lord Doningdale, buttoning up his coat. While he spoke, a vivid flash of lightning darted across their very path, and the sky grew darker and darker.

"We may as well rest at the inn," said Maltravers: "the storm is coming on apace, and Madame de Ventadour—"

"You are right," interrupted Lord Doningdale; and he put his horse into a canter.

They were soon at the door of the old hotel. Bells rang dogs barked—hostlers ran. A plain, dark, travelling post-chariot was before the inn-door; and, roused perhaps by the noise below, a lady in the "first-floor front, No. 2," came to the window. This lady owned the travelling-carriage, and was at this time alone in that apartment. As she looked carelessly at the party, her eyes rested on one form—she turned pale, uttered a faint cry, and fell senseless on the floor.

Meanwhile, Lord Doningdale and his guests were shown into the room next to that tenanted by the lady. Properly speaking, both the rooms made one long apartment for balls and county meetings, and the division was formed by a thin partition, removable at pleasure. The hail now came on fast and heavy, the trees groaned, the thunder roared; and in the large, dreary room there was a palpable and oppressive sense of coldness and discomfort. Valerie shivered—a fire was lighted—and the Frenchwoman drew near to it.

"You are wet, my dear lady," said Lord Doningdale. "You should take off that close habit, and have it dried."

"Oh, no; what matters it?" said Valerie bitterly, and almost rudely.

"It matters everything," said Ernest; "pray be ruled."

"And do you care for me?" murmured Valerie.

"Can you ask that question?" replied Ernest, in the same tone, and with affectionate and friendly warmth.

Meanwhile, the good old lord had summoned the chambermaid, and, with the kindly imperiousness of a father, made Valerie quit the room. The three gentlemen, left together, talked of the storm, wondered how long it would last, and debated the propriety of sending to Doningdale for the carriage. While they spoke, the hail suddenly ceased, though clouds in the distant horizon were bearing heavily up to renew the charge. George Herbert, who was the most impatient of mortals, especially of rainy weather in a strange place, seized the occasion, and insisted on riding to Doningdale, and sending back the carriage.

"Surely a groom would do as well, George," said the father.

"My dear father, no; I should envy the rogue too much. I am bored to death here. Marie will be frightened about us. Brown Bess will take me back in twenty minutes. I am a hardy fellow, you know. Good-bye."

Away darted the young sportsman, and in two minutes they saw him spur gaily from the inn-door.

"It is very odd that /I/ should have such a son," said Lord Doningdale, musingly,—"a son who cannot amuse himself indoors for two minutes together. I took great pains with his education, too. Strange that people should weary so much of themselves that they cannot brave the prospect of a few minutes passed in reflection—that a shower and the resources of their own thoughts are evils so galling—very strange indeed. But it is a confounded climate this, certainly. I wonder when it will clear up."

Thus muttering, Lord Doningdale walked, or rather marched, to and fro the room, with his hands in his coat pockets, and his whip sticking perpendicularly out of the right one. Just at this moment the waiter came to announce that his lordship's groom was without, and desired much to see him. Lord Doningdale had then the pleasure of learning that his favourite grey hackney, which he had ridden,

winter and summer, for fifteen years, was taken with shivers, and, as the groom expressed it, seemed to have "the colic in its bowels!"

Lord Doningdale turned pale, and hurried to the stables without saying a word.

Maltravers, who, plunged in thought, had not overheard the low and brief conference between master and groom, remained alone, seated by the fire, his head buried in his bosom, and his arms folded.

Meanwhile, the lady, who occupied the adjoining chamber, had recovered slowly from her swoon. She put both hands to her temples, as if trying to recollect her thoughts. Hers was a fair, innocent, almost childish face; and now, as a smile shot across it, there was something so sweet and touching in the gladness it shed over that countenance, that you could not have seen it without strong and almost painful interest. For it was the gladness of a person who has known sorrow. Suddenly she started up, and said: "No, then! I do not dream. He is come back—he is here—all will be well again! Ha! it is his voice. Oh, bless him, it is /his/ voice!" She paused, her finger on her lip, her face bent down. A low and indistinct sound of voices reached her straining ear through the thin door that divided her from Maltravers. She listened intently, but she could not overhear the import. Her heart beat violently. "He is not alone!" she murmured, mournfully. "I will wait till the sound ceases, and then I will venture in!"

