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PAUL CLIFFORD, Volume 6.

By Edward Bulwer-Lytton

CHAPTER XXVIII.

God bless our King and Parliament,
And send he may make such knaves repent!
Loyal Songs against the Rump Parliament.

Ho, treachery! my guards, my cimeter!
BYRON.

When the irreverent Mr. Pepper had warmed his hands sufficiently to be able to transfer them from the fire, he lifted the right palm, and with an indecent jocularly of spirits, accosted the *ci-devant* ornament of "The Asinaeum" with a sounding slap on his back, or some such part of his conformation.

"Ah, old boy!" said he, "is this the way you keep house for us? A fire not large enough to roast a nit, and a supper too small to fatten him beforehand! But how the deuce should you know how to provender for gentlemen? You thought you were in Scotland, I'll be bound!"

"Perhaps he did when he looked upon you, Ned!" said Tomlinson, gravely; "'t is but rarely out of Scotland that a man can see so big a rogue in so little a compass!"

Mr. MacGrawler, into whose eyes the palmistry of Long Ned had brought tears of sincere feeling, and who had hitherto been rubbing the afflicted part, now grumbled forth,—

"You may say what you please, Mr. Pepper, but it is not often in my country that men of genius are seen performing the part of cook to robbers!"

"No!" quoth Tomlinson, "they are performing the more profitable part of robbers to cooks, eh!"

"Damme, you're out," cried Long Ned,— "for in that country there are either no robbers, because

there is nothing to rob; or the inhabitants are all robbers, who have plundered one another, and made away with the booty!"

"May the de'il catch thee!" said MacGrawler, stung to the quick,—for, like all Scots, he was a patriot; much on the same principle as a woman who has the worst children makes the best mother.

"The de'il," said Ned, mimicking the "silver sound," as Sir W. Scott had been pleased facetiously to call the "mountain tongue" (the Scots in general seem to think it is silver, they keep it so carefully) "the de'il,—*MacDeil*, you mean, sure, the gentleman must have been a Scotchman!"

The sage grinned in spite; but remembering the patience of Epictetus when a slave, and mindful also of the strong arm of Long Ned, he curbed his temper, and turned the beefsteaks with his fork.

"Well, Ned," said Augustus, throwing himself into a chair, which he drew to the fire, while he gently patted the huge limbs of Mr. Pepper, as if to admonish him that they were not so transparent as glass, "let us look at the fire; and, by the by, it is your turn to see to the horses."

"Plague on it!" cried Ned; "it is always my turn, I think. Holla, you Scot of the pot! can't you prove that I groomed the beasts last? I'll give you a crown to do it."

The wise MacGrawler pricked up his ears.

"A crown!" said he,—"a crown! Do you mean to insult me, Mr. Pepper? But, to be sure, you did see to the horses last; and this worthy gentleman, Mr. Tomlinson, must remember it too."

"How!" cried Augustus; "you are mistaken, and I'll give you half a guinea to prove it."

MacGrawler opened his eyes larger and larger, even as you may see a small circle in the water widen into enormity, if you disturb the equanimity of the surface by the obtrusion of a foreign substance.

"Half a guinea!" said he; "nay, nay, you joke. I'm not mercenary. You think I am! Pooh, pooh! you are mistaken; I'm a man who means weel, a man of veracity, and will speak the truth in spite of all the half-guineas in the world. But certainly, now I begin to think of it, Mr. Tomlinson did see to the creatures last; and, Mr. Pepper, it is your turn."

"A very Daniel!" said Tomlinson, chuckling in his usual dry manner. "Ned, don't you hear the horses neigh?"

"Oh, hang the horses!" said the volatile Pepper, forgetting everything else, as he thrust his hands in his pockets, and felt the gains of the night; "let us first look to our winnings!"

So saying, he marched towards the table, and emptied his pockets thereon. Tomlinson, nothing loath, followed the example. Heavens! what exclamations of delight issued from the scoundrels' lips, as, one by one, they inspected their new acquisitions!

"Here's a magnificent creature!" cried Ned, handling that superb watch studded with jewels which the poor earl had once before unavailingly redeemed,—"a repeater, by Jove!"

"I hope not," said the phlegmatic Augustus; "repeaters will not tell well for your conversation, Ned! But, powers that be! look at this ring,—a diamond of the first water!"

"Oh, the sparkler! it makes one's mouth water as much as itself. 'Sdeath, here's a precious box for a sneezer,—a picture inside, and rubies outside! The old fellow had excellent taste; it would charm him to see how pleased we are with his choice of jewelry!"

"Talking of jewelry," said Tomlinson, "I had almost forgotten the morocco case. Between you and me, I imagine we have a prize there; it looks like a jewel casket!"

So saying, the robber opened that case which on many a gala day had lent lustre to the polished person of Mauleverer. Oh, reader, the burst of rapture that ensued! Imagine it! we cannot express it. Like the Grecian painter, we drop a veil over emotions too deep for words.

"But here," said Pepper, when they had almost exhausted their transports at sight of the diamonds,—"here's a purse,—fifty guineas! And what's this? Notes, by Jupiter! We must change them to-morrow before they are stopped. Curse those fellows at the Bank! they are always imitating us, we stop their money, and they don't lose a moment in stopping it too. Three hundred pounds! Captain, what say you to our luck?" Clifford had sat gloomily looking on during the operations of the robbers; he now, assuming a correspondent cheerfulness of manner, made a suitable reply, and after some general conversation the work of division took place.

"We are the best arithmeticians in the world," said Augustus, as he pouched his share; "addition, subtraction, division, reduction,—we have them all as pat as 'The Tutor's Assistant;' and, what is better, we make them all applicable to the *Rule of Three*."

"You have left out multiplication!" said Clifford, smiling. "Ah! because that works differently. The other rules apply to the specie-s of the kingdom; but as for multiplication, we multiply, I fear, no species but our own!"

"Fie, gentlemen!" said MacGrawler, austere,—"for there is a wonderful decorum in your true Scotsmen. "Actions are trifles; nothing can be cleaner than their words!"

"Oh, you thrust in your wisdom, do you?" said Ned. "I suppose you want your part of the booty!"

"Part!" said the subtilizing Tomlinson. "He has nine times as many parts as we have already. Is he not a critic, and has he not the parts of speech at his fingers' end?"

"Nonsense!" said MacGrawler, instinctively holding up his hands, with the fork dropping between the outstretched fingers of the right palm.

"Nonsense yourself," cried Ned; "you have a share in what you never took! A pretty fellow, truly! Mind your business, Mr. Scot, and fork nothing but the beefsteaks!"

With this Ned turned to the stables, and soon disappeared among the horses; but Clifford, eyeing the disappointed and eager face of the culinary sage, took ten guineas from his own share, and pushed them towards his quondam tutor.

"There!" said he, emphatically.

"Nay, nay," grunted MacGrawler; "I don't want the money,—it is my way to scorn such dross!" So saying, he pocketed the coins, and turned, muttering to himself, to the renewal of his festive preparations.

Meanwhile a whispered conversation took place between Augustus and the captain, and continued till Ned returned.

"And the night's viands smoked along the board!"

Souls of Don Raphael and Ambrose Lamela, what a charming thing it is to be a rogue for a little time! How merry men are when they have cheated their brethren! Your innocent milksops never made so jolly a supper as did our heroes of the way. Clifford, perhaps acted a part, but the hilarity of his comrades was unfeigned. It was a delicious contrast,— the boisterous "ha, ha!" of Long Ned, and the secret, dry, calculating chuckle of Augustus Tomlinson. It was Rabelais against Voltaire. They united only in the objects of their jests, and foremost of those objects (wisdom is ever the but of the frivolous!) was the great Peter MacGrawler.

The graceless dogs were especially merry upon the subject of the sage's former occupation.

"Come, Mac, you carve this ham," said Ned; "you have had practice in cutting up."

The learned man whose name was thus disrespectfully abbreviated proceeded to perform what he was bid. He was about to sit down for that purpose, when Tomlinson slyly subtracted his chair,—the sage fell.

"No jests at MacGrawler," said the malicious Augustus; "whatever be his faults as a critic, you see that he is well grounded, and he gets at once to the bottom of a subject. Mac, suppose your next work be entitled a Tail of Woe!"

Men who have great minds are rarely flexible,—they do not take a jest readily; so it was with MacGrawler. He rose in a violent rage; and had the robbers been more penetrating than they condescended to be, they might have noticed something dangerous in his eye. As it was, Clifford, who had often before been the protector of his tutor, interposed in his behalf, drew the sage a seat near to himself, and filled his plate for him. It was interesting to see this deference from Power to Learning! It was Alexander doing homage to Aristotle!

"There is only one thing I regret," cried Ned, with his mouth full, "about the old lord,—it was a thousand pities we did not make him dance! I remember the day, Captain, when you would have insisted on it. What a merry fellow you were once! Do you recollect, one bright moonlight night, just like the present, for instance, when we were doing duty near Staines, how you swore every person we stopped, above fifty years old, should dance a minuet with you?"

"Ay!" added Augustus, "and the first was a bishop in a white wig. Faith, how stiffly his lordship jiggled it! And how gravely Lovett bowed to him, with his hat off, when it was all over, and returned him his watch and ten guineas,—it was worth the sacrifice!"

"And the next was an old maid of quality," said Ned, "as lean as a lawyer. Don't you remember how she curvetted?"

"To be sure," said Tomlinson; "and you very wittily called her a hop- pole!"

"How delighted she was with the captain's suavity! When he gave her back her earrings and aigrette, she bade him with a tender sigh keep them for her sake,—ha! ha!"

"And the third was a beau!" cried Augustus; "and Lovett surrendered his right of partnership to me. Do you recollect how I danced his beauship into the ditch? Ah! we were mad fellows then; but we get sated— *blases*, as the French say—as we grow older!"

"We look only to the main chance now," said Ned. "Avarice supersedes enterprise," added the sententious Augustus.

"And our captain takes to wine with an *h* after the *w*!" continued the metaphorical Ned.

"Come, we are melancholy," said Tomlinson, tossing off a bumper. "Methinks we are really growing old, we shall repent soon, and the next step will be-hanging!"

"Fore Gad!" said Ned, helping himself, "don't be so croaking. There are two classes of maligned gentry, who should always be particular to avoid certain colours in dressing; I hate to see a true boy in black, or a devil in blue. But here's my last glass to-night! I am confoundedly sleepy, and we rise early to-morrow."

"Right, Ned," said Tomlinson; "give us a song before you retire, and let it be that one which Lovett composed the last time we were here."

Ned, always pleased with an opportunity of displaying himself, cleared his voice and complied.

A DITTY FROM SHERWOOD.

I.

Laugh with us at the prince and the palace,
In the wild wood-life there is better cheer;
Would you board your mirth from your neighbour's malice,
Gather it up in our garners here.
Some kings their wealth from their subjects wring,
While by their foes they the poorer wax;
Free go the men of the wise wood-king,
And it is only our foes we tax.
Leave the cheats of trade to the shrewd gude-wife
Let the old be knaves at ease;
Away with the tide of that dashing life
Which is stirred by a constant breeze!

II.

Laugh with us when you hear deceiving
And solemn rogues tell you what knaves we be
Commerce and law have a method of thieving
Worse than a stand at the outlaw's tree.
Say, will the maiden we love despise
Gallants at least to each other true?
I grant that we trample on legal ties,
But I have heard that Love scorns them too,
Courage, then,—courage, ye jolly boys,
Whom the fool with the knavish rates
Oh! who that is loved by the world enjoys
Half as much as the man it hates?

"Bravissimo, Ned!" cried Tomlinson, rapping the table; "bravissimo! Your voice is superb to-night, and your song admirable. Really, Lovett, it does your poetical genius great credit; quite philosophical, upon my honour."

"Bravissimo!" said MacGrawler, nodding his head awfully. "Mr. Pepper's voice is as sweet as a bagpipe! Ah! such a song would have been invaluable to 'The Asinaeum,' when I had the honour to—"

"Be Vicar of *Bray* to that establishment," interrupted Tomlinson.
"Pray, MacGrawler, why do they call Edinburgh the Modern Athens?"

"Because of the learned and great men it produces," returned MacGrawler, with conscious pride.

"Pooh! pooh!—you are thinking of ancient Athens. Your city is called the modern Athens because you are all so like the modern Athenians,—the greatest scoundrels imaginable, unless travellers belie them."

"Nay," interrupted Ned, who was softened by the applause of the critic, "Mac is a good fellow, spare him. Gentlemen, your health. I am going to bed, and I suppose you will not tarry long behind me."

"Trust us for that," answered Tomlinson; "the captain and I will consult on the business of the morrow, and join you in the twinkling of a bedpost, as it has been shrewdly expressed."

Ned yawned his last "good-night," and disappeared within the dormitory. MacGrawler, yawning also, but with a graver yawn, as became his wisdom, betook himself to the duty of removing the supper paraphernalia: after bustling soberly about for some minutes, he let down a press-bed in the corner of the cave (for he did not sleep in the robbers' apartment), and undressing himself, soon appeared buried in the bosom of Morpheus. But the chief and Tomlinson, drawing their seats nearer to the dying embers, defied the slothful god, and entered with low tones into a close and anxious commune.

"So, then," said Augustus, "now that you have realized sufficient funds for your purpose, you will really desert us? Have you well weighed the pros and cons? Remember that nothing is so dangerous to our state as reform; the moment a man grows honest, the gang forsake him; the magistrate misses his fee; the informer peaches; and the recusant hangs."

"I have well weighed all this," answered Clifford, "and have decided on my course. I have only tarried till my means could assist my will. With my share of our present and late booty, I shall betake myself to the Continent. Prussia gives easy trust and ready promotion to all who will enlist in her service. But this language, my dear friend, seems strange from your lips. Surely you will join me in my separation from the corps? What! you shake your head! Are you not the same Tomlinson who at Bath agreed with me that we were in danger from the envy of our comrades, and that retreat had become necessary to our safety? Nay, was not this your main argument for our matrimonial expedition?"

"Why, look you, dear Lovett," said Augustus, "we are all blocks of matter, formed from the atoms of custom; in other words, we are a mechanism, to which habit is the spring. What could I do in an honest career? I am many years older than you. I have lived as a rogue till I have no other nature than roguery. I doubt if I should not be a coward were I to turn soldier. I am sure I should be the most consummate of rascals were I to affect to be honest. No: I mistook myself when I talked of separation. I must e'en jog on with my old comrades, and in my old ways; till I jog into the noose hempen or—melancholy alternative!— the noose matrimonial."

"This is mere folly," said Clifford, from whose nervous and masculine mind habits were easily shaken. "We have not for so many years discarded all the servile laws of others, to be the abject slaves of our own weaknesses. Come, my dear fellow, rouse yourself. Heaven knows, were I to succumb to the feebleness of my own heart, I should be lost indeed. And perhaps, wrestle I ever so stoutly, I do not wrestle away that which clings within me, and will kill me, though by inches. But let us not be cravens, and suffer fate to drown us rather than swim. In a word, fly with me ere it be too late. A smuggler's vessel waits me off the coast of Dorset: in three days from this I sail. Be my companion. We can both rein a fiery horse, and wield a good sword. As long as men make war one against another, those accomplishments will prevent their owner from starving, or—"

"If employed in the field, not the road," interrupted Tomlinson, with a smile,— "from hanging. But it cannot be! I wish you all joy, all success in your career. You are young, bold, and able; and you always had a loftier spirit than I have. Knave I am, and knave I must be to the end of the chapter!"

"As you will," said Clifford, who was not a man of many words, but he spoke with reluctance: "if so, I must seek my fortune alone."

"When do you leave us?" asked Tomlinson.

"To-morrow, before noon. I shall visit London for a few hours, and then start at once for the coast."

"London!" exclaimed Tomlinson; "what, the very den of danger? Pooh! you do not know what you say:

or do you think it filial to caress Mother Lobkins before you depart?"

"Not that," answered Clifford. "I have already ascertained that she is above the reach of all want; and her days, poor soul! cannot, I fear, be many. In all probability she would scarcely recognize me; for her habits cannot much have improved her memory. Would I could say as much for her neighbours! Were I to be seen in the purlieu of low thievery, you know, as well as I do, that some stealer of kerchiefs would turn informer against the notorious Captain Lovett."

"What, then, takes you to town? Ah! you turn away your face. I guess! Well, Love has ruined many a hero before; may you not be the worse for his godship!"

Clifford did not answer, and the conversation made a sudden and long pause; Tomlinson broke it.

"Do you know, Lovett," said he, "though I have as little heart as most men, yet I feel for you more than I could have thought it possible. I would fain join you; there is devilish good tobacco in Germany, I believe; and, after all, there is not so much difference between the life of a thief and of a soldier."

"Do profit by so sensible a remark," said Clifford. "Reflect! how certain of destruction is the path you now tread; the gallows and the hulks are the only goals!"

"The prospects are not pleasing, I allow," said Tomlinson; "nor is it desirable to be preserved for another century in the immortality of a glass case in Surgeons' Hall, grinning from ear to ear, as if one had made the merriest finale imaginable. Well! I will sleep on it, and you shall have my answer tomorrow; but poor Ned?"

"Would he not join us?"

"Certainly not; his neck is made for a rope, and his mind for the Old Bailey. There is no hope for him; yet he is an excellent fellow. We must not even tell him of our meditated desertion."

"By no means. I shall leave a letter to our London chief; it will explain all. And now to bed. I look to your companionship as settled."

"Humph!" said Augustus Tomlinson.

So ended the conference of the robbers. About an hour after it had ceased, and when no sound save the heavy breath of Long Ned broke the stillness of the night, the intelligent countenance of Peter MacGrawler slowly elevated itself from the lonely pillow on which it had reclined.

By degrees the back of the sage stiffened into perpendicularity, and he sat for a few moments erect on his seat of honour, apparently in listening deliberation. Satisfied with the deep silence that, save the solitary interruption we have specified, reigned around, the learned disciple of Vatel rose gently from the bed, hurried on his clothes, stole on tiptoe to the door, unbarred it with a noiseless hand, and vanished. Sweet reader! while thou art wondering at his absence, suppose we account for his appearance.

