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GODOLPHIN, Volume 4.
By Edward Bulwer Lytton
(Lord Lytton)

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE WEAKNESS OF ALL VIRTUE SPRINGING ONLY FROM THE FEELINGS.

It was the evening before Godolphin left Rome. As he was entering his palazzo he descried, in the darkness, and at a little distance, a figure wrapped in a mantle, that reminded him of Lucilla;—ere he could certify himself, it was gone.

On entering his rooms, he looked eagerly over the papers and notes on his table: he seemed disappointed with the result, and sat himself down in moody and discontented thought. He had written to Lucilla the day before, a long, a kind, nay, a noble outpouring of his thoughts and feelings. As far as he was able to one so simple in her experience, yet so wild in her fancy, he explained to her the nature of his struggles and his self-sacrifice. He did not disguise from her that, till the moment of her confession, he had never examined the state of his heart towards her; nor that, with that confession, a new and ardent train of sentiment had been kindled within him. He knew enough of women to be aware, that the last avowal would be the sweetest consolation both to her vanity and her heart. He assured her of the promises he had received from her relations to grant her the liberty and the indulgence that her early and unrestrained habits required; and, in the most delicate and respectful terms, he inclosed an order for a sum of money sufficient at any time to command the regard of those with whom she lived, or to enable her to choose, should she so desire (though he advised her not to adopt such a measure, save for the most urgent reasons), another residence. "Send me in return," he said, as he concluded, "a lock of your hair. I want nothing to remind me of your beauty; but I want some token of the heart of whose affection I am so mournfully proud. I will wear it as a charm against the contamination of that world of which you are so happily ignorant—as a memento of one nature beyond the thought of self—as a surety that, in finding within this base and selfish quarter of earth, one soul so warm, so pure as yours, I did not deceive myself, and dream. If we ever meet again, may you have then found some one happier than I am, and in his tenderness have forgotten all of me save one kind remembrance.—Beautiful and dear Lucilla, adieu! If I have not given way to the luxury of being beloved by you, it is because your generous self-abandonment has awakened within a heart too selfish to others a real love for yourself."

To this letter Godolphin had, hour after hour, expected a reply. He received none—not even the lock of hair for which he had pressed. He was disappointed—angry, with Lucilla—dissatisfied with himself. "How bitterly," thought he, "the wise Saville would smile at my folly! I have renounced the bliss of possessing this singular and beautiful being; for what?—a scruple which she cannot even comprehend, and at which, in her friendless and forlorn state, the most starved of her dissolute countrywomen would smile as a ridiculous punctilio. And, in truth, had I fled hence with her, should I not have made her through out life happier—far happier, than she will be now? Nor would she, in that happiness, have felt, like an English girl, any pang of shame. *Here*, the tie would have never been regarded as a degradation; nor does she, recurring to the simple laws of nature, imagine than any one *could* so regard it. Besides, inexperienced as she is—the creature of impulse—will she not fall a victim to some more artful and less generous lover?—to some one who in her innocence will see only forwardness; and who, far from protecting her as I should have done, will regard her but as the plaything of an hour, and cast her forth the moment his passion is sated!—Sated! O bitter thought, that the head of another should rest upon that bosom now so wholly mine! After all, I have, in vainly adopting a seeming and sounding virtue, merely renounced my own happiness to leave her to the chances of being permanently rendered unhappy, and abandoned to want, shame, destitution, by another!"

These disagreeable and regretful thoughts were, in turn, but weakly combated by the occasional self-congratulation that belongs to a just or generous act, and were varied by a thousand conjectures—now of anxiety, now of anger—as to the silence of Lucilla. Sometimes he thought—but the thought only glanced partially across him, and was not distinctly acknowledged—that she might seek an interview with him ere he departed; and in this hope he did not retire to rest till the dawn broke over the ruins of the mighty and breathless city. He then flung himself on a sofa without undressing, but could not sleep, save in short and broken intervals.

