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PAUL CLIFFORD, Volume 4.

By Edward Bulwer Lytton

CHAPTER XVI.

Whackum. My dear rogues, dear boys, Bluster and Dingboy! you are the bravest fellows that ever scoured yet!—SUADWELL: Scourers.

Cato, the Thessalian, was wont to say that some things may be done unjustly, that many things may be done justly.—LORD BACON (being a justification of every rascality).

Although our three worthies had taken unto themselves a splendid lodging in Milsom Street, which, to please Ned, was over a hairdresser's shop, yet, instead of returning thither, or repairing to such taverns as might seem best befitting their fashion and garb, they struck at once from the gay parts of the town, and tarried not till they reached a mean-looking alehouse in a remote suburb.

The door was opened to them by an elderly lady; and Clifford, stalking before his companions into an apartment at the back of the house, asked if the other gentlemen were come yet.

"No," returned the dame. "Old Mr. Bags came in about ten minutes ago; but hearing more work might be done, he went out again."

"Bring the lush and the pipes, old blone!" cried Ned, throwing himself on a bench; "we are never at a loss for company!"

"You, indeed, never can be, who are always inseparably connected with the object of your admiration," said Tomlin, son, dryly, and taking up an old newspaper. Ned, who, though choleric, was a capital fellow, and could bear a joke on himself, smiled, and drawing forth a little pair of scissors, began trimming his nails.

"Curse me," said he, after a momentary silence, "if this is not a devilish deal pleasanter than playing

the fine gentleman in that great room, with a rose in one's button-hole! What say you, Master Lovett?"

Clifford (as henceforth, despite his other aliases, we shall denominate our hero), who had thrown himself at full length on a bench at the far end of the room, and who seemed plunged into a sullen revery, now looked up for a moment, and then, turning round and presenting the dorsal part of his body to Long Ned, muttered, "Fish!"

"Harkye, Master Lovett!" said Long Ned, colouring. "I don't know what has come over you of late; but I would have you to learn that gentlemen are entitled to courtesy and polite behaviour; and so, d' ye see, if you ride your high horse upon me, splice my extremities if I won't have satisfaction!"

"Hist, man! be quiet," said Tomlinson, philosophically, snuffing the candles,—

"'For companions to quarrel,
Is extremely immoral.'"

"Don't you see that the captain is in a revery? What good man ever loves to be interrupted in his meditations? Even Alfred the Great could not bear it! Perhaps at this moment, with the true anxiety of a worthy chief, the captain is designing something for our welfare!"

"Captain indeed!" muttered Long Ned, darting a wrathful look at Clifford, who had not deigned to pay any attention to Mr. Pepper's threat; "for my part I cannot conceive what was the matter with us when we chose this green slip of the gallows-tree for our captain of the district. To be sure, he did very well at first, and that robbery of the old lord was not ill-planned; but lately—"

"Nay, nay," quoth Augustus, interrupting the gigantic grumbler; "the nature of man is prone to discontent. Allow that our present design of setting up the gay Lothario, and trying our chances at Bath for an heiress, is owing as much to Lovett's promptitude as to our invention."

"And what good will come of it?" returned Ned, as he lighted his pipe; "answer me that. Was I not dressed as fine as a lord, and did not I walk three times up and down that great room without being a jot the better for it?"

"Ah! but you know not how many secret conquests you may have made. You cannot win a prize by looking upon it."

"Humph!" grunted Ned, applying himself discontentedly to the young existence of his pipe.

"As for the captain's partner," renewed Tomlinson, who maliciously delighted in exciting the jealousy of the handsome "tax-collector,"—for that was the designation by which Augustus thought proper to style himself and companions,—"I will turn Tory if she be not already half in love with him; and did you hear the old gentleman who cut into our rubber say what a fine fortune she had? Faith, Ned, it is lucky for us two that we all agreed to go shares in our marriage speculations; I fancy the worthy captain will think it a bad bargain for himself."

"I am not so sure of that, Mr. Tomlinson," said Long Ned, sourly eying his comrade. "Some women may be caught by a smooth skin and a showy manner; but real masculine beauty,—eyes, colour, and hair,—Mr. Tomlinson, must ultimately make its way; so hand me the brandy, and cease your jaw."

"Well, well," said Tomlinson, "I'll give you a toast,—'The prettiest girl in England,' and that's Miss Brandon!"

"You shall give no such toast, sir!" said Clifford, starting from the bench. "What the devil is Miss Brandon to you? And now, Ned," seeing that the tall hero looked on him with an unfavourable aspect, "here's my hand; forgive me if I was uncivil. Tomlinson will tell you, in a maxim, men are changeable. Here's to your health; and it shall not be my fault, gentlemen, if we have not a merry evening!"

This speech, short as it was, met with great applause from the two friends; and Clifford, as president, stationed himself in a huge chair at the head of the table. Scarcely had he assumed this dignity, before the door opened, and half-a-dozen of the gentlemen confederates trooped somewhat noisily into the apartment.

"Softly, softly, messieurs," said the president, recovering all his constitutional gayety, yet blending it with a certain negligent command,—"respect for the chair, if you please! 'T is the way with all assemblies where the public purse is a matter of deferential interest!"

"Hear him!" cried Tomlinson.

"What, my old friend Bags!" said the president; "you have not come empty-handed, I will swear; your

honest face is like the table of contents to the good things in your pockets!"

"Ah, Captain Clifford," said the veteran, groaning, and shaking his reverend head, "I have seen the day when there was not a lad in England forked so largely, so comprehensively-like, as I did. But, as King Lear says at Common Garden, 'I be's old now!'"

"But your zeal is as youthful as ever, my fine fellow," said the captain, soothingly; "and if you do not clean out the public as thoroughly as heretofore, it is not the fault of your inclinations."

"No, that it is not!" cried the "tax-collectors" unanimously.

"And if ever a pocket is to be picked neatly, quietly, and effectually," added the complimentary Clifford, "I do not know to this day, throughout the three kingdoms, a neater, quieter, and more effective set of fingers than Old Bags's!"

The veteran bowed disclaimingly, and took his seat among the heartfelt good wishes of the whole assemblage.

"And now, gentlemen," said Clifford, as soon as the revellers had provided themselves with their wonted luxuries, potatory and fumous, "let us hear your adventures, and rejoice our eyes with their produce. The gallant Attie shall begin; but first, a toast,—'May those who leap from a hedge never leap from a tree!'"

This toast being drunk with enthusiastic applause, Fighting Attie began the recital of his little history.

"You sees, Captain," said he, putting himself in a martial position, and looking Clifford full in the face, "that I'm not addicted to much blarney. Little cry and much wool is my motto. At ten o'clock A.M. saw the enemy—in the shape of a Doctor of Divinity. 'Blow me,' says I to Old Bags, 'but I 'll do his reverence!' 'Blow me,' says Old Bags, 'but you sha' n't,—you'll have us scragged if you touches the Church.' 'My grandmother!' says I. Bags tells the pals,—all in a fuss about it,— what care I? I puts on a decent dress, and goes to the doctor as a decayed soldier wot supplies the shops in the turning line. His reverence—a fat jolly dog as ever you see—was at dinner over a fine roast pig; so I tells him I have some bargains at home for him. Splice me, if the doctor did not think he had got a prize; so he puts on his boots, and he comes with me to my house. But when I gets him into a lane, out come my pops. 'Give up, Doctor,' says I; 'others must share the goods of the Church now.' You has no idea what a row he made; but I did the thing, and there's an end on't."

"Bravo, Attie!" cried Clifford; and the word echoed round the board. Attie put a purse on the table, and the next gentleman was called to confession.

"It skills not, boots not," gentlest of readers, to record each of the narratives that now followed one another. Old Bags, in especial, preserved his well-earned reputation by emptying six pockets, which had been filled with every possible description of petty valuables. Peasant and prince appeared alike to have come under his hands; and perhaps the good old man had done in the town more towards effecting an equality of goods among different ranks than all the Reformers, from Cornwall to Carlisle. Yet so keen was his appetite for the sport that the veteran appropriator absolutely burst into tears at not having "forked more."

"I love a warm-hearted enthusiasm," cried Clifford, handling the movables, while he gazed lovingly on the ancient purloiner. "May new cases never teach us to forget Old Bags!"

As soon as this "sentiment" had been duly drunk, and Mr. Bagshot had dried his tears and applied himself to his favourite drink,—which, by the way, was "blue ruin,"—the work of division took place. The discretion and impartiality of the captain in this arduous part of his duty attracted universal admiration; and each gentleman having carefully pouched his share, the youthful president hemmed thrice, and the society became aware of a purposed speech.

"Gentlemen!" began Clifford,—and his main supporter, the sapient Augustus, shouted out, "Hear!"—"gentlemen, you all know that when some months ago you were pleased, partly at the instigation of Gentleman George—God bless him!—partly from the exaggerated good opinion expressed of me by my friends, to elect me to the high honour of the command of this district, I myself was by no means ambitious to assume that rank, which I knew well was far beyond my merits, and that responsibility which I knew with equal certainty was too weighty for my powers. Your voices, however, overruled my own; and as Mr. Muddlepudd, the great metaphysician, in that excellent paper, 'The Asinaeum,' was wont to observe, 'the susceptibilities, innate, extensible, incomprehensible, and eternal,' existing in my bosom, were infinitely more powerful than the shallow suggestions of reason,—that ridiculous thing which all wise men and judicious Asinaeans sedulously stifle."

"Plague take the man! what is he talking about?" said Long Ned, who we have seen was of an envious temper, in a whisper to Old Bags. Old Bags shook his head.

"In a word, gentlemen," renewed Clifford, "your kindness overpowered me; and despite my cooler inclinations, I accepted your flattering proposal. Since then I have endeavoured, so far as I have been able, to advance your interests; I have kept a vigilant eye upon all my neighbours; I have, from county to county, established numerous correspondents; and our exertions have been carried on with a promptitude that has ensured success.

"Gentlemen, I do not wish to boast; but on these nights of periodical meetings, when every quarter brings us to go halves,—when we meet in private to discuss the affairs of the public, show our earnings as it were in privy council, and divide them amicably as it were in the Cabinet ["Hear! hear!" from Mr. Tomlinson],—it is customary for your captain for the time being to remind you of his services, engage your pardon for his deficiencies, and your good wishes for his future exertions. Gentlemen, has it ever been said of Paul Lovett that he heard of a prize and forgot to tell you of his news? ["Never! never!" loud cheering.] Has it ever been said of him that he sent others to seize the booty, and stayed at home to think how it should be spent? ["No! no!" repeated cheers.] Has it ever been said of him that he took less share than his due of your danger, and more of your guineas? [Cries in the negative, accompanied with vehement applause.] Gentlemen, I thank you for these flattering and audible testimonials in my favour; but the points on which I have dwelt, however necessary to my honour, would prove but little for my merits; they might be worthy notice in your comrade, you demand more subtle duties in your chief. Gentlemen, has it ever been said of Paul Lovett that he sent out brave men on forlorn hopes; that he hazarded your own heads by rash attempts in acquiring pictures of King George's; that zeal, in short, was greater in him than caution, or that his love of a quid (A guinea) ever made him neglectful of your just aversion to a quod? (A prison) [Unanimous cheering.]

"Gentlemen, since I have had the honour to preside over your welfare, Fortune, which favours the bold, has not been unmerciful to you! But three of our companions have been missed from our peaceful festivities. One, gentlemen, I myself expelled from our corps for ungentlemanlike practices; he picked pockets of fogles, (handkerchiefs)—it was a vulgar employment. Some of you, gentlemen, have done the same for amusement; Jack Littlefork did it for occupation. I expostulated with him in public and in private; Mr. Pepper cut his society; Mr. Tomlinson read him an essay on Real Greatness of Soul: all was in vain. He was pumped by the mob for the theft of a *bird's-eye wipe*. The fault I had borne with,— the detection was unpardonable; I expelled him. Who's here so base as would be a fogle-hunter? If any, speak; for him have I offended! Who's here so rude as would not be a gentleman? If any, speak; for him have I offended! I pause for a reply! What, none! then none have I offended. [Loud cheers.] Gentlemen, I may truly add, that I have done no more to Jack Littlefork than you should do to Paul Lovett! The next vacancy in our ranks was occasioned by the loss of Patrick Blunderbull. You know, gentlemen, the vehement exertions that I made to save that misguided creature, whom I had made exertions no less earnest to instruct. But he chose to swindle under the name of the 'Honourable Captain Smico;' the Peerage gave him the lie at once; his case was one of aggravation, and he was so remarkably ugly that he 'created no interest.' He left us for a foreign exile; and if as a man I lament him, I confess to you, gentlemen, as a 'tax-collector' I am easily consoled.

"Our third loss must be fresh in your memory. Peter Popwell, as bold a fellow as ever breathed, is no more! [A movement in the assembly.] Peace be with him! He died on the field of battle; shot dead by a Scotch Colonel, whom poor Popwell thought to rob of nothing with an empty pistol. His memory, gentlemen,—in solemn silence!

"These make the catalogue of our losses," resumed the youthful chief, so soon as the "red cup had crowned the memory" of Peter Popwell; "I am proud, even in sorrow, to think that the blame of those losses rests not with me. And now, friends and followers! Gentlemen of the Road, the Street, the Theatre, and the Shop! Prigs, Tobymen, and Squires of the Cross! according to the laws of our Society, I resign into your hands that power which for two quarterly terms you have confided to mine, ready to sink into your ranks as a comrade, nor unwilling to renounce the painful honour I have borne,—borne with much infirmity, it is true, but at least with a sincere desire to serve that cause with which you have intrusted me."

So saying, the captain descended from his chair amidst the most uproarious applause; and as soon as the first burst had partially subsided, Augustus Tomlinson rising, with one hand in his breeches' pocket and the other stretched out, said,—

"Gentlemen, I move that Paul Lovett be again chosen as our captain for the ensuing term of three months. [Deafening cheers.] Much might I say about his surpassing merits; but why dwell upon that which is obvious? Life is short! Why should speeches be long? Our lives, perhaps, are shorter than the lives of other men; why should not our harangues be of a suitable brevity? Gentlemen, I shall say but

one word in favour of my excellent friend,—of mine, say I? ay, of mine, of yours. He is a friend to all of us! A prime minister is not more useful to his followers and more burdensome to the public than I am proud to say is—Paul Lovett. [Loud plaudits.] What I shall urge in his favour is simply this: the man whom opposite parties unite in praising must have supereminent merit. Of all your companions, gentlemen, Paul Lovett is the only man who to that merit can advance a claim. [Applause.] You all know, gentlemen, that our body has long been divided into two factions,—each jealous of the other, each desirous of ascendancy, and each emulous which shall put the greatest number of fingers into the public pie. In the language of the vulgar, the one faction would be called 'swindlers,' and the other 'highwaymen.' I, gentlemen, who am fond of finding new names for things and for persons, and am a bit of a politician, call the one Whigs, and the other Tories. [Clamorous cheering.] Of the former body I am esteemed no uninfluential member; of the latter faction Mr. Bags is justly considered the most shining ornament. Mr. Attie and Mr. Edward Pepper can scarcely be said to belong entirely to either; they unite the good qualities of both. 'British compounds' some term them; I term them Liberal Aristocrats! [Cheers.] I now call upon you all, Whig, or Swindler, Tory, or Highwayman, 'British Compounds,' or Liberal Aristocrats,—I call upon you all to name me one man whom you will all agree to elect."

All,—"Lovett forever!"

"Gentlemen," continued the sagacious Augustus, "that shout is sufficient; without another word, I propose, as your captain, Mr. Paul Lovett."

"And I seconds the motion!" said old Mr. Bags.

Our hero, being now by the unanimous applause of his confederates restored to the chair of office, returned thanks in a neat speech; and Scarlet Jem declared, with great solemnity, that it did equal honour to his head and heart.

The thunders of eloquence being hushed, flashes of lightning, or, as the vulgar say, *glasses of gin*, gleamed about. Good old Mr. Bags stuck, however, to his blue ruin, and Attie to the bottle of bingo; some, among whom were Clifford and the wise Augustus, called for wine; and Clifford, who exerted himself to the utmost in supporting the gay duties of his station, took care that the song should vary the pleasures of the bowl. Of the songs we have only been enabled to preserve two. The first is by Long Ned; and though we confess we can see but little in it, yet (perhaps from some familiar allusion or other with which we are necessarily unacquainted) it produced a prodigious sensation. It ran thus:—

THE ROGUE'S RECIPE.

Your honest fool a rogue to make,
As great as can be seen, sir,
Two hackneyed rogues you first must take,
Then place your fool between, sir.

Virtue 's a dunghill cock, ashamed
Of self when paired with game ones;
And wildest elephants are tamed
If stuck betwixt two tame ones.