One evening Clifford and his companion Augustus had been enjoying the rational amusement at Ranelagh, and were just leaving that celebrated place when they were arrested by a crowd at the entrance. That crowd was assembled round a pickpocket; and that pickpocket—O virtue, O wisdom, O Asinaeum!—was Peter MacGrawler! We have before said that Clifford was possessed of a good mien and an imposing manner, and these advantages were at that time especially effectual in preserving our Orbilius from the pump. No sooner did Clifford recognize the magisterial face of the sapient Scot, than he boldly thrust himself into the middle of the crowd, and collaring the enterprising citizen who had collared MacGrawler, declared himself ready to vouch for the honesty of the very respectable person whose identity had evidently been so grossly mistaken. Augustus, probably foreseeing some ingenious ruse, of his companion, instantly seconded the defence. The mob, who never descry any difference between impudence and truth, gave way; a constable came up, took part with the friend of two gentlemen so unexceptionally dressed; our friends walked off; the crowd repented of their precipitation, and by way of amends ducked the gentleman whose pockets had been picked. It was in vain for him to defend himself, for he had an impediment in his speech; and Messieurs the mob, having ducked him once for his guilt, ducked him a second time for his embarrassment.

In the interim Clifford had withdrawn his quondam Mentor to the asylum of a coffee-house; and while MacGrawler's soul expanded itself by wine, he narrated the causes of his dilemma. It seems that that incomparable journal "The Asinaeum," despite a series of most popular articles upon the writings of "Aulus Prudentius," to which were added an exquisite string of dialogues, written in a tone of broad humour, namely, broad Scotch (with Scotchmen it is all the same thing), despite these invaluable miscellanies, to say nothing of some glorious political articles, in which it was clearly proved to the

satisfaction of the rich, that the less poor devils eat the better for their constitutions,— despite, we say, these great acquisitions to British literature, "The Asinaeum" tottered, fell, buried its bookseller, and crushed its author. MacGrawler only,—escaping, like Theodore from the enormous helmet of Otranto,— MacGrawler only survived. "Love," says Sir Philip Sidney. "makes a man see better than a pair of spectacles." Love of life has a very different effect on the optics,—it makes a man wofully dim of inspection, and sometimes causes him to see his own property in another man's purse! This *deceptio visus*, did it impose upon Peter MacGrawler? He went to Ranelagh. Reader, thou knowest the rest!

Wine and the ingenuity of the robbers having extorted this narrative from MacGrawler, the barriers of superfluous delicacy were easily done away with.

Our heroes offered to the sage an introduction to their club; the offer was accepted; and MacGrawler, having been first made drunk, was next made a robber. The gang engaged him in various little matters, in which we grieve to relate that though his intentions were excellent, his success was so ill as thoroughly to enrage his employers; nay, they were about at one time, when they wanted to propitiate justice, to hand him over to the secular power, when Clifford interposed in his behalf. From a robber the sage dwindled into a drudge; menial offices (the robbers, the lying rascals, declared that such offices were best fitted to the genius of his country!) succeeded to noble exploits, and the worst of robbers became the best of cooks. How vain is all wisdom but that of long experience! Though Clifford was a sensible, and keen man, though he knew our sage to be a knave, he never dreamed he could be a traitor. He thought him too indolent to be malicious, and—short-sighted humanity!—too silly to be dangerous. He trusted the sage with the secret of the cavern; and Augustus, who was a bit of an epicure, submitted, though forebodingly, to the choice, because of the Scotchman's skill in broiling.

But MacGrawler, like Brutus, concealed a scheming heart under a stolid guise. The apprehension of the noted Lovett had become a matter of serious desire; the police was no longer to be bribed, nay, they were now eager to bribe. MacGrawler had watched his time, sold his chief, and was now on the road to Reading to meet and to guide to the cavern Mr. Nabbem of Bow Street and four of his attendants.

Having thus, as rapidly as we were able, traced the causes which brought so startlingly before your notice the most incomparable of critics, we now, reader, return to our robbers.

"Hist, Lovett!" said Tomlinson, half asleep, "methought I heard something in the outer cave."

"It is the Scot, I suppose," answered Clifford: "you saw, of course, to the door?"

"To be sure!" muttered Tomlinson, and in two minutes more he was asleep.

Not so Clifford: many and anxious thoughts kept him waking. At one while, when he anticipated the opening to a new career, somewhat of the stirring and high spirit which still moved amidst the guilty and confused habits of his mind made his pulse feverish and his limbs restless; at another time, an agonizing remembrance,—the remembrance of Lucy in all her charms, her beauty, her love, her tender and innocent heart,—Lucy all perfect, and lost to him forever,—banished every other reflection, and only left him the sick sensation of despondency and despair. "What avails my struggle for a better name?" he thought. "Whatever my future lot, she can never share it. My punishment is fixed,—it is worse than a death of shame; it is a life without hope! Every moment I feel, and shall feel to the last, the pressure of a chain that may never be broken or loosened! And yet, fool that I am! I cannot leave this country without seeing her again, without telling her that I have really looked my last. But have I not twice told her that? Strange fatality! But twice have I spoken to her of love, and each time it was to tear myself from her at the moment of my confession. And even now something that I have no power to resist compels me to the same idle and weak indulgence. Does destiny urge me? Ay, perhaps to my destruction! Every hour a thousand deaths encompass me. I have now obtained all for which I seemed to linger. I have won, by a new crime, enough to bear me to another land, and to provide me there a soldier's destiny. I should not lose an hour in flight, yet I rush into the nest of my enemies, only for one unavailing word with her; and this, too, after I have already bade her farewell! Is this fate? If it be so, what matters it? I no longer care for a life which, after all, I should reform in vain if I could not reform it for her; yet—yet, selfish and lost that I am! will it be nothing to think hereafter that I have redeemed her from the disgrace of having loved an outcast and a felon? If I can obtain honour, will it not, in my own heart at least,—will it not reflect, however dimly and distantly, upon her?"

Such, bewildered, unsatisfactory, yet still steeped in the colours of that true love which raises even the lowest, were the midnight meditations of Clifford; they terminated, towards the morning, in an uneasy and fitful slumber. From this he was awakened by a loud yawn from the throat of Long Ned, who was always the earliest riser of his set.

"Hullo!" said he, "it is almost daybreak; and if we want to cash our notes and to move the old lord's

jewels, we should already be on the start."

"A plague on you!" said Tomlinson, from under cover of his woollen nightcap; "it was but this instant that I was dreaming you were going to be hanged, and now you wake me in the pleasantest part of the dream!"

"You be shot!" said Ned, turning one leg out of bed; "by the by, you took more than your share last night, for you owed me three guineas for our last game at cribbage! You'll please to pay me before we part to-day: short accounts make long friends!"

"However true that maxim may be," returned Tomlinson, "I know one much truer,—namely, long friends will make short accounts! You must ask Jack Ketch this day month if I'm wrong!"

"That's what you call wit, I suppose!" retorted Ned, as he now, struggling into his inexpressibles, felt his way into the outer cave.

"What, ho, Mac!" cried he, as he went, "stir those bobbins of thine, which thou art pleased to call legs; strike a light, and be d—d to you!"

"A light for you," said Tomlinson, profanely, as he reluctantly left his couch, "will indeed be a 'light to lighten the Gentiles!'"

"Why, Mac, Mac!" shouted Ned, "why don't you answer? faith, I think the Scot's dead!"

"Seize your men!—Yield, sirs!" cried a stern, sudden voice from the gloom; and at that instant two dark lanterns were turned, and their light streamed full upon the astounded forms of Tomlinson and his gaunt comrade! In the dark shade of the background four or five forms were also indistinctly visible; and the ray of the lanterns glimmered on the blades of cutlasses and the barrels of weapons still less easily resisted.

Tomlinson was the first to recover his self-possession. The light just gleamed upon the first step of the stairs leading to the stables, leaving the rest in shadow. He made one stride to the place beside the cart, where, we have said, lay some of the robbers' weapons; he had been anticipated,—the weapons were gone. The next moment Tomlinson had sprung up the steps.

"Lovett! Lovett! Lovett!" shouted he.

The captain, who had followed his comrades into the cavern, was already in the grasp of two men. From few ordinary mortals, however, could any two be selected as fearful odds against such a man as Clifford,—a man in whom a much larger share of sinews and muscle than is usually the lot even of the strong had been hardened, by perpetual exercise, into a consistency and iron firmness which linked power and activity into a union scarcely less remarkable than that immortalized in the glorious beauty of the sculptured gladiator. His right hand is upon the throat of one assailant; his left locks, as in a vice, the wrist of the other; you have scarcely time to breathe! The former is on the ground, the pistol of the latter is wrenched from his grip, Clifford is on the step; a ball —another—whizzes by him; he is by the side of the faithful Augustus!

"Open the secret door!" whispered Clifford to his friend; "I will draw up the steps alone."

Scarcely had he spoken, before the steps were already, but slowly, ascending beneath the desperate strength of the robber. Meanwhile Ned was struggling, as he best might, with two sturdy officers, who appeared loath to use their weapons without an absolute necessity, and who endeavoured, by main strength, to capture and detain their antagonist.

"Look well to the door!" cried the voice of the principal officer, "and hang out more light!"

Two or three additional lanterns were speedily brought forward; and over the whole interior of the cavern a dim but sufficient light now rapidly circled, giving to the scene and to the combatants a picturesque and wild appearance.

The quick eye of the head-officer descried in an instant the rise of the steps, and the advantage the robbers were thereby acquiring. He and two of his men threw themselves forward, seized the ladder, if so it may be called, dragged it once more to the ground, and ascended. But Clifford, grasping with both hands the broken shaft of a cart that lay in reach, received the foremost invader with a salute that sent him prostrate and senseless back among his companions. The second shared the same fate; and the stout leader of the enemy, who, like a true general, had kept himself in the rear, paused now in the middle of the steps, dismayed alike by the reception of his friends and the athletic form towering above, with raised weapons and menacing attitude. Perhaps that moment seemed to the judicious Mr. Nabbem

more favourable to parley than to conflict. He cleared his throat, and thus addressed the foe:

"You, sir, Captain Lovett, alias Howard, alias Jackson, alias Cavendish, alias Solomons, alias Devil,—for I knows you well, and could swear to you with half an eye, in your clothes or without,—you lay down your club there, and let me come alongside of you, and you'll find me as gentle as a lamb; for I've been used to gemmen all my life, and I knows how to treat 'em when I has 'em!"

"But if I will not let you 'come alongside of me,' what then?"

"Why, I must send one of these here pops through your skull, that's all!"

"Nay, Mr. Nabbem, that would be too cruel! You surely would not harm one who has such an esteem for you? Don't you remember the manner in which I brought you off from Justice Burnflat, when you were accused, you know whether justly or—"

"You're a liar, Captain!" cried Nabbem, furiously, fearful that something not meet for the ears of his companions should transpire. "You knows you are! Come down, or let me mount; otherwise I won't be 'sponsible for the consequences!"

Clifford cast a look over his shoulder. A gleam of the gray daylight already glimmered through a chink in the secret door, which Tomlinson had now unbarred and was about to open.

"Listen to me, Mr. Nabbem," said he, "and perhaps I may grant what you require! What would you do with me if you had me?"

"You speaks like a sensible man now," answered Nabbem; "and that's after my own heart. Why, you sees, Captain, your time is come, and you can't shilly-shally any longer. You have had your full swing; your years are up, and you must die like a man! But I gives you my honour as a gemman, that if you surrenders, I'll take you to the justice folks as tenderly as if you were made of cotton."

"Give way one moment," said Clifford, "that I may plant the steps firmer for you."

Nabbem retreated to the ground; and Clifford, who had, good-naturedly enough, been unwilling unnecessarily to damage so valuable a functionary, lost not the opportunity now afforded him. Down thundered the steps, clattering heavily among the other officers, and falling like an avalanche on the shoulder of one of the arresters of Long Ned.

Meanwhile Clifford sprang after Tomlinson through the aperture, and found himself—in the presence of four officers, conducted by the shrewd MacGrawler. A blow from a bludgeon on the right cheek and temple of Augustus felled that hero. But Clifford bounded over his comrade's body, dodged from the stroke aimed at himself, caught the blow aimed by another assailant in his open hand, wrested the bludgeon from the officer, struck him to the ground with his own weapon, and darting onward through the labyrinth of the wood, commenced his escape with a step too fleet to allow the hope of a successful pursuit.

CHAPTER XXIX.

"In short, Isabella, I offer you myself!"

"Heavens!" cried Isabella, "what do I hear? You, my lord?"

Castle of Otranto.

A novel is like a weatherglass,—where the man appears out at one time, the woman at another. Variable as the atmosphere, the changes of our story now re-present Lucy to the reader.

That charming young person—who, it may be remarked, is (her father excepted) the only unsophisticated and unsullied character in the pages of a story in some measure designed to show, in the depravities of character, the depravities of that social state wherein characters are formed—was sitting alone in her apartment at the period in which we return to her. As time, and that innate and insensible fund of healing, which Nature has placed in the bosoms of the young in order that her great law, the passing away of the old, may not leave too lasting and keen a wound, had softened her first anguish at her father's death, the remembrance of Clifford again resumed its ancient sway in her heart.

The loneliness of her life, the absence of amusement, even the sensitiveness and languor which succeed to grief, conspired to invest the image of her lover in a tenderer and more impressive guise. She recalled his words, his actions, his letters, and employed herself whole hours, whole days and nights, in endeavouring to decipher their mystery. Who that has been loved will not acknowledge the singular and mighty force with which a girl, innocent herself, clings to the belief of innocence in her lover? In breasts young and unacquainted with the world, there is so pure a credulity in the existence of unmixed good, so firm a reluctance to think that where we love there can be that which we would not esteem, or where we admire there can be that which we ought to blame, that one may almost deem it an argument in favour of our natural power to attain a greater eminence in virtue than the habits and arts of the existing world will allow us to reach. Perhaps it is not paradoxical to say that we could scarcely believe perfection in others, were not the germ of perfectibility in our own minds! When a man has lived some years among the actual contests of faction without imbibing the prejudice as well as the experience, how wonderingly he smiles at his worship of former idols, how different a colour does history wear to him, how cautious is he now to praise, how slow to admire, how prone to cavil! Human nature has become the human nature of art; and he estimates it not from what it may be, but from what, in the corruptions of a semi-civilization, it is! But in the same manner as the young student clings to the belief that the sage or the minstrel, who has enlightened his reason or chained his imagination, is in character as in genius elevated above the ordinary herd, free from the passions, the frivolities, the little meannesses, and the darkening vices which ordinary flesh is heir to, does a woman who loves for the first time cling to the imagined excellence of him she loves. When Evelina is so shocked at the idea of an occasional fit of intoxication in her "noble, her unrivalled" lover, who does not acknowledge how natural were her feelings? Had Evelina been married six years, and the same lover, then her husband, been really guilty of what she suspected, who does not feel that it would have been very unnatural to have been shocked in the least at the occurrence? She would not have loved him less, nor admired him less, nor would he have been less "the noble and the unrivalled,"—he would have taken his glass too much, have joked the next morning on the event, and the gentle Evelina would have made him a cup of tea; but that which would have been a matter of pleasantry in the husband would have been matter of damnation in a lover. But to return to Lucy.

If it be so hard, so repellent, to believe a lover guilty even of a trivial error, we may readily suppose that Lucy never for a moment admitted the supposition that Clifford had been really guilty of gross error or wilful crime. True that expressions in his letter were more than suspicious; but there is always a charm in the candour of self-condemnation. As it is difficult to believe the excellence of those who praise themselves, so it is difficult to fancy those criminal who condemn. What, too, is the process of a woman's reasoning? Alas! she is too credulous a physiognomist. The turn of a throat, with her, is the unerring token of nobleness of mind; and no one can be guilty of a sin who is blessed with a beautiful forehead! How fondly, how fanatically Lucy loved! She had gathered together a precious and secret hoard,—a glove, a pen, a book, a withered rose-leaf,—treasures rendered inestimable because he had touched them; but more than all, had she the series of his letters,—from the first formal note written to her father, meant for her, in which he answered an invitation, and requested Miss Brandon's acceptance of the music she had wished to have, to the last wild and, to her, inexplicable letter in which he had resigned her forever. On these relics her eyes fed for hours; and as she pored over them, and over thoughts too deep not only for tears but for all utterance or conveyance, you might have almost literally watched the fading of her rich cheek and the pining away of her rounded and elastic form.

It was just in such a mood that she was buried when her uncle knocked at her door for admittance. She hurried away her treasures, and hastened to admit and greet him.

"I have come," said he, smiling, "to beg the pleasure of your company for an old friend who dines with us to-day. But, stay, Lucy, your hair is ill-arranged. Do not let me disturb so important an occupation as your toilette; dress yourself, my love, and join us."

Lucy turned, with a suppressed sigh, to the glass. The uncle lingered for a few moments, surveying her with mingled pride and doubt; he then slowly left the chamber.

Lucy soon afterwards descended to the drawing-room, and beheld with a little surprise (for she had not had sufficient curiosity to inquire the name of the guest), the slender form and comely features of Lord Mauleverer. The earl approached with the same grace which had in his earlier youth rendered him almost irresistible, but which now, from the contrast of years with manner, contained a slight mixture of the comic. He paid his compliments, and in paying them declared that he must leave it to his friend, Sir William, to explain all the danger he had dared, for the sake of satisfying himself that Miss Brandon was no less lovely than when he had last beheld her.

"Yes, indeed," said Brandon, with a scarcely perceptible sneer, "Lord Mauleverer has literally endured the moving accidents of flood and field,—for he was nearly exterminated by a highwayman,

and all but drowned in a ditch!"

"Commend me to a friend for setting one off to the best advantage," said Mauleverer, gayly. "Instead of attracting your sympathy, you see, Brandon would expose me to your ridicule; judge for yourself whether I deserve it!" and Mauleverer proceeded to give, with all the animation which belonged to his character, the particulars of that adventure with which the reader is so well acquainted. He did not, we may be sure, feel any scruple in representing himself and his prowess in the most favourable colours.

The story was scarcely ended when dinner was announced. During that meal Mauleverer exerted himself to be amiable with infinite address. Suiting his conversation, more than he had hitherto deigned to do, to the temper of Lucy, and more anxious to soften than to dazzle, he certainly never before appeared to her so attractive. We are bound to add that the point of attraction did not reach beyond the confession that he was a very agreeable old man.