The next day, he put off his departure till noon, still in the hope of hearing from Lucilla, but in vain. He could not flatter himself with the hope that Lucilla did not know the exact time for his journey—he had expressly stated it. Sometimes he conceived the notion of seeking her again; but he knew too well the weakness of his generous resolution; and, though infirm of thought, was yet virtuous enough in act not to hazard it to certain defeat. At length in a momentary desperation, and muttering reproaches on Lucilla for her fickleness and inability to appreciate the magnanimity of his conduct, he threw himself into his carriage, and bade adieu to Rome.

As every grove that the traveller passes on that road was guarded once by a nymph, so now it is hallowed by a memory. In vain the air, heavy with death, creeps over the wood, the rivulet, and the shattered tower;—the mind will not recur to the risk of its ignoble tenement; it flies back; it is with the Past! A subtle and speechless rapture fills and exalts the spirit. There—far to the West—spreads that purple sea, haunted by a million reminiscences of glory; there the mountains, with their sharp and snowy crests, rise into the bosom of the heavens; on that plain, the pilgrim yet hails the traditional tomb of the Curiatii and those immortal Twins who left to their brother the glory of conquest, and the shame by which it was succeeded: around the Lake of Nemi yet bloom the sacred groves by which Diana raised Hippolytus again into life. Poetry, Fable, History, watch over the land: it is a sepulchre; Death is within and around it; Decay writes defeature upon every stone; but the Past sits by the tomb as a mourning angel; a soul breathes through the desolation; a voice calls amidst the silence. Every age that bath passed away bath left a ghost behind it; and the beautiful land seems like that imagined clime beneath the earth in which man, glorious though it be, may not breathe and live—but which is populous with holy phantoms and illustrious shades.

On, on sped Godolphin. Night broke over him as he traversed the Pontine Marshes. There, the malaria broods over its rankest venom: solitude hath lost the soul that belonged to it: all life, save the deadly fertility of corruption, seems to have rotted away: the spirit falls stricken into gloom; a nightmare weighs upon the breast of Nature; and over the wrecks of Time, Silence sits motionless in the arms of Death.

He arrived at Terracina, and retired to rest. His sleep was filled with fearful dreams; he woke, late at noon, languid and dejected. As his servant, who had lived with him some years, attended him in rising, Godolphin observed on his countenance that expression common to persons of his class when they have something which they wish to communicate, and are watching their opportunity.

"Well, Malden!" said he, "you look important this morning: what has happened?"

"E—hem! Did not you observe, sir, a carriage behind us as we crossed the marshes? Sometimes you might just see it at a distance, in the moonlight."

"How the deuce should I, being within the carriage, see behind me? No; I know nothing of the carriage: what of it?"

"A person arrived in it, sir, a little after you—would not retire to bed—and waits you in your sitting-room."

"A person! what person!"

"A lady, sir,—a young lady;" said the servant, suppressing a smile.

"Good heavens!" ejaculated Godolphin: "leave me." The valet obeyed.

Godolphin, not for a moment doubting that it was Lucilla who had thus followed him, was struck to the heart by this proof of her resolute and reckless attachment. In any other woman, so bold a measure would, it is true, have revolted his fastidious and somewhat English taste. But in Lucilla, all that might have seemed immodest arose, in reality, from that pure and spotless ignorance which, of all species of modesty, is the most enchanting, the most dangerous to its possessor. The daughter of loneliness and seclusion—estranged wholly from all familiar or female intercourse—rather bewildered than in any way enlightened by the few books of poetry, or the lighter letters, she had by accident read—the sense of impropriety was in her so vague a sentiment, that every impulse of her wild and impassioned character effaced and swept it away. Ignorant of what is due to the reserve of the sex, and even of the opinions of the world—lax as the Italian world is on matters of love—she only saw occasion to glory in her tenderness, her devotion, to one so elevated in her fancy as the English stranger. Nor did there—however unconsciously to herself—mingle a single more derogatory or less pure emotion with her fanatical worship.

For my own part, I think that few men understand the real nature of a girl's love. Arising so vividly as it does from the imagination, nothing that the mind of the libertine would impute to it ever (or at least in most rare instances) sullies its weakness or debases its folly. I do not say the love is better for being thus solely the creature of imagination: I say only, so it is in ninety-nine out of a hundred instances of girlish infatuation. In later life, it is different: in the experienced woman, forwardness is always depravity.