And what was the conversation carried on in that chamber? We must return to Ernest. He was sitting in the same thoughtful posture when Madame de Ventadour returned.

The Frenchwoman coloured when she found herself alone with Ernest, and
Ernest himself was not at his ease.

"Herbert has gone home to order the carriage, and Lord Doningdale has disappeared, I scarce know whither. You do not, I trust, feel the worse for the rain?"

"No," said Valerie.

"Shall you have any commands in London?" asked Maltravers; "I return to town to-morrow."

"So soon!" and Valerie sighed. "Ah!" she added, after a pause, "we shall not meet again for years, perhaps. Monsieur de Ventadour is to be appointed ambassador to the Court and so—and so—. Well, it is no matter. What has become of the friendship we once swore to each other?"

"It is here," said Maltravers, laying his hand on his heart. "Here, at least, lies the half of that friendship which was my charge; and more than friendship, Valerie de Ventadour—respect—admiration—gratitude. At a time of life when passion and fancy, most strong, might have left me an idle and worthless voluptuary, you convinced me that the world has virtue, and that woman is too noble to be our toy—the idol of to-day, the victim of to-morrow. Your influence, Valerie, left me a more thoughtful man—I hope a better one."

"Oh!" said Madame de Ventadour, strongly affected; "I bless you for what
you tell me: you cannot know—you cannot guess how sweet it is to me.
Now I recognise you once more. What—what did my resolution cost me?
Now I am repaid!"

Ernest was moved by her emotion, and by his own remembrances; he took her hand, and pressing it with frank and respectful tenderness—"I did not think, Valerie," said he, "when I reviewed the past, I did not think that you loved me—I was not vain enough for that; but, if so, how much is your character raised in my eyes—how provident, how wise your virtue! Happier and better for both, our present feelings, each to each, than if we had indulged a brief and guilty dream of passion, at war with all that leaves passion without remorse, and bliss without alloy. Now—"

"Now," interrupted Valerie, quickly, and fixing on him her dark eyes—"now you love me no longer! Yet it is better so. Well, I will go back to my cold and cheerless state of life, and forget once more that Heaven endowed me with a heart!"

"Ah, Valerie! esteemed, revered, still beloved, not indeed with the fires of old, but with a deep, undying, and holy tenderness, speak not thus to me. Let me not believe you unhappy; let me think that, wise, sagacious, brilliant as you are, you have employed your gifts to reconcile yourself to a common lot. Still let me look up to you when I would despise the circles in which you live, and say: 'On that pedestal an altar is yet placed, to which the heart may bring the offerings of the soul.'"

"It is in vain—in vain that I struggle," said Valerie, half-choked with emotion, and clasping her hands passionately. "Ernest, I love you still—I am wretched to think you love me no more: I would give you

nothing—yet I exact all; my youth is going—my beauty dimmed—my very intellect is dulled by the life I lead; and yet I ask from you that which your young heart once felt for me. Despise me, Maltravers, I am not what I seemed—I am a hypocrite—despise me."

"No," said Ernest, again possessing himself of her hand, and falling on his knee by her side. "No, never-to-be-forgotten, ever-to-be-honoured Valerie, hear me." As he spoke, he kissed the hand he held; with the other, Valerie covered her face and wept bitterly, but in silence. Ernest paused till the burst of her feelings had subsided, her hand still in his—still warmed by his kisses—kisses as pure as cavalier ever impressed on the hand of his queen.

At this time, the door communicating with the next room gently opened. A fair form—a form fairer and younger than that of Valerie de Ventadour—entered the apartment; the silence had deceived her—she believed that Maltravers was alone. She had entered with her heart upon her lips; love, sanguine, hopeful love, in every vein, in every thought—she had entered dreaming that across that threshold life would dawn upon her afresh—that all would be once more as it had been, when the common air was rapture. Thus she entered; and now she stood spell-bound, terror-stricken, pale as death—life turned to stone—youth—hope—bliss were for ever over to her! Ernest kneeling to another was all she saw! For this had she been faithful and true amidst storm and desolation; for this had she hoped—dreamed—lived. They did not note her; she was unseen—unheard. And Ernest, who would have gone barefoot to the end of the earth to find her, was in the very room with her, and knew it not!