Perhaps, if there had not been a certain half-melancholy vein in his conversation, possibly less uncongenial to his lordship from the remembrance of his lost diamonds, and the impression that Sir William Brandon's cook was considerably worse than his own, he might not have been so successful in pleasing Lucy. As for himself, all the previous impressions she had made on him returned in colours yet more vivid; even the delicate and subdued cast of beauty which had succeeded to her earlier brilliancy, was far more charming to his fastidious and courtly taste than her former glow of spirits and health. He felt himself very much in love during dinner; and after it was over, and Lucy had retired, he told Brandon, with a passionate air, that he adored his niece to distraction!

The wily judge affected to receive the intimation with indifference; but knowing that too long an absence is injurious to a grande passion, he did not keep Mauleverer very late over his wine.

The earl returned rapturously to the drawing-room, and besought Lucy, in a voice in which affectation seemed swooning with delight, to indulge him with a song. More and more enchanted by her assent, he drew the music-stool to the harpsichord, placed a chair beside her, and presently appeared lost in transport. Meanwhile Brandon, with his back to the pair, covered his face with his handkerchief, and to all appearance yielded to the voluptuousness of an after-dinner repose.

Lucy's song-book opened accidentally at a song which had been praised by Clifford; and as she sang, her voice took a richer and more tender tone than in Mauleverer's presence it had ever before assumed.

THE COMPLAINT OF THE VIOLETS WHICH LOSE THEIR SCENT IN MAY.

In the shadow that falls from the silent hill
We slept, in our green retreats
And the April showers were wont to fill
Our hearts with sweets.

And though we lay in a lowly bower,
Yet all things loved us well,
And the waking bee left her fairest flower,
With us to dwell.

But the warm May came in his pride to woo
The wealth of our honeyed store;
And our hearts just felt his breath, and knew
Their sweets no more!

And the summer reigns on the quiet spot
Where we dwell, and its suns and showers
Bring balm to our sisters' hearts, but not—
Ah! not to ours.

We live, we bloom, but forever o'er
Is the charm of the earth and sky;
To our life, ye heavens, that balm restore,
Or—bid us die!

As with eyes suffused with many recollections, and a voice which melted away in an indescribable and thrilling pathos, Lucy ceased her song, Mauleverer, charmed out of himself, gently took her hand, and holding the soft treasure in his own, scarcely less soft, he murmured,—

"Angel, sing on! Life would be like your own music, if I could breathe it away at your feet!"

There had been a time when Lucy would have laughed outright at this declaration; and even as it was, a suppressed and half-arch smile played in the dimples of her beautiful mouth, and bewitchingly contrasted the swimming softness of her eyes.

Drawing rather an erroneous omen from the smile, Mauleverer rapturously continued, still detaining the hand which Lucy endeavoured to extricate,—

"Yes, enchanting Miss Brandon! I, who have for so many years boasted of my invulnerable heart, am subdued at last. I have long, very long, struggled against my attachment to you. Alas! it is in vain; and you behold me now utterly at your mercy. Make me the most miserable of men or the most enviable. Enchantress, speak!"

"Really, my lord," said Lucy, hesitating, yet rising, and freeing herself from his hand, "I feel it difficult to suppose you serious; and perhaps this is merely a gallantry to me by way of practice on others."

"Sweet Lucy, if I may so call you," answered Mauleverer, with an ardent gaze, "do not, I implore you, even for a moment, affect to mistake me! Do not for a moment jest at what, to me, is the bane or bliss of life! Dare I hope that my hand and heart, which I now offer you, are not deserving of your derision?"

Lucy gazed on her adorer with a look of serious inquiry; Brandon still appeared to sleep.

"If you are in earnest, my lord," said Lucy, after a pause, "I am truly and deeply sorry. For the friend of my uncle I shall always have esteem; believe that I am truly sensible of the honour you render me, when I add my regret that I can have no other sentiment than esteem."

A blank and puzzled bewilderment for a moment clouded the expressive features of Mauleverer; it passed away. "How sweet is your rebuke!" said he. "Yes; I do not yet deserve any other sentiment than esteem. You are not to be won precipitately; a long trial, a long course of attentions, a long knowledge of my devoted and ardent love, alone will entitle me to hope for a warmer feeling in your breast. Fix then your own time of courtship, angelic Lucy!—a week, nay, a month! Till then, I will not even press you to appoint that day which to me will be the whitest of my life!"

"My lord!" said Lucy, smiling now no longer half archly, "you must pardon me for believing your proposal can be nothing but a jest; but here, I beseech you, let it rest forever. Do not mention this subject to me again."

"By heavens!" cried Mauleverer, "this is too cruel. Brandon, intercede with me for your niece."

Sir William started, naturally enough, from his slumber, and Mauleverer continued,

"Yes, intercede for me; you, my oldest friend, be my greatest benefactor! I sue to your niece; she affects to disbelieve. Will you convince her of my truth, my devotion, my worship?"

"Disbelieve you!" said the bland judge, with the same secret sneer that usually lurked in the corners of his mouth. "I do not wonder that she is slow to credit the honour you have done her, and for which the noblest damsels in England have sighed in vain. Lucy, will you be cruel to Lord Mauleverer? Believe me, he has often confided to me his love for you; and if the experience of some years avails, there is not a question of his honour and his truth. I leave his fate in your hands."

Brandon turned to the door.

"Stay, dear sir," said Lucy, "and instead of interceding for Lord Mauleverer, intercede for me." Her look now settled into a calm and decided seriousness of expression. "I feel highly flattered by his lordship's proposal, which, as you say, I might well doubt to be gravely meant. I wish him all happiness with a lady of higher deserts; but I speak from an unalterable determination, when I say that I can never accept the dignity with which he would invest me."

So saying, Lucy walked quickly to the door and vanished, leaving the two friends to comment as they would upon her conduct.

"You have spoiled all with your precipitation," said the uncle.

"Precipitation! d—n it, what would you have? I have been fifty years making up my mind to marry; and now when I have not a day to lose, you talk of precipitation!" answered the lover, throwing himself into an easy-chair.

"But you have not been fifty years making up your mind to marry my niece," said Brandon, dryly.

"To be refused, positively refused, by a country girl!" continued Mauleverer, soliloquizing aloud; "and that too at my age and with all my experience!—a country girl without rank, *ton*, accomplishments! By heavens! I don't care if all the world heard it,—for not a soul in the world will ever believe it."

Brandon sat speechless, eying the mortified face of the courtier with a malicious complacency, and there was a pause of several minutes. Sir William then, mastering the strange feeling which made him always rejoice in whatever threw ridicule on his friend, approached, laid his hand kindly on Mauleverer's shoulder, and talked to him of comfort and of encouragement. The reader will believe that Mauleverer was not a man whom it was impossible to encourage.

CHAPTER XXX.

Before he came, everything loved me, and I had more things to love than I could reckon by the hairs of my head. Now I feel I can love but one, and that one has deserted me. . . . Well, be it so,—let her perish, let her be anything but mine!—Melmoth.

Early the next morning Sir William Brandon was closeted for a long time with his niece, previous to his departure to the duties of his office. Anxious and alarmed for the success of one of the darling projects of his ambition, he spared no art in his conversation with Lucy, that his great ingenuity of eloquence and wonderful insight into human nature could suggest, in order to gain at least a foundation for the raising of his scheme. Among other resources of his worldly tact, he hinted at Lucy's love for Clifford; and (though darkly and subtly, as befitting the purity of the one he addressed) this abandoned and wily person did not scruple to hint also at the possibility of indulging that love *after* marriage; though he denounced, as the last of indecorums, the crime of encouraging it *before*. This hint, however, fell harmless upon the innocent ear of Lucy. She did not in the remotest degree comprehend its meaning; she only, with a glowing cheek and a pouting lip, resented the allusion to a love which she thought it insolent in any one even to suspect.

When Brandon left the apartment, his brow was clouded, and his eye absent and thoughtful: it was evident that there had been little in the conference with his niece to please or content him. Miss Brandon herself was greatly agitated; for there was in her uncle's nature that silent and impressive secret of influencing or commanding others which almost so invariably and yet so quietly attains the wishes of its owner; and Lucy, who loved and admired him sincerely,—not the less, perhaps, for a certain modicum of fear,—was greatly grieved at perceiving how rooted in him was the desire of that marriage which she felt was a moral impossibility. But if Brandon possessed the secret of sway, Lucy was scarcely less singularly endowed with the secret of resistance. It may be remembered, in describing her character, that we spoke of her as one who seemed, to the superficial, as of too yielding and soft a temper. But circumstances gave the lie to manner, and proved that she eminently possessed a quiet firmness and latent resolution, which gave to her mind a nobleness and trustworthy power that never would have been suspected by those who met her among the ordinary paths of life.

Brandon had not been long gone, when Lucy's maid came to inform her that a gentleman, who expressed himself very desirous of seeing her, waited below. The blood rushed from Lucy's cheek at this announcement, simple as it seemed. "What gentleman could be desirous of seeing her? Was it—was it Clifford?" She remained for some moments motionless, and literally unable to move; at length she summoned courage, and smiling with self-contempt at a notion which appeared to her after thoughts utterly absurd, she descended to the drawing-room. The first glance she directed towards the stranger, who stood by the fireplace with folded arms, was sufficient,—it was impossible to mistake, though the face was averted, the unequalled form of her lover. She advanced eagerly with a faint cry, checked herself, and sank upon the sofa.

Clifford turned towards her, and fixed his eyes upon her countenance with an intense and melancholy gaze, but he did not utter a syllable; and Lucy, after pausing in expectation of his voice, looked up, and caught, in alarm, the strange and peculiar aspect of his features. He approached her slowly, and still silent; but his gaze seemed to grow more earliest and mournful as he advanced.

"Yes," said he at last, in a broken and indistinct voice, "I see you once more, after all my promises to quit you forever,—after, my solemn farewell, after all that I have cost you; for, Lucy, you love me, you love me, and I shudder while I feel it; after all I myself have borne and resisted, I once more come wilfully into your presence! How have I burned and sickened for this moment! How have I said, 'Let me behold her once more, only once more, and Fate may then do her worst!' Lucy! dear, dear Lucy! forgive

me for my weakness. It is now in bitter and stern reality the very last I can be guilty of!"

As he spoke, Clifford sank beside her. He took both her hands in his, and holding them, though without pressure, again looked passionately upon her innocent yet eloquent face. It seemed as if he were moved beyond all the ordinary feelings of reunion and of love. He did not attempt to kiss the hands he held; and though the touch thrilled through every vein and fibre of his frame, his clasp was as light as that in which the first timidity of a boy's love ventures to stamp itself!

"You are pale, Lucy," said he, mournfully, "and your cheek is much thinner than it was when I first saw you. When I first saw you! Ah! would for your sake that that had never been! Your spirits were light then, Lucy; your laugh came from the heart, your step spurned the earth. Joy broke from your eyes, everything that breathed around you seemed full of happiness and mirth; and now, look upon me, Lucy! lift those soft eyes, and teach them to flash upon me indignation and contempt! Oh, not thus, not thus! I could leave you happy,—yes, literally blessed,—if I could fancy you less forgiving, less gentle, less angelic!"

"What have I to forgive?" said Lucy, tenderly.

"What! everything for which one human being can pardon another. Have not deceit and injury been my crimes against you? Your peace of mind, your serenity of heart, your buoyancy of temper,—have I marred these or not?"

"Oh, Clifford!" said Lucy, rising from herself and from all selfish thoughts, "why, why will you not trust me? You do not know me, indeed you do not,—you are ignorant even of the very nature of a woman, if you think me unworthy of your confidence! Do you believe I could betray it, or do you think that if you had done that for which all the world forsook you, I could forsake?"

Lucy's voice faltered at the last words; but it sank, as a stone sinks into deep waters, to the very core of Clifford's heart. Transported from all resolution and all forbearance, he wound his arms around her in one long and impassioned caress; and Lucy, as her breath mingled with his, and her cheek drooped upon his bosom, did indeed feel as if the past could contain no secret powerful enough even to weaken the affection with which her heart clung to his. She was the first to extricate herself from their embrace. She drew back her face from his, and smiling on him through her tears, with a brightness that the smiles of her earliest youth had never surpassed, she said,—

"Listen to me. Tell me your history or not, as you will. But believe me, a woman's wit is often no despicable counsellor. They who accuse themselves the most bitterly are not often those whom it is most difficult to forgive; and you must pardon me if I doubt the extent of the blame you would so lavishly impute to yourself. I am now alone in the world" (here the smile withered from Lucy's lips). "My poor father is dead. I can injure no one by my conduct; there is no one on earth to whom I am bound by duty. I am independent, I am rich. You profess to love me. I am foolish and vain, and I believe you. Perhaps, also, I have the fond hope which so often makes dupes of women,—the hope that if you have erred, I may reclaim you; if you have been unfortunate, I may console you! I know, Mr. Clifford, that I am saying that for which many would despise me, and for which, perhaps, I ought to despise myself; but there are times when we speak only as if some power at our hearts constrained us, despite ourselves,—and it is thus that I have now spoken to you."

It was with an air very unwonted to herself that Lucy had concluded her address, for her usual characteristic was rather softness than dignity; but, as if to correct the meaning of her words, which might otherwise appear unmaidenly, there was a chaste, a proud, yet not the less a tender and sweet propriety and dignified frankness in her look and manner; so that it would have been utterly impossible for one who heard her not to have done justice to the nobleness of her motives, or not to have felt both touched and penetrated, as much by respect as by any warmer or more familiar feeling.

Clifford, who had risen while she was speaking, listened with a countenance that varied at every word she uttered,—now all hope, now all despondency. As she ceased, the expression hardened into a settled and compulsive resolution.

"It is well!" said he, mutteringly. "I am worthy of this,—very, very worthy! Generous, noble girl! had I been an emperor, I would have bowed down to you in worship; but to debase, to degrade you,—no! no!"

"Is there debasement in love?" murmured Lucy.

Clifford gazed upon her with a sort of enthusiastic and self-gratulatory pride; perhaps he felt to be thus loved and by such a creature was matter of pride, even in the lowest circumstances to which he could ever be exposed. He drew his breath hard, set his teeth, and answered,—

"You could love, then, an outcast, without birth, fortune, or character?"

No! you believe this now, but you could not.

"Could you desert your country, your friends, and your home,—all that you are born and fitted for? Could you attend one over whom the sword hangs, through a life subjected every hour to discovery and disgrace? Could you be subjected yourself to the moodiness of an evil memory and the gloomy silence of remorse? Could you be the victim of one who has no merit but his love for you, and who, if that love destroy you, becomes utterly redeemed? Yes, Lucy, I was wrong—I will do you justice; all this, nay, more, you could bear, and your generous nature would disdain the sacrifice. But am I to be all selfish, and you all devoted? Are you to yield everything to me, and I to accept everything and yield none? Alas! I have but one good, one blessing to yield, and that is yourself. Lucy, I deserve you; I outdo you in generosity. All that you would desert for me is nothing—O God!—nothing to the sacrifice I make to you! And now, Lucy, I have seen you, and I must once more bid you farewell; I am on the eve of quitting this country forever. I shall enlist in a foreign service. Perhaps" (and Clifford's dark eyes flashed with fire) "you will yet hear of me, and not blush when you hear! But" (and his voice faltered, for Lucy, hiding her face with both hands, gave way to her tears and agitation),—"but, in one respect, you have conquered. I had believed that you could never be mine,—that my past life had forever deprived me of that hope! I now begin, with a rapture that can bear me through all ordeals, to form a more daring vision. A soil maybe effaced,—an evil name maybe redeemed,—the past is not set and sealed, without the power of revoking what has been written. If I can win the right of meriting your mercy, I will throw myself on it without reserve; till then, or till death, you will see me no more!"

He dropped on his knee, left his kiss and his tears upon Lucy's cold hand; the next moment she heard his step on the stairs, the door closed heavily and jarringly upon him, and Lucy felt one bitter pang, and, for some time at least, she felt no more!

CHAPTER XXXI.

Many things fall between the cup and the lip!
Your man does please me
With his conceit.

.....
Comes Chanon Hugh accoutred as you see
Disguised!
And thus am I to gull the constable?
Now have among you for a man at arms.

.....
High-constable was more, though
He laid Dick Tator by the heels.
BEN JONSON—Tale of a Tub.

Meanwhile Clifford strode rapidly through the streets which surrounded the judge's house, and turning to an obscurer quartier of the town, entered a gloomy lane or alley. Here he was abruptly accosted by a man wrapped in a shaggy great-coat, of somewhat a suspicious appearance.

"Aha, Captain!" said he, "you are beyond your time, but all 's well!"

Attempting, with indifferent success, the easy self-possession which generally marked his address to his companions, Clifford, repeating the stranger's words, replied,—

"All's well! What! are the prisoners released?"

"No, faith!" answered the man, with a rough laugh, "not yet; but all in good time. It is a little too much to expect the justices to do our work, though, by the Lord Harry, we often do theirs!"

"What then?" asked Clifford, impatiently.

"Why, the poor fellows had been carried to the town of ———, and brought before the queer cuffin (Magistrate) ere I arrived, though I set off the moment you told me, and did the journey in four hours. The examination lasted all yesterday, and they were remanded till to-day,—let's see, it is not yet noon; we may be there before it's over."

"And this is what you call well!" said Clifford, angrily. "No, Captain, don't be glimflashy! You have not

heard all yet! It seems that the only thing buffed hard against them was by a stout grazier, who was cried 'Stand!' to, some fifty miles off the town; so the queer coffin thinks of sending the poor fellows to the jail of the county where they did the business!"

"Ah! that may leave some hopes for them! We must look sharp to their journey; if they once get to prison, their only chances are the file and the bribe. Unhappily, neither of them is so lucky as myself at that trade!"

"No, indeed, there is not a stone-wall in England that the great Captain Lovett could not creep through, I'll swear!" said the admiring satellite.

"Saddle the horses and load the pistols! I will join you in ten minutes. Have my farmer's dress ready, the false hair, etc. Choose your own trim. Make haste; the Three Feathers is the house of meeting."

"And in ten minutes only, Captain?"

"Punctually!"

The stranger turned a corner and was out of sight. Clifford, muttering, "Yes, I was the cause of their apprehension; it was I who was sought; it is but fair that I should strike a blow for their escape before I attempt my own," continued his course till he came to the door of a public-house. The sign of a seaman swung aloft, portraying the jolly tar with a fine pewter pot in his hand, considerably huger than his own circumference. An immense pug sat at the door, lolling its tongue out, as if, having stuffed itself to the tongue, it was forced to turn that useful member out of its proper place. The shutters were half closed, but the sounds of coarse merriment issued jovially forth.