The other effusion with which we have the honour to favour our readers is a very amusing duet which took place between Fighting Attie and a tall thin robber, who was a dangerous fellow in a mob, and was therefore called Mobbing Francis; it was commenced by the latter:—

MOBBING FRANCIS:

The best of all robbers as ever I knowed
Is the bold Fighting Attie, the pride of the road!—
Fighting Attie, my hero, I saw you to-day
A purse full of yellow boys seize;
And as, just at present, *I'm low in the lay*,
I'll borrow a quid, if you please.
Oh! bold Fighting Attie, the knowing, the natty,
By us all it must sure be confest,
Though your shoppers and snobbers are pretty good robbers,
A soldier is always the best.

FIGHTING ATTIE

Stubble your whids, (Hold your tongue)
You wants to trick I.
Lend you my quids?
Not one, by Dickey.

MOBBING FRANCIS:

Oh, what a beast is a niggardly ruffler,
Nabbing, grabbing all for himself!
Hang it, old fellow, I'll hit you a muffler,
Since you won't give me a pinch of the pelf.
You has not a heart for the *general distress*,
You cares not a mag if our party should fall,
And if Scarlet Jem were not good at a press,
By Goles, it would soon be all up with us all!
Oh, Scarlet Jem, he is trusty and trim,
Like his wig to his poll, sticks his conscience to him;
But I vows I despises the fellow who prizes
More his own ends than the popular stock, sir;
And the soldier as bones for himself and his crones,
Should be boned like a traitor himself at the block, sir.

The severe response of Mobbing Francis did not in the least ruffle the constitutional calmness of Fighting Attie; but the wary Clifford, seeing that Francis had lost his temper, and watchful over the least sign of disturbance among the company, instantly called for another song, and Mobbing Francis sullenly knocked down Old Bags.

The night was far gone, and so were the wits of the honest tax-gatherers, when the president commanded silence, and the convivialists knew that their chief was about to issue forth the orders for the ensuing term. Nothing could be better timed than such directions,—during merriment and before oblivion.

"Gentlemen," said the captain, "I will now, with your leave, impart to you all the plans I have formed for each. You, Attie, shall repair to London: be the Windsor road and the purlieu of Pimlico your especial care. Look you, my hero, to these letters; they will apprise you of much work. I need not caution you to silence. Like the oyster, you never open your mouth but for something. Honest Old Bags, a rich grazier will be in Smithfield on Thursday; his name is Hodges, and he will have somewhat like a thousand pounds in his pouch. He is green, fresh, and avaricious; offer to assist him in defrauding his neighbours in a bargain, and cease not till thou hast done that with him which he wished to do to others. Be, excellent old man, like the frog-fish, which fishes for other fishes with two horns that resemble baits; the prey dart at the horns, and are down the throat in an instant!—For thee, dearest Jem, these letters announce a prize: fat is Parson Pliant; full is his purse; and he rides from Henley to Oxford on Friday,—I need say no more! As for the rest of you, gentlemen, on this paper you will see your destinations fixed. I warrant you, ye will find enough work till we meet again this day three months. Myself, Augustus Tomlinson, and Ned Pepper remain in Bath; we have business in hand, gentlemen, of paramount importance; should you by accident meet us, never acknowledge us,—we are *incog.*; striking at high game, and putting on falcon's plumes to do it in character,—you understand; but this accident can scarcely occur, for none of you will remain at Bath; by to-morrow night, may the road receive you. And now, gentlemen, speed the glass, and I'll give you a sentiment by way of a spur to it,—

"Much sweeter than honey
Is other men's money!"

Our hero's maxim was received with all the enthusiasm which agreeable truisms usually create. And old Mr. Bags rose to address the chair; unhappily for the edification of the audience, the veteran's foot slipped before he had proceeded further than "Mr. President;" he fell to the earth with a sort of reel,—

"Like shooting stars he fell to rise no more!"

His body became a capital footstool for the luxurious Pepper. Now Augustus Tomlinson and Clifford, exchanging looks, took every possible pains to promote the hilarity of the evening; and before the third hour of morning had sounded, they had the satisfaction of witnessing the effects of their benevolent labours in the prostrate forms of all their companions. Long Ned, naturally more capacious than the rest, succumbed the last.

"As leaves of trees," said the chairman, waving his hand,

"As leaves of trees the race of man is found,
Now fresh with dew, now withering on the ground."

"Well said, my Hector of Highways;" cried Tomlinson; and then helping himself to the wine, while he employed his legs in removing the supine forms of Scarlet Jem and Long Ned, he continued the Homeric quotation, with a pompous and self-gratulatory tone,—

"So flourish these when those have passed away!"

"We managed to get rid of our friends," began Clifford—

"Like Whigs in place," interrupted the politician.

"Right, Tomlinson, thanks to the milder properties of our drink, and perchance to the stronger qualities of our heads; and now tell me, my friend, what think you of our chance of success? Shall we catch an heiress or not?"

"Why, really," said Tomlinson, "women are like those calculations in arithmetic, which one can never bring to an exact account; for my part, I shall stuff my calves, and look out for a widow. You, my good fellow, seem to stand a fair chance with Miss ——"

"Oh, name her not!" cried Clifford, colouring, even through the flush which wine had spread over his countenance. "Ours are not the lips by which her name should be breathed; and, faith, when I think of her, I do it anonymously."

"What, have you ever thought of her before this evening?"

"Yes, for months," answered Clifford. "You remember some time ago, when we formed the plan for robbing Lord Mauleverer, how, rather for frolic than profit, you robbed Dr. Slopperton, of Warlock, while I compassionately walked home with the old gentleman. Well, at the parson's house I met Miss Brandon—mind, if I speak of her by name, *you* must not; and, by Heaven!—But I won't swear. I accompanied her home. You know, before morning we robbed Lord Mauleverer; the affair made a noise, and I feared to endanger you all if I appeared in the vicinity of the robbery. Since then, business diverted my thoughts; we formed the plan of trying a matrimonial speculation at Bath. I came hither,—guess my surprise at seeing her—"

"And your delight," added Tomlinson, "at hearing she is as rich as she is pretty."

"No!" answered Clifford, quickly; "that thought gives me no pleasure. You stare. I will try and explain. You know, dear Tomlinson, I'm not much of a canter, and yet my heart shrinks when I look on that innocent face, and hear that soft happy voice, and think that my love to her can be only ruin and disgrace; nay, that my very address is contamination, and my very glance towards her an insult."

"Heyday!" quoth Tomlinson; "have you been under my instructions, and learned the true value of words, and can you have any scruples left on so easy a point of conscience? True, you may call your representing yourself to her as an unprofessional gentleman, and so winning her affections, deceit; but why call it deceit when a genius for intrigue is so much neater a phrase? In like manner, by marrying the young lady, if you say you have ruined her, you justly deserve to be annihilated; but why not say you have saved yourself, and then, my dear fellow, you will have done the most justifiable thing in the world."

"Pish, man!" said Clifford, peevishly; "none of thy sophisms and sneers!"

"By the soul of Sir Edward Coke, I am serious! But look you, my friend! this is not a matter where it is convenient to have a tender-footed conscience. You see these fellows on the ground, all d—d clever, and so forth; but you and I are of a different order. I have had a classical education, seen the world, and mixed in decent society; you, too, had not been long a member of our club before you distinguished yourself above us all. Fortune smiled on your youthful audacity. You grew particular in horses and dress, frequented public haunts, and being a deuced good-looking fellow, with an inborn air of gentility and some sort of education, you became sufficiently well received to acquire in a short time the manner and tone of a—what shall I say?—a gentleman, and the taste to like suitable associates. This is my case too! Despite our labours for the public weal, the ungrateful dogs see that we are above them; a single envious breast is sufficient to give us to the hangman. We have agreed that we are in danger; we have agreed to make an honourable retreat; we cannot do so without money. You know the vulgar distich among our set. Nothing can be truer,—

"'Hanging is 'nation
More nice than starvation!'"

You will not carry off some of the common stock, though I think you justly might, considering how much you have put into it. What, then, shall we do? Work we cannot, beg we will not; and, between you and me, we are cursedly extravagant! What remains but marriage?"

"It is true," said Clifford, with a half sigh.

"You may well sigh, my good fellow. Marriage is a lackadaisical proceeding at best; but there is no resource. And now, when you have got a liking to a young lady who is as rich as a she-Craesus, and so gilded the pill as bright as a lord mayor's coach, what the devil have you to do with scruples?"

Clifford made no answer, and there was a long pause; perhaps he would not have spoken so frankly as he had done, if the wine had not opened his heart.

"How proud," renewed Tomlinson, "the good old matron at Thames Court would be if you married a lady! You have not seen her lately?"

"Not for years," answered our hero. "Poor old soul! I believe that she is well in health, and I take care that she should not be poor in pocket."

"But why not visit her? Perhaps, like all great men, especially of a liberal turn of mind, you are ashamed of old friends, eh?"

"My good fellow, is that like me? Why, you know the beaux of our set look askant on me for not keeping up my dignity, robbing only in company with well-dressed gentlemen, and swindling under the name of a lord's nephew. No, my reasons are these: first, you must know, that the old dame had set her heart on my turning out an honest man."

"And so you have," interrupted Augustus,—"honest to your party; what more would you have from either prig or politician?"

"I believe," continued Clifford, not heeding the interruption, "that my poor mother, before she died, desired that I might be reared honestly; and strange as it may seem to you, Dame Lobkins is a conscientious woman in her own way,—it is not her fault if I have turned out as I have done. Now I know well that it would grieve her to the quick to see me what I am. Secondly, my friend, under my new names, various as they are,— Jackson and Howard, Russell and Pigwiggin, Villiers and Gotobed, Cavendish and Solomons,—you may well suppose that the good persons in the neighbourhood of Thames Court have no suspicion that the adventurous and accomplished ruffler, at present captain of this district, under the new appellation of Lovett, is in reality no other than the obscure and surnameless Paul of the Mug. Now you and I, Augustus, have read human nature, though in the black letter; and I know well that were I to make my appearance in Thames Court, and were the old lady (as she certainly would, not from unkindness, but insobriety,—not that she loves me less, but heavy wet more) to divulge the secret of that appearance—"

"You know well," interrupted the vivacious Tomlinson, "that the identity of your former meanness with your present greatness would be easily traced; the envy and jealousy of your early friends aroused; a hint of your whereabouts and your aliases given to the police, and yourself grabbed, with a slight possibility of a hempen consummation."

"You conceive me exactly!" answered Clifford. "The fact is, that I have observed in nine cases out of ten our bravest fellows have been taken off by the treachery of some early sweetheart or the envy of some boyish friend. My destiny is not yet fixed. I am worthy of better things than a ride in the cart with a nosegay in my hand; and though I care not much about death in itself, I am resolved, if possible, not to die a highwayman. Hence my caution, and that prudential care for secrecy and safe asylums, which men less wise than you have so often thought an unnatural contrast to my conduct on the road."

"Fools!" said the philosophical Tomlinson; "what has the bravery of a warrior to do with his insuring his house from fire?"

"However," said Clifford, "I send my good nurse a fine gift every now and then to assure her of my safety; and thus, notwithstanding my absence, I show my affection by my presents,—excuse a pun."

"And have you never been detected by any of your quondam associates?"

"Never! Remember in what a much more elevated sphere of life I have been thrown; and who could recognize the scamp Paul with a fustian jacket in gentleman Paul with a laced waistcoat? Besides, I have diligently avoided every place where I was likely to encounter those who saw me in childhood. You know how little I frequent flash houses, and how scrupulous I am in admitting new confederates into our band; you and Pepper are the only two of my associates—save my /protege/, as you express it, who

never deserts the cave—that possess a knowledge of my identity with the lost Paul; and as ye have both taken that dread oath to silence, which to disobey until indeed I be in the jail or on the gibbet, is almost to be assassinated, I consider my secret is little likely to be broken, save with my own consent."

"True," said Augustus, nodding; "one more glass, and to bed, Mr. Chairman."

"I pledge you, my friend; our last glass shall be philanthropically quaffed,—'All fools, and may their money soon be parted!'"

"All fools!" cried Tomlinson, filling a bumper; "but I quarrel with the wisdom of your toast. May fools be rich, and rogues will never be poor! I would make a better livelihood off a rich fool than a landed estate."

So saying, the contemplative and ever-sagacious Tomlinson tossed off his bumper; and the pair, having kindly rolled by pedal applications the body of Long Ned into a safe and quiet corner of the room, mounted the stairs, arm-in-arm, in search of somnambular accommodations.

CHAPTER XVII

That contrast of the hardened and mature,
The calm brow brooding o'er the project dark,
With the clear loving heart, and spirit pure
Of youth,—I love, yet, hating, love to mark!

H. FLETCHER.

On the forenoon of the day after the ball, the carriage of William Brandon, packed and prepared, was at the door of his abode at Bath; meanwhile the lawyer was closeted with his brother.

"My dear Joseph," said the barrister, "I do not leave you without being fully sensible of your kindness evinced to me, both in coming hither, contrary to your habits, and accompanying me everywhere, despite of your tastes."

"Mention it not, my dear William," said the kind-hearted squire, "for your delightful society is to me the most agreeable (and that's what I can say of very few people like you; for, for my own part, I generally find the cleverest men *the most unpleasant*) *in the world!* And I think lawyers in particular (very different, indeed, from your tribe *you are!*) *perfectly intolerable!*"

"I have now," said Brandon, who with his usual nervous quickness of action was walking with rapid strides to and fro the apartment, and scarcely noted his brother's compliment,—"I have now another favour to request of you. Consider this house and these servants yours for the next month or two at least. Don't interrupt me,—it is no compliment,— I speak for our family benefit." And then seating himself next to his brother's armchair, for a fit of the gout made the squire a close prisoner, Brandon unfolded to his brother his cherished scheme of marrying Lucy to Lord Mauleverer. Notwithstanding the constancy of the earl's attentions to the heiress, the honest squire had never dreamed of their palpable object; and he was overpowered with surprise when he heard the lawyer's expectations.

"But, my dear brother," he began, "so great a match for my Lucy, the Lord-Lieutenant of the Coun—"

"And what of that?" cried Brandon, proudly, and interrupting his brother. "Is not the race of Brandon, which has matched its scions with royalty, far nobler than that of the upstart stock of Mauleverer? What is there presumptuous in the hope that the descendant of the Earls of Suffolk should regild a faded name with some of the precious dust of the quondam silversmiths of London? Besides," he continued, after a pause, "Lucy will be rich, very rich, and before two years my rank may possibly be of the same order as Mauleverer's!"

The squire stared; and Brandon, not giving him time to answer, resumed. It is needless to detail the conversation; suffice it to say that the artful barrister did not leave his brother till he had gained his point, —till Joseph Brandon had promised to remain at Bath in possession of the house and establishment of his brother; to throw no impediment on the suit of Mauleverer; to cultivate society, as

before; and above all, not to alarm Lucy, who evidently did not yet favour Mauleverer exclusively, by hinting to her the hopes and expectations of her uncle and father. Brandon, now taking leave of his brother, mounted to the drawing-room in search of Lucy. He found her leaning over the gilt cage of one of her feathered favourites, and speaking to the little inmate in that pretty and playful language in which all thoughts, innocent yet fond, should be clothed. So beautiful did Lucy seem, as she was thus engaged in her girlish and caressing employment, and so utterly unlike one meet to be the instrument of ambitious designs, and the sacrifice of worldly calculations, that Brandon paused, suddenly smitten at heart, as he beheld her. He was not, however, slow in recovering himself; he approached. "Happy he," said the man of the world, "for whom caresses and words like these are reserved!"

Lucy turned. "It is ill!" she said, pointing to the bird, which sat with its feathers stiff and erect, mute and heedless even of that voice which was as musical as its own.

"Poor prisoner!" said Brandon; "even gilt cages and sweet tones cannot compensate to thee for the loss of the air and the wild woods!"

"But," said Lucy, anxiously, "it is not confinement which makes it ill! If you think so, I will release it instantly."

"How long have you had it?" asked Brandon.

"For three years!" said Lucy. "And is it your chief favourite?"

"Yes; it does not sing so prettily as the other, but it is far more sensible, and so affectionate!"

"Can you release it then?" asked Brandon, smiling. "Would it not be better to see it die in your custody than to let it live and to see it no more?"

"Oh, no, no!" said Lucy, eagerly; "when I love any one, anything, I wish that to be happy, not me!"