"Call me again /beloved/!" said Valerie, very softly.

"Beloved Valerie, hear me."

These words were enough for the listener; she turned noiselessly away: humble as that heart was, it was proud. The door closed on her—she had obtained the wish of her whole being—Heaven had heard her prayer—she had once more seen the lover of her youth; and thenceforth all was night and darkness to her. What matter what became of her? One moment, what an effect it produces upon years!—ONE MOMENT!—virtue, crime, glory, shame, woe, rapture, rest upon moments! Death itself is but a moment, yet Eternity is its successor!

"Hear me!" continued Ernest, unconscious of what had passed—" hear me; let us be what human nature and worldly forms seldom allow those of opposite sexes to be—friends to each other, and to virtue also—friends through time and absence—friends through all the vicissitudes of life—friends on whose affection shame and remorse never cast a shade—friends who are to meet hereafter! Oh! there is no attachment so true, no tie so holy, as that which is founded on the old chivalry of loyalty and honour; and which is what love would be, if the heart and the soul were unadulterated by clay."

There was in Ernest's countenance an expression so noble, in his voice a tone so thrilling, that Valerie was brought back at once to the nature which a momentary weakness had subdued. She looked at him with an admiring and grateful gaze, and then said, in a calm but low voice, "Ernest, I understand you; yes, your friendship is dearer to me than love."

At this time they heard the voice of Lord Doningdale on the stairs. Valerie turned away. Maltravers, as he rose, extended his hand; she pressed it warmly, and the spell was broken, the temptation conquered, the ordeal passed. While Lord Doningdale entered the room, the carriage, with Herbert in it, drove to the door. In a few minutes the little party were within the vehicle. As they drove away, the hostlers were harnessing the horses to the dark green travelling-carriage. From the window, a sad and straining eye gazed upon the gayer equipage of the peer—that eye which Maltravers would have given his whole fortune to meet again. But he did not look up; and Alice Darvil turned away, and her fate was fixed!

CHAPTER XI.

"Strange fits of passion I have known.
And I will dare to tell."—WORDSWORTH.

"* * * * * The food of hope
Is meditated action."—WORDSWORTH.

MALTRAVERS left Doningdale the next day. He had no further conversation with Valerie; but when he took leave of her, she placed in his hand a letter, which he read as he rode slowly through the beech avenues of the park. Translated, it ran thus:

"Others would despise me for the weakness I showed—but you will not! It is the sole weakness of a life. None can know what I have passed through—what hours of dejection and gloom. I, whom so many envy! Better to have been a peasant girl, with love, than a queen whose life is but a dull mechanism. You, Maltravers, I never forgot in absence; and your image made yet more wearisome and trite the things around me. Years passed, and your name was suddenly on men's lips. I heard of you wherever I went—I could not shut you from me. Your fame was as if you were conversing by my side. We met at last, suddenly and unexpectedly. I saw that you loved me no more, and that thought conquered all my resolves: anguish subdues the nerves of the mind as sickness those of the body. And thus I forgot, and humbled, and might have undone myself. Juster and better thoughts are once more awakened within me, and when we meet again I shall be worthy of your respect. I see how dangerous are that luxury of thought, that sin of discontent which I indulged. I go back to life, resolved to vanquish all that can interfere with its claims and duties. Heaven guide and preserve you, Ernest. Think of me as one whom you will not blush to have loved—whom you will not blush hereafter to present to your wife. With so much that is soft, as well as great within you, you were not formed like me—to be alone.

"FAREWELL!"

Maltravers read, and re-read this letter; and when he reached his home, he placed it carefully amongst the things he most valued. A lock of Alice's hair lay beside it—he did not think that either was dishonoured by the contact.

With an effort, he turned himself once more to those stern yet high connections which literature makes with real life. Perhaps there was a certain restlessness in his heart which induced him ever to occupy his mind. That was one of the busiest years of his life—the one in which he did most to sharpen jealousy and confirm fame.

CHAPTER XII.