Clifford disconcerted the pug; and crossing the threshold, cried in aloud tone, "Janseen!"

"Here!" answered a gruff voice; and Clifford, passing on, came to a small parlour adjoining the tap. There, seated by a round oak table, he found mine host,—a red, fierce, weather-beaten, but bloated-looking personage, like Dick Hatteraick in a dropsy.

"How now, Captain!" cried he, in a guttural accent, and interlarding his discourse with certain Dutch graces, which with our reader's leave we will omit, as being unable to spell them; "how now!—not gone yet!"

"No! I start for the coast to-morrow; business keeps me to-day. I came to ask if Mellon may be fully depended on?"

"Ay, honest to the back-bone."

"And you are sure that in spite of my late delays he will not have left the village?"

"Sure! What else can I be? Don't I know Jack Mellon these twenty years! He would lie like a log in a calm for ten months together, without moving a hair's-breadth, if he was under orders."

"And his vessel is swift and well manned, in case of an officer's chase?"

"The 'Black Molly' swift? Ask your grandmother. The 'Black Molly' would outstrip a shark."

"Then good-by, Janseen; there is something to keep your pipe alight. We shall not meet within the three seas again, I think. England is as much too hot for me as Holland for you!"

"You are a capital fellow!" cried mine host, shaking Clifford by the hand; "and when the lads come to know their loss, they will know they have lost the bravest and truest gill that ever took to the toby; so good-by, and be d—d to you!"

With this valedictory benediction mine host released Clifford; and the robber hastened to his appointment at the Three Feathers.

He found all prepared. He hastily put on his disguise; and his follower led out his horse,—a noble animal of the grand Irish breed, of remarkable strength and bone, and save only that it was somewhat sharp in the quarters (a fault which they who look for speed as well as grace will easily forgive), of most unequalled beauty in its symmetry and proportions.

Well did the courser know, and proudly did it render obeisance to, its master; snorting impatiently and rearing from the hand of the attendant robber, the sagacious animal freed itself of the rein, and as it tossed its long mane in the breeze of the fresh air, came trotting to the place where Clifford stood.

"So ho, Robin! so ho! What, thou chafest that I have left thy fellow behind at the Red Cave! Him we may never see more. But while I have life, I will not leave thee, Robin!" With these words the robber fondly stroked the shining neck of his favourite steed; and as the animal returned the caress by rubbing its head against the hands and the athletic breast of its master, Clifford felt at his heart somewhat of that old racy stir of the blood which had been once to him the chief charm of his criminal profession, and which in the late change of his feelings he had almost forgotten.

"Well, Robin, well," he renewed, as he kissed the face of his steed,— "well, we will have some days like our old ones yet; thou shalt say, Ha! ha! to the trumpet, and bear thy master along on more glorious enterprises than he has yet thanked thee for sharing. Thou wilt now be my only familiar, my only friend, Robin; we two shall be strangers in a foreign land. But thou wilt make thyself welcome easier than thy lord, Robin; and thou wilt forget the old days and thine old comrades and thine old loves, when—Ha!" and Clifford turned abruptly to his attendant, who addressed him; "It is late, you say. True! Look you, it will be unwise for us both to quit London together. You know the sixth milestone; join me there, and we can proceed in company!"

Not unwilling to linger for a parting cup, the comrade assented to the prudence of the plan proposed; and after one or two additional words of caution and advice, Clifford mounted and rode from the yard of the inn. As he passed through the tall wooden gates into the street, the imperfect gleam of the wintry sun falling over himself and his steed, it was scarcely possible, even in spite of his disguise and rude garb, to conceive a more gallant and striking specimen of the lawless and daring tribe to which he belonged; the height, strength, beauty, and exquisite grooming visible in the steed; the sparkling eye, the bold profile, the sinewy chest, the graceful limbs, and the careless and practised horsemanship of the rider.

Looking after his chief with a long and an admiring gaze, the robber said to the hostler of the inn, an aged and withered man, who had seen nine generations of highwaymen rise and vanish,—

"There, Joe, when did you ever look on a hero like that? The bravest heart, the frankest hand, the best judge of a horse, and the handsomest man that ever did honour to Hounslow!"

"For all that," returned the hostler, shaking his palsied head, and turning back to the tap-room,— "for all that, master, his time be up. Mark my whids, Captain Lovett will not be over the year,—no, nor mayhap the month!"

"Why, you old rascal, what makes you so wise? You will not peach, I suppose!"

"I peach! Devil a bit! But there never was the gemman of the road, great or small, knowing or stupid, as outlived his seventh year. And this will be the captain's seventh, come the 21st of next month; but he be a fine chap, and I'll go to his hanging!"

"Fish!" said the robber, peevishly,—he himself was verging towards the end of his sixth year,— "pish!"

"Mind, I tells it you, master; and somehow or other I thinks—and I has experience in these things—by the fey, of his eye and the drop of his lip, that the captain's time will be up to-day!"

[Fey—A word difficult to translate; but the closest interpretation of which is, perhaps, "the ill omen."]

Here the robber lost all patience, and pushing the hoary border of evil against the wall, he turned on his heel, and sought some more agreeable companion to share his stirrup-cup.

It was in the morning of the day following that in which the above conversations occurred, that the sagacious Augustus Tomlinson and the valorous Edward Pepper, handcuffed and fettered, were jogging along the road in a postchaise, with Mr. Nabbem squeezed in by the side of the former, and two other gentlemen in Mr. Nabbem's confidence mounted on the box of the chaise, and interfering sadly, as Long Ned growlingly remarked, with "the beauty of the prospect."

"Ah, well!" quoth Nabbem, unavoidably thrusting his elbow into Tomlinson's side, while he drew out his snuffbox, and helped himself largely to the intoxicating dust; "you had best prepare yourself, Mr. Pepper, for a change of prospects. I believes as how there is little to please you in *guod* [prison]."

"Nothing makes men so facetious as misfortune to others!" said Augustus, moralizing, and turning himself, as well as he was able, in order to deliver his body from the pointed elbow of Mr. Nabbem. "When a man is down in the world, all the bystanders, very dull fellows before, suddenly become wits!"

"You reflects on I," said Mr. Nabbem. "Well, it does not sinnify a pin; for directly we does our duty, you chaps become howdaciously ungrateful!"

"Ungrateful!" said Pepper; "what a plague have we got to be grateful for? I suppose you think we ought to tell you you are the best friend we have, because you have scrouged us, neck and crop, into this horrible hole, like turkeys fatted for Christmas. 'Sdeath! one's hair is flatted down like a pancake; and as for one's legs, you had better cut them off at once than tuck them up in a place a foot square,—to say nothing of these blackguardly irons!"

"The only irons pardonable in your eyes, Ned," said Tomlinson, "are the curling-irons, eh?"

"Now, if this is not too much!" cried Nabbem, crossly; "you objects to go in a cart like the rest of your profession; and when I puts myself out of the way to obleedgie you with a shay, you slangs I for it!"

"Peace, good Nabbem!" said Augustus, with a sage's dignity; "you must allow a little bad humour in men so unhappily situated as we are."

The soft answer turneth away wrath. Tomlinson's answer softened Nabbem; and by way of conciliation, he held his snuff-box to the nose of his unfortunate prisoner. Shutting his eyes, Tomlinson long and earnestly sniffed up the luxury, and as soon as, with his own kerchief of spotted yellow, the officer had wiped from the proboscis some lingering grains, Tomlinson thus spoke:

"You see us now, Mr. Nabbem, in a state of broken-down opposition; but our spirits are not broken too. In our time we have had something to do with the administration; and our comfort at present is the comfort of fallen ministers!"

"Oho! you were in the Methodist line before you took to the road?" said Nabbem.

"Not so!" answered Augustus, gravely. "We were the Methodists of politics, not of the church; namely, we lived upon our flock without a legal authority to do so, and that which the law withheld from us our wits gave. But tell me, Mr. Nabbem, are you addicted to politics?"

"Why, they says I be," said Mr. Nabbem, with a grin; "and for my part, I thinks all who sarves the king should stand up for him, and take care of their little families!"

"You speak what others think!" answered Tomlinson, smiling also. "And I will now, since you like politics, point out to you what I dare say you have not observed before."

"What be that?" said Nabbem.

"A wonderful likeness between the life of the gentlemen adorning his Majesty's senate and the life of the gentlemen whom you are conducting to his Majesty's jail."

THE LIBELLOUS PARALLEL OF AUGUSTUS TOMLINSON.

"We enter our career, Mr. Nabbem, as your embryo ministers enter parliament,—by bribery and corruption. There is this difference, indeed, between the two cases: we are enticed to enter by the bribery and corruptions of others; they enter spontaneously by dint of their own. At first, deluded by romantic visions, we like the glory of our career better than the profit, and in our youthful generosity we profess to attack the rich solely from consideration for the poor! By and by, as we grow more hardened, we laugh at these boyish dreams,—peasant or prince fares equally at our impartial hands; we grasp at the bucket, but we scorn not the thimbleful; we use the word 'glory' only as a trap for proselytes and apprentices; our fingers, like an office-door, are open for all that can possibly come into them; we consider the wealthy as our salary, the poor as our perquisites. What is this, but a picture of your member of parliament ripening into a minister, your patriot mellowing into your placeman? And mark me, Mr. Nabbem! is not the very language of both as similar as the deeds? What is the phrase either of us loves to employ? 'To deliver.' What? 'The Public.' And do not both invariably deliver it of the same thing,—namely, its purse? Do we want an excuse for sharing the gold of our neighbours, or abusing them if they resist? Is not our mutual, our pithiest plea, 'Distress'? True, your patriot calls it 'distress of the country;' but does he ever, a whit more than we do, mean any distress but his own? When we are brought low, and our coats are shabby, do we not both shake our heads and talk of 'reform'? And when, oh! when we are up in the world, do we not both kick 'reform' to the devil? How often your parliament man 'vacates his seat,' only for the purpose of resuming it with a weightier purse! How often, dear Ned, have our seats been vacated for the same end! Sometimes, indeed, he really finishes his career by accepting the Hundreds,—it is by 'accepting the hundreds' that ours may be finished too! [Ned drew a long sigh.] Note us now, Mr. Nabbem, in the zenith of our prosperity,—we

have filled our pockets, we have become great in the mouths of our party. Our pals admire us, and our blowens adore. What do we in this short-lived summer? Save and be thrifty? Ah, no! we must give our dinners, and make light of our lush. We sport horses on the race-course, and look big at the multitude we have bubbled. Is not this your minister come into office? Does not this remind you of his equipage, his palace, his plate? In both cases lightly won, lavishly wasted; and the public, whose cash we have fingered, may at least have the pleasure of gaping at the figure we make with it! This, then, is our harvest of happiness; our foes, our friends, are ready to eat us with envy,—yet what is so little enviable as our station? Have we not both our common vexations and our mutual disquietudes? Do we not both bribe [Nabbem shook his head and buttoned his waistcoat] our enemies, cajole our partisans, bully our dependants, and quarrel with our only friends,—namely, ourselves? Is not the secret question with each, 'It is all confoundedly fine; but how long will it last?' Now, Mr. Nabbem, note me,—reverse the portrait: we are fallen, our career is over,—the road is shut to us, and new plunderers are robbing the carriages that once we robbed. Is not this the lot of— No, no! I deceive myself! Your ministers, your jobmen, for the most part milk the popular cow while there's a drop in the udder. Your chancellor declines on a pension; your minister attenuates on a grant; the feet of your great rogues may be gone from the treasury benches, but they have their little fingers in the treasury. Their past services are remembered by his Majesty; ours only noted by the Recorder. They save themselves, for they hang by one another; we go to the devil, for we hang by ourselves. We have our little day of the public, and all is over; but it is never over with them. We both hunt the same fox; but we are your fair riders, they are your knowing ones,—we take the leap, and our necks are broken; they sneak through the gates, and keep it up to the last!"

As he concluded, Tomlinson's head dropped on his bosom, and it was easy to see that painful comparisons, mingled perhaps with secret murmurs at the injustice of fortune, were rankling in his breast. Long Ned sat in gloomy silence; and even the hard heart of the severe Mr. Nabbem was softened by the affecting parallel to which he had listened. They had proceeded without speaking for two or three miles, when Long Ned, fixing his eyes on Tomlinson, exclaimed,—

"Do you know, Tomlinson, I think it was a burning shame in Lovett to suffer us to be carried off like muttons, without attempting to rescue us by the way! It is all his fault that we are here; for it was he whom Nabbem wanted, not us."

"Very true," said the cunning policeman; "and if I were you, Mr. Pepper, hang me if I would not behave like a man of spirit, and show as little consarn for him as he shows for you! Why, Lord now, I doesn't want to 'tice you; but this I does know, the justices are very anxious to catch Lovett; and one who gives him up, and says a word or two about his c'racter, so as to make conviction sartain, may himself be sartain of a free pardon for all little sprees and so forth!"

"Ah!" said Long Ned, with a sigh, "that is all very well, Mr. Nabbem, but I'll go to the crap like a gentleman, and not peach of my comrades; and now I think of it, Lovett could scarcely have assisted us. One man alone, even Lovett, clever as he is, could not have forced us out of the clutches of you and your myrmidons, Mr. Nabbem! And when we were once at ———, they took excellent care of us. But tell me now, my dear Nabbem," and Long Ned's voice wheedled itself into something like softness,—"tell me, do you think the grazier will buff it home?"

"No doubt of that," said the unmoved Nabbem. Long Ned's face fell. "And what if he does?" said he; "they can but transport us!"

"Don't desave yourself, Master Pepper!" said Nabbem: "you're too old a hand for the herring-pond. They're resolved to make gallows apples of all such numprels [Nonpareils] as you!"

Ned cast a sullen look at the officer.

"A pretty comforter you are!" said he. "I have been in a post chaise with a pleasanter fellow, I'll swear! You may call me an apple if you will, but, I take it, I am not an apple you'd like to see peeled."

With this pugilistic and menacing pun, the lengthy hero relapsed into meditative silence.

Our travellers were now entering a road skirted on one side by a common of some extent, and on the other by a thick hedgerow, which through its breaks gave occasional glimpses of woodland and fallow, interspersed with cross-roads and tiny brooklets.

"There goes a jolly fellow!" said Nabbem, pointing to an athletic-looking man, riding before the carriage, dressed in a farmer's garb, and mounted on a large and powerful horse of the Irish breed. "I dare say he is well acquainted with your grazier, Mr. Tomlinson; he looks mortal like one of the same

kidney; and here comes another chap" (as the stranger, was joined by a short, stout, ruddy man in a carter's frock, riding on a horse less showy than his comrade's, but of the lengthy, reedy, lank, yet muscular race, which a knowing jockey would like to bet on). "Now that's what I call a comely lad!" continued Nabbem, pointing to the latter horseman; "none of your thin-faced, dark, strapping fellows like that Captain Lovett, as the blowens raves about, but a, nice, tight little body, with a face like a carrot! That's a beauty for my money! Honesty's stamped on his face, Mr. Tomlinson! I dare says" (and the officer grinned, for he had been a lad of the cross in his own day),— "I dare says, poor innocent booby, he knows none of the ways of Lunnun town; and if he has not as merry a life as some folks, mayhap he may have a longer. But a merry one forever for such lads as us, Mr. Pepper! I say, has you heard as how Bill Fang went to Scratchland [Scotland] and was stretched for smashing queer screens [that is, hung for uttering forged notes]? He died 'nation game; for when his father, who was a gray-headed parson, came to see him after the sentence, he says to the governor, say he, 'Give us a tip, old 'un, to pay the expenses, and die dacently.' The parson forks him out ten shiners, preaching all the while like winkey. Bob drops one of the guineas between his fingers, and says, 'Holla, dad, you have only tipped us nine of the yellow boys! Just now you said as how it was ten!' On this the parish-bull, who was as poor as if he had been a mouse of the church instead of the curate, lugs out another; and Bob, turning round to the jailer, cries, 'Flung the governor out of a guinea, by God!—[Fact]—Now, that's what I call keeping it up to the last!"

Mr. Nabbem had scarcely finished this anecdote, when the farmer-like stranger, who had kept up by the side of the chaise, suddenly rode to the window, and touching his hat, said in a Norfolk accent,—

"Were the gentlemen we met on the road belonging to your party? They were asking after a chaise and pair."

"No!" said Nabbem, "there be no gentlemen as belongs to our party!" So saying, he tipped a knowing wink at the farmer, and glanced over his shoulder at the prisoners.

"What! you are going all alone?" said the farmer.

"Ay, to be sure," answered Nabbem; "not much danger, I think, in the daytime, with the sun out as big as a sixpence, which is as big as ever I see'd him in this country!"

At that moment the shorter stranger, whose appearance had attracted the praise of Mr. Nabbem (that personage was himself very short and ruddy), and who had hitherto been riding close to the post-horses, and talking to the officers on the box, suddenly threw himself from his steed, and in the same instant that he arrested the horses of the chaise, struck the postilion to the ground with a short heavy bludgeon which he drew from his frock. A whistle was heard and answered, as if by a signal: three fellows, armed with bludgeons, leaped from the hedge; and in the interim the pretended farmer, dismounting, flung open the door of the chaise, and seizing Mr. Nabbem by the collar, swung him to the ground with a celerity that became the circular rotundity of the policeman's figure rather than the deliberate gravity of his dignified office.

Rapid and instantaneous as had been this work, it was not without a check. Although the policemen had not dreamed of a rescue in the very face of the day and on the high-road, their profession was not that which suffered them easily to be surprised. The two guardians of the dicky leaped nimbly to the ground; but before they had time to use their firearms, two of the new aggressors, who had appeared from the hedge, closed upon them, and bore them to the ground. While this scuffle took place, the farmer had disarmed the prostrate Nabbem, and giving him in charge to the remaining confederate, extricated Tomlinson and his comrade from the chaise.

"Hist!" said he in a whisper, "beware my name; my disguise hides me at present. Lean on me,—only through the hedge; a cart waits there, and you are safe!"