As she said this, she took the bird from the cage; and bearing it to the open window, kissed it, and held it on her hand in the air. The poor bird turned a languid and sickly eye around it, as if the sight of the crowded houses and busy streets presented nothing familiar or inviting; and it was not till Lucy with a tender courage shook it gently from her, that it availed itself of the proffered liberty. It flew first to an opposite balcony; and then recovering from a short and as it were surprised pause, took a brief circuit above the houses; and after disappearing for a few minutes, flew back, circled the window, and re-entering, settled once more on the fair form of its mistress and nestled into her bosom.

Lucy covered it with kisses. "You see it will not leave me!" said she.

"Who can?" said the uncle, warmly, charmed for the moment from every thought but that of kindness for the young and soft creature before him,—"who can," he repeated with a sigh, "but an old and withered ascetic like myself? I must leave you indeed; see, my carriage is at the door! Will my beautiful niece, among the gayeties that surround her, condescend now and then to remember the crabbed lawyer, and assure him by a line of her happiness and health? Though I rarely write any notes but those upon cases, you, at least, may be sure of an answer. And tell me, Lucy, if there be in all this city one so foolish as to think that these idle gems, useful only as a vent for my pride in you, can add a single charm to a beauty above all ornament?"

So saying, Brandon produced a leathern case; and touching a spring, the imperial flash of diamonds, which would have made glad many a patrician heart, broke dazzlingly on Lucy's eyes.

"No thanks, Lucy," said Brandon, in answer to his niece's disclaiming and shrinking gratitude; "I do honour to myself, not you; and now bless you, my dear girl. Farewell! Should any occasion present itself in which you require an immediate adviser, at once kind and wise, I beseech you, my dearest Lucy, as a parting request, to have no scruples in consulting Lord Mauleverer. Besides his friendship for me, he is much interested in you, and you may consult him with the more safety and assurance; because" (and the lawyer smiled) "he is perhaps the only man in the world whom my Lucy could not make in love with her. His gallantry may appear adulation, but it is never akin to love. Promise me that you will not hesitate in this."

Lucy gave the promise readily; and Brandon continued in a careless tone: "I hear that you danced last night with a young gentleman whom no one knew, and whose companions bore a very strange appearance. In a place like Bath, society is too mixed not to render the greatest caution in forming acquaintances absolutely necessary. You must pardon me, my dearest niece, if I remark that a young lady owes it not only to herself but to her relations to observe the most rigid circumspection of conduct. This is a wicked world, and the peach-like bloom of character is easily rubbed away. In these points Mauleverer can be of great use to you. His knowledge of character, his penetration into men, and his

tact in manners are unerring. Pray, be guided by him; whomsoever he warns you against, you may be sure is unworthy of your acquaintance. God bless you! You will write to me often and frankly, dear Lucy; tell me all that happens to you,—all that interests, nay, all that displeases."

Brandon then, who had seemingly disregarded the blushes with which during his speech Lucy's cheeks had been spread, folded his niece in his arms, and hurried, as if to hide his feelings, into his carriage. When the horses had turned the street, he directed the postilions to stop at Lord Mauleverer's. "Now," said he to himself, "if I can get this clever coxcomb to second my schemes, and play according to my game and not according to his own vanity, I shall have a knight of the garter for my nephew-in-law!"

Meanwhile Lucy, all in tears, for she loved her uncle greatly, ran down to the squire to show him Brandon's magnificent present.

"Ah," said the squire, with a sigh, "few men were born with more good, generous, and great qualities (pity only that his chief desire was to get on in the world; for my part, I think *no motive makes greater and more cold-hearted rogues*) than my brother William!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

Why did she love him? Curious fool, be still!
Is human love the growth of human will?
To her he might be gentleness!

LORD BYRON.

In three weeks from the time of his arrival, Captain Clifford was the most admired man in Bath. It is true the gentlemen, who have a quicker tact as to the respectability of their own sex than women, might have looked a little shy upon him, had he not himself especially shunned appearing intrusive, and indeed rather avoided the society of men than courted it; so that after he had fought a duel with a baronet (the son of a shoemaker), who called him *one* Clifford, and had exhibited a flea-bitten horse, allowed to be the finest in Bath, he rose insensibly into a certain degree of respect with the one sex as well as popularity with the other. But what always attracted and kept alive suspicion, was his intimacy with so peculiar and *dashing* a gentleman as Mr. Edward Pepper. People could get over a certain frankness in Clifford's address, but the most lenient were astounded by the swagger of Long Ned. Clifford, however, not insensible to the ridicule attached to his acquaintances, soon managed to pursue his occupations alone; nay, he took a lodging to himself, and left Long Ned and Augustus Tomlinson (the latter to operate as a check on the former) to the quiet enjoyment of the hairdresser's apartments. He himself attended all public gayeties; and his mien, and the appearance of wealth which he maintained, procured him access into several private circles which pretended to be exclusive,—as if people who had daughters ever could be exclusive! Many were the kind looks, nor few the inviting letters, which he received; and if his sole object had been to marry an heiress, he would have found no difficulty in attaining it. But he devoted himself entirely to Lucy Brandon; and to win one glance from her, he would have renounced all the heiresses in the kingdom. Most fortunately for him, Mauleverer, whose health was easily deranged, had fallen ill the very day William Brandon left Bath; and his lordship was thus rendered unable to watch the movements of Lucy, and undermine or totally prevent the success of her lover. Miss Brandon, indeed, had at first, melted by the kindness of her uncle, and struck with the sense of his admonition (for she was no self-willed young lady, who was determined to be in love), received Captain Clifford's advances with a coldness which, from her manner the first evening they had met at Bath, occasioned him no less surprise than mortification. He retreated, and recoiled on the squire, who, patient and bold, as usual, was sequestered in his favourite corner. By accident, Clifford trod on the squire's gouty digital; and in apologizing for the offence, was so struck by the old gentleman's good-nature and peculiarity of expressing himself, that without knowing who he was, he entered into conversation with him. There was an off-hand sort of liveliness and candour, not to say wit, about Clifford, which always had a charm for the elderly, who generally like frankness above all the cardinal virtues; the squire was exceedingly pleased with him. The acquaintance, once begun, was naturally continued without difficulty when Clifford ascertained who was his new friend; and next morning, meeting in the pump-room, the squire asked Clifford to dinner. The entree to the house thus gained, the rest was easy. Long before Mauleverer recovered his health, the mischief effected by his rival was almost beyond redress; and the heart of the pure, the simple, the affectionate Lucy Brandon

was more than half lost to the lawless and vagrant cavalier who officiates as the hero of this tale.

One morning, Clifford and Augustus strolled out together. "Let us," said the latter, who was in a melancholy mood, "leave the busy streets, and indulge in a philosophical conversation on the nature of man, while we are enjoying a little fresh air in the country." Clifford assented to the proposal, and the pair slowly sauntered up one of the hills that surround the city of Bladud.

"There are certain moments," said Tomlinson, looking pensively down at his kerseymere gaiters, "when we are like the fox in the nursery rhyme, 'The fox had a wound, he could not tell where,'—we feel extremely unhappy, and we cannot tell why. A dark and sad melancholy grows over us; we shun the face of man; we wrap ourselves in our thoughts like silkworms; we mutter fag-ends of dismal songs; tears come into our eyes; we recall all the misfortunes that have ever happened to us; we stoop in our gait, and bury our hands in our breeches-pockets; we say, 'What is life?—a stone to be shied into a horsepond!' We pine for some congenial heart, and have an itching desire to talk prodigiously about ourselves; all other subjects seem weary, stale, and unprofitable. We feel as if a fly could knock us down, and are in a humour to fall in love, and make a very sad piece of business of it. Yet with all this weakness we have at these moments a finer opinion of ourselves than we ever had before. We call our megrims the melancholy of a sublime soul, the yearnings of an indigestion we denominate yearnings after immortality, nay, sometimes 'a proof of the nature of the soul!' May I find some biographer who understands such sensations well, and may he style those melting emotions the offspring of the poetical character," which, in reality, are the offspring of—a mutton-chop!"

[Vide Moore's "Life of Byron," in which it is satisfactorily shown that if a man fast forty-eight hours, then eat three lobsters, and drink Heaven knows how many bottles of claret; if, when he wake the next morning, he sees himself abused as a demon by half the periodicals of the country,—if, in a word, he be broken in his health, irregular in his habits, unfortunate in his affairs, unhappy in his home, and if then he should be so extremely eccentric as to be low-spirited and misanthropical, the low spirits and the misanthropy are by no means to be attributed to the above agreeable circumstances, but, God wot, to the "poetical character"!]]

"You jest pleasantly enough on your low spirits," said Clifford; "but I have a cause for mine."

"What then?" cried Tomlinson. "So much the easier is it to cure them. The mind can cure the evils that spring from the mind. It is only a fool and a quack and a driveller when it professes to heal the evils that spring from the body. My blue devils spring from the body; consequently my mind, which, as you know, is a particularly wise mind, wrestles riot against them. Tell me frankly," renewed Augustus, after a pause, "do you ever repent? Do you ever think, if you had been a shop-boy with a white apron about your middle, that you would have been a happier and a better member of society than you now are?"

"Repent!" said Clifford, fiercely; and his answer opened more of his secret heart, its motives, its reasonings, and its peculiarities than were often discernible,—"repent! that is the idlest word in our language. No; the moment I repent, that moment I reform! Never can it seem to me an atonement for crime merely to regret it. My mind would lead me, not to regret, but to repair! Repent! no, not yet. The older I grow, the more I see of men and of the callings of social life, the more I, an open knave, sicken at the glossed and covert dishonesties around. I acknowledge no allegiance to society. From my birth to this hour, I have received no single favour from its customs or its laws; openly I war against it, and patiently will I meet its revenge. This may be crime; but it looks light in my eyes when I gaze around, and survey on all sides the masked traitors who acknowledge large debts to society, who profess to obey its laws, adore its institutions, and, above all—oh, how righteously!—attack all those who attack it, and who yet lie and cheat and defraud and peculate,—publicly reaping all the comforts, privately filching all the profits. Repent!—of what? I come into the world friendless and poor; I find a body of laws hostile to the friendless and the poor! To those laws hostile to me, then, I acknowledge hostility in my turn. Between us are the conditions of war. Let them expose a weakness,—I insist on my right to seize the advantage; let them defeat me, and I allow their right to destroy."—[The author need not, he hopes, observe that these sentiments are Mr. Paul Clifford's, not his.]

"Passion," said Augustus, coolly, "is the usual enemy of reason; in your case it is the friend."

The pair had now gained the summit of a hill which commanded a view of the city below. Here Augustus, who was a little short-winded, paused to recover breath. As soon as he had done so, he pointed with his forefinger to the scene beneath, and said enthusiastically, "What a subject for contemplation!"

Clifford was about to reply, when suddenly the sound of laughter and voices was heard behind. "Let us fly!" cried Augustus; "on this day of spleen man delights me not—or woman either."

"Stay!" said Clifford, in a trembling accent; for among those voices he recognized one which had already acquired over him an irresistible and bewitching power. Augustus sighed, and reluctantly remained motionless. Presently a winding in the road brought into view a party of pleasure, some on foot, some on horseback, others in the little vehicles which even at that day haunted watering-places, and called themselves "Flies" or "Swallows."

But among the gay procession Clifford had only eyes for one! Walking with that elastic step which so rarely survives the first epoch of youth, by the side of the heavy chair in which her father was drawn, the fair beauty of Lucy Brandon threw—at least in the eyes of her lover—a magic and a lustre over the whole group. He stood for a moment, stilling the heart that leaped at her bright looks and the gladness of her innocent laugh; and then recovering himself, he walked slowly, and with a certain consciousness of the effect of his own singularly handsome person, towards the party. The good squire received him with his usual kindness, and informed him, according to that *lucidus ordo* which he so especially favoured, of the whole particulars of their excursion. There was something worthy of an artist's sketch in the scene at that moment: the old squire in his chair, with his benevolent face turned towards Clifford, and his hands resting on his cane, Clifford himself bowing down his stately head to hear the details of the father; the beautiful daughter on the other side of the chair, her laugh suddenly stilled, her gait insensibly more composed, and blush chasing blush over the smooth and peach-like loveliness of her cheek; the party, of all sizes, ages, and attire, affording ample scope for the caricaturist; and the pensive figure of Augustus Tomlinson (who, by the by, was exceedingly like Liston) standing apart from the rest, on the brow of the hill where Clifford had left him, and moralizing on the motley procession, with one hand hid in his waistcoat, and the other caressing his chin, which slowly and pendulously with the rest of his head moved up and down.

As the party approached the brow of the hill, the view of the city below was so striking that there was a general pause for the purpose of survey. One young lady in particular drew forth her pencil, and began sketching, while her mamma looked complacently on, and abstractedly devoured a sandwich. It was at this time, in the general pause, that Clifford and Lucy found themselves—Heaven knows how!—next to each other, and at a sufficient distance from the squire and the rest of the party to feel in some measure alone. There was a silence in both which neither dared to break; when Lucy, after looking at and toying with a flower that she had brought from the place which the party had been to see, accidentally dropped it; and Clifford and herself stooping at the same moment to recover it, their hands met. Involuntarily, Clifford detained the soft fingers in his own; his eyes, that encountered hers, so spell-bound and arrested them that for once they did not sink beneath his gaze; his lips moved, but many and vehement emotions so suffocated his voice that no sound escaped them. But all the heart was in the eyes of each; that moment fixed their destinies. Henceforth there was an era from which they dated a new existence; a nucleus around which their thoughts, their remembrances, and their passions clung. The great gulf was passed; they stood on the same shore, and felt that though still apart and disunited, on that shore was no living creature but themselves! Meanwhile Augustus Tomlinson, on finding himself surrounded by persons eager to gaze and to listen, broke from his moodiness and reserve. Looking full at his next neighbour, and flourishing his right hand in the air, till he suffered it to rest in the direction of the houses and chimneys below, he repeated that moral exclamation which had been wasted on Clifford, with a more solemn and a less passionate gravity than before,—“What a subject, ma'am, for contemplation!”

"Very sensibly said, indeed, sir," said the lady addressed, who was rather of a serious turn.

"I never," resumed Augustus in a louder key, and looking round for auditors,—“I never see a great town from the top of a hill without thinking of an apothecary's shop!”

"Lord, sir!" said the lady. Tomlinson's end was gained. Struck with the quaintness of the notion, a little crowd gathered instantly around him, to hear it further developed.

"Of an apothecary's shop, ma'am!" repeated Tomlinson. "There lie your simples and your purges and your cordials and your poisons,—all things to heal and to strengthen and to destroy. There are drugs enough in that collection to save you, to cure you all; but none of you know how to use them, nor what medicines to ask for, nor what portions to take; so that the greater part of you swallow a wrong dose, and die of the remedy!"

"But if the town be the apothecary's shop, what, in the plan of your idea, stands for the apothecary?" asked an old gentleman, who perceived at what Tomlinson was driving.

"The apothecary, sir," answered Augustus, stealing his notion from Clifford, and sinking his voice lest the true proprietor should overhear him (Clifford was otherwise employed),—"the apothecary, sir, is the LAW! It is the law that stands behind the counter, and dispenses to each man the dose he should take. To the poor it gives bad drugs gratuitously; to the rich, pills to stimulate the appetite; to the latter, premiums for luxury; to the former, only speedy refuges from life! Alas! either your apothecary is but

an ignorant quack, or his science itself is but in its cradle. He blunders as much as you would do if left to your own selection. Those who have recourse to him seldom speak gratefully of his skill. He relieves you, it is true,—but of your money, not your malady; and the only branch of his profession in which he is an adept is that which enables him to bleed you! O mankind!" continued Augustus, "what noble creatures you ought to be! You have keys to all sciences, all arts, all mysteries, but one! You have not a notion how you ought to be governed; you cannot frame a tolerable law, for the life and soul of you! You make yourselves as uncomfortable as you can by all sorts of galling and vexatious institutions, and you throw the blame upon 'Fate.' You lay down rules it is impossible to comprehend, much less to obey; and you call each other monsters, because you cannot conquer the impossibility! You invent all sorts of vices, under pretence of making laws for preserving virtue; and the anomalous artificialities of conduct yourselves produce, you say you are born with; you make a machine by the perversest art you can think of, and you call it, with a sigh, 'Human Nature.' With a host of good dispositions struggling at your breasts, you insist upon libelling the Almighty, and declaring that he meant you to be wicked. Nay, you even call the man mischievous and seditious who begs and implores you to be one jot better than you are. O mankind! you are like a nosegay bought at Covent Garden. The flowers are lovely, the scent delicious. Mark that glorious hue; contemplate that bursting petal! How beautiful, how redolent of health, of nature, of the dew and breath and blessing of Heaven, are you all! But as for the dirty piece of string that ties you together, one would think you had picked it out of the kennel."