With trembling steps and palpitating heart, Godolphin sought the apartment in which he expected to find Lucilla. There, in one corner of the room, her face covered with her mantle, he beheld her: he hastened to that spot; he threw himself on his knees before her; with a timid hand he removed the covering from her face; and through tears, and paleness, and agitation, his heart was touched to the quick by its soft and loving expression.

"Wilt thou forgive me?" she faltered; "it was thine own letter that brought me hither. Now leave me, if thou canst!"

"Never, never!" cried Godolphin, clasping her to his heart. "It is fated, and I resist no more. Love, tend, cherish thee, I will to my last hour. I will be all to thee that human ties can afford—father, brother, lover—all but—" He paused; "all but husband," whispered his conscience, but he silenced its voice.

"I may go with thee!" said Lucilla, in wild ecstasy: that was *her* only thought.

As, when the notion of escape occurs to the insane, their insanity appears to cease; courage, prudence, caution, invention (faculties which they knew not in sounder health), flash upon and support them as by an inspiration; so, a new genius had seemed breathed into Lucilla by the idea of rejoining Godolphin. She imagined—not without justice—that, could she throw in the way of her return home an obstacle of that worldly nature which he seemed to dread she should encounter, his chief reason for resisting her attachment would be removed. Encouraged by this thought, and more than ever transported by her love since he had expressed a congenial sentiment: excited into emulation by the generous tone of his letter, and softened into yet deeper weakness by its tenderness;—she had resolved upon the bold step she adopted. A vetturino lived near the gate of St. Sebastian: she had sought him; and at sight of the money which Godolphin had sent her, the vetturino willingly agreed to transport her to whatever point on the road to Naples she might desire—nay, even to keep pace with the more rapid method of travelling which Godolphin pursued. Early on the morning of his departure, she had sought her station within sight of Godolphin's palazzo; and ten minutes after his departure the vetturino bore her, delighted but trembling, on the same road.

The Italians are ordinarily good-natured, especially when they are paid for it; and courteous to females, especially if they have any suspicion of the influence of the belle passion. The vetturino's foresight had supplied the deficiencies of her inexperience: he had reminded her of the necessity of procuring her passport; and he undertook that all other difficulties should solely devolve on him. And thus Lucilla was now under the same roof with one for whom, indeed, she was unaware of the sacrifice she made, but whom, despite of all that clouded and separated their after-lot, she loved to the last, with

a love as reckless and strong as then—a love passing the love of woman, and defying the common ordinances of time.

On the blue waters that break with a deep and far voice along the rocks of that delicious shore, above which the mountain that rises behind Terracina scatters to the air the odours of the citron and the orange—on that sounding and immemorial sea the stars, like the hopes of a brighter world upon the darkness and unrest of life, shone down with a solemn but tender light. On that shore stood Lucilla and he—the wandering stranger—in whom she had hoarded the peace and the hopes of earth. Hers was the first and purple flush of the love which has attained its object; that sweet and quiet fulness of content—that heavenly, all-subduing and subdued delight, with which the heart slumbers in the excess of its own rapture. Care—the forethought of change—even the shadowy and vague mournfulness of passion—are felt not in those voluptuous but tranquil moments. Like the waters that rolled, deep and eloquent, before her, every feeling within was but the mirror of an all-gentle and cloudless heaven. Her head half-declined upon the breast of her young lover, she caught the beating of his heart, and in it heard all the sounds of what was now become to her the world.

And still and solitary deepened around them the mystic and lovely night. How divine was that sense and consciousness of solitude! how, as it thrilled within them, they clung closer to each other! Theirs as yet was that blissful and unsated time when the touch of their hands, clasped together, was in itself a happiness of emotion too deep for words. And ever, as his eyes sought hers, the tears which the sensitiveness of her frame, in the very luxury of her overflowing heart, called forth, glittered in the tranquil stars a moment and were kissed away. "Do not look up to heaven, my love," whispered Godolphin, "lest thou shouldst think of any world but this!"

Poor Lucilla! will any one who idly glances over this page sympathise one moment with the springs of thy brief joys and thy bitter sorrow? The page on which, in stamping a record of thee, I would fain retain thy memory from oblivion; that page is an emblem of thyself;—a short existence; confounded with the herd to which it has no resemblance, and then, amidst the rush and tumult of the world, forgotten and cast away for ever!