"In effect he entered my apartment."—/Gil Blas/.

> "'I am surprised,' said he, 'at the caprice of Fortune, who sometimes delights in loading an execrable author with favours, whilst she leaves good writers to perish for want.'"—/Gil Blas/.

IT was just twelve months after his last interview with Valerie, and
Madame de Ventadour had long since quitted England, when one morning, as
Maltravers sat alone in his study, Castruccio Cesarini was announced.

"Ah, my dear Castruccio, how are you?" cried Maltravers, eagerly, as the opening door presented the form of the Italian.

"Sir," said Castruccio, with great stiffness, and speaking in French, which was his wont when he meant to be distant—"sir, I do not come to renew our former acquaintance—you are a great man [here a bitter sneer], I an obscure one [here Castruccio drew himself up]—I only come to discharge a debt to you which I find I have incurred."

"What tone is this, Castruccio; and what debt do you speak of?"

"On my arrival in town yesterday," said the poet solemnly, "I went to the man whom you deputed some years since to publish my little volume, to demand an account of its success; and I found that it had cost one hundred and twenty pounds, deducting the sale of forty-nine copies which had been sold. /Your/ books sell some thousands, I am told. It is well contrived—mine fell still-born, no pains were taken with it—no matter—[a wave of the hand]. You discharged this debt, I repay you: there is a cheque for the money. Sir, I have done! I wish you a good day, and health to enjoy /your/ reputation."

"Why, Cesarini, this is folly."

"Sir—"

"Yes, it is folly; for there is no folly equal to that of throwing away friendship in a world where friendship is so rare. You insinuate that I am to blame for any neglect which your work experienced. Your publisher can tell you that I was more anxious about your book than I have ever been about my own."

"And the proof is that forty-nine copies were sold!"

"Sit down, Castruccio; sit down, and listen to reason;" and Maltravers proceeded to explain, and

soothe, and console. He reminded the poor poet that his verses were written in a foreign tongue—that even English poets of great fame enjoyed but a limited sale for their works—that it was impossible to make the avaricious public purchase what the stupid public would not take an interest in—in short, he used all those arguments which naturally suggested themselves as best calculated to convince and soften Castruccio; and he did this with so much evident sympathy and kindness, that at length the Italian could no longer justify his own resentment. A reconciliation took place, sincere on the part of Maltravers, hollow on the part of Cesarini; for the disappointed author could not forgive the successful one.

"And how long shall you stay in London?"

"Some months."

"Send for your luggage, and be my guest."

"No; I have taken lodgings that suit me. I am formed for solitude."

"While you stay here, you will, however, go into the world."

"Yes, I have some letters of introduction, and I hear that the English can honour merit, even in an Italian."

"You hear the truth, and it will amuse you, at least, to see our eminent men. They will receive you most hospitably. Let me assist you as a cicerone."

"Oh, your /valuable/ time!"

"Is at your disposal: but where are you going?"

"It is Sunday, and I have had my curiosity excited to hear a celebrated preacher—Mr. ———, who they tell me, is now more talked of than /any author/ in London."

"They tell you truly—I will go with you—I myself have not yet heard him, but proposed to do so this very day."

"Are you not jealous of a man so much spoken of?"

"Jealous!—why, I never set up for a popular preacher!—/ce n'est pas mon metier/."

"If I were a /successful/ author, I should be jealous if the dancing-dogs were talked of."

"No, my dear Cesarini, I am sure you would not. You are a little irritated at present by natural disappointment; but the man who has as much success as he deserves is never morbidly jealous, even of a rival in his own line. Want of success sours us; but a little sunshine smiles away the vapours. Come, we have no time to lose."

Maltravers took his hat, and the two young men bent their way to ——— Chapel. Cesarini still retained the singular fashion of his dress, though it was now made of handsomer materials, and worn with more coxcombry and pretension. He had much improved in person—had been admired in Paris, and told that he looked like a man of genius—and, with his black ringlets flowing over his shoulders, his long moustache, his broad Spanish-shaped hat, and eccentric garb, he certainly did not look like other people. He smiled with contempt at the plain dress of his companion. "I see," said he, "that you follow the fashion, and look as if you passed your life with /elegans/ instead of students. I wonder you condescend to such trifles as fashionably-shaped hats and coats."