So saying, Tomlinson turned on his heel, broke away from the crowd, and solemnly descended the hill. The party of pleasure slowly followed; and Clifford, receiving an invitation from the squire to partake of his family dinner, walked by the side of Lucy, and felt as if his spirit were drunk with the airs of Eden.

A brother squire, who among the gayeties of Bath was almost as forlorn as Joseph Brandon himself, partook of the Lord of Warlock's hospitality. When the three gentlemen adjourned to the drawing-room, the two elder sat down to a game at backgammon, and Clifford was left to the undisturbed enjoyment of Lucy's conversation. She was sitting by the window when Clifford joined her. On the table by her side were scattered books, the charm of which (they were chiefly poetry) she had only of late learned to discover; there also were strewn various little masterpieces of female ingenuity, in which the fairy fingers of Lucy Brandon were especially formed to excel. The shades of evening were rapidly darkening over the empty streets; and in the sky, which was cloudless and transparently clear, the stars came gradually out one by one, until,—

"As water does a sponge, so their soft light
Filled the void, hollow, universal air."

Beautiful evening! (if we, as well as Augustus Tomlinson, may indulge in an apostrophe)—beautiful evening! For thee all poets have had a song, and surrounded thee with rills and waterfalls and dews and flowers and sheep and bats and melancholy and owls; yet we must confess that to us, who in this very sentimental age are a bustling, worldly, hard-minded person, jostling our neighbours, and thinking of the main chance,—to us thou art never so charming as when we meet thee walking in thy gray hood through the emptying streets and among the dying sounds of a city. We love to feel the stillness where all, two hours back, was clamour. We love to see the dingy abodes of Trade and Luxury—those restless patients of earth's constant fever—contrasted and canopied by a heaven full of purity and quietness and peace. We love to fill our thought with speculations on man, even though the man be the muffin-man, rather than with inanimate objects,—hills and streams,—things to dream about, not to meditate on. Man is the subject of far nobler contemplation, of far more glowing hope, of a far purer and loftier vein of sentiment, than all the "floods and fells" in the universe; and that, sweet evening! is one reason why we like that the earnest and tender thoughts thou excitest within us should be rather surrounded by the labours and tokens of our species than by sheep and bats and melancholy and owls. But whether, most blessed evening! thou delightest us in the country or in the town, thou equally disposest us to make and to feel love! Thou art the cause of more marriages and more divorces than any other time in the twenty-four hours! Eyes that were common eyes to us before, touched by thy enchanting and magic shadows, become inspired, and preach to us of heaven. A softness settles on features that were harsh to us while the sun shone; a mellow "light of love" reposes on the complexion which by day we would have steeped "full fathom five" in a sea of Mrs. Gowland's lotion. What, then, thou modest hypocrite! to those who already and deeply love,—what, then, of danger and of paradise dost thou bring?

Silent, and stilling the breath which heaved in both quick and fitfully, Lucy and Clifford sat together. The streets were utterly deserted; and the loneliness, as they looked below, made them feel the more intensely not only the emotions which swelled within them, but the undefined and electric sympathy which, in uniting them, divided them from the world. The quiet around was broken by a distant strain of rude music; and as it came nearer, two forms of no poetical order grew visible. The one was a poor blind man, who was drawing from his flute tones in which the melancholy beauty of the air compensated for any deficiency (the deficiency was but slight) in the execution. A woman much

younger than the musician, and with something of beauty in her countenance, accompanied him, holding a tattered hat, and looking wistfully up at the windows of the silent street. We said two forms; we did the injustice of forgetfulness to another,—a rugged and simple friend, it is true, but one that both minstrel and wife had many and moving reasons to love. This was a little wiry terrier, with dark piercing eyes, that glanced quickly and sagaciously in all quarters from beneath the shaggy covert that surrounded them. Slowly the animal moved onward, pulling gently against the string by which he was held, and by which he guided his master. Once his fidelity was tempted: another dog invited him to play; the poor terrier looked anxiously and doubtingly round, and then, uttering a low growl of denial, pursued—

"The noiseless tenour of his way."

The little procession stopped beneath the window where Lucy and Clifford sat; for the quick eye of the woman had perceived them, and she laid her hand on the blind man's arm, and whispered him. He took the hint, and changed his air into one of love. Clifford glanced at Lucy; her cheek was dyed in blushes. The air was over; another succeeded,—it was of the same kind; a third,—the burden was still unaltered; and then Clifford threw into the street a piece of money, and the dog wagged his abridged and dwarfed tail, and darting forward, picked it up in his mouth; and the woman (she had a kind face!) patted the officious friend, even before she thanked the donor, and then she dropped the money with a cheering word or two into the blind man's pocket, and the three wanderers moved slowly on. Presently they came to a place where the street had been mended, and the stones lay scattered about. Here the woman no longer trusted to the dog's guidance, but anxiously hastened to the musician, and led him with evident tenderness and minute watchfulness over the rugged way. When they had passed the danger, the man stopped; and before he released the hand which had guided him, he pressed it gratefully, and then both the husband and the wife stooped down and caressed the dog. This little scene—one of those rough copies of the loveliness of human affections, of which so many are scattered about the highways of the world—both the lovers had involuntarily watched; and now as they withdrew their eyes,— those eyes settled on each other,—Lucy's swam in tears.

"To be loved and tended by the one I love," said Clifford, in a low voice, "I would walk blind and barefoot over the whole earth!"

Lucy sighed very gently; and placing her pretty hands (the one clasped over the other) upon her knee, looked down wistfully on them, but made no answer. Clifford drew his chair nearer, and gazed on her, as she sat; the long dark eyelashes drooping over her eyes, and contrasting the ivory lids; her delicate profile half turned from him, and borrowing a more touching beauty from the soft light that dwelt upon it; and her full yet still scarcely developed bosom heaving at thoughts which she did not analyze, but was content to feel at once vague and delicious. He gazed, and his lips trembled; he longed to speak; he longed to say but those words which convey what volumes have endeavoured to express and have only weakened by detail,—"*I love*." How he resisted the yearnings of his heart, we know not,— but he did resist; and Lucy, after a confused and embarrassed pause, took up one of the poems on the table, and asked him some questions about a particular passage in an old ballad which he had once pointed to her notice. The passage related to a border chief, one of the Armstrongs of old, who, having been seized by the English and condemned to death, vented his last feelings in a passionate address to his own home—his rude tower—and his newly wedded bride. "Do you believe," said Lucy, as their conversation began to flow, "that one so lawless and eager for bloodshed and strife as this robber is described to be, could be so capable of soft affections?"

"I do," said Clifford, "because he was not sensible that he was as criminal as you esteem him. If a man cherish the idea that his actions are not evil, he will retain at his heart all its better and gentler sensations as much as if he had never sinned. The savage murders his enemy, and when he returns home is not the less devoted to his friend or the less anxious for his children. To harden and embrate the kindly dispositions, we must not only indulge in guilt but feel that we are guilty. Oh! many that the world load with their opprobrium are capable of acts—nay, have committed acts—which in others the world would reverence and adore. Would you know whether a man's heart be shut to the power of love,—ask what he is, not to his foes, but to his friends! Crime, too," continued Clifford, speaking fast and vehemently, while his eyes flashed and the dark blood rushed to his cheek,—"*crime*,—what is crime? Men embody their worst prejudices, their most evil passions, in a heterogeneous and contradictory code; and whatever breaks this code they term a crime. When they make no distinction in the penalty—that is to say, in the estimation—awarded both to murder and to a petty theft imposed on the weak will by famine, we ask nothing else to convince us that they are ignorant of the very nature of guilt, and that they make up in ferocity for the want of wisdom."

Lucy looked in alarm at the animated and fiery countenance of the speaker. Clifford recovered himself after a moment's pause, and rose from his seat, with the gay and frank laugh which made one of his peculiar characteristics. "There is a singularity in politics, Miss Brandon," said he, "which I dare

say you have often observed,—namely, that those who are least important are always most noisy, and that the chief people who lose their temper are those who have nothing to gain in return."

As Clifford spoke, the doors were thrown open, and some visitors to Miss Brandon were announced. The good squire was still immersed in the vicissitudes of his game; and the sole task of receiving and entertaining "the company," as the chambermaids have it, fell, as usual, upon Lucy. Fortunately for her, Clifford was one of those rare persons who possess eminently the talents of society. There was much in his gay and gallant temperament, accompanied as it was with sentiment and ardour, that resembled our beau-ideal of those chevaliers, ordinarily peculiar to the Continent,—heroes equally in the drawing-room and the field. Observant, courteous, witty, and versed in the various accomplishments that combine (that most unfrequent of all unions!) vivacity with grace, he was especially formed for that brilliant world from which his circumstances tended to exclude him. Under different auspices, he might have been— Pooh! we are running into a most pointless commonplace; what might any man be under auspices different from those by which his life has been guided? Music soon succeeded to conversation, and Clifford's voice was of necessity put into requisition. Miss Brandon had just risen from the harpsichord, as he sat down to perform his part; and she stood by him with the rest of the group while he sang. Only twice his eye stole to that spot which her breath and form made sacred to him; once when he began, and once when he concluded his song. Perhaps the recollection of their conversation inspired him; certainly it dwelt upon his mind at the moment,—threw a richer flush over his brow, and infused a more meaning and heartfelt softness into his tone.

STANZAS.

When I leave thee, oh! ask not the world what that heart
Which adores thee to others may be!
I know that I sin when from thee I depart,
But my guilt shall not light upon thee!

My life is a river which glasses a ray
That hath deigned to descend from above;
Whatever the banks that o'ershadow its way,
It mirrors the light of thy love.

Though the waves may run high when the night wind awakes,
And hurries the stream to its fall;
Though broken and wild be the billows it makes,
Thine image still trembles on all!"

While this ominous love between Clifford and Lucy was thus finding fresh food in every interview and every opportunity, the unfortunate Mauleverer, firmly persuaded that his complaint was a relapse of what he termed the "Warlock dyspepsia," was waging dire war with the remains of the beef and pudding, which he tearfully assured his physicians "were lurking in his constitution." As Mauleverer, though complaisant, like most men of unmistakable rank, to all his acquaintances, whatever might be their grade, possessed but very few friends intimate enough to enter his sick-chamber, and none of that few were at Bath, it will readily be perceived that he was in blissful ignorance of the growing fortunes of his rival; and to say the exact truth, illness, which makes a man's thoughts turn very much upon himself, banished many of the most tender ideas usually floating in his mind around the image of Lucy Brandon. His pill superseded his passion; and he felt that there are draughts in the world more powerful in their effects than those in the phials of Alcidonis.—[See Marmontel's pretty tale of "Les Quatres Flacons."]— He very often thought, it is true, how pleasant it would be for Lucy to smooth his pillow, and Lucy to prepare that mixture; but then Mauleverer had an excellent valet, who hoped to play the part enacted by Gil Blas towards the honest Licentiate, and to nurse a legacy while he was nursing his master. And the earl, who was tolerably good-tempered, was forced to confess that it would be scarcely possible for any one "to know his ways better than Smoothson." Thus, during his illness, the fair form of his intended bride little troubled the peace of the noble adorer. And it was not till he found himself able to eat three good dinners consecutively, with a tolerable appetite, that Mauleverer recollected that he was violently in love. As soon as this idea was fully reinstated in his memory, and he had been permitted by his doctor to allow himself "a little cheerful society," Mauleverer resolved to go to the rooms for an hour or two.

It may be observed that most great personages have some favourite place, some cherished Baiae, at which they love to throw off their state, and to play the amiable instead of the splendid; and Bath at that time, from its gayety, its ease, the variety of character to be found in its haunts, and the obliging manner in which such characters exposed themselves to ridicule, was exactly the place calculated to please a man like Mauleverer, who loved at once to be admired and to satirize. He was therefore an

idolized person at the city of Bladud; and as he entered the rooms he was surrounded by a whole band of imitators and sycophants, delighted to find his lordship looking so much better and declaring himself so convalescent. As soon as the earl had bowed and smiled, and shaken hands sufficiently to sustain his reputation, he sauntered towards the dancers in search of Lucy. He found her not only exactly in the same spot in which he had last beheld her, but dancing with exactly the same partner who had before provoked all the gallant nobleman's jealousy and wrath. Mauleverer, though not by any means addicted to preparing his compliments beforehand, had just been conning a delicate speech for Lucy; but no sooner did the person of her partner flash on him than the whole flattery vanished at once from his recollection. He felt himself grow pale; and when Lucy turned, and seeing him near, addressed him in the anxious and soft tone which she thought due to her uncle's friend on his recovery, Mauleverer bowed, confused and silent; and that green-eyed passion, which would have convulsed the mind of a true lover, altering a little the course of its fury, effectually disturbed the manner of the courtier.

Retreating to an obscure part of the room, where he could see all without being conspicuous, Mauleverer now employed himself in watching the motions and looks of the young pair. He was naturally a penetrating and quick observer, and in this instance jealousy sharpened his talents; he saw enough to convince him that Lucy was already attached to Clifford; and being, by that conviction, fully persuaded that Lucy was necessary to his own happiness, he resolved to lose not a moment in banishing Captain Clifford from her presence, or at least in instituting such inquiries into that gentleman's relatives, rank, and respectability as would, he hoped, render such banishment a necessary consequence of the research.

Fraught with this determination, Mauleverer repaired at once to the retreat of the squire, and engaging him in conversation, bluntly asked him who the deuce Miss Brandon was dancing with.

The squire, a little piqued at this *brusquerie*, replied by a long eulogium on Paul; and Mauleverer, after hearing it throughout with the blandest smile imaginable, told the squire, very politely, that he was sure Mr. Brandon's good-nature had misled him. "Clifford!" said he, repeating the name,— "Clifford! It is one of those names which are particularly selected by persons nobody knows,—first, because the name is good, and secondly, because it is common. My long and dear friendship with your brother makes me feel peculiarly anxious on any point relative to his niece; and, indeed, my dear William, overrating, perhaps, my knowledge of the world and my influence in society, but not my affection for him, besought me to assume the liberty of esteeming myself a friend, nay, even a relation of yours and Miss Brandon's; so that I trust you do not consider my caution impertinent."

The flattered squire assured him that he was particularly honoured, so far from deeming his lordship (which never could be the case with people so distinguished *as his lordship was, especially!*) *impertinent*.

Lord Mauleverer, encouraged by this speech, artfully renewed, and succeeded, if not in convincing the squire that the handsome captain was a suspicious character, at least in persuading him that common prudence required that he should find out exactly who the handsome captain was, especially as he was in the habit of dining with the squire thrice a week, and dancing with Lucy every night.

"See," said Mauleverer, "he approaches you now; I will retreat to the chair by the fireplace, and you shall cross-examine him,—I have no doubt you will do it with the utmost delicacy."

So saying, Mauleverer took possession of a seat where he was not absolutely beyond hearing (slightly deaf as he was) of the ensuing colloquy, though the position of his seat screened him from sight. Mauleverer was esteemed a man of the most punctilious honour in private life, and he would not have been seen in the act of listening to other people's conversation for the world.

Hemming with an air and resettling himself as Clifford approached, the squire thus skilfully commenced the attack "Ah, ha! my good Captain Clifford, and how do you do? I saw you (and I am very glad, my friend, as every one else is, to see you) at a distance. And where have you left my daughter?"

"Miss Brandon is dancing with Mr. Muskwel, sir," answered Clifford.

"Oh! she is! Mr. Muskwel,—humph! Good family the Muskwells,—came from Primrose Hall. Pray, Captain, not that I want to know for my own sake, for I am a strange, odd person, I believe, and I am thoroughly convinced (some people are censorious, and others, thank God, are not!) of your respectability,—what family do you come from? You won't think my—my caution impertinent?" added the shrewd old gentleman, borrowing that phrase which he thought so friendly in the mouth of Lord Mauleverer.

Clifford coloured for a moment, but replied with a quiet archness of look, "Family! oh, my dear sir, I come from an old family,—a very old family indeed."

"So I always thought; and in what part of the world?"

"Scotland, sir,—all our family come from Scotland; namely, all who live long do,—the rest die young."

"Ay, particular air does agree with particular constitutions. I, for instance, could not live in all countries; not—you take me—in the North!"

"Few honest men can live there," said Clifford, dryly. "And," resumed the squire, a little embarrassed by the nature of his task, and the cool assurance of his young friend,— "and pray, Captain Clifford, what regiment do you belong to?"

"Regiment?—oh, the Rifles!" answered Clifford. ("Deuce is in me," muttered he, "if I can resist a jest, though I break my neck over it.")

"A very gallant body of men," said the squire.

"No doubt of that, sir!" rejoined Clifford.

"And do you think, Captain Clifford," renewed the squire, "that it is a good corps for getting on?"