With these broken words he assisted the robbers as well as he could, in spite of their manacles, through the same part of the hedge from which the three allies had sprung. They were already through the barrier,— only the long legs of Ned Pepper lingered behind,—when at the far end of the road, which was perfectly straight, a gentleman's carriage became visible. A strong hand from the interior of the hedge, seizing Pepper, dragged him through; and Clifford,—for the reader need not be told who was the farmer, perceiving the approaching reinforcement, shouted at once for flight. The robber who had guarded Nabbem, and who indeed was no other than Old Bags, slow as he habitually was, lost not an instant in providing for himself; before you could say "Laudamus," he was on the other side of the hedge. The two men engaged with the police-officers were not capable of an equal celerity; but Clifford, throwing himself into the contest and engaging the policemen, gave the robbers the opportunity of escape. They scrambled through the fence; the officers, tough fellows and keen, clinging lustily to them, till one was felled by Clifford, and the other, catching against a stump, was forced to relinquish his hold; he then sprang back into the road and prepared for Clifford, who now, however, occupied

himself rather in fugitive than warlike measures. Meanwhile, the moment the other rescuers had passed the Rubicon of the hedge, their flight, and that of the gentlemen who had passed before them, commenced. On this mystic side of the hedge was a cross-road, striking at once through an intricate and wooded part of the country, which allowed speedy and ample opportunities of dispersion. Here a light cart, drawn by two swift horses in a tandem fashion, awaited the fugitives. Long Ned and Augustus were stowed down at the bottom of this vehicle; three fellows filed away at their irons, and a fourth, who had hitherto remained inglorious with the cart, gave the lash—and he gave it handsomely—to the coursers. Away rattled the equipage; and thus was achieved a flight still memorable in the annals of the elect, and long quoted as one of the boldest and most daring exploits that illicit enterprise ever accomplished.

Clifford and his equestrian comrade only remained in the field, or rather the road. The former sprang at once on his horse; the latter was not long in following the example. But the policeman, who, it has been said, baffled in detaining the fugitives of the hedge, had leaped back into the road, was not idle in the meanwhile. When he saw Clifford about to mount, instead of attempting to seize the enemy, he recurred to his pistol, which in the late struggle hand to hand he had been unable to use, and taking sure aim at Clifford, whom he judged at once to be the leader of the rescue, he lodged a ball in the right side of the robber at the very moment he had set spurs in his horse and turned to fly. Clifford's head drooped to the saddle-bow. Fiercely the horse sprang on. The robber endeavoured, despite his reeling senses, to retain his seat; once he raised his head, once he nerved his slackened and listless limbs, and then, with a faint groan, he fell to the earth. The horse bounded but one step more, and, true to the tutorship it had received, stopped abruptly. Clifford raised himself with great difficulty on one arm; with the other hand he drew forth a pistol. He pointed it deliberately towards the officer that wounded him. The man stood motionless, cowering and spellbound, beneath the dilating eye of the robber. It was but for a moment that the man had cause for dread; for muttering between his ground teeth, "Why waste it on *an enemy?*" Clifford turned the muzzle towards the head of the unconscious steed, which seemed sorrowfully and wistfully to incline towards him. "Thou," he said, "whom I have fed and loved, shalt never know hardship from another!" and with a merciful cruelty he dragged himself one pace nearer to his beloved steed, uttered a well-known word, which brought the docile creature to his side, and placing the muzzle of the pistol close to his ear, he fired, and fell back senseless at the exertion. The animal staggered, and dropped down dead.

Meanwhile Clifford's comrade, profiting by the surprise and sudden panic of the officer, was already out of reach, and darting across the common, he and his ragged courser speedily vanished.

CHAPTER XXXII

Lose I not

With him what fortune could in life allot?

Lose I not hope, life's cordial?

.....

In fact, the lessons he from prudence took

Were written in his mind as in a book;

There what to do he read, and what to shun,

And all commanded was with promptness done.

He seemed without a passion to proceed,

.....

Yet some believed those passions only slept!

CRABBE.

Relics of love, and life's enchanted spring!

A. WATTS: On burning a Packet of Letters.

Many and sad and deep

Were the thoughts folded in thy silent breast!

Thou, too, could'st watch and weep!

MRS. HEMANS.

While Sir William Brandon was pursuing his ambitious schemes, and, notwithstanding Lucy's firm and steady refusal of Lord Mauleverer, was still determined on that ill-assorted marriage; while Mauleverer himself day after day attended at the judge's house, and, though he spoke not of love,

looked it with all his might,—it became obvious to every one but the lover and the guardian, that Lucy herself was rapidly declining in appearance and health. Ever since the day she had last seen Clifford, her spirits, before greatly shattered, had refused to regain even a likeness to their naturally cheerful and happy tone. She became silent and abstracted; even her gentleness of temper altered at times into a moody and fretful humour. Neither to books nor music, nor any art by which time is beguiled, she recurred for a momentary alleviation of the bitter feelings at her heart, or for a transient forgetfulness of their sting. The whole world of her mind had been shaken. Her pride was wounded, her love galled; her faith in Clifford gave way at length to gloomy and dark suspicion. Nothing, she now felt, but a name as well as fortunes utterly abandoned, could have justified him for the stubbornness of heart in which he had fled and deserted her. Her own self-acquittal no longer consoled her in affliction. She condemned herself for her weakness, from the birth of her ill-starred affection to the crisis it had now acquired. "Why did I not wrestle with it at first?" she said bitterly. "Why did I allow myself so easily to love one unknown to me, and equivocal in station, despite the cautions of my uncle and the whispers of the world?" Alas! Lucy did not remember that at the time she was guilty of this weakness, she had not learned to reason as she since reasoned. Her faculties were but imperfectly awakened; her experience of the world was utter ignorance. She scarcely knew that she loved, and she knew not at all that the delicious and excited sentiment which filled her being could ever become as productive of evil and peril as it had done now; and even had her reason been more developed, and her resolutions more strong, does the exertion of reason and resolution always avail against the master passion? Love, it is true, is not unconquerable; but how few have ever, mind and soul, coveted the conquest! Disappointment makes a vow, but the heart records it not. Or in the noble image of one who has so tenderly and so truly portrayed the feelings of her own sex,—

"We make
A ladder of our thoughts where angels step,
But sleep ourselves at the foot!"

[The History of the Lyre, by L. E. L.]

Before Clifford had last seen her, we have observed that Lucy had (and it was a consolation) clung to the belief that, despite of appearances and his own confession, his past life had not been such as to place him without the pale of her just affections; and there were frequent moments when, remembering that the death of her father had removed the only being who could assert an unanswerable claim to the dictation of her actions, she thought that Clifford, hearing her hand was utterly at her own disposal, might again appear, and again urge a suit which he felt so few circumstances could induce her to deny. All this half-acknowledged yet earnest train of reasoning and hope vanished from the moment he had quitted her uncle's house. His words bore no misinterpretation. He had not yielded even to her own condescension, and her cheek burned as she recalled it. Yet he loved her. She saw, she knew it in his every word and look! Bitter, then, and dark must be that remorse which could have conquered every argument but that which urged him to leave her, when he might have claimed her forever. True, that when his letter formally bade her farewell, the same self-accusing language was recurred to, the same dark hints and allusions to infamy or guilt; yet never till now had she interpreted them rigidly, and never till now had she dreamed how far their meaning could extend. Still, what crimes could he have committed? The true ones never occurred to Lucy. She shuddered to ask herself, and hushed her doubts in a gloomy and torpid silence. But through all her accusations against herself, and through all her awakened suspicions against Clifford, she could not but acknowledge that something noble and not unworthy of her mingled in his conduct, and occasioned his resistance to her and to himself; and this belief, perhaps, irritated even while it touched her, and kept her feelings in a perpetual struggle and conflict which her delicate frame and soft mind were little able to endure. When the nerves once break, how breaks the character with them! How many ascetics, withered and soured, do we meet in the world, who but for one shock to the heart and form might have erred on the side of meekness! Whether it come from woe or disease, the stroke which mars a single fibre plays strange havoc with the mind. Slaves we are to our muscles, and puppets to the spring of the capricious blood; and the great soul, with all its capacities, its solemn attributes, and sounding claims, is, while on earth, but a jest to this mountebank,—the body,—from the dream which toys with it for an hour, to the lunacy which shivers it into a driveller, laughing as it plays with its own fragments, and reeling benighted and blinded to the grave!

We have before said that Lucy was fond both of her uncle and his society; and still, whenever the subject of Lord Mauleverer and his suit was left untouched, there was that in the conversation of Sir William Brandon which aroused an interest in her mind, engrossed and self-consuming as it had become. Sorrow, indeed, and sorrow's companion, reflection, made her more and more capable of comprehending a very subtle and intricate character. There is no secret for discovering the human heart like affliction, especially the affliction which springs from passion. Does a writer startle you with his insight into your nature, be sure that he has mourned; such lore is the alchemy of tears. Hence the insensible and almost universal confusion of idea which confounds melancholy with depth, and finds

but hollow inanity in the symbol of a laugh. Pitiably error! Reflection first leads us to gloom, but its next stage is to brightness. The Laughing Philosopher had reached the goal of Wisdom; Heraclitus whimpered at the starting-post. But enough for Lucy to gain even the vestibule of philosophy.

Notwithstanding the soreness we naturally experience towards all who pertinaciously arouse an unpleasant subject, and in spite therefore of Brandon's furtherance of Mauleverer's courtship, Lucy felt herself inclined strangely, and with something of a daughter's affection, towards this enigmatical being; in spite, too, of all the cold and measured vice of his character,—the hard and wintry grayness of heart with which he regarded the welfare of others, or the substances of Truth, Honour, and Virtue,—the callousness of his fossilized affections, which no human being softened but for a moment, and no warm and healthful impulse struck, save into an evanescent and idle flash;—in spite of this consummate obduracy and worldliness of temperament, it is not paradoxical to say that there was something in the man which Lucy found at times analogous to her own vivid and generous self. This was, however, only noticeable when she led him to talk over earlier days, and when by degrees the sarcastic lawyer forgot the present, and grew eloquent, not over the actions, but the feelings of the past. He would speak to her for hours of his youthful dreams, his occupations, or his projects, as a boy. Above all, he loved to converse with her upon Warlock, its remains of ancient magnificence, the green banks of the placid river that enriched its domains, and the summer pomp of wood and heath-land, amidst which his noonday visions had been nursed.

When he spoke of these scenes and days, his countenance softened, and something in its expression, recalling to Lucy the image of one still dearer, made her yearn to him the more. An ice seemed broken from his mind, and streams of released and gentle feelings, mingled with kindly and generous sentiment, flowed forth. Suddenly a thought, a word, brought him back to the present,—his features withered abruptly into their cold placidity or latent sneer; the seal closed suddenly on the broken spell, and, like the victim of a fairy-tale, condemned at a stated hour to assume another shape, the very being you had listened to seemed vanished, and replaced by one whom you startled to behold. But there was one epoch of his life on which he was always silent, and that was his first onset into the actual world,—the period of his early struggle into wealth and fame. All that space of time seemed as a dark gulf, over which he had passed, and become changed at once,—as a traveller landing in a strange climate may adopt, the moment he touches its shore, its costume and its language.

All men—the most modest—have a common failing; but it is one which often assumes the domino and mask,—pride! Brandon was, however, proud to a degree very rare in men who have risen and flourished in the world. Out of the wrecks of all other feelings this imperial survivor made one great palace for its residence, and called the fabric "Disdain." Scorn was the real essence of Brandon's nature; even in the blandest disguises, the smoothness of his voice, the insinuation of his smile, the popular and supple graces of his manners, an oily derision floated, rarely discernible, it is true, but proportioning its strength and quantum to the calm it produced.

In the interim, while his character thus displayed and contradicted itself in private life, his fame was rapidly rising in public estimation. Unlike many of his brethren, the brilliant lawyer had exceeded expectation, and shone even yet more conspicuously in the less adventitiously aided duties of the judge. Envy itself—and Brandon's political virulence had, despite his personal affability, made him many foes—was driven into acknowledging the profundity of his legal knowledge, and in admiring the manner in which the peculiar functions of his novel dignity were discharged. No juvenile lawyer browbeat, no hackneyed casuist puzzled, him; even his attention never wandered from the dullest case subjected to his tribunal. A painter, desirous of stamping on his canvas the portrait of an upright judge, could scarcely have found a finer realization for his beau-ideal than the austere, collected, keen, yet majestic countenance of Sir William Brandon, such as it seemed in the trappings of office and from the seat of justice.

The newspapers were not slow in recording the singular capture of the notorious Lovett. The boldness with which he had planned and executed the rescue of his comrades, joined to the suspense in which his wound for some time kept the public, as to his escape from one death by the postern gate of another, caused a very considerable ferment and excitation in the popular mind; and, to feed the impulse, the journalists were little slothful in retailing every anecdote, true or false, which they could collect touching the past adventures of the daring highwayman. Many a good story then came to light, which partook as much of the comic as the tragic,—for not a single one of the robber's adventures was noted for cruelty or bloodshed; many of them betokened rather an hilarious and jovial spirit of mirthful enterprise. It seemed as if he had thought the highway a capital arena for jokes, and only robbed for the sake of venting a redundant affection for jesting. Persons felt it rather a sin to be severe with a man of so merry a disposition; and it was especially observable that not one of the ladies who had been despoiled by the robber could be prevailed on to prosecute; on the contrary, they always talked of the event as one of the most agreeable remembrances in their lives, and seemed to bear a provoking gratitude to the comely offender, rather than resentment. All the gentlemen were not, however, of so

placable a temper; and two sturdy farmers, with a grazier to boot, were ready to swear, "through thick and thin," to the identity of the prisoner with a horseman who had civilly borne each of them company for an hour in their several homeward rides from certain fairs, and had carried the pleasure of his society, they very gravely asserted, considerably beyond a joke; so that the state of the prisoner's affairs took a very sombre aspect, and the counsel—an old hand—intrusted with his cause declared confidentially that there was not a chance. But a yet more weighty accusation, because it came from a much nobler quarter, awaited Clifford. In the robbers' cavern were found several articles answering exactly to the description of those valuables feloniously abstracted from the person of Lord Mauleverer. That nobleman attended to inspect the articles, and to view the prisoner. The former he found himself able to swear to, with a very tranquillized conscience; the latter he beheld feverish, attenuated, and in a moment of delirium, on the sick-bed to which his wound had brought him. He was at no loss, however, to recognize in the imprisoned felon the gay and conquering Clifford, whom he had once even honoured with his envy. Although his former dim and vague suspicions of Clifford were thus confirmed, the good-natured peer felt some slight compunction at appearing as his prosecutor. This compunction, however, vanished the moment he left the sick man's apartment; and after a little patriotic conversation with the magistrates about the necessity of public duty,—a theme which brought virtuous tears into the eyes of those respectable functionaries,—he re-entered his carriage, returned to town, and after a lively dinner *tete-a-tete* with an old *chere amie*, who, of all her charms, had preserved only the attraction of conversation and the capacity of relishing a *salami*, Mauleverer, the very evening of his return, betook himself to the house of Sir William Brandon.

When he entered the hall, Barlow, the judge's favourite servant, met him, with rather a confused and mysterious air, and arresting him as he was sauntering into Brandon's library, informed him that Sir William was particularly engaged, but would join his lordship in the drawing-room. While Barlow was yet speaking, and Mauleverer was bending his right ear (with which he heard the best) towards him, the library door opened, and a man in a very coarse and ruffianly garb awkwardly bowed himself out.

"So this is the particular engagement," thought Mauleverer,—*"a strange Sir Pandarus; but those old fellows have droll tastes."*

"I may go in now, my good fellow, I suppose?" said his lordship to Barlow; and without waiting an answer, he entered the library. He found Brandon alone, and bending earnestly over some letters which strewed his table. Mauleverer carelessly approached, and threw himself into an opposite chair. Sir William lifted his head, as he heard the movement; and Mauleverer, reckless as was that personage, was chilled and almost awed by the expression of his friend's countenance. Brandon's face was one which, however pliant, nearly always wore one pervading character,—calmness; whether in the smoothness of social courtesy, or the austerity of his official station, or the bitter sarcasm which escaped him at no unfrequent intervals, still a certain hard and inflexible dryness stamped both his features and his air. But at this time a variety of feelings not ordinarily eloquent in the outward man struggled in his dark face, expressive of all the energy and passion of his powerful and masculine nature; there seemed to speak from his features and eyes something of shame and anger and triumph and regret and scorn. All these various emotions, which it appears almost a paradox to assert met in the same expression, nevertheless were so individually and almost fearfully stamped as to convey at once their signification to the mind of Mauleverer. He glanced towards the letters, in which the writing seemed faint and discoloured by time or damp; and then once more regarding the face of Brandon, said in rather an anxious and subdued tone,—

"Heavens, Brandon! are you ill; or has anything happened? You alarm me!"

"Do you recognize these locks?" said Brandon, in a hollow voice; and from under the letters he drew some ringlets of an auburn hue, and pushed them with an averted face towards Mauleverer.

The earl took them up, regarded them for a few moments, changed colour, but shook his head with a negative gesture, as he laid them once more on the table.

"This handwriting, then?" renewed the judge, in a yet more impressive and painful voice; and he pointed to the letters.

Mauleverer raised one of them, and held it between his face and the lamp, so that whatever his features might have betrayed was hidden from his companion. At length he dropped the letter with an affected nonchalance, and said,—

"Ah, I know the writing even at this distance of time; this letter is directed to you!"

"It is; so are all these," said Brandon, with the same voice of preternatural and strained composure. "They have come back to me after an absence of nearly twenty-five years; they are the letters she wrote to me in the days of our courtship" (here Brandon laughed scornfully),—"she carried them away with

her, you know when; and (a pretty clod of consistency is woman!) she kept them, it seems, to her dying day."

The subject in discussion, whatever it might be, appeared a sore one to Mauleverer; he turned uneasily on his chair, and said at length,—

"Well, poor creature! these are painful remembrances, since it turned out so unhappily; but it was not our fault, dear Brandon. We were men of the world; we knew the value of—of women, and treated them accordingly!"

"Right! right! right!" cried Brandon, vehemently, laughing in a wild and loud disdain, the intense force of which it would be in vain to attempt expressing. "Right! and, faith, my lord, I repine not, nor repent."

"So, so, that's well!" said Mauleverer, still not at his ease, and hastening to change the conversation. "But, my dear Brandon, I have strange news for you! You remember that fellow Clifford, who had the insolence to address himself to your adorable niece? I told you I suspected that long friend of his of having made my acquaintance somewhat unpleasantly, and I therefore doubted of Clifford himself. Well, my dear friend, this Clifford is—whom do you think?—no other than Mr. Lovett of Newgate celebrity!"