"It would be worse trifling to set up for originality in hats and coats, at least in sober England. I was born a gentleman, and I dress my outward frame like others of my order. Because I am a writer, why should I affect to be different from other men?"

"I see that you are not above the weakness of your countryman Congreve," said Cesarini, "who deemed it finer to be a gentleman than an author."

"I always thought that anecdote misconstrued. Congreve had a proper and manly pride, to my judgment, when he expressed a dislike to be visited merely as a raree-show."

"But is it policy to let the world see that an author is like other people? Would he not create a deeper personal interest if he showed that even in person alone he was unlike the herd? He ought to be seen seldom—not to stale his presence—and to resort to the arts that belong to the royalty of intellect as well as the royalty of birth."

"I dare say an author, by a little charlatanism of that nature, might be more talked of—might be more adored in the boarding-schools, and make a better picture in the exhibition. But I think, if his mind be manly, he would lose in self-respect at every quackery of the sort. And my philosophy is, that to respect oneself is worth all the fame in the world."

Cesarini sneered and shrugged his shoulders; it was quite evident that the two authors had no sympathy with each other.

They arrived at last at the chapel, and with some difficulty procured seats.

Presently the service began. The preacher was a man of unquestionable talent and fervid eloquence; but his theatrical arts, his affected dress, his artificial tones and gestures; and, above all, the fanatical mummeries which he introduced into the House of God, disgusted Maltravers, while they charmed, entranced, and awed Cesarini. The one saw a mountebank and impostor—the other recognised a profound artist and an inspired prophet.

But while the discourse was drawing towards a close, while the preacher was in one of his most eloquent bursts—the ohs! and ahs! of which were the grand prelude to the pathetic peroration—the dim outline of a female form, in the distance, riveted the eyes and absorbed the thoughts of Maltravers. The chapel was darkened, though it was broad daylight; and the face of the person that attracted Ernest's attention was concealed by her head-dress and veil. But that bend of the neck, so simply graceful, so humbly modest, recalled to his heart but one image. Every one has, perhaps, observed that there is a physiognomy (if the bull may be pardoned) of /form/ as well as face, which it rarely happens that two persons possess in common. And this, with most, is peculiarly marked in the turn of the head, the outline of the shoulders, and the ineffable something that characterises the postures of each individual in repose. The more intently he gazed, the more firmly Ernest was persuaded that he saw before him the long-lost, the never-to-be-forgotten mistress of his boyish days, and his first love. On one side of the lady in question sat an elderly gentleman, whose eyes were fixed upon the preacher; on the other, a beautiful little girl, with long fair ringlets, and that cast of features which, from its exquisite delicacy and expressive mildness, painters and poets call the "angelic." These persons appeared to belong to the same party. Maltravers literally trembled, so great were his impatience and agitation. Yet still, the dress of the supposed likeness of Alice, the appearance of her companions, were so evidently above the ordinary rank, that Ernest scarcely ventured to yield to the suggestions of his own heart. Was it possible that the daughter of Luke Darvil, thrown upon the wide world, could have risen so far beyond her circumstances and station? At length the moment came when he might resolve his doubts—the discourse was concluded—the extemporaneous prayer was at an end—the congregation broke up, and Maltravers pushed his way, as well as he could, through the dense and serried crowd. But every moment some vexatious obstruction, in the shape of a fat gentleman or three close-wedged ladies, intercepted his progress. He lost sight of the party in question amidst the profusion of tall bonnets and waving plumes. He arrived at last, breathless and pale as death (so great was the struggle within him), at the door of the chapel. He arrived in time to see a plain carriage with servants in grey undress liveries, driving from the porch—and caught a glimpse, within the vehicle, of the golden ringlets of a child. He darted forward, he threw himself almost before the horses. The coachman drew in, and with an angry exclamation, very much like an oath, whipped his horses aside and went off. But that momentary pause sufficed.—"It is she—it is! O Heaven, it is Alice!" murmured Maltravers. The whole place reeled before his eyes, and he clung, overpowered and unconscious, to a neighbouring lamp-post for support. But he recovered himself with an agonising effort, as the thought struck upon this heart that he was about to lose sight of her again for ever. And he rushed forward, like one frantic, in pursuit of the carriage. But there was a vast crowd of other carriages, besides stream upon stream of foot-passengers,—for the great and the gay resorted to that place of worship, as a fashionable excitement in a dull day. And after a weary and a dangerous chase, in which he had been nearly run over three times, Maltravers halted at last, exhausted and in despair. Every succeeding Sunday, for months, he went to the same chapel, but in vain; in vain, too, he resorted to every public haunt of dissipation and amusement. Alice Darvil he beheld no more!