"It is rather a bad one for getting off," muttered the Captain; and then aloud, "Why, we have not much interest at court, sir."

"Oh! but then there is a wider scope, as my brother the lawyer says—and no man knows better—for merit. I dare say you have seen many a man elevated from the ranks?"

"Nothing more common, sir, than such elevation; and so great is the virtue of our corps, that I have also known not a few willing to transfer the honour to their comrades."

"You don't say so!" exclaimed the squire, opening his eyes at such disinterested magnanimity.

"But," said Clifford, who began to believe he might carry the equivocal too far, and who thought, despite of his jesting, that it was possible to strike out a more agreeable vein of conversation—"but, sir, if you remember, you have not yet finished that youthful hunting adventure of yours, when the hounds were lost at Burnham Copse."

"Oh, very true," cried the squire, quite forgetting his late suspicions; and forthwith he began a story that promised to be as long as the chase it recorded. So charmed was he, when he had finished it, with the character of the gentleman who had listened to it so delightedly, that on rejoining Mauleverer, he told the earl, with an important air, that he had strictly examined the young captain, and that he had fully convinced himself of the excellence of his family, as well as the rectitude of his morals. Mauleverer listened with a countenance of polite incredulity; he had heard but little of the conversation that had taken place between the pair; but on questioning the squire upon sundry particulars of Clifford's birth, parentage, and property, he found him exactly as ignorant as before. The courtier, however, seeing further expostulation was in vain, contented himself with patting the squire's shoulder, and saying, with a mysterious urbanity, "Ah, sir, you are too good!"

With these words he turned on his heel, and, not yet despairing, sought the daughter. He found Miss Brandon just released from dancing, and with a kind of paternal gallantry, he offered his arm to parade the apartments. After some preliminary flourish, and reference for the thousandth time to his friendship for William Brandon, the earl spoke to her about that "fine-looking young man who called himself Captain Clifford."

Unfortunately for Mauleverer, he grew a little too unguarded, as his resentment against the interference of Clifford warmed with his language, and he dropped in his anger one or two words of caution, which especially offended the delicacy of Miss Brandon.

"Take care how I encourage, my lord!" said Lucy, with glowing cheeks, repeating the words which had so affronted her, "I really must beg you—"

"You mean, dear Miss Brandon," interrupted Mauleverer, squeezing her hand with respectful tenderness, "that you must beg me to apologize for my inadvertent expression. I do most sincerely. If I had felt less interest in your happiness, believe me, I should have been more guarded in my language."

Miss Brandon bowed stiffly, and the courtier saw, with secret rage, that the country beauty was not easily appeased, even by an apology from Lord Mauleverer. "I have seen the time," thought he, "when young unmarried ladies would have deemed an *affront* from *me* an honour! They would have gone into hysterics at an *apology*!" Before he had time to make his peace, the squire joined them; and Lucy, taking her father's arm, expressed her wish to return home. The squire was delighted at the

proposition. It would have been but civil in Mauleverer to offer his assistance in those little attentions preparatory to female departure from balls. He hesitated for a moment. "It keeps one so long in those cursed thorough draughts," thought he, shivering. "Besides, it is just possible that I may not marry her, and it is no good risking a cold (above all, at the beginning of winter) for nothing!" Fraught with this prudential policy, Mauleverer then resigned Lucy to her father, and murmuring in her ear that "her displeasure made him the most wretched of men," concluded his adieu by a bow penitentially graceful.

About five minutes afterwards, he himself withdrew. As he was wrapping his corporeal treasure in his *roquelaire* of sables, previous to immersing himself in his chair, he had the mortification of seeing Lucy, who with her father, from some cause or other, had been delayed in the hall, handed to the carriage by Captain Clifford. Had the earl watched more narrowly than in the anxious cares due to himself he was enabled to do, he would, to his consolation, have noted that Lucy gave her hand with an averted and cool air, and that Clifford's expressive features bore rather the aspect of mortification than triumph.

He did not, however, see more than the action; and as he was borne homeward with his flambeaux and footmen preceding him, and the watchful Smoothson by the side of the little vehicle, he muttered his determination of writing by the very next post to Brandon all his anger for Lucy and all his jealousy of her evident lover.

While this doughty resolve was animating the great soul of Mauleverer, Lucy reached her own room, bolted the door, and throwing herself on her bed, burst into a long and bitter paroxysm of tears. So unusual were such visitors to her happy and buoyant temper, that there was something almost alarming in the earnestness and obstinacy with which she now wept.

"What!" said she, bitterly, "have I placed my affections upon a man of uncertain character, and is my infatuation so clear that an acquaintance dare hint at its imprudence? And yet his manner—his tone! No, no, there can be no reason for shame in loving him!" And as she said this, her heart smote her for the coldness of her manner towards Clifford on his taking leave of her for the evening. "Am I," she thought, weeping yet more vehemently than before,— "am I so worldly, so base, as to feel altered towards him the moment I hear a syllable breathed against his name? Should I not, on the contrary, have clung to his image with a greater love, if he were attacked by others? But my father, my dear father, and my kind, prudent uncle,—something is due to them; and they would break their hearts if I loved one whom they deemed unworthy. Why should I not summon courage, and tell him of the suspicions respecting him? One candid word would dispel them. Surely it would be but kind in me towards him, to give him an opportunity of disproving all false and dishonouring conjectures. And why this reserve, when so often, by look and hint, if not by open avowal, he has declared that he loves me, and knows—he must know—that he is not indifferent to me? Why does he never speak of his parents, his relations, his home?"

And Lucy, as she asked this question, drew from a bosom whose hue and shape might have rivalled hers who won Cymon to be wise,—[See Dryden's poem of "Cymon and Iphigenia."]—a drawing which she herself had secretly made of her lover, and which, though inartificially and even rudely done, yet had caught the inspiration of memory, and breathed the very features and air that were stamped already ineffaceably upon a heart too holy for so sullied an idol. She gazed upon the portrait as if it could answer her question of the original; and as she looked and looked, her tears slowly ceased, and her innocent countenance relapsed gradually into its usual and eloquent serenity. Never, perhaps, could Lucy's own portrait have been taken at a more favourable moment. The unconscious grace of her attitude; her dress loosened; the modest and youthful voluptuousness of her beauty; the tender cheek to which the virgin bloom, vanished for a while, was now all glowingly returning; the little white soft hand on which that cheek leaned, while the other contained the picture upon which her eyes fed; the half smile just conjured to her full, red, dewy lips, and gone the moment after, yet again restored,—all made a picture of such enchanting loveliness that we question whether Shakspeare himself could have fancied an earthly shape more meet to embody the vision of a Miranda or a Viola. The quiet and maiden neatness of the apartment gave effect to the charm; and there was a poetry even in the snowy furniture of the bed, the shutters partly unclosed and admitting a glimpse of the silver moon, and the solitary lamp just contending with the purer ray of the skies, and so throwing a mixed and softened light around the chamber.

She was yet gazing on the drawing, when a faint stream of music stole through the air beneath her window, and it gradually rose till the sound of a guitar became distinct and clear, suiting with, not disturbing, the moonlit stillness of the night. The gallantry and romance of a former day, though at the time of our story subsiding, were not quite dispelled; and nightly serenades under the casements of a distinguished beauty were by no means of unfrequent occurrence. But Lucy, as the music floated upon her ear, blushed deeper and deeper, as if it had a dearer source to her heart than ordinary gallantry; and raising herself on one arm from her incumbent position, she leaned forward to catch the sound with a greater and more unerring certainty.

After a prelude of some moments a clear and sweet voice accompanied the instrument, and the words of the song were as follows:—

CLIFFORD'S SERENADE.

There is a world where every night
My spirit meets and walks with thine;
And hopes I dare not tell thee light,
Like stars of Love, that world of mine!

Sleep!—to the waking world my heart
Hath now, methinks, a stranger grown;
Ah, sleep! that I may feel thou art
Within *one* world that is my own.

As the music died away, Lucy sank back once more, and the drawing which she held was pressed (with cheeks glowing, though unseen, at the act) to her lips. And though the character of her lover was uncleared, though she herself had come to no distinct resolution even to inform him of the rumours against his name, yet so easily restored was her trust in him, and so soothing the very thought of his vigilance and his love, that before an hour had passed, her eyes were closed in sleep. The drawing was laid, as a spell against grief, under her pillow; and in her dreams she murmured his name, and unconscious of reality and the future, smiled tenderly as she did so!

CHAPTER XIX.

Come, the plot thickens! and another fold
Of the warm cloak of mystery wraps us around.

.....

And for their loves?

Behold the seal is on them!

Tanner of Tyburn.

We must not suppose that Clifford's manner and tone were towards Lucy Brandon such as they seemed to others. Love refines every roughness; and that truth which nurtures tenderness is never barren of grace. Whatever the habits and comrades of Clifford's life, he had at heart many good and generous qualities. They were not often perceptible, it is true,—first, because he was of a gay and reckless turn; secondly, because he was not easily affected by any external circumstances; and thirdly, because he had the policy to affect among his comrades only such qualities as were likely to give him influence with them. Still, however, his better genius broke out whenever an opportunity presented itself. Though no "Corsair," romantic and unreal, an Ossianic shadow becoming more vast in proportion as it recedes from substance; though no grandly-imagined lie to the fair proportions of human nature, but an erring man in a very prosaic and homely world,—Clifford still mingled a certain generosity and chivalric spirit of enterprise even with the practices of his profession. Although the name of Lovett, by which he was chiefly known, was one peculiarly distinguished in the annals of the adventurous, it had never been coupled with rumours of cruelty or outrage; and it was often associated with anecdotes of courage, courtesy, good humour, or forbearance. He was one whom a real love was peculiarly calculated to soften and to redeem. The boldness, the candour, the unselfishness of his temper, were components of nature upon which affection invariably takes a strong and deep hold. Besides, Clifford was of an eager and aspiring turn; and the same temper and abilities which had in a very few years raised him in influence and popularity far above all the chivalric band with whom he was connected, when once inflamed and elevated by a higher passion, were likely to arouse his ambition from the level of his present pursuits, and reform him, ere too late, into a useful, nay, even an honourable member of society. We trust that the reader has already perceived that, despite his early circumstances, his manner and address were not such as to unfit him for a lady's love. The comparative refinement of his exterior is easy of explanation, for he possessed a natural and inborn gentility, a quick turn for observation, a ready sense both of the ridiculous and the graceful; and these are materials which are soon and lightly wrought from coarseness into polish. He had been thrown, too, among the leaders and heroes of his band; many not absolutely low in birth, nor debased in habit. He had associated with the Barringtons of the day,—gentlemen who were admired at Ranelagh, and made speeches worthy of Cicero, when they were summoned to trial. He had played his part in public places; and as Tomlinson

was wont to say after his classic fashion, "the triumphs accomplished in the field had been planned in the ball-room." In short, he was one of those accomplished and elegant highwaymen of whom we yet read wonders, and by whom it would have been delightful to have been robbed: and the aptness of intellect which grew into wit with his friends, softened into sentiment with his mistress. There is something, too, in beauty (and Clifford's person, as we have before said, was possessed of even uncommon attractions) which lifts a beggar into nobility; and there was a distinction in his gait and look which supplied the air of rank and the tone of courts. Men, indeed, skilled like Mauleverer in the subtleties of manner, might perhaps have easily detected in him the want of that indescribable essence possessed only by persons reared in good society; but that want being shared by so many persons of indisputable birth and fortune, conveyed no particular reproach. To Lucy, indeed, brought up in seclusion, and seeing at Warlock none calculated to refine her taste in the fashion of an air or phrase to a very fastidious standard of perfection, this want was perfectly imperceptible; she remarked in her lover only a figure everywhere unequalled, an eye always eloquent with admiration, a step from which grace could never be divorced, a voice that spoke in a silver key, and uttered flatteries delicate in thought and poetical in word; even a certain originality of mind, remark, and character, occasionally approaching to the bizarre, yet sometimes also to the elevated, possessed a charm for the imagination of a young and not unenthusiastic female, and contrasted favourably, rather than the reverse, with the dull insipidity of those she ordinarily saw. Nor are we sure that the mystery thrown about him, irksome as it was to her, and discreditable as it appeared to others, was altogether ineffectual in increasing her love for the adventurer; and thus Fate, which transmutes in her magic crucible all opposing metals into that one which she is desirous to produce, swelled the wealth of an ill-placed and ominous passion by the very circumstances which should have counteracted and destroyed it.

We are willing, by what we have said, not to defend Clifford, but to redeem Lucy in the opinion of our readers for loving so unwisely; and when they remember her youth, her education, her privation of a mother, of all female friendship, even of the vigilant and unrelaxing care of some protector of the opposite sex, we do not think that what was so natural will be considered by any inexcusable.

Mauleverer woke the morning after the ball in better health than usual, and consequently more in love than ever. According to his resolution the night before, he sat down to write a long letter to William Brandon: it was amusing and witty as usual; but the wily nobleman succeeded, under the cover of wit, in conveying to Brandon's mind a serious apprehension lest his cherished matrimonial project should altogether fail. The account of Lucy and of Captain Clifford contained in the epistle instilled, indeed, a double portion of sourness into the professionally acrid mind of the lawyer; and as it so happened that he read the letter just before attending the court upon a case in which he was counsel to the crown, the witnesses on the opposite side of the question felt the full effects of the barrister's ill humour. The case was one in which the defendant had been engaged in swindling transactions to a very large amount; and among his agents and assistants was a person of the very lowest orders, but who, seemingly enjoying large connections, and possessing natural acuteness and address, appeared to have been of great use in receiving and disposing of such goods as were fraudulently obtained. As a witness against the latter person appeared a pawnbroker, who produced certain articles that had been pledged to him at different times by this humble agent. Now, Brandon, in examining the guilty go-between, became the more terribly severe in proportion as the man evinced that semblance of unconscious stolidity which the lower orders can so ingeniously assume, and which is so peculiarly adapted to enrage and to baffle the gentlemen of the bar. At length, Brandon entirely subduing and quelling the stubborn hypocrisy of the culprit, the man turned towards him a look between wrath and beseechings, muttering,—

"Aha! *if* so be, Counsellor Prandon, you knew vat I knows. You would not go for to bully I so!"

"And pray, my good fellow, what is it that you know that should make me treat you as if I thought you an honest man?"

The witness had now relapsed into sullenness, and only answered by a sort of grunt. Brandon, who knew well how to sting a witness into communicativeness, continued his questioning till the witness, re-roused into anger, and it may be into indiscretion, said in a low voice,—

"Hax Mr. Swoppem the pawnbroker what I sold 'im on the 15th hof February, exactly twenty-three yearn ago." Brandon started back, his lips grew white, he clenched his hands with a convulsive spasm; and while all his features seemed distorted with an earnest yet fearful intensity of expectation, he poured forth a volley of questions, so incoherent and so irrelevant that he was immediately called to order by his learned brother on the opposite side. Nothing further could be extracted from the witness. The pawnbroker was resummoned: he appeared somewhat disconcerted by an appeal to his memory so far back as twenty-three years; but after taking some time to consider, during which the agitation of the usually cold and possessed Brandon was remarkable to all the court, he declared that he recollected no transaction whatsoever with the witness at that time. In vain were all Brandon's efforts

to procure a more elucidatory answer. The pawnbroker was impenetrable, and the lawyer was compelled reluctantly to dismiss him. The moment the witness left the box, Brandon sank into a gloomy abstraction,—he seemed quite to forget the business and the duties of the court; and so negligently did he continue to conclude the case, so purposeless was the rest of his examination and cross-examination, that the cause was entirely marred, and a verdict "Not guilty" returned by the jury.