"You do not say so!" rejoined Brandon, apathetically, as he slowly gathered his papers together and deposited them in a drawer.

"Indeed it is true; and what is more, Brandon, this fellow is one of the very identical highwaymen who robbed me on my road from Bath. No doubt he did me the same kind office on my road to Mauleverer Park."

"Possibly," said Brandon, who appeared absorbed in a reverie.

"Ay!" answered Mauleverer, piqued at this indifference. "But do you not see the consequences to your niece?"

"My niece!" repeated Brandon, rousing himself.

"Certainly. I grieve to say it, my dear friend,—but she was young, very young, when at Bath. She suffered this fellow to address her too openly. Nay,—for I will be frank,—she was suspected of being in love with him!"

"She was in love with him," said Brandon, dryly, and fixing the malignant coldness of his eye upon the suitor. "And, for aught I know," added he, "she is so at this moment."

"You are cruel!" said Mauleverer, disconcerted. "I trust not, for the sake of my continued addresses."

"My dear lord," said Brandon, urbanely taking the courtier's hand, while the *anguis in herba* of his sneer played around his compressed lips,— "my dear lord, we are old friends, and need not deceive each other. You wish to marry my niece because she is an heiress of great fortune, and you suppose that my wealth will in all probability swell her own. Moreover, she is more beautiful than any other young lady of your acquaintance, and, polished by your example, may do honour to your taste as well as your prudence. Under these circumstances, you will, I am quite sure, look with lenity on her girlish errors, and not love her the less because her foolish fancy persuades her that she is in love with another."

"Ahem!" said Mauleverer, "you view the matter with more sense than sentiment; but look you, Brandon, we must try, for both our sakes, if possible, to keep the identity of Lovett with Clifford from being known. I do not see why it should be. No doubt he was on his guard while playing the gallant, and committed no atrocity at Bath. The name of Clifford is hitherto perfectly unsullied. No fraud, no violence are attached to the appellation; and if the rogue will but keep his own counsel, we may hang him out of the way without the secret transpiring."

"But if I remember right," said Brandon, "the newspapers say that this Lovett will be tried some seventy or eighty miles only from Bath, and that gives a chance of recognition."

"Ay, but he will be devilishly altered, I imagine; for his wound has already been but a bad beautifier to his face. Moreover, if the dog has any delicacy, he will naturally dislike to be known as the gallant of that gay city where he shone so successfully, and will disguise himself as well as he is able. I hear wonders of his powers of self-transformation."

"But he may commit himself on the point between this and his trial," said

Brandon.

"I think of ascertaining how far that is likely, by sending my valet down to him (you know one treats these gentlemen highwaymen with a certain consideration, and hangs them with all due respect to their feelings), to hint that it will be doubtless very unpleasant to him, under his 'present unfortunate circumstances' (is not that the phrase?), to be known as the gentleman who enjoyed so deserved a popularity at Bath, and that, though 'the laws of my country compel me' to prosecute him, yet, should he desire it, he may be certain that I will preserve his secret. Come, Brandon, what say you to that manoeuvre? It will answer my purpose, and make the gentleman—for doubtless he is all sensibility—shed tears at my generous forbearance!"

"It is no bad idea," said Brandon. "I commend you for it. At all events, it is necessary that my niece should not know the situation of her lover. She is a girl of a singular turn of mind, and fortune has made her independent. Who knows but that she might commit some folly or another, write petitions to the king, and beg me to present them, or go—for she has a world of romance in her—to prison, to console him; or, at all events, she would beg my kind offices on his behalf,—a request peculiarly awkward, as in all probability I shall have the honour of trying him."

"Ay, by the by, so you will. And I fancy the poor rogue's audacity will not cause you to be less severe than you usually are. They say you promise to make more human pendulums than any of your brethren."

"They do say that, do they?" said Brandon. "Well, I own I have a bile against my species; I loathe their folly and their half vices. 'Ridet et odit'—["He laughs and hates"]—is my motto; and I allow that it is not the philosophy that makes men merciful!"

"Well, Juvenal's wisdom be yours, mine be Horace's!" rejoined Mauleverer, as he picked his teeth; "but I am glad you see the absolute necessity of keeping this secret from Lucy's suspicion. She never reads the papers, I suppose? Girls never do!"

"No! and I will take care not to have them thrown in her way; and as, in consequence of my poor brother's recent death, she sees nobody but us, there is little chance, should Lovett's right to the name of Clifford be discovered, that it should reach her ears."

"But those confounded servants?"

"True enough! But consider that before they know it, the newspapers will; so that, should it be needful, we shall have our own time to caution them. I need only say to Lucy's woman, 'A poor gentleman, a friend of the late squire, whom your mistress used to dance with, and you must have seen,—Captain Clifford,—is to be tried for his life. It will shock her, poor thing! in her present state of health, to tell her of so sad an event to her father's friend; therefore be silent, as you value your place and ten guineas,'—and I may be tolerably sure of caution!"

"You ought to be chairman to the Ways and Means Committee!" cried Mauleverer. "My mind is now easy; and when once poor Clifford is gone,—fallen from a high estate,—we may break the matter gently to her; and as I intend thereon to be very respectful, very delicate, etc., she cannot but be sensible of my kindness and real affection!"

"And if a live dog be better than a dead lion," added Brandon, "surely a lord in existence will be better than a highwayman hanged!"

"According to ordinary logic," rejoined Mauleverer, "that syllogism is clear enough; and though I believe a girl may cling now and then to the memory of a departed lover, I do not think she will when the memory is allied with shame. Love is nothing more than vanity pleased; wound the vanity, and you destroy the love! Lucy will be forced, after having made so bad a choice of a lover, to make a good one in a husband, in order to recover her self-esteem!"

"And therefore you are certain of her!" said Brandon, ironically.

"Thanks to my star,—my garter,—my ancestor, the first baron, and myself, the first earl,—I hope I am," said Mauleverer; and the conversation turned. Mauleverer did not stay much longer with the judge; and Brandon, left alone, recurred once more to the, perusal of his letters.

We scarcely know what sensations it would have occasioned in one who had known Brandon only in his later years, could he have read those letters referring to so much earlier a date. There was in the keen and arid character of the man so little that recalled any idea of courtship or youthful gallantry that a correspondence of that nature would have appeared almost as unnatural as the loves of plants, or the amatory softening of a mineral. The correspondence now before Brandon was descriptive of various

feelings, but all appertaining to the same class; most of them were apparent answers to letters from him. One while they replied tenderly to expressions of tenderness, but intimated a doubt whether the writer would be able to constitute his future happiness, and atone for certain sacrifices of birth and fortune and ambitious prospects, to which she alluded: at other times, a vein of latent coquetry seemed to pervade the style,—an indescribable air of coolness and reserve contrasted former passages in the correspondence, and was calculated to convey to the reader an impression that the feelings of the lover were not altogether adequately returned. Frequently the writer, as if Brandon had expressed himself sensible of this conviction, reproached him for unjust jealousy and unworthy suspicion. And the tone of the reproach varied in each letter; sometimes it was gay and satirizing; at others soft and expostulatory; at others gravely reasoning, and often haughtily indignant. Still, throughout the whole correspondence, on the part of the mistress, there was a sufficient stamp of individuality to give a shrewd examiner some probable guess at the writer's character. He would have judged her, perhaps, capable of strong and ardent feeling, but ordinarily of a light and capricious turn, and seemingly prone to imagine and to resent offence. With these letters were mingled others in Brandon's writing,—of how different, of how impassioned a description! All that a deep, proud, meditative, exacting character could dream of love given, or require of love returned, was poured burningly over the pages; yet they were full of reproach, of jealousy, of a nice and torturing observation, as calculated to wound as the ardour might be fitted to charm; and often the bitter tendency to disdain that distinguished his temperament broke through the fondest enthusiasm of courtship or the softest outpourings of love.

"You saw me not yesterday," he wrote in one letter, "but I saw you; all day I was by you: you gave not a look which passed me unnoticed; you made not a movement which I did not chronicle in my memory. Julia, do you tremble when I tell you this? Yes, if you have a heart, I know these words would stab it to the core! You may affect to answer me indignantly! Wise dissembler! it is very skilful, very, to assume anger when you have no reply. I repeat during the whole of that party of pleasure (pleasure! well, your tastes, it must be acknowledged, are exquisite!) which you enjoyed yesterday, and which you so faintly asked me to share, my eye was on you. You did not know that I was in the wood when you took the grin of the incomparable Digby, with so pretty a semblance of alarm at the moment the snake which my foot disturbed glided across your path. You did not know I was within hearing of the tent where you made so agreeable a repast, and from which your laughter sent peals so many and so numerous. Laughter! O Julia, can you tell me that you love, and yet be happy, even to mirth, when I am away! Love! O God, how different a sensation is mine! Mine makes my whole principle of life! Yours! I tell you that I think at moments I would rather have your hate than the lukewarm sentiment you bear to me, and honour by the name of affection.' Pretty phrase! I have no affection for you! Give me not that sickly word; but try with me, Julia, to invent some expression that has never filtered a paltry meaning through the lips of another! Affection! why, that is a sister's word, a girl's word to her pet squirrel! Never was it made for that ruby and most ripe mouth! Shall I come to your house this evening? Your mother has asked me, and you—you heard her, and said nothing. Oh! but that was maiden reserve, was it? and maiden reserve caused you to take up a book the moment I left you, as if my company made but an ordinary amusement instantly to be replaced by another! When I have seen you, society, books, food, all are hateful to me; but you, sweet Julia, you can read, can you? Why, when I left you, I lingered by the parlour window for hours, till dusk, and you never once lifted your eyes, nor saw me pass and repass. At least I thought you would have watched my steps when I left the house; but I err, charming moralist! According to you, that vigilance would have been meanness."

In another part of the correspondence a more grave if not a deeper gush of feeling struggled for expression.

"You say, Julia, that were you to marry one who thinks so much of what he surrenders for you, and who requires from yourself so vast a return of love, you should tremble for the future happiness of both of us. Julia, the triteness of that fear proves that you love not at all. I do not tremble for our future happiness; on the contrary, the intensity of my passion for you makes me know that we never can be happy, never beyond the first rapture of our union. Happiness is a quiet and tranquil feeling. No feeling that I can possibly bear to you will ever receive those epithets,—I know that I shall be wretched and accursed when I am united to you. Start not! I will presently tell you why. But I do not dream of happiness, neither (could you fathom one drop of the dark and limitless ocean of my emotions) would you name to me that word. It is not the mercantile and callous calculation of chances for 'future felicity' (what homily supplied you with so choice a term?) that enters into the heart that cherishes an all-pervading love. Passion looks only to one object, to nothing beyond; I thirst, I consume, not for happiness, but you. Were your possession inevitably to lead me to a gulf of anguish and shame, think you I should covet it one jot the less! If you carry one

thought, one hope, one dim fancy, beyond the event that makes you mine, you may be more worthy of the esteem of others, but you are utterly undeserving of my love.

.....

"I will tell you now why I know we cannot be happy. In the first place, when you say that I am proud of birth, that I am morbidly ambitious, that I am anxious to shine in the great world, and that after the first intoxication of love has passed away I shall feel bitterness against one who has so humbled my pride and darkened my prospects, I am not sure that you wholly err. But I am sure that the instant remedy is in your power. Have you patience, Julia, to listen to a kind Of history of myself, or rather of my feelings? If so, perhaps it may be the best method of explaining all that I would convey. You will see, then, that my family pride and my worldly ambition are not founded altogether on those basements which move my laughter in another; if my feelings thereon are really, however, as you would insinuate, equal matter for derision, behold, my Julia, I can laugh equally at them! So pleasant a thing to me is scorn, that I would rather despise myself than have no one to despise! But to my narrative! You must know that there are but two of us, sons of a country squire, of old family, which once possessed large possessions and something of historical renown. We lived in an old country-place; my father was a convivial dog, a fox-hunter, a drunkard, yet in his way a fine gentleman,—and a very disreputable member of society. The first feelings towards him that I can remember were those of shame. Not much matter of family pride here, you will say! True, and that is exactly the reason which made me cherish family pride elsewhere. My father's house was filled with guests,—some high and some low; they all united in ridicule of the host. I soon detected the laughter, and you may imagine that it did not please me. Meanwhile the old huntsman, whose family was about as ancient as ours, and whose ancestors had officiated in his capacity for the ancestors of his master time out of mind, told me story after story about the Brandons of yore. I turned from the stories to more legitimate history, and found the legends were tolerably true. I learned to glow at this discovery; the pride, humbled when I remembered my sire, revived when I remembered my ancestors. I became resolved to emulate them, to restore a sunken name, and vowed a world of nonsense on the subject. The habit of brooding over these ideas grew on me. I never heard a jest broken on my paternal guardian, I never caught the maudlin look of his reeling eyes, nor listened to some exquisite inanity from his besotted lips, but that my thoughts flew instantly back to the Sir Charleses and the Sir Roberts of my race, and I comforted myself with the hope that the present degeneracy should pass away. Hence, Julia, my family pride; hence, too, another feeling you dislike in me,—disdain! I first learned to despise my father, the host, and I then despised my acquaintances, his guests; for I saw, while they laughed at him, that they flattered, and that their merriment was not the only thing suffered to feed at his expense. Thus contempt grew up with me, and I had nothing to check it; for when I looked around I saw not one living thing that I could respect. This father of mine had the sense to think I was no idiot. He was proud (poor man!) of 'my talents,' namely, of prizes won at school, and congratulatory letters from my masters. He sent me to college. My mind took a leap there; I will tell you, prettiest, what it was! Before I went thither I had some fine vague visions about virtue. I thought to revive my ancestral honours by being good; in short, I was an embryo King Pepin. I awoke from this dream at the University. There, for the first time, I perceived the real consequence of rank.

"At school, you know, Julia, boys care nothing for a lord. A good cricketer, an excellent fellow, is worth all the earls in the peerage. But at college all that ceases; bats and balls sink into the nothingness in which corals and bells had sunk before. One grows manly, and worships coronets and carriages. I saw it was a fine thing to get a prize, but it was ten times a finer thing to get drunk with a peer. So, when I had done the first, my resolve to be worthy of my sires made me do the second,—not, indeed, exactly; I never got drunk: my father disgusted me with that vice betimes. To his gluttony I owe my vegetable diet, and to his inebriety my addiction to water. No, I did not get drunk with peers; but I was just as agreeable to them as if I had been equally embruted. I knew intimately all the 'Hats' in the University, and I was henceforth looked up to by the 'Caps,' as if my head had gained the height of every hat that I knew.

[At Cambridge the sons of noblemen and the eldest sons of baronets are allowed to wear hats instead of the academical cap.]

But I did not do this immediately. I must tell you two little anecdotes that first initiated me into the secret of real greatness.

"The first was this: I was sitting at dinner with some fellows of a college, grave men and clever. Two of them, not knowing me, were conversing about me; they heard, they said, that I should never be so good a fellow as my father,—have such a cellar or keep such a house. 'I have met six earls there and a marquess,' quoth the other senior. 'And his son,' returned the first don, 'only keeps company with sizars, I believe.' 'So then,' said I to myself, 'to deserve the praise even of clever men, one must have good wines, know plenty of earls, and for swear sizars.' Nothing could be truer than my conclusion.

"Anecdote the second is this: On the day I gained a high university prize I invited my friends to dine with me. Four of them refused because they were engaged (they had been asked since I asked them),—to whom? the richest man at the University. These occurrences, happening at the same time, threw me into a profound revery. I awoke, and became a man of the world. I no longer resolved to be virtuous, and to hunt after the glory of your Romans and your Athenians,—I resolved to become rich, powerful, and of worldly repute.

"I abjured my honest sizars, and as I said before, I courted some rich 'Hats.' Behold my first grand step in the world! I became the parasite and the flatterer. What! would my pride suffer this? Verily, yes, my pride delighted in it; for it soothed my spirit of contempt to put these fine fellows to my use! It soothed me to see how easily I could cajole them, and to what a variety of purposes I could apply even the wearisome disgust of their acquaintance. Nothing is so foolish as to say the idle great are of no use; they can be put to any use whatsoever that a wise man is inclined to make of them. Well, Julia, lo! my character already formed; the family pride, disdain, and worldly ambition,—there it is for you. After circumstances only strengthened the impression already made. I desired, on leaving college, to go abroad; my father had no money to give me. What signified that? I looked carelessly around for some wealthier convenience than the paternal board; I found it in a Lord Mauleverer. He had been at college with me, and I endured him easily as a companion,—for he had accomplishments, wit, and good-nature. I made him wish to go abroad, and I made him think he should die of ennui if I did not accompany him. To his request to that effect I reluctantly agreed, and saw everything in Europe, which he neglected to see, at his expense. What amused me the most was the perception that I, the parasite, was respected by him; and he, the patron, was ridiculed by me! It would not have been so if I had depended on 'my virtue.' Well, sweetest Julia, the world, as I have said, gave to my college experience a sacred authority. I returned to England; and my father died, leaving to me not a sixpence, and to my brother an estate so mortgaged that he could not enjoy it, and so restricted that he could not sell it. It was now the time for me to profit by the experience I boasted of. I saw that it was necessary I should take some profession. Professions are the masks to your pauper-rogue; they give respectability to cheating, and a diploma to feed upon others. I analyzed my talents, and looked to the customs of my country; the result was my resolution to take to the Bar. I had an inexhaustible power of application; I was keen, shrewd, and audacious. All these qualities 'tell' at the courts of justice. I kept my legitimate number of terms; I was called; I went the circuit; I obtained not a brief,—not a brief, Julia! My health, never robust, gave way beneath study and irritation. I was ordered to betake myself to the country. I came to this village, as one both salubrious and obscure. I lodged in the house of your aunt; you came hither daily,—I saw you,—you know the rest. But where, all this time, were my noble friends? you will say. 'Sdeath, since we had left college, they had learned a little of the wisdom I had then possessed; they were not disposed to give something for nothing; they had younger brothers, and cousins, and mistresses, and, for aught I know, children to provide for. Besides, they had their own expenses; the richer a man is, the less he has to give. One of them would have bestowed on me a living, if I had gone into the Church; another, a commission if I had joined his regiment. But I knew the day was past both for priest and soldier; and it was not merely to live, no, nor to live comfortably, but to enjoy power, that I desired; so I declined these offers. Others of my friends would have been delighted to have kept me in their house, feasted me, joked with me, rode with me, nothing more! But I had already the sense to see that if a man dances himself into distinction, it is never by the steps of attendance. One must receive favours and court patronage, but it must be with the air of an independent man. My old friends thus rendered useless, my legal studies forbade me to make new, nay, they even estranged me from the old; for people may say what they please about a similarity of opinions being necessary to friendship,—a similarity of habits is much more so. It is the man you dine, breakfast, and lodge with, walk, ride, gamble, or thieve with, that is your friend; not the man who likes Virgil as well as you do, and agrees

with you in an admiration of Handel. Meanwhile my chief prey, Lord Mauleverer, was gone; he had taken another man's Dulcinea, and sought out a bower in Italy. From that time to this I have never heard of him nor seen him; I know not even his address. With the exception of a few stray gleanings from my brother, who, good easy man! I could plunder more, were I not resolved not to ruin the family stock, I have been thrown on myself; the result is that, though as clever as my fellows, I have narrowly shunned starvation,—had my wants been less simple, there would have been no shunning in the case; but a man is not easily starved who drinks water, and eats by the ounce. A more effectual fate might have befallen me. Disappointment, wrath, baffled hope, mortified pride, all these, which gnawed at my heart, might have consumed it long ago; I might have fretted away as a garment which the moth eateth, had it not been for that fund of obstinate and iron hardness which nature—I beg pardon, there is no nature—circumstance bestowed upon me. This has borne me up, and will bear me yet through time and shame and bodily weakness and mental fever, until my ambition has won a certain height, and my disdain of human pettiness rioted in the external sources of fortune, as well as an inward fountain of bitter and self-fed consolation. Yet, oh, Julia! I know not if even this would have supported me, if at that epoch of life, when I was most wounded, most stricken in body, most soured in mind, my heart had not met and fastened itself to yours. I saw you, loved you; and life became to me a new object. Even now, as I write to you, all my bitterness, my pride, vanish; everything I have longed for disappears; my very ambition is gone. I have no hope but for you, Julia; beautiful, adored Julia! when I love you, I love even my kind. Oh, you know not the power you possess over me! Do not betray it; you can yet make me all that my boyhood once dreamed, or you can harden every thought, feeling, sensation, into stone.