CHAPTER XIII.

"Tell me, sir,
Have you cast up your state, rated your land,
And find it able to endure the charge?"
/The Noble Gentleman/.

By degrees, as Maltravers sobered down from the first shock of that unexpected meeting, and from the prolonged disappointment that followed it, he became sensible of a strange kind of happiness or

contentment. Alice was not in poverty, she was not eating the unhallowed bread of vice, or earning the bitter wages of laborious penury. He saw her in reputable, nay, opulent circumstances. A dark nightmare, that had often, amidst the pleasures of youth, or the triumphs of literature, weighed upon his breast, was removed. He breathed more freely—he could sleep in peace. His conscience could no longer say to him, "She who slept upon thy bosom is a wanderer upon the face of the earth—exposed to every temptation, perishing perhaps for want." That single sight of Alice had been like the apparition of the injured Dead conjured up at Heraclea—whose sight could pacify the aggressor and exorcise the spectres of remorse. He was reconciled with himself, and walked on to the Future with a bolder step and a statelier crest. Was she married to that staid and sober-looking personage whom he had beheld with her? was that child the offspring of their union? He almost hoped so—it was better to lose than to destroy her. Poor Alice! could she have dreamed, when she sat at his feet gazing up into his eyes, that a time would come when Maltravers would thank Heaven for the belief that she was happy with another?

Ernest Maltravers now felt a new man: the relief of conscience operated on the efforts of his genius. A more buoyant and elastic spirit entered into them—they seemed to breathe as with a second youth.

Meanwhile, Cesarini threw himself into the fashionable world, and to his own surprise was /feted/ and caressed. In fact, Castruccio was exactly the sort of person to be made a lion of. The letters of introduction that he had brought from Paris were addressed to those great personages in England between whom and personages equally great in France politics makes a bridge of connection. Cesarini appeared to them as an accomplished young man, brother-in-law to a distinguished member of the French Chamber. Maltravers, on the other hand, introduced him to the literary dilettanti, who admire all authors that are not rivals. The singular costume of Cesarini, which would have revolted persons in an Englishman, enchanted them in an Italian. He looked, they said, like a poet. Ladies like to have verses written to them, and Cesarini, who talked very little, made up for it by scribbling eternally. The young man's head soon grew filled with comparisons between himself in London and Petrarch at Avignon. As he had always thought that fame was in the gift of lords and ladies, and had no idea of the multitude, he fancied himself already famous. And, since one of his strongest feelings was his jealousy of Maltravers, he was delighted at being told he was a much more interesting creature than that haughty personage, who wore his neckcloth like other people, and had not even those indispensable attributes of genius—black curls and a sneer. Fine society, which, as Madame de Stael well says, depraves the frivolous mind and braces the strong one, completed the ruin of all that was manly in Cesarini's intellect. He soon learned to limit his desire of effect or distinction to gilded saloons; and his vanity contented itself upon the scraps and morsels from which the lion heart of true ambition turns in disdain. But this was not all. Cesarini was envious of the greater affluence of Maltravers. His own fortune was in a small capital of eight or nine thousand pounds: but, thrown in the midst of the wealthiest society in Europe, he could not bear to sacrifice a single claim upon its esteem. He began to talk of the satiety of wealth, and young ladies listened to him with remarkable interest when he did so—he obtained the reputation of riches—he was too vain not to be charmed with it. He endeavoured to maintain the claim by adopting the extravagant excesses of the day. He bought horses—he gave away jewels—he made love to a marchioness of forty-two, who was very kind to him and very fond of /ecarte/—he gambled—he was in the high road to destruction.

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