The moment he left the court, Brandon repaired to the pawnbroker's; and after a conversation with Mr. Swoppem, in which he satisfied that honest tradesman that his object was rather to reward than intimidate, Swoppem confessed that twenty-three years ago the witness had met him at a public-house in Devereux Court, in company with two other men, and sold him several articles in plate, ornaments, etc. The great bulk of these articles had, of course, long left the pawnbroker's abode; but he still thought a stray trinket or two, not of sufficient worth to be reset or remodelled, nor of sufficient fashion to find a ready sale, lingered in his drawers. Eagerly, and with trembling hands, did Brandon toss over the motley contents of the mahogany reservoirs which the pawnbroker now submitted to his scrutiny. Nothing on earth is so melancholy a prospect as a pawnbroker's drawer! Those little, quaint, valueless ornaments,— those true-lovers' knots, those oval lockets, those battered rings, girdled by initials, or some brief inscription of regard or of grief,— what tales of past affections, hopes, and sorrows do they not tell! But no sentiment of so general a sort ever saddened the hard mind of William Brandon, and now less than at any time could such reflections have occurred to him. Impatiently he threw on the table, one after another, the baubles once hoarded perchance with the tenderest respect, till at length his eyes sparkled, and with a nervous gripe he seized upon an old ring which was inscribed with letters, and circled a heart containing hair. The inscription was simply, "W. B. to Julia." Strange and dark was the expression that settled on Brandon's face as he regarded this seemingly worthless trinket. After a moment's gaze, he uttered an inarticulate exclamation, and thrusting it into his pocket, renewed his search. He found one or two other trifles of a similar nature; one was an ill-done miniature set in silver, and bearing at the back sundry half-effaced letters, which Brandon construed at once (though no other eye could) into "Sir John Brandon, 1635, AEtat. 28;" the other was a seal stamped with the noble crest of the house of Brandon, 'A bull's head, ducally crowned and armed, Or.' As soon as Brandon had possessed himself of these treasures, and arrived at the conviction that the place held no more, he assured the conscientious Swoppem of his regard for that person's safety, rewarded him munificently, and went his way to Bow Street for a warrant against the witness who had commended him to the pawnbroker. On his road thither, a new resolution occurred to him. "Why make all public," he muttered to himself, "if it can be avoided? and it may be avoided!" He paused a moment, then retraced his way to the pawnbroker's, and, after a brief mandate to Mr. Swoppem, returned home. In the course of the same evening the witness we refer to was brought to the lawyer's house by Mr. Swoppem, and there held a long and private conversation with Brandon; the result of this seemed a compact to their mutual satisfaction, for the man went away safe, with a heavy purse and a light heart, although sundry shades and misgivings did certainly ever and anon cross the latter; while Brandon flung himself back in his seat with the triumphant air of one who has accomplished some great measure, and his dark face betrayed in every feature a joyousness and hope which were unfrequent guests, it must be owned, either to his countenance or his heart.

So good a man of business, however, was William Brandon that he allowed not the event of that day to defer beyond the night his attention to his designs for the aggrandizement of his niece and house. By daybreak the next morning he had written to Lord Mauleverer, to his brother, and to Lucy. To the last his letter, couched in all the anxiety of fondness and the caution of affectionate experience, was well calculated to occasion that mingled shame and soreness which the wary lawyer rightly judged would be the most effectual enemy to an incipient passion. "I have accidentally heard," he wrote, "from a friend of mine, just arrived from Bath, of the glaring attentions paid to you by a Captain Clifford; I will not, my dearest niece, wound you by repeating what also I heard of your manner in receiving them. I know the ill-nature and the envy of the world; and I do not for a moment imagine that my Lucy, of whom I am so justly proud, would countenance, from a petty coquetry, the advances of one whom she could never marry, or evince to any suitor partiality unknown to her relations, and certainly placed in a quarter which could never receive their approbation. I do not credit the reports of the idle, my dear niece; but if I discredit, you must not slight them. I call upon your prudence, your delicacy, your discretion, your sense of right, at once and effectually to put a stop to all impertinent rumours: dance with this young man no more; do not let him be of your party in any place of amusement, public or private; avoid even seeing him if you are able, and throw in your manner towards him that decided coldness which the world cannot mistake." Much more did the skilful uncle write, but all to the same purpose, and for the furtherance of the same design. His letter to his brother was not less artful. He told him at once that Lucy's preference of the suit of a handsome fortune-hunter was the public talk, and besought him to lose not a moment in quelling the rumour. "You may do so easily," he wrote, "by avoiding the young man; and should he be very importunate, return at once to Warlock. Your daughter's welfare must be dearer to you than anything."

To Mauleverer, Brandon replied by a letter which turned first on public matters, and then slid carelessly into the subject of the earl's information.

Among the admonitions which he ventured to give Mauleverer, he dwelt, not without reason, on the want of tact displayed by the earl in not manifesting that pomp and show which his station in life enabled him to do. "Remember," he urged, "you are not among your equals, by whom unnecessary parade begins to be considered an ostentatious vulgarity. The surest method of dazzling our inferiors is by splendour, not taste. All young persons—all women in particular—are caught by show, and enamoured of magnificence. Assume a greater state, and you will be more talked of; and notoriety wins a woman's heart more than beauty or youth. You have, forgive me, played the boy too long; a certain dignity becomes your manhood; women will not respect you if you suffer yourself to become 'stale and cheap to vulgar company.' You are like a man who has fifty advantages, and uses only one of them to gain his point, when you rely on your conversation and your manner, and throw away the resources of your wealth and your station. Any private gentleman may be amiable and witty; but any private gentleman cannot call to his aid the Aladdin's lamp possessed in England by a wealthy peer. Look to this, my dear lord! Lucy at heart is vain, or she is not a woman. Dazzle her, then,—dazzle! Love may be blind, but it must be made so by excess of light. You have a country-house within a few miles of Bath. Why not take up your abode there instead of in a paltry lodging in the town? Give sumptuous entertainments,—make it necessary for all the world to attend them,—exclude, of course, this Captain Clifford; you will then meet Lucy without a rival. At present, excepting only your title, you fight on a level ground with this adventurer, instead of an eminence from which you could in an instant sweep him away. Nay, he is stronger than you; he has the opportunities afforded by a partnership in balls where you cannot appear to advantage; he is, you say, in the first bloom of youth, he is handsome. Reflect!—your destiny, so far as Lucy is concerned, is in your hands. I turn to other subjects," etc. As Brandon re-read, ere he signed, this last letter, a bitter smile sat on his harsh yet handsome features. "If," said he, mentally, "I can effect this object,—if Mauleverer does marry this girl,—why so much the better that she has another, a fairer, and a more welcome lover. By the great principle of scorn within me, which has enabled me to sneer at what weaker minds adore, and make a footstool of that worldly honour which fools set up as a throne, it would be to me more sweet than fame—ay, or even than power—to see this fine-spun lord a gibe in the mouths of men,—a cuckold, a cuckold!" and as he said the last word Brandon laughed outright. "And he thinks, too," added he, "that he is sure of my fortune; otherwise, perhaps, he, the goldsmith's descendant, would not dignify our house with his proposals; but he may err there,—he may err there," and, finishing his soliloquy, Brandon finished also his letter by—"Adieu, my dear lord, your most affectionate friend"!

It is not difficult to conjecture the effect produced upon Lucy by Brandon's letter. It made her wretched; she refused for days to go out; she shut herself up in her apartment, and consumed the time in tears and struggles with her own heart. Sometimes what she conceived to be her duty conquered, and she resolved to forswear her lover; but the night undid the labour of the day,—for at night, every night, the sound of her lover's voice, accompanied by music, melted away her resolution, and made her once more all tenderness and trust. The words, too, sung under her window were especially suited to affect her; they breathed a melancholy which touched her the more from its harmony with her own thoughts. One while they complained of absence, at another they hinted at neglect; but there was always in them a tone of humiliation, not reproach; they bespoke a sense of unworthiness in the lover, and confessed that even the love was a crime: and in proportion as they owned the want of desert did Lucy more firmly cling to the belief that her lover was deserving.

The old squire was greatly disconcerted by his brother's letter. Though impressed with the idea of self-consequence, and the love of tolerably pure blood, common to most country squires, he was by no means ambitious for his daughter. On the contrary, the same feeling which at Warlock had made him choose his companions among the inferior gentry made him averse to the thought of a son-in-law from the peerage. In spite of Mauleverer's good-nature, the very ease of the earl annoyed him, and he never felt at home in his society. To Clifford he had a great liking; and having convinced himself that there was nothing to suspect in the young gentleman, he saw no earthly reason why so agreeable a companion should not be an agreeable son-in-law. "If he be poor," thought the squire, "though he does not seem so, Lucy is rich!" And this truism appeared to him to answer every objection. Nevertheless, William Brandon possessed a remarkable influence over the weaker mind of his brother; and the squire, though with great reluctance, resolved to adopt his advice. He shut his doors against Clifford, and when he met him in the streets, instead of greeting him with his wonted cordiality, he passed him with a hasty "Good day, Captain!" which, after the first day or two, merged into a distant bow. Whenever very good-hearted people are rude, and unjustly so, the rudeness is in the extreme. The squire felt it so irksome to be less familiar than heretofore with Clifford, that his only remaining desire was now to drop him altogether; and to this consummation of acquaintance the gradually cooling salute appeared rapidly approaching. Meanwhile Clifford, unable to see Lucy, shunned by her father, and obtaining in answer to all inquiry rude looks from the footman, whom nothing but the most resolute command over

his muscles prevented him from knocking down, began to feel perhaps, for the first time in his life, that an equivocal character is at least no equivocal misfortune. To add to his distress, "the earnings of his previous industry"—we use the expression cherished by the wise Tomlinson—waxed gradually less and less beneath the expenses of Bath; and the murmuring voices of his two comrades began already to reproach their chief for his inglorious idleness, and to hint at the necessity of a speedy exertion.

CHAPTER XX.

Whackum. Look you there, now! Well, all Europe cannot show a knot of finer wits and braver gentlemen.

Dingboy. Faith, they are pretty smart men.

SHADWELL: Scourers.

The world of Bath was of a sudden delighted by the intelligence that Lord Mauleverer had gone to Beauvale (the beautiful seat possessed by that nobleman in the neighbourhood of Bath), with the intention of there holding a series of sumptuous entertainments.

The first persons to whom the gay earl announced his "hospitable purpose" were Mr. and Miss Brandon; he called at their house, and declared his resolution of not leaving it till Lucy (who was in her own room) consented to gratify him with an interview, and a promise to be the queen of his purposed festival. Lucy, teased by her father, descended to the drawing-room, spiritless and pale; and the earl, struck by the alteration of her appearance, took her hand, and made his inquiries with so interesting and feeling a semblance of kindness as prepossessed the father for the first time in his favour, and touched even the daughter. So earnest, too, was his request that she would honour his festivities with her presence, and with so skilful a flattery was it conveyed, that the squire undertook to promise the favour in her name; and when the earl, declaring he was not contented with that promise from another, appealed to Lucy herself, her denial was soon melted into a positive though a reluctant assent.

Delighted with his success, and more struck with Lucy's loveliness, refined as it was by her paleness, than he had ever been before, Mauleverer left the house, and calculated, with greater accuracy than he had hitherto done, the probable fortune Lucy would derive from her uncle.

No sooner were the cards issued for Lord Mauleverer's fete than nothing else was talked of among the circles which at Bath people were pleased to term "the World."

But in the interim caps are making, and talk flowing, at Bath; and when it was found that Lord Mauleverer—the good-natured Lord Mauleverer, the obliging Lord Mauleverer—was really going to be exclusive, and out of a thousand acquaintances to select only eight hundred, it is amazing how his popularity deepened into respect. Now, then, came anxiety and triumph; she who was asked turned her back upon her who was not,—old friendships dissolved,—Independence wrote letters for a ticket,—and, as England is the freest country in the world, all the Mistresses Hodges and Snodges begged to take the liberty of bringing their youngest daughters.

Leaving the enviable Mauleverer,—the god-like occasion of so much happiness and woe, triumph and dejection,—ascend with us, O reader, into those elegant apartments over the hairdresser's shop, tenanted by Mr. Edward Pepper and Mr. Augustus Tomlinson. The time was that of evening; Captain Clifford had been dining with his two friends; the cloth was removed, and conversation was flowing over a table graced by two bottles of port, a bowl of punch for Mr. Pepper's especial discussion, two dishes of filberts, another of devilled biscuits, and a fourth of three Pomarian crudities, which nobody touched.

The hearth was swept clean, the fire burned high and clear, the curtains were let down, and the light excluded. Our three adventurers and their rooms seemed the picture of comfort. So thought Mr. Pepper; for, glancing round the chamber and putting his feet upon the fender, he said,—

"Were my portrait to be taken, gentlemen, it is just as I am now that I would be drawn!"

"And," said Tomlinson, cracking his filberts,—Tomlinson was fond of filberts,—"were I to choose a home, it is in such a home as this that I would be always quartered."

"Ah, gentlemen," said Clifford, who had been for some time silent, "it is more than probable that both

your wishes may be heard, and that ye may be drawn, quartered, and something else, too, in the very place of your desert!"

"Well," said Tomlinson, smiling gently, "I am happy to hear you jest again, Captain, though it be at our expense."

"Expense!" echoed Ned; "ay, there's the rub! Who the deuce is to pay the expense of our dinner?"

"And our dinners for the last week?" added Tomlinson. "This empty nut looks ominous; it certainly has one grand feature strikingly resembling my pockets."

"Heigho!" sighed Long Ned, turning his waistcoat commodities inside-out with a significant gesture, while the accomplished Tomlinson, who was fond of plaintive poetry, pointed to the disconsolate vacua, and exclaimed,

"E'en while Fashion's brightest arts decoy,
The heart desponding asks if this be joy!"

"In truth, gentlemen," added he, solemnly depositing his nut-crackers on the table, and laying, as was his wont when about to be luminous, his right finger on his sinister palm,— "in truth, gentlemen, affairs are growing serious with us, and it becomes necessary forthwith to devise some safe means of procuring a decent competence."

"I am dunned confoundedly," cried Ned.

"And," continued Tomlinson, "no person of delicacy likes to be subjected to the importunity of vulgar creditors; we must therefore raise money for the liquidation of our debts. Captain Lovett, or Clifford, whichever you be styled, we call upon you to assist us in so praiseworthy a purpose."

Clifford turned his eyes first on one and then on the other; but made no answer.

"*Imprimis*," said Tomlinson, "let us each produce our stock in hand; for my part, I am free to confess—for what shame is there in that poverty which our exertions are about to relieve?—that I have only two guineas four shillings and threepence halfpenny!"

"And I," said Long Ned, taking a China ornament from the chimney-piece, and emptying its contents in his hand, "am in a still more pitiful condition. See, I have only three shillings and a bad guinea. I gave the guinea to the waiter at the White Hart yesterday; the dog brought it back to me to-day, and I was forced to change it with my last shiner. Plague take the thing! I bought it of a Jew for four shillings, and have lost one pound five by the bargain."

"Fortune frustrates our wisest schemes," rejoined the moralizing Augustus. "Captain, will you produce the scanty wrecks of your wealth?"

Clifford, still silent, threw a purse on the table. Augustus carefully emptied it, and counted out five guineas; an expression of grave surprise settled on Tomlinson's contemplative brow, and extending the coins towards Clifford, he said in a melancholy tone,—

"All your pretty ones?
Did you say all?"

A look from Clifford answered the interesting interrogatory. "These, then," said Tomlinson, collecting "in his hand the common wealth,— "these, then, are all our remaining treasures!" As he spoke, he jingled the coins mournfully in his palm, and gazing upon them with a parental air, exclaimed,—

"Alas! regardless of their doom, the little victims play!"

"Oh, d—-it!" said Ned, "no sentiment! Let us come to business at once. To tell you the truth, I, for one, am tired of this heiress-hunting, and a man may spend a fortune in the chase before he can win one."

"You despair then, positively, of the widow you have courted so long?" asked Tomlinson.

"Utterly," rejoined Ned, whose addresses had been limited solely to the dames of the middling class, and who had imagined himself at one time, as he punningly expressed it, sure of a dear rib from Cheapside,— "utterly; she was very civil to me at first, but when I proposed, asked me, with a blush, for my 'references.' 'References?' said I; 'why, I want the place of your husband, my charmer, not your footman!' The dame was inexorable, said she could not take me without a character, but hinted that I might be the lover instead of the bridegroom; and when I scorned the suggestion, and pressed for the parson, she told me point-blank, with her unlucky city pronunciation, 'that she would never accompany me to the halter!'"

"Ha, ha, ha!" cried Tomlinson, laughing. One can scarcely blame the good lady for that. Love rarely brooks such permanent ties. But have you no other lady in your eye?"

"Not for matrimony,—all roads but those to the church!" While this dissolute pair were thus conversing, Clifford, leaning against the wainscot, listened to them with a sick and bitter feeling of degradation, which till of late days had been a stranger to his breast. He was at length aroused from his silence by Ned, who, bending forward and placing his hand upon Clifford's knee, said abruptly,—

"In short, Captain, you must lead us once more to glory. We have still our horses, and I keep my mask in my pocketbook, together with my comb. Let us take the road to-morrow night, dash across the country towards Salisbury, and after a short visit in that neighbourhood to a band of old friends of mine,—bold fellows, who would have stopped the devil himself when he was at work upon Stonehenge,—make a tour by Reading and Henley and end by a plunge into London."

"You have spoken well, Ned!" said Tomlinson, approvingly. "Now, noble captain, your opinion?"

"Messieurs," answered Clifford, "I highly approve of your intended excursion, and I only regret that I cannot be your companion."