.....

"I was to tell you why I look not for happiness in our union. You have now seen my nature. You have traced the history of my life, by tracing the history of my character. You see what I surrender in gaining you. I do not deny the sacrifice. I surrender the very essentials of my present mind and soul. I cease to be worldly. I cannot raise myself, I cannot revive my ancestral name; nay, I shall relinquish it forever. I shall adopt a disguised appellation. I shall sink into another grade of life. In some remote village, by means of some humbler profession than that I now follow, we must earn our subsistence, and smile at ambition. I tell you frankly, Julia, when I close the eyes of my heart, when I shut you from my gaze, this sacrifice appalls me. But even then you force yourself before me, and I feel that one glance from your eye is more to me than all. If you could bear with me,—if you could soothe me,—if when a cloud is on me you could suffer it to pass away unnoticed, and smile on me the moment it is gone,—O Julia! there would be then no extreme of poverty, no abasement of fortune, no abandonment of early dreams which would not seem to me rapture if coupled with the bliss of knowing that you are mine. Never should my lip, never should my eye tell you that there is that thing on earth for which I repine or which I could desire. No, Julia, could I flatter my heart with this hope, you would not find me dream of unhappiness and you united. But I tremble, Julia, when I think of your temper and my own; you will conceive a gloomy look from one never mirthful is an insult, and you will feel every vent of passion on Fortune or on others as a reproach to you. Then, too, you cannot enter into my nature; you cannot descend into its caverns; you cannot behold, much less can you deign to lull, the exacting and lynx-eyed jealousy that dwells there. Sweetest Julia! every breath of yours, every touch of yours, every look of yours, I yearn for beyond all a mother's longing for the child that has been torn from her for years. Your head leaned upon an old tree (do you remember it, near ——?), and I went every day, after seeing you, to kiss it. Do you wonder that I am jealous? How can I love you as I do and be otherwise! My whole being is intoxicated with you!

.....

"This then, your pride and mine, your pleasure in the admiration of others, your lightness, Julia, make me foresee an eternal and gushing source of torture to my mind. I care not; I care for nothing so that you are mine, if but for one hour."

It seems that, despite the strange, sometimes the unloverlike and fiercely selfish nature of these letters from Brandon, something of a genuine tone of passion,—perhaps their originality,—aided, no doubt, by some uttered eloquence of the writer and some treacherous inclination on the part of the mistress, ultimately conquered; and that a union so little likely to receive the smile of a prosperous star was at length concluded. The letter which terminated the correspondence was from Brandon: it was written on the evening before the marriage, which, it appeared by the same letter, was to be private

and concealed. After a, rapturous burst of hope and joy, it continued thus:—

"Yes, Julia, I recant my words; I have no belief that you or I shall ever have cause hereafter for unhappiness. Those eyes that dwelt so tenderly on mine; that hand whose pressure lingers yet in every nerve of my frame; those lips turned so coyly, yet, shall I say, reluctantly from me,—all tell me that you love me; and my fears are banished. Love, which conquered my nature, will conquer the only thing I would desire to see altered in yours. Nothing could ever make me adore you less, though you affect to dread it,—nothing but a knowledge that you are unworthy of me, that you have a thought for another; then I should not hate you. No; the privilege of my past existence would revive; I should revel in a luxury of contempt, I should despise you, I should mock you, and I should be once more what I was before I knew you. But why do I talk thus? My bride, my blessing, forgive me!"

In concluding our extracts from this correspondence, we wish the reader to note, first, that the love professed by Brandon seems of that vehement and corporeal nature which, while it is often the least durable, is often the most susceptible of the fiercest extremes of hatred or even of disgust; secondly, that the character opened by this sarcastic candour evidently required in a mistress either an utter devotion or a skilful address; and thirdly, that we have hinted at such qualities in the fair correspondent as did not seem sanguinely to promise either of these essentials.

While with a curled yet often with a quivering lip the austere and sarcastic Brandon slowly compelled himself to the task of proceeding through these monuments of former folly and youthful emotion, the further elucidation of those events, now rapidly urging on a fatal and dread catastrophe, spreads before us a narrative occurring many years prior to the time at which we are at present arrived.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Clem. Lift the dark veil of years! Behind, what waits?
A human heart. Vast city, where reside
All glories and all vilenesses; while foul,
Yet silent, through the roar of passions rolls
The river of the Darling Sin, and bears
A life and yet a poison on its tide.

.....
Clem. Thy wife?

Vict. Avaunt! I've changed that word to "scorn"!

Clem. Thy child?

Vict. Ay, that strikes home,—my child, my child!

Love and Hatred, by ———

To an obscure town in shire there came to reside a young couple, whose appearance and habits drew towards them from the neighbouring gossips a more than ordinary attention. They bore the name of Welford. The man assumed the profession of a solicitor. He came without introduction or recommendation; his manner of life bespoke poverty; his address was reserved and even sour; and despite the notice and scrutiny with which he was regarded, he gained no clients and made no lawsuits. The want of all those decent charlatanisms which men of every profession are almost necessitated to employ, and the sudden and unusherred nature of his coming were, perhaps, the cause of this ill-success. "His house was too small," people said, "for respectability." And little good could be got from a solicitor the very rails round whose door were so sadly in want of repainting! Then, too, Mrs. Welford made a vast number of enemies. She was, beyond all expression, beautiful; and there was a certain coquetry in her manner which showed she was aware of her attractions. All the ladies of ——— hated her. A few people called on the young couple. Welford received them coldly; their invitations were unaccepted, and, what was worse, they were never returned. The devil himself could not have supported an attorney under such circumstances. Reserved, shabby, poor, rude, introductionless, a bad house, an unpainted railing, and a beautiful wife! Nevertheless, though Welford was not employed, he was, as we have said, watched. On their first arrival, which was in summer, the young pair were often seen walking together in the fields or groves which surrounded their home. Sometimes they walked affectionately together, and it was observed with what care Welford adjusted his wife's cloak or shawl

around her slender shape, as the cool of the evening increased. But often his arm was withdrawn; he lingered behind, and they continued their walk or returned homeward in silence and apart. By degrees whispers circulated throughout the town that the new-married couple lived by no means happily. The men laid the fault on the stern-looking husband; the women, on the minx of a wife. However, the solitary servant whom they kept declared that though Mr. Welford did sometimes frown, and Mrs. Welford did sometimes weep, they were extremely attached to each other, and only quarrelled through love. The maid had had four lovers herself, and was possibly experienced in such matters. They received no visitors, near or from a distance; and the postman declared he had never seen a letter directed to either. Thus a kind of mystery hung over the pair, and made them still more gazed on and still more disliked—which is saying a great deal—than they would have otherwise been. Poor as Welford was, his air and walk eminently bespoke what common persons term gentility. And in this he had greatly the advantage of his beautiful wife, who, though there was certainly nothing vulgar or plebeian in her aspect, altogether wanted the refinement of manner, look, and phrase which characterized Welford. For about two years they lived in this manner, and so frugally and tranquilly that though Welford had not any visible means of subsistence, no one could well wonder in what manner they did subsist. About the end of that time Welford suddenly embarked a small sum in a county speculation. In the course of this adventure, to the great surprise of his neighbours, he evinced an extraordinary turn for calculation, and his habits plainly bespoke a man both of business and ability. This disposal of capital brought a sufficient return to support the Welfords, if they had been so disposed, in rather a better style than heretofore. They remained, however, in much the same state; and the only difference that the event produced was the retirement of Mr. Welford from the profession he had embraced. He was no longer a solicitor! It must be allowed that he resigned no great advantages in this retirement. About this time some officers were quartered at ——; and one of them, a handsome lieutenant, was so struck with the charms of Mrs. Welford, whom he saw at church, that he lost no opportunity of testifying his admiration. It was maliciously yet not unfoundedly remarked that though no absolute impropriety could be detected in the manner of Mrs. Welford, she certainly seemed far from displeased with the evident homage of the young lieutenant. A blush tinged her cheek when she saw him; and the gallant coxcomb asserted that the blush was not always without a smile. Emboldened by the interpretations of his vanity, and contrasting, as every one else did, his own animated face and glittering garb with the ascetic and gloomy countenance, the unstudied dress, and austere gait which destroyed in Welford the effect of a really handsome person, our lieutenant thought fit to express his passion by a letter, which he conveyed to Mrs. Welford's pew. Mrs. Welford went not to church that day; the letter was found by a good-natured neighbour, and inclosed anonymously to the husband.

Whatever, in the secrecy of domestic intercourse, took place on this event was necessarily unknown; but the next Sunday the face of Mr. Welford, which had never before appeared at church, was discerned by one vigilant neighbour,—probably the anonymous friend,—not in the same pew with his wife, but in a remote corner of the sacred house. And once, when the lieutenant was watching to read in Mrs. Welford's face some answer to his epistle, the same obliging inspector declared that Welford's countenance assumed a sardonic and withering sneer that made his very blood to creep. However this be, the lieutenant left his quarters, and Mrs. Welford's reputation remained dissatisfactorily untarnished. Shortly after this the county speculation failed, and it was understood that the Welfords were about to leave the town, whither none knew,—some said to jail; but then, unhappily, no debts could be discovered. Their bills had been "next to nothing;" but, at least, they had been regularly paid. However, before the rumoured emigration took place, a circumstance equally wonderful to the good people of occurred. One bright spring morning a party of pleasure from a great house in the vicinity passed through that town. Most conspicuous of these was a young horseman, richly dressed, and of a remarkably showy and handsome appearance. Not a little sensible of the sensation he created, this cavalier lingered behind his companions in order to eye more deliberately certain damsels stationed in a window, and who were quite ready to return his glances with interest. At this moment the horse, which was fretting itself fiercely against the rein that restrained it from its fellows, took a fright at a knife-grinder, started violently to one side, and the graceful cavalier, who had been thinking, not of the attitude best adapted to preserve his equilibrium, but to display his figure, was thrown with some force upon a heap of bricks and rubbish which had long, to the scandal of the neighbourhood, stood before the paintless railings around Mr. Welford's house. Welford himself came out at the time, and felt compelled—for he was by no means one whose sympathetic emotions flowed easily—to give a glance to the condition of a man who lay motionless before his very door. The horseman quickly recovered his senses, but found himself unable to rise; one of his legs was broken. Supported in the arms of his groom, he looked around, and his eye met Welford's. An instant recognition gave life to the face of the former, and threw a dark blush over the sullen features of the latter.

"Heavens!" said the cavalier, "is that—"

"Hist, my lord!" cried Welford, quickly interrupting him, and glancing round. "But you are hurt,—will

you enter my house?"

The horseman signified his assent, and, between the groom and Welford, was borne within the shabby door of the ex-solicitor. The groom was then despatched with an excuse to the party, many of whom were already hastening around the house; and though one or two did force themselves across the inhospitable threshold, yet so soon as they had uttered a few expletives, and felt their stare sink beneath the sullen and chilling asperity of the host, they satisfied themselves that though it was d—d unlucky for their friend, yet they could do nothing for him at present; and promising to send to inquire after him the next day, they remounted and rode homeward, with an eye more attentive than usual to the motion of their steeds. They did not, however, depart till the surgeon of the town had made his appearance, and declared that the patient must not on any account be moved. A lord's leg was a windfall that did not happen every day to the surgeon of ———. All this while we may imagine the state of anxiety experienced in the town, and the agonized endurance of those rural nerves which are produced in scanty populations, and have so *Taliacotian* a sympathy with the affairs of other people. One day, two days, three days, a week, a fortnight, nay, a month, passed, and the lord was still the inmate of Mr. Welford's abode. Leaving the gossips to feed on their curiosity,—“cannibals of their own hearts,”—we must give a glance towards the interior of the inhospitable mansion of the ex-solicitor.

It was towards evening, the sufferer was supported on a sofa, and the beautiful Mrs. Welford, who had officiated as his nurse, was placing the pillow under the shattered limb. He himself was attempting to seize her hand, which she coyly drew back, and uttering things sweeter and more polished than she had ever listened to before. At this moment Welford softly entered; he was unnoticed by either; and he stood at the door contemplating them with a smile of calm and self-hugging derision. The face of Mephistopheles regarding Margaret and Faust might suggest some idea of the picture we design to paint; but the countenance of Welford was more lofty, as well as comelier, in character, though not less malignant in expression, than that which the incomparable Retsch has given to the mocking fiend. So utter, so congratulatory, so lordly was the contempt on Welford's dark and striking features, that though he was in that situation in which ridicule usually attaches itself to the husband, it was the gallant and the wife that would have appeared to the beholder in a humiliating and unenviable light.

After a momentary pause Welford approached with a heavy step. The wife started; but with a bland and smooth expression, which since his sojourn in the town of had been rarely visible in his aspect, the host joined the pair, smiled on the nurse, and congratulated the patient on his progress towards recovery. The nobleman, well learned in the usages of the world, replied easily and gayly; and the conversation flowed on cheerfully enough till the wife, who had sat abstracted and apart, stealing ever and anon timid glances towards her husband and looks of a softer meaning towards the patient, retired from the room. Welford then gave a turn to the conversation; he reminded the nobleman of the pleasant days they had passed in Italy,—of the adventures they had shared, and the intrigues they had enjoyed. As the conversation warmed, it assumed a more free and licentious turn; and not a little, we ween, would the good folks of ——— have been amazed, could they have listened to the gay jests and the libertine maxims which flowed from the thin lips of that cold and severe Welford, whose countenance gave the lie to mirth. Of women in general they spoke with that lively contempt which is the customary tone with men of the world; only in Welford it assumed a bitterer, a deeper, and a more philosophical cast than it did in his more animated yet less energetic guest.