"Not! and why?" cried Mr. Pepper, amazed.

"Because I have business here that renders it impossible; perhaps, before long, I may join you in London."

"Nay," said Tomlinson, "there is no necessity for our going to London, if you wish to remain here; nor need we at present recur to so desperate an expedient as the road,—a little quiet business at Bath will answer our purpose; and for my part, as you well know, I love exerting my wits in some scheme more worthy of them than the highway,—a profession meet for a bully than a man of genius. Let us then, Captain, plan a project of enrichment on the property of some credulous tradesman! Why have recourse to rough measures so long as we can find easy fools?"

Clifford shook his head. "I will own to you fairly," said he, "that I cannot at present take a share in your exploits; nay, as your chief I must lay my positive commands on you to refrain from all exercise of your talents at Bath. Rob, if you please: the world is before you; but this city is sacred."

"Body o' me!" cried Ned, colouring, "but this is too good. I will not be dictated to in this manner."

"But, sir," answered Clifford, who had learned in his oligarchical profession the way to command,— "but, sir, you shall, or if you mutiny you leave our body, and then will the hangman have no petty chance of your own. Come, come! ingrate as you are, what would you be without me? How many times have I already saved that long carcass of thine from the rope, and now would you have the baseness to rebel? Out on you!"

Though Mr. Pepper was still wroth, he bit his lip in moody silence, and suffered not his passion to have its way; while Clifford, rising, after a short pause continued: "Look you, Mr. Pepper, you know my commands; consider them peremptory. I wish you success and plenty! Farewell, gentlemen!"

"Do you leave us already?" cried Tomlinson. "You are offended."

"Surely not!" answered Clifford, retreating to the door. "But an engagement elsewhere, you know!"

"Ay, I take you," said Tomlinson, following Clifford out of the room, and shutting the door after him. "Ay, I take you!" added he, in a whisper, as he arrested Clifford at the head of the stairs. "But tell me, how do you get on with the heiress?"

Smothering that sensation at his heart which made Clifford, reckless as he was, enraged and ashamed, whenever through the lips of his comrades there issued any allusion to Lucy Brandon, the chief replied: "I fear, Tomlinson, that I am already suspected by the old squire! All of a sudden he avoids me, shuts his door against me; Miss Brandon goes nowhere, and even if she did, what could I expect from her after this sudden change in the father?"

Tomlinson looked blank and disconcerted. "But," said he, after a moment's silence, "why not put a good face on the matter, walk up to the squire, and ask him the reason of his unkindness?"

"Why, look you, my friend; I am bold enough with all others, but this girl has made me as bashful as a maid in all that relates to herself. Nay, there are moments when I think I can conquer all selfish feeling and rejoice for her sake that she has escaped me. Could I but see her once more, I could—yes! I feel—I feel I could—resign her forever!"

"Humph!" said Tomlinson; "and what is to become of us? Really, my captain, your sense of duty should lead you to exert yourself; your friends starve before your eyes, while you are shilly-shallying about your mistress. Have you no bowels for friendship?"

"A truce with this nonsense!" said Clifford, angrily.

"It is sense,—sober sense,—and sadness too," rejoined Tomlinson. "Ned is discontented, our debts are imperious. Suppose, now,—just suppose,— that we take a moonlight flitting from Bath, will that tell well for you whom we leave behind? Yet this we must do, if you do not devise some method of refilling our purses. Either, then, consent to join us in a scheme meet for our wants, or pay our debts in this city, or fly with us to London, and dismiss all thoughts of that love which is so seldom friendly to the projects of ambition."

Notwithstanding the manner in which Tomlinson made this threefold proposition, Clifford could not but acknowledge the sense and justice contained in it; and a glance at the matter sufficed to show how ruinous to his character, and therefore to his hopes, would be the flight of his comrades and the clamour of their creditors.

"You speak well, Tomlinson," said he, hesitating; "and yet for the life of me I cannot aid you in any scheme which may disgrace us by detection. Nothing can reconcile me to the apprehension of Miss Brandon's discovering who and what was her suitor."

"I feel for you," said Tomlinson, "but give me and Pepper at least permission to shift for ourselves; trust to my known prudence for finding some method to raise the wind without creating a dust; in other words (this cursed Pepper makes one so vulgar!), of preying on the public without being discovered."

"I see no alternative," answered Clifford, reluctantly; "but if possible, be quiet for the present. Bear with me for a few days longer, give me only sufficient time once more to see Miss Brandon, and I will engage to extricate you from your difficulties!"

"Spoken like yourself, frankly and nobly," replied Tomlinson; "no one has a greater confidence in your genius, once exerted, than I have!"

So saying, the pair shook hands and parted. Tomlinson rejoined Mr. Pepper.

"Well, have you settled anything?" quoth the latter.

"Not exactly; and though Lovett has promised to exert himself in a few days, yet, as the poor man is in love, and his genius under a cloud, I have little faith in his promises."

"And I have none!" said Pepper; "besides, time presses! A few days!— a few devils! We are certainly scented here, and I walk about like a barrel of beer at Christmas, under hourly apprehension of being tapped!"

"It is very strange," said the philosophic Augustus; "but I think there is an instinct in tradesmen by which they can tell a rogue at first sight; and I can get (dress I ever so well) no more credit with my laundress than my friends the Whigs can with the people."

"In short, then," said Ned, "we must recur at once to the road; and on the day after to-morrow there will be an excellent opportunity. The old earl with the hard name gives a breakfast, or feast, or some such mummery. I understand people will stay till after nightfall; let us watch our opportunity, we are famously mounted, and some carriage later than the general string may furnish us with all our hearts can desire!"

"Bravo!" cried Tomlinson, shaking Mr. Pepper heartily by the hand; "I give you joy of your ingenuity, and you may trust to me to make our peace afterwards with Lovett. Any enterprise that seems to him gallant he is always willing enough to forgive; and as he never practises any other branch of the profession than that of the road (for which I confess that I think him foolish), he will be more ready to look over our exploits in that line than in any other more subtle but less heroic."

"Well, I leave it to you to propitiate the cove or not, as you please; and now that we have settled the main point, let us finish the lush!"

"And," added Augustus, taking a pack of cards from the chimney-piece, "we can in the mean while have a quiet game at cribbage for shillings."

"Done!" cried Ned, clearing away the dessert.

If the redoubted hearts of Mr. Edward Pepper, and that Ulysses of robbers, Augustus Tomlinson, beat high as the hours brought on Lord Mauleverer's fete, their leader was not without anxiety and expectation for the same event. He was uninvited, it is true, to the gay scene; but he had heard in public that Miss Brandon, recovered from her late illness, was certainly to be there; and Clifford, torn with suspense, and eager once more, even if for the last time, to see the only person who had ever pierced his soul with a keen sense of his errors or crimes, resolved to risk all obstacles and meet her at Mauleverer's.

"My life," said he, as he sat alone in his apartment, eying the falling embers of his still and lethargic fire, "may soon approach its termination; it is, indeed, out of the chances of things that I can long escape the doom of my condition; and when, as a last hope to raise myself from my desperate state into respectability and reform, I came hither, and meditated purchasing independence by marriage, I was blind to the cursed rascality of the action! Happy, after all, that my intentions were directed against one whom I so soon and so adoringly learned to love! Had I wooed one whom I loved less, I might not have scrupled to deceive her into marriage. As it is,—well, it is idle in me to think thus of my resolution, when I have not even the option to choose; when her father, perhaps, has already lifted the veil from my assumed dignities, and the daughter already shrinks in horror from my name. Yet I will see her! I will look once more upon that angel face, I will hear from her own lips the confession of her scorn, I will see that bright eye flash hatred upon me, and I can then turn once more to my fatal career, and forget that I have ever repented that it was begun. Yet, what else could have been my alternative? Friendless, homeless, nameless,—an orphan, worse than an orphan,—the son of a harlot, my father even unknown; yet cursed with early aspirings and restlessness, and a half glimmering of knowledge, and an entire lust of whatever seemed enterprise,—what wonder that I chose anything rather than daily labour and perpetual contumely? After all, the fault is in fortune and the world, not me! Oh, Lucy! had I but been born in your sphere, had I but possessed the claim to merit you, what would I not have done and dared and conquered for your sake!"

Such, or similar to these, were the thoughts of Clifford during the interval between his resolution of seeing Lucy and the time of effecting it. The thoughts were of no pleasing though of an exciting nature; nor were they greatly soothed by the ingenious occupation of cheating himself into the belief that if he was a highwayman, it was altogether the fault of the highways.

CHAPTER XXI.

Dream. Let me but see her, dear Leontins.
Humorous Lieutenant.

Hempskirke. It was the fellow, sure.
Wolfort. What are you, sirrah?
Beggar's Bush.

O thou divine spirit that burnest in every breast, inciting each with the sublime desire to be fine; that stirrest up the great to become little in order to seem greater, and that makest a duchess woo insult for a voucher,—thou that delightest in so many shapes, multifarious yet the same; spirit that makest the high despicable, and the lord meaner than his valet; equally great whether thou cheatest a friend or cuttest a father; lacquering all thou touchest with a bright vulgarity that thy votaries imagine to be gold,—thou that sendest the few to fashionable balls and the many to fashionable novels; that smitest even Genius as well as Folly, making the favourites of the gods boast an acquaintance they have not with the graces of a mushroom peerage rather than the knowledge they have of the Muses of an eternal Helicon,—thou that leavest in the great ocean of our manners no dry spot for the foot of independence; that pallest on the jaded eye with a moving and girdling panorama of daubed vilenesses, and fritterest away the souls of free-born Britons into a powder smaller than the angels which dance in myriads on a pin's point,—whether, O spirit! thou callest thyself Fashion or Ton, or Ambition or Vanity or Cringing or Cant or any title equally lofty and sublime,—would that from thy wings we could gain but a single plume! Fain would we, in fitting strain, describe the festivities of that memorable day when the benevolent Lord Mauleverer received and blessed the admiring universe of Bath.

But to be less poetical, as certain writers say, when they have been writing nonsense,—but to be less poetical and more exact, the morning, though in the depth of winter, was bright and clear, and Lord Mauleverer found himself in particularly good health. Nothing could be better planned than the whole of his arrangements. Unlike those which are ordinarily chosen for the express reason of being as

foreign as possible to the nature of our climate, all at Lord Mauleverer's were made suitable to a Greenland atmosphere. The temples and summer-houses, interspersed through the grounds, were fitted up, some as Esquimaux huts, others as Russian pavilions; fires were carefully kept up; the musicians Mauleverer took care should have as much wine as they pleased; they were set skilfully in places where they were unseen, but where they could be heard. One or two temporary buildings were erected for those who loved dancing; and as Mauleverer, miscalculating on the principles of human nature, thought gentlemen might be averse from ostentatious exhibition, he had hired persons to skate minuets and figures of eight upon his lakes, for the amusement of those who were fond of skating. All people who would be kind enough to dress in strange costumes and make odd noises, which they called singing, the earl had carefully engaged, and planted in the best places for making them look still stranger than they were.

There was also plenty to eat, and more than plenty to drink. Mauleverer knew well that our countrymen and countrywomen, whatever be their rank, like to have their spirits exalted. In short, the whole *dejeuner* was so admirably contrived that it was probable the guests would not look much more melancholy during the amusements than they would have done had they been otherwise engaged at a funeral.

Lucy and the squire were among the first arrivals. Mauleverer, approaching the father and daughter with his most courtly manner, insisted on taking the latter under his own escort, and being her cicerone through the round of preparations.

As the crowd thickened, and it was observed how gallant were the attentions testified towards Lucy by the host, many and envious were the whispers of the guests! Those good people, naturally angry at the thought that two individuals should be married, divided themselves into two parties: one abused Lucy, and the other Lord Mauleverer; the former vituperated her art, the latter his folly. "I thought she would play her cards well, deceitful creature!" said the one. "January and May," muttered the other; "the man's sixty!" It was noticeable that the party against Lucy was chiefly composed of ladies, that against Mauleverer of men; that conduct must indeed be heinous which draws down the indignation of one's own sex!

Unconscious of her crimes, Lucy moved along, leaning on the arm of the gallant earl, and languidly smiling, with her heart far away, at his endeavours to amuse her. There was something interesting in the mere contrast of the pair; so touching seemed the beauty of the young girl, with her delicate cheek, maiden form, drooping eyelid, and quiet simplicity of air, in comparison to the worldly countenance and artificial grace of her companion.

After some time, when they were in a sequestered part of the grounds, Mauleverer, observing that none were near, entered a rude hut; and so fascinated was he at that moment by the beauty of his guest, and so meet to him seemed the opportunity of his confession, that he with difficulty suppressed the avowal rising to his lips, and took the more prudent plan of first sounding and preparing as it were the way.

"I cannot tell you, my dear Miss Brandon," said he, slightly pressing the beautiful hand leaning on his arm, "how happy I am to see you the guest—the queen, rather—of my house! Ah! could the bloom of youth return with its feelings! Time is never so cruel as when, while stealing from us the power to please, he leaves us in full vigour the unhappy privilege to be charmed!"

Mauleverer expected at least a blushing contradiction to the implied application of a sentiment so affectingly expressed: he was disappointed. Lucy, less alive than usual to the sentimental, or its reverse, scarcely perceived his meaning, and answered simply that it was very true. "This comes of being, like my friend Burke, too refined for one's audience," thought Mauleverer, wincing a little from the unexpected reply. "And yet!" he resumed, "I would not forego my power to admire, futile, nay, painful as it is. Even now, while I gaze on you, my heart tells me that the pleasure I enjoy, it is at your command at once and forever to blight into misery; but while it tells me, I gaze on!"

Lucy raised her eyes, and something of her natural archness played in their expression.

"I believe, my lord," said she, moving from the hut, "that it would be better to join your guests: walls have ears; and what would be the gay Lord Mauleverer's self-reproach if he heard again of his fine compliments to—"

"The most charming person in Europe!" cried Mauleverer, vehemently; and the hand which he before touched he now clasped. At that instant Lucy saw opposite to her, half hid by a copse of evergreens, the figure of Clifford. His face, which seemed pale and wan, was not directed towards the place where she stood, and he evidently did not perceive Mauleverer or herself; yet so great was the effect that this glimpse of him produced on Lucy, that she trembled violently, and, unconsciously uttering a faint cry,

snatched her hand from Mauleverer.

The earl started, and catching the expression of her eyes, turned instantly towards the spot to which her gaze seemed riveted. He had not heard the rustling of the boughs, but he saw, with his habitual quickness of remark, that they still trembled, as if lately displaced; and he caught through their interstices the glimpse of a receding figure. He sprang forward with an agility very uncommon to his usual movements; but before he gained the copse, every vestige of the intruder had vanished.

What slaves we are to the moment! As Mauleverer turned back to rejoin Lucy, who, agitated almost to fainting, leaned against the rude wall of the but, he would as soon have thought of flying as of making that generous offer of self, etc., which the instant before he had been burning to render Lucy. The vain are always sensitively jealous; and Mauleverer, remembering Clifford, and Lucy's blushes in dancing with him, instantly accounted for her agitation and its cause. With a very grave air he approached the object of his late adoration, and requested to know if it were not some abrupt intruder that had occasioned her alarm. Lucy, scarcely knowing what she said, answered in a low voice that it was, indeed, and begged instantly to rejoin her father. Mauleverer offered his arm with great dignity; and the pair passed into the frequented part of the grounds, where Mauleverer once more brightened into smiles and courtesy to all around him.

"He is certainly accepted!" said Mr. Shrewd to Lady Simper.

"What an immense match for the girl!" was Lady Simper's reply.

Amidst the music, the dancing, the throng, the noise, Lucy found it easy to recover herself; and disengaging her arm from Lord Mauleverer, as she perceived her father, she rejoined the squire, and remained a patient listener to his remarks till late in the noon it became an understood matter that people were expected to go into a long room in order to eat and drink. Mauleverer, now alive to the duties of his situation, and feeling exceedingly angry with Lucy, was more reconciled than he otherwise might have been to the etiquette which obliged him to select for the object of his hospitable cares an old dowager duchess instead of the beauty of the fete; but he took care to point out to the squire the places appointed for himself and daughter, which were, though at some distance from the earl, under the providence of his vigilant survey.

While Mauleverer was deifying the dowager duchess, and refreshing his spirits with a chicken and a medicinal glass of madeira, the conversation near Lucy turned, to her infinite dismay, upon Clifford. Some one had seen him in the grounds, booted and in a riding undress (in that day people seldom rode and danced in the same conformation of coat); and as Mauleverer was a precise person about those little matters of etiquette, this negligence of Clifford's made quite a subject of discussion. By degrees the conversation changed into the old inquiry as to who this Captain Clifford was; and just as it had reached that point, it reached also the gently deafened ears of Lord Mauleverer.

"Pray, my lord," said the old duchess, "since he is one of your guests, you, who know who and what every one is, can possibly inform us of the real family of this beautiful Mr. Clifford?"

"One of my guests, did you say?" answered Mauleverer, irritated greatly beyond his usual quietness of manner. "Really, your grace does me wrong. He may be a guest of my valet, but he assuredly is not mine; and should I encounter him, I shall leave it to my valet to give him his *conge* as well as his invitation!"

Mauleverer, heightening his voice as he observed athwart the table an alternate paleness and flush upon Lucy's face, which stung all the angrier passions, generally torpid in him, into venom, looked round, on concluding, with a haughty and sarcastic air. So loud had been his tone, so pointed the insult, and so dead the silence at the table while he spoke, that every one felt the affront must be carried at once to Clifford's hearing, should he be in the room. And after Mauleverer had ceased, there was a universal nervous and indistinct expectation of an answer and a scene; all was still, and it soon became certain that Clifford was not in the apartment. When Mr. Shrewd had fully convinced himself of this fact,—for there was a daring spirit about Clifford which few wished to draw upon themselves,—that personage broke the pause by observing that no man who pretended to be a gentleman would intrude himself, unasked and unwelcome, into any society; and Mauleverer, catching up the observation, said (drinking wine at the same time with Mr. Shrewd) that undoubtedly such conduct fully justified the rumours respecting Mr. Clifford, and utterly excluded him from that rank to which it was before more than suspected he had no claim.

So luminous and satisfactory an opinion from such an authority, once broached, was immediately and universally echoed; and long before the repast was over, it seemed to be tacitly agreed that Captain Clifford should be sent to Coventry, and if he murmured at the exile, he would have no right to insist upon being sent thence to the devil.

The good old squire, mindful of his former friendship for Clifford, and not apt to veer, was about to begin a speech on the occasion, when Lucy, touching his arm, implored him to be silent; and so ghastly was the paleness of her cheek while she spoke, that the squire's eyes, obtuse as he generally was, opened at once to the real secret of her heart. As soon as the truth flashed upon him, he wondered, recalling Clifford's great personal beauty and marked attentions, that it had not flashed upon him sooner; and leaning back on his chair, he sank into one of the most unpleasant reveries he had ever conceived.

At a given signal the music for the dancers recommenced, and at a hint to that effect from the host, persons rose without ceremony to repair to other amusements, and suffer such guests as had hitherto been excluded from eating to occupy the place of the relinquishers. Lucy, glad to escape, was one of the first to resign her situation, and with the squire she returned to the grounds. During the banquet, evening had closed in, and the scene now really became fairy-like and picturesque; lamps hung from many a tree, reflecting the light through the richest and softest hues; the music itself sounded more musically than during the day; gipsy-tents were pitched at wild corners and copses, and the bright wood-fires burning in them blazed merrily upon the cold yet cheerful air of the increasing night. The view was really novel and inviting; and as it had been an understood matter that ladies were to bring furs, cloaks, and boots, all those who thought they looked well in such array made little groups, and scattered themselves about the grounds and in the tents. They, on the contrary, in whom "the purple light of love" was apt by the frost to be propelled from the cheeks to the central ornament of the face, or who thought a fire in a room quite as agreeable as a fire in a tent, remained within, and contemplated the scene through the open windows.

Lucy longed to return home, nor was the squire reluctant; but, unhappily, it wanted an hour to the time at which the carriage had been ordered, and she mechanically joined a group of guests who had persuaded the good-natured squire to forget his gout and venture forth to look at the illuminations. Her party was soon joined by others, and the group gradually thickened into a crowd; the throng was stationary for a few minutes before a little temple in which fireworks had just commenced an additional attraction to the scene. Opposite to this temple, as well as in its rear, the walks and trees had been purposely left in comparative darkness, in order to heighten the effect of the fireworks.

"I declare," said Lady Simper, glancing down one of the alleys which seemed to stretch away into blackness,—*"I declare it seems quite a lovers' walk. How kind in Lord Mauleverer!—such a delicate attention—"*

"To your ladyship!" added Mr. Shrewd, with a bow. While, one of this crowd, Lucy was vacantly eying the long trains of light which ever and anon shot against the sky, she felt her hand suddenly seized, and at the same time a voice whispered, "For God's sake, read this now and grant my request!"

The voice, which seemed to rise from the very heart of the speaker, Lucy knew at once; she trembled violently, and remained for some minutes with eyes which did not dare to look from the ground. A note she felt had been left in her hand; and the agonized and earnest tone of that voice, which was dearer to her than the fulness of all music, made her impatient yet afraid to read it. As she recovered courage, she looked around, and seeing that the attention of all was bent upon the fireworks, and that her father in particular, leaning on his cane, seemed to enjoy the spectacle with a child's engrossed delight, she glided softly away, and entering unperceived one of the alleys, she read, by a solitary lamp that burned at its entrance, the following lines, written in pencil and in a hurried hand, apparently upon a leaf torn from a pocket-book:—

I implore, I entreat you, Miss Brandon, to see me, if but for a moment. I purpose to tear myself away from the place in which you reside, to go abroad, to leave even the spot hallowed by your footstep. After this night my presence, my presumption, will degrade you no more. But this night, for mercy's sake, see me, or I shall go mad! I will but speak to you one instant: this is all I ask. If you grant me this prayer, the walk to the left where you stand, at the entrance to which there is one purple lamp, will afford an opportunity to your mercy. A few yards down that walk I will meet you,—none can see or hear us. Will you grant this? I know not, I dare not think; but under any case, your name shall be the last upon my lips.

P. C.

As Lucy read this hurried scrawl, she glanced towards the lamp above her, and saw that she had accidentally entered the very walk indicated in the note. She paused, she hesitated; the impropriety, the singularity of the request, darted upon her at once; on the other hand, the anxious voice still

ringing in her ear, the incoherent vehemence of the note, the risk, the opprobrium Clifford had incurred solely—her heart whispered—to see her, all aided her simple temper, her kind feelings, and her love for the petitioner, in inducing her to consent. She cast one glance behind,—all seemed occupied with far other thoughts than that of notice towards her; she looked anxiously before,—all looked gloomy and indistinct; but suddenly, at some little distance, she descried a dark figure in motion. She felt her knees shake under her, her heart beat violently; she moved onward a few paces, again paused, and looked back. The figure before her moved as in approach; she resumed courage, and advanced,—the figure was by her side.

"How generous, how condescending, is this goodness in Miss Brandon!" said the voice, which so struggled with secret and strong emotion that Lucy scarcely recognized it as Clifford's. "I did not dare to expect it; and now—now that I meet you—" Clifford paused, as if seeking words; and Lucy, even through the dark, perceived that her strange companion was powerfully excited; she waited for him to continue, but observing that he walked on in silence, she said, though with a trembling voice, "Indeed, Mr. Clifford, I fear that it is very, very improper in me to meet you thus; nothing but the strong expressions in your letter—and—and—in short, my fear that you meditated some desperate design, at which I could not guess, caused me to yield to your wish for an interview." She paused, and Clifford still preserving silence, she added, with some little coldness in her tone: "If you have really ought to say to me, you must allow me to request that you speak it quickly. This interview, you must be sensible, ought to end almost as soon as it begins."

"Hear me, then!" said Clifford, mastering his embarrassment and speaking in a firm and clear voice; "is that true which I have but just heard,—is it true that I have been spoken of in your presence in terms of insult and affront?"

It was now for Lucy to feel embarrassed; fearful to give pain, and yet anxious that Clifford should know, in order that he might disprove, the slight and the suspicion which the mystery around him drew upon his name, she faltered between the two feelings, and without satisfying the latter, succeeded in realizing the fear of the former.

"Enough!" said Clifford, in a tone of deep mortification, as his quick ear caught and interpreted, yet more humiliatingly than the truth, the meaning of her stammered and confused reply,—"enough! I see that it is true, and that the only human being in the world to whose good opinion I am not indifferent has been a witness of the insulting manner in which others have dared to speak of me!"

"But," said Lucy, eagerly, "why give the envious or the idle any excuse? Why not suffer your parentage and family to be publicly known? Why are you here"—and her voice sank into a lower key—"this very day, unasked, and therefore subject to the cavils of all who think the poor distinction of an invitation an honour? Forgive me, Mr. Clifford; perhaps I offend. I hurt you by speaking thus frankly; but your good name rests with yourself, and your friends cannot but feel angry that you should trifle with it."

"Madam," said Clifford; and Lucy's eyes, now growing accustomed to the darkness, perceived a bitter smile upon his lips, "my name, good or ill, is an object of little care to me. I have read of philosophers who pride themselves in placing no value in the opinions of the world. Rank me among that sect. But I am—I own I am—anxious that you alone, of all the world, should not despise me; and now that I feel you do, that you must, everything worth living or hoping for is past!"

"Despise you!" said Lucy, and her eyes filled with tears; "indeed you wrong me and yourself. But listen to me, Mr. Clifford. I have seen, it is true, but little of the world, yet I have seen enough to make me wish I could have lived in retirement forever. The rarest quality among either sex, though it is the simplest, seems to me good-nature; and the only occupation of what are termed 'fashionable people' appears to be speaking ill of one another. Nothing gives such a scope to scandal as mystery; nothing disarms it like openness. I know, your friends know, Mr. Clifford, that your character can bear inspection; and I believe, for my own part, the same of your family. Why not, then, declare who and what you are?"

"That candour would indeed be my best defender," said Clifford, in a tone which ran displeasingly through Lucy's ear; "but in truth, madam, I repeat, I care not one drop of this worthless blood what men say of me: that time has passed, and forever; perhaps it never keenly existed for me,—no matter. I came hither, Miss Brandon, not wasting a thought on these sickening fooleries, or on the hoary idler by whom they are given. I came hither only once more to see you, to hear you speak, to watch you move, to tell you"—and the speaker's voice trembled, so as to be scarcely audible—"to tell you, if any reason for the disclosure offered itself, that I have had the boldness, the crime, to love—to love—O God! to adore you; and then to leave you forever!"

Pale, trembling, scarcely preserved from falling by the tree against which she leaned, Lucy listened to

this abrupt avowal. "Dare I touch this hand?" continued Clifford, as he knelt and took it timidly and reverently. "You know not, you cannot dream, how unworthy is he who thus presumes; yet not all unworthy, while he is sensible of so deep, so holy a feeling as that which he bears to you. God bless you, Miss Brandon!— Lucy, God bless you! And if hereafter you hear me subjected to still blacker suspicion or severer scrutiny than that which I now sustain; if even your charity and goodness can find no defence for me; if the suspicion become certainty, and the scrutiny end in condemnation,— believe at least that circumstances have carried me beyond my nature, and that under fairer auspices I might have been other than I am!"

Lucy's tear dropped upon Clifford's hand as he spoke; and while his heart melted within him as he felt it and knew his own desperate and unredeemed condition, he added,—

"Every one courts you,—the proud, the rich, the young, the high-born,— all are at your feet! You will select one of that number for your husband; may he watch over you as I would have done!—love you as I do he cannot! Yes, I repeat it," continued Clifford, vehemently,—"he cannot! None amidst the gay, happy, silken crowd of your equals and followers can feel for you that single and overruling passion which makes you to me what all combined—country, power, wealth, reputation, an honest name, peace, common safety, the quiet of the common air, alike the least blessing and the greatest—are to all others! Once more, may God in heaven watch over you and preserve you! I tear myself, on leaving you, from all that cheers or blesses or raises or might have saved me! Farewell!"

The hand which Lucy had relinquished to her strange suitor was pressed ardently to his lips, dropped in the same instant, and she knew that she was once more alone.

But Clifford, hurrying rapidly through the trees, made his way towards the nearest gate which led from Lord Mauleverer's domain; when he reached it, a crowd of the more elderly guests occupied the entrance, and one of these was a lady of such distinction that Mauleverer, in spite of his aversion to any superfluous exposure to the night air, had obliged himself to conduct her to her carriage. He was in a very ill humour with this constrained politeness, especially as the carriage was very slow in relieving him of his charge, when he saw, by the lamplight, Clifford passing near him, and winning his way to the gate. Quite forgetting his worldly prudence, which should have made him averse to scenes with any one, especially with a flying enemy, and a man with whom, if he believed aright, little glory was to be gained in conquest, much less in contest; and only remembering Clifford's rivalry, and his own hatred towards him for the presumption, Mauleverer, uttering a hurried apology to the lady on his arm, stepped forward, and opposing Clifford's progress, said, with a bow of tranquil insult, "Pardon me, sir, but is it at my invitation or that of one of my servants that you have honoured me with your company this day?"

Clifford's thoughts at the time of this interruption were of that nature before which all petty misfortunes shrink into nothing; if, therefore, he started for a moment at the earl's address, he betrayed no embarrassment in reply, but bowing with an air of respect, and taking no notice of the affront implied in Mauleverer's speech, he answered,—

"Your lordship has only to deign a glance at my dress to see that I have not intruded myself on your grounds with the intention of claiming your hospitality. The fact is, and I trust to your lordship's courtesy to admit the excuse, that I leave this neighbourhood to-morrow, and for some length of time. A person whom I was very anxious to see before I left was one of your lordship's guests; I heard this, and knew that I should have no other opportunity of meeting the person in question before my departure; and I must now throw myself on the well-known politeness of Lord Mauleverer to pardon a freedom originating in a business very much approaching to a necessity."

Lord Mauleverer's address to Clifford had congregated an immediate crowd of eager and expectant listeners; but so quietly respectful and really gentlemanlike were Clifford's air and tone in excusing himself, that the whole throng were smitten with a sudden disappointment.

Lord Mauleverer himself, surprised by the temper and deportment of the unbidden guest, was at a loss for one moment; and Clifford was about to take advantage of that moment and glide away, when Mauleverer, with a second bow, more civil than the former one, said,—

"I cannot but be happy, sir, that my poor place has afforded you any convenience; but if I am not very impertinent, will you allow me to inquire the name of my guest with whom you required a meeting?"

"My lord," said Clifford, drawing himself up and speaking gravely and sternly, though still with a certain deference, "I need not surely point out to your lordship's good sense and good feeling that your very question implies a doubt, and consequently an affront, and that the tone of it is not such as to justify that concession on my part which the further explanation you require would imply!"

Few spoken sarcasms could be so bitter as that silent one which Mauleverer could command by a smile, and with this complimentary expression on his thin lips and raised brow, the earl answered: "Sir, I honour the skill testified by your reply; it must be the result of a profound experience in these affairs. I wish you, sir, a very good night; and the next time you favour me with a visit, I am quite sure that your motives for so indulging me will be no less creditable to you than at present."

With these words Mauleverer turned to rejoin his fair charge. But Clifford was a man who had seen in a short time a great deal of the world, and knew tolerably well the theories of society, if not the practice of its minutiae; moreover, he was of an acute and resolute temper, and these properties of mind, natural and acquired, told him that he was now in a situation in which it had become more necessary to defy than to conciliate. Instead therefore of retiring he walked deliberately up to Mauleverer, and said,—

"My lord, I shall leave it to the judgment of your guests to decide whether you have acted the part of a nobleman and a gentleman in thus, in your domains, insulting one who has given you such explanation of his trespass as would fully excuse him in the eyes of all considerate or courteous persons. I shall also leave it to them to decide whether the tone of your inquiry allowed me to give you any further apology. But I shall take it upon myself, my lord, to demand from you an immediate explanation of your last speech."

"Insolent!" cried Mauleverer, colouring with indignation, and almost for the first time in his life losing absolute command over his temper; "do you bandy words with me? Begone, or I shall order my servants to thrust you forth!"

"Begone, sir! begone!" cried several voices in echo to Mauleverer, from those persons who deemed it now high time to take part with the powerful.

Clifford stood his ground, gazing around with a look of angry and defying contempt, which, joined to his athletic frame, his dark and fierce eye, and a heavy riding-whip, which, as if mechanically, he half raised, effectually kept the murmurers from proceeding to violence.

"Poor pretender to breeding and to sense!" said he, disdainfully turning to Mauleverer; "with one touch of this whip I could shame you forever, or compel you to descend from the level of your rank to that of mine, and the action would be but a mild return to your language. But I love rather to teach you than to correct. According to my creed, my lord, he conquers most in good breeding who forbears the most,—scorn enables me to forbear! Adieu!"

With this, Clifford turned on his heel and strode away. A murmur, approaching to a groan, from the younger or sillier part of the parasites (the mature and the sensible have no extra emotion to throw away), followed him as he disappeared.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK PAUL CLIFFORD — VOLUME 04 ***

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