The nobleman seemed charmed with his friend; the conversation was just to his taste; and when Welford had supported him up to bed, he shook that person cordially by the hand, and hoped he should soon see him in very different circumstances. When the peer's door was closed on Welford, he stood motionless for some moments; he then with a soft step ascended to his own chamber. His wife slept soundly; beside the bed was the infant's cradle. As his eyes fell on the latter, the rigid irony, now habitual to his features, relaxed; he bent over the cradle long and in deep silence. The mother's face, blended with the sire's, was stamped on the sleeping and cherub countenance before him; and as at length, rousing from his reverie, he kissed it gently, he murmured,—

"When I look on you I will believe that she once loved me. Pah!" he said abruptly, and rising, "this fatherly sentiment for a ———'s offering is exquisite in me!" So saying, without glancing towards his wife, who, disturbed by the loudness of his last words, stirred uneasily, he left the room, and descended into that where he had conversed with his guest. He shut the door with caution, and striding to and fro the humble apartment, gave vent to thoughts marshalled somewhat in the broken array in which they now appear to the reader:—

"Ay, ay, she has been my ruin! and if I were one of your weak fools who make a gospel of the silliest and most mawkish follies of this social state, she would now be my disgrace; but instead of my disgrace, I will make her my footstool to honour and wealth. And, then, to the devil with the footstool! Yes! two years I have borne what was enough to turn my whole blood into gall,—inactivity, hopelessness, a wasted heart and life in myself; contumely from the world; coldness, bickering,

ingratitude from the one for whom (oh, ass that I was!) I gave up the most cherished part of my nature,—rather, my nature itself! Two years I have borne this, and now will I have my revenge. I will sell her,—sell her! God! I will sell her like the commonest beast of a market! And this paltry piece of false coin shall buy me—my world! Other men's vengeance comes from hatred,—a base, rash, unphilosophical sentiment! mine comes from scorn,—the only wise state for the reason to rest in. Other men's vengeance ruins themselves; mine shall save me! Ha! how my soul chuckles when I look at this pitiful pair, who think I see them not, and know that every movement they make is on a mesh of my web! Yet," and Welford paused slowly,—"yet I cannot but mock myself when I think of the arch gull that this boy's madness, love,—love, indeed! the very word turns me sick with loathing,—made of me. Had that woman, silly, weak, automatal as she is, really loved me; had she been sensible of the unspeakable sacrifice I had made to her (Antony's was nothing to it,—he lost a real world only; mine was the world of imagination); had she but condescended to learn my nature, to subdue the woman's devil at her own,—I could have lived on in this babbling hermitage forever, and fancied myself happy and resigned,—I could have become a different being. I fancy I could have become what your moralists (quacks!) call 'good.' But this fretting frivolity of heart, this lust of fool's praise, this peevishness of temper, this sullenness in answer to the moody thought, which in me she neither fathomed nor forgave, this vulgar, daily, hourly pining at the paltry pinches of the body's poverty, the domestic whine, the household complaint,—when I—I have not a thought for such pitiful trials of affection; and all this while my curses, my buried hope and disguised spirit and sunken name not thought of; the magnitude of my surrender to her not even comprehended; nay, her 'inconveniences'—a dim hearth, I suppose, or a daintless table—compared, ay, absolutely compared, with all which I abandoned for her sake! As if it were not enough,—had I been a fool, an ambitionless, soulless fool,—the mere thought that I had linked my name to that of a tradesman,—I beg pardon, a retired tradesman!—as if that knowledge—a knowledge I would strangle my whole race, every one who has ever met, seen me, rather than they should penetrate—were not enough, when she talks of 'comparing,' to make me gnaw the very flesh from my bones! No, no, no! Never was there so bright a turn in my fate as when this titled coxcomb, with his smooth voice and gaudy fripperies, came hither! I will make her a tool to carve my escape from this cavern wherein she has plunged me. I will foment 'my lord's' passion, till 'my lord' thinks 'the passion' (a butterfly's passion!) worth any price. I will then make my own terms, bind 'my lord' to secrecy, and get rid of my wife, my shame, and the obscurity of Mr. Welford forever. Bright, bright prospects! let me shut my eyes to enjoy you! But softly! my noble friend calls himself a man of the world, skilled in human nature, and a derider of its prejudices; true enough, in his own little way—thanks not to enlarged views, but a vicious experience—so he is! The book of the world is a vast miscellany; he is perfectly well acquainted, doubtless, with those pages that treat of the fashions,—profoundly versed, I warrant, in the 'Magasin des Modes' tacked to the end of the index. But shall I, even with all the mastership which my mind must exercise over his,—shall I be able utterly to free myself in this 'peer of the world's' mind from a degrading remembrance? Cuckold! cuckold! 't is an ugly word; a convenient, willing cuckold, humph!—there is no grandeur, no philosophical varnish in the phrase. Let me see—yes! I have a remedy for all that. I was married privately,—well! under disguised names,—well! It was a stolen marriage, far from her town,—well! witnesses unknown to her,—well! proofs easily secured to my possession,—excellent! The fool shall believe it a forged marriage, an ingenious gallantry of mine; I will wash out the stain cuckold with the water of another word; I will make market of a mistress, not a wife. I will warn him not to acquaint her with this secret; let me consider for what reason,—oh! my son's legitimacy may be convenient to me hereafter. He will understand that reason, and I will have his 'honour' thereon. And by the way, I do care for that legitimacy, and will guard the proofs. I love my child,—ambitious men do love their children. I may become a lord myself, and may wish for a lord to succeed me; and that son is mine, thank Heaven! I am sure on that point,—the only child, too, that ever shall arise to me. Never, I swear, will I again put myself beyond my own power! All my nature, save one passion, I have hitherto mastered; that passion shall henceforth be my slave, my only thought be ambition, my only mistress be the world!"

As thus terminated the reverie of a man whom the social circumstances of the world were calculated, as if by system, to render eminently and basely wicked, Welford slowly ascended the stairs, and re-entered his chamber. His wife was still sleeping. Her beauty was of the fair and girlish and harmonized order, which lovers and poets would express by the word "angelic;" and as Welford looked upon her face, hushed and almost hallowed by slumber, a certain weakness and irresolution might have been discernible in the strong lines of his haughty features. At that moment, as if forever to destroy the return of hope or virtue to either, her lips moved, they uttered one word,—it was the name of Welford's courtly guest.

About three weeks from that evening Mrs. Welford eloped with the young nobleman, and on the morning following that event the distracted husband with his child disappeared forever from the town of ——. From that day no tidings whatsoever respecting him ever reached the titillated ears of his anxious neighbours; and doubt, curiosity, discussion, gradually settled into the belief that his despair had hurried him into suicide.

Although the unfortunate Mrs. Welford was in reality of a light and frivolous turn, and, above all, susceptible to personal vanity, she was not without ardent affections and keen sensibilities. Her marriage had been one of love,—that is to say, on her part, the ordinary love of girls, who love not through actual and natural feeling so much as forced predisposition. Her choice had fallen on one superior to herself in birth, and far above all, in person and address, whom she had habitually met. Thus her vanity had assisted her affection, and something strange and eccentric in the temper and mind of Welford had, though at times it aroused her fear, greatly contributed to inflame her imagination. Then, too, though an uncourtly, he had been a passionate and a romantic lover. She was sensible that he gave up for her much that he had previously conceived necessary to his existence; and she stopped not to inquire how far this devotion was likely to last, or what conduct on her part might best perpetuate the feelings from which it sprang. She had eloped with him. She had consented to a private marriage. She had passed one happy month, and then delusion vanished! Mrs. Welford was not a woman who could give to reality, or find in it, the charm equal to delusion. She was perfectly unable to comprehend the intricate and dangerous character of her husband.

She had not the key to his virtues, nor the spell for his vices. Neither was the state to which poverty compelled them one well calculated for that tender meditation, heightened by absence and cherished in indolence, which so often supplies one who loves with the secret to the nature of the one beloved. Though not equal to her husband in birth or early prospects, Mrs. Welford had been accustomed to certain comforts, often more felt by those who belong to the inferior classes than by those appertaining to the more elevated, who in losing one luxury will often cheerfully surrender all. A fine lady can submit to more hardships than her woman; and every gentleman who travels smiles at the privations which agonize his valet. Poverty and its grim comrades made way for a whole host of petty irritations and peevish complaints; and as no guest or visitor ever relieved the domestic discontent, or broke on the domestic bickering, they generally ended in that moody sullenness which so often finds love a grave in repentance. Nothing makes people tire of each other like a familiarity that admits of carelessness in quarrelling and coarseness in complaining. The biting sneer of Welford gave acrimony to the murmur of his wife; and when once each conceived the other the injurer, or him or herself the wronged, it was vain to hope that one would be more wary, or the other more indulgent. They both exacted too much, and the wife in especial conceded too little. Mrs. Welford was altogether and emphatically what a libertine calls "a woman,"—such as a frivolous education makes a woman,—generous in great things, petty in small; vain, irritable, full of the littleness of herself and her complaints, ready to plunge into an abyss with her lover, but equally ready to fret away all love with reproaches when the plunge had been made. Of all men, Welford could bear this the least. A woman of a larger heart, a more settled experience, and an intellect capable of appreciating his character and sounding all his qualities, might have made him perhaps a useful and a great man, and, at least, her lover for life. Amidst a harvest of evil feelings the mere strength of his nature rendered him especially capable of intense feeling and generous emotion. One who relied on him was safe; one who rebelled against him trusted only to the caprice of his scorn. Still, however, for two years, love, though weakening with each hour, fought on in either breast, and could scarcely be said to be entirely vanquished in the wife, even when she eloped with her handsome seducer. A French writer has said pithily enough: "Compare for a moment the apathy of a husband with the attention, the gallantry, the adoration of a lover, and can you ask the result?" He was a French writer; but Mrs. Welford had in her temper much of the Frenchwoman. A suffering patient, young, handsome, well versed in the arts of intrigue, contrasted with a gloomy husband whom she had never comprehended, long feared, and had lately doubted if she disliked,—ah! a much weaker contrast has made many a much better woman food for the lawyers! Mrs. Welford eloped; but she felt a revived tenderness for her husband on the very morning that she did so. She carried away with her his letters of love as well as her own, which when they first married she had in an hour of fondness collected together,—then an inestimable board!—and never did her new lover receive from her beautiful lips half so passionate a kiss as she left on the cheek of her infant. For some months she enjoyed with her paramour all for which she had sighed in her home. The one for whom she had forsaken her legitimate ties was a person so habitually cheerful, courteous, and what is ordinarily termed "good-natured" (though he had in him as much of the essence of selfishness as any nobleman can decently have), that he continued gallant to her without an effort long after he had begun to think it possible to tire even of so lovely a face. Yet there were moments when the fickle wife recalled her husband with regret, and contrasting him with her seducer, did not find all the colourings of the contrast flattering to the latter. There is something in a powerful and marked character which women and all weak natures feel themselves constrained to respect; and Welford's character thus stood in bold and therefore advantageous though gloomy relief when opposed to the levities and foibles of this guilty woman's present adorer. However this be, the die was cast; and it would have been policy for the lady to have made the best of her present game. But she who had murmured as a wife was not complaisant as a mistress. Reproaches made an interlude to caresses, which the noble lover by no means admired. He was not a man to retort, he was too indolent; but neither was he one to forbear. "My charming friend," said he one day, after a scene, "you weary of me,— nothing more natural! Why torment each other? You say I have ruined you; my sweet friend, let me make you reparation. Become independent; I

will settle an annuity upon you; fly me,—seek happiness elsewhere, and leave your unfortunate, your despairing lover to his fate."

"Do you taunt me, my lord?" cried the angry fair; "or do you believe that money can replace the rights of which you have robbed me? Can you make me again a wife,—a happy, a respected wife? Do this, my lord, and you atone to me!"

The nobleman smiled, and shrugged his shoulders. The lady yet more angrily repeated her question. The lover answered by an innuendo, which at once astonished and doubly enraged her. She eagerly demanded explanation; and his lordship, who had gone further than he intended, left the room. But his words had sunk deep into the breast of this unhappy woman, and she resolved to procure an elucidation. Agreeably to the policy which stripped the fabled traveller of his cloak, she laid aside the storm and preferred the sunshine: she watched a moment of tenderness, turned the opportunity to advantage, and by little and little she possessed herself of a secret which sickened her with shame, disgust, and dismay. Sold! bartered! the object of a contemptuous huxtering to the purchaser and the seller, sold, too, with a lie that debased her at once into an object for whom even pity was mixed with scorn! Robbed already of the name and honour of a wife, and transferred as a harlot from the wearied arms of one leman to the capricious caresses of another! Such was the image that rose before her; and while it roused at one moment all her fiercer passions into madness, humbled, with the next, her vanity into the dust. She, who knew the ruling passion of Welford, saw at a glance the object of scorn and derision which she had become to him. While she imagined herself the betrayer, she had been betrayed; she saw vividly before her (and shuddered as she saw) her husband's icy smile, his serpent eye, his features steeped in sarcasm, and all his mocking soul stamped upon the countenance, whose lightest derision was so galling. She turned from this picture, and saw the courtly face of the purchaser,—his subdued smile at her reproaches,—his latent sneer at her claims to a station which he had been taught by the arch plotter to believe she had never possessed. She saw his early weariness of her attractions, expressed with respect indeed,—an insulting respect,—but felt without a scruple of remorse. She saw in either—as around—only a reciprocation of contempt. She was in a web of profound abasement. Even that haughty grief of conscience for crime committed to another, which if it stings humbles not, was swallowed up in a far more agonizing sensation, to one so vain as the adulteress,—the burning sense of shame at having herself, while sinning, been the duped and deceived. Her very soul was appalled with her humiliation. The curse of Welford's vengeance was on her, and it was wreaked to the last! Whatever kindly sentiment she might have experienced towards her protector, was swallowed up at once by this discovery. She could not endure the thought of meeting the eye of one who had been the gainer by this ignominious barter; the foibles and weaknesses of the lover assumed a despicable as well as hateful dye. And in feeling *herself* degraded, she loathed *him*. The day after she had made the discovery we have referred to, Mrs. Welford left the house of her protector, none knew whither. For two years from that date, all trace of her history was lost. At the end of that time what was Welford? A man rapidly rising in the world, distinguished at the Bar, where his first brief had lifted him into notice, commencing a flattering career in the senate, holding lucrative and honourable offices, esteemed for the austere rectitude of his moral character, gathering the golden opinions of all men, as he strode onward to public reputation. He had re-assumed his hereditary name; his early history was unknown; and no one in the obscure and distant town of —— had ever guessed that the humble Welford was the William Brandon whose praise was echoed in so many journals, and whose rising genius was acknowledged by all. That asperity, roughness, and gloom which had noted him at ——, and which, being natural to him, he deigned not to disguise in a station ungenial to his talents and below his hopes, were now glitteringly varnished over by an hypocrisy well calculated to aid his ambition. So learnedly could this singular man fit himself to others that few among the great met him as a companion, nor left him without the temper to become his friend. Through his noble rival—that is (to make our reader's "surety doubly sure"), through Lord Mauleverer—he had acquired his first lucrative office, a certain patronage from government, and his seat in parliament. If he had persevered at the Bar rather than given himself entirely to State intrigues, it was only because his talents were eminently more calculated to advance him in the former path to honour than in the latter. So devoted was he become to public life that he had only permitted himself to cherish one private source of enjoyment,—his son. As no one, not even his brother, knew he had been married (during the two years of his disguised name, he had been supposed abroad), the appearance of this son made the only piece of scandal whispered against the rigid morality of his fair fame; but he himself, waiting his own time for avowing a legitimate heir, gave out that it was the orphan child of a dear friend whom he had known abroad; and the puritan demureness not only of life, but manner, which he assumed, gained a pretty large belief to the statement. This son Brandon idolized. As we have represented himself to say, ambitious men are commonly fond of their children, beyond the fondness of other sires. The perpetual reference which the ambitious make to posterity is perhaps the main reason. But Brandon was also fond of children generally; philoprogenitiveness was a marked trait in his character, and would seem to belie the hardness and artifice belonging to that character, were not the same love so frequently noticeable in the harsh and the artificial. It seems as if a half-conscious but pleasing feeling that they too were once

gentle and innocent, makes them delight in reviving any sympathy with their early state.

Often after the applause and labour of the day, Brandon would repair to his son's chamber and watch his slumber for hours; often before his morning toil commenced, he would nurse the infant in his arms with all a woman's natural tenderness and gushing joy; and often, as a graver and more characteristic sentiment stole over him, he would mentally say, "You shall build up our broken name on a better foundation than your sire. I begin too late in life, and I labour up a painful and stony road; but I shall make the journey to Fame smooth and accessible for you. Never, too, while you aspire to honour, shall you steel your heart to tranquillity. For you, my child, shall be the joys of home and love, and a mind that does not sicken at the past, and strain, through mere forgetfulness, towards a solitary and barren distinction for the future. Not only what your father gains you shall enjoy, but what has cursed him his vigilance shall lead you to shun!"

It was thus not only that his softer feelings, but all the better and nobler ones, which even in the worst and hardest bosom find some root, turned towards his child, and that the hollow and vicious man promised to become the affectionate and perhaps the wise parent.

One night Brandon was returning home on foot from a ministerial dinner. The night was frosty and clear, the hour was late, and his way lay through the longest and best-lighted streets of the metropolis. He was, as usual, buried in thought, when he was suddenly aroused from his reverie by a light touch laid on his arm. He turned, and saw one of the unhappy persons who haunt the midnight streets of cities, standing right before his path. The gaze of each fell upon the other; and it was thus, for the first time since they laid their heads on the same pillow, that the husband met the wife. The skies were intensely clear, and the lamplight was bright and calm upon the faces of both. There was no doubt in the mind of either. Suddenly, and with a startled and ghastly consciousness, they recognized each other. The wife staggered, and clung to a post for support; Brandon's look was calm and unmoved. The hour that his bitter and malignant spirit had yearned for was come; his nerves expanded in a voluptuous calmness, as if to give him a deliberate enjoyment of his hope fulfilled. Whatever the words that in that unwitnessed and almost awful interview passed between them, we may be sure that Brandon spared not one atom of his power. The lost and abandoned wife returned home; and all her nature, embruted as it had become by guilt and vile habits, hardened into revenge,—that preternatural feeling which may be termed the hope of despair.

Three nights from that meeting Brandon's house was broken into. Like the houses of many legal men, it lay in a dangerous and thinly populated outskirt of the town, and was easily accessible to robbery. He was awakened by a noise; he started, and found himself in the grasp of two men. At the foot of the bed stood a female, raising a light; and her face, haggard with searing passions, and ghastly with the leprous whiteness of disease and approaching death, glared full upon him.

"It is now my turn," said the female, with a grin of scorn which Brandon himself might have envied; "you have cursed me, and I return the curse! You have told me that my child shall never name me but to blush. Fool! I triumph over you; you he shall never know to his dying day! You have told me that to my child and my child's child (a long transmission of execration) my name—the name of the wife you basely sold to ruin and to hell—should be left as a legacy of odium and shame! Man, you shall teach that child no further lesson whatever: you shall know not whether he live or die, or have children to carry on your boasted race; or whether, if he have, those children be not outcasts of the earth, the accursed of man and God, the fit offspring of the thing you have made me. Wretch! I hurl back on you the denunciation with which, when we met three nights since, you would have crushed the victim of your own perfidy. You shall tread the path of your ambition childless and objectless and hopeless. Disease shall set her stamp upon your frame. The worm shall batten upon your heart. You shall have honours and enjoy them not; you shall gain your ambition, and despair; you shall pine for your son, and find him not; or, if you find him, you shall curse the hour in which he was born. Mark me, man,—I am dying while I speak,—I know that I am a prophet in my curse. From this hour I am avenged, and you are my scorn!"

As the hardest natures sink appalled before the stony eye of the maniac, so, in the dead of the night, pinioned by ruffians, the wild and solemn voice, sharpened by passion and partial madness, of the ghastly figure before him curdling through his veins, even the haughty and daring character of William Brandon quailed! He uttered not a word. He was found the next morning bound by strong cords to his bed. He spoke not when he was released, but went in silence to his child's chamber,—the child was gone! Several articles of property were also stolen; the desperate tools the mother had employed worked not perhaps without their own reward.

We need scarcely add that Brandon set every engine and channel of justice in motion for the discovery of his son. All the especial shrewdness and keenness of his own character, aided by his professional experience, he employed for years in the same pursuit. Every research was wholly in vain;

not the remotest vestige towards discovery could be traced until were found (we have recorded when) some of the articles that had been stolen. Fate treasured in her gloomy womb, altogether undescried by man, the hour and the scene in which the most ardent wish of William Brandon was to be realized.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK PAUL CLIFFORD — VOLUME 06 ***

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