CHAPTER XXXIII.

RETURN TO LADY ERPINGHAM.—LADY ERPINGHAM FALLS ILL.—LORD ERPINGHAM RESOLVES TO GO ABROAD.—PLUTARCH UPON MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS.—PARTY AT ERPINGHAM HOUSE.—SAVILLE ON SOCIETY AND THE TASTE FOR THE LITTLE.—DAVID MANDEVILLE.—WOMEN, THEIR INFLUENCE AND EDUCATION.—THE NECESSITY OF AN OBJECT.—RELIGION.

As, after a long dream, we rise to the occupations of life, even so, with an awakening and more active feeling, I return from characters removed from the ordinary world—like Volktman[1] and his daughter—to the brilliant heroine of my narrative.

There is a certain tone about London society which enfeebles the mind without exciting it; and this state of temperament, more than all others, engenders satiety. In classes that border upon the highest this effect is less evident; for in them—there is some object to contend for. Fashion gives them an inducement. They struggle to emulate the toga of their superiors. It is an ambition of trifle, it is true; but it is still ambition. It frets, it irritates, but it keeps them alive. The great are the true victims of ennui. The more firmly seated their rank, the more established their position, the more their life stagnates into insipidity. Constance was at the height of her wishes. No one was so courted, so adored. One after one, she had humbled and subdued all those who, before her marriage, had trampled on her pride—or, who after it, had resisted her pretensions: a look from her had become a triumph, and a smile conferred a rank on its receiver. But this empire palled upon her: of too large a mind to be satisfied with petty pleasures and unreal distinctions, she still felt the Something of life was wanting. She was not blessed or cursed (as it may be) with children, and she had no companion in her husband. There might be times in which she regretted her choice, dazzling as it had proved;—but she complained not of sorrow, but monotony.

Political intrigue could not fill up the vacuum of which Constance daily complained; and of private intrigue, the then purity of her nature was incapable. When people have really nothing to do, they generally fall ill upon it; and at length, the rich colour grew faint upon Lady Erpingham's cheek; her form wasted; the physicians hinted at consumption, and recommended a warmer clime. Lord Erpingham seized at the proposition; he was fond of Italy; he was bored with England.

Very stupid people often become very musical: it is a sort of pretension to intellect that suits their capacities. Plutarch says somewhere that the best musical instruments are made from the jaw-bones of asses. Plutarch never made a more sensible observation. Lord Erpingham had of late taken greatly to

operas: he talked of writing one himself; and not being a performer, he consoled himself by becoming a patron. Italy, therefore, presented to him manifold captivations—he thought of fiddling, but he talked only of his wife's health. Amidst the regrets of the London world, they made their arrangements, and prepared to set out at the end of the season for the land of Paganini and Julius Caesar.

Two nights before their departure, Lady Erpingham gave a farewell party to her more intimate acquaintance. Saville, who always contrived to be well with every one who was worth the trouble it cost him, was of course among the guests. Years had somewhat scathed him since he last appeared on our stage. Women had ceased to possess much attraction for his jaded eyes: gaming and speculation had gradually spread over the tastes once directed to other pursuits. His vivacity had deserted him in great measure, as years and infirmity began to stagnate and knot up the current of his veins; but conversation still possessed for and derived from him its wonted attraction. The sparkling jeu d'esprit had only sobered down into the quiet sarcasm; and if his wit rippled less freshly to the breeze of the present moment, it was coloured more richly by the glittering sands which rolled down from the experience that over shadowed the current. For the wisdom of the worldly is like the mountains that, sterile without, conceal within them unprofitable ore: only the filings and particles escape to the daylight and sparkle in the wave; the rest wastes idly within. The Pactolus takes but the sand-drifts from the hoards lost to use in the Tmolus.

"And how," said Saville, seating himself by Lady Erpingham, "how shall we bear London when you are gone? When society—the everlasting draught—had begun to pall upon us, you threw your pearl into the cup; and now we are grown so luxurious, that we shall never bear the wine without the pearl."

"But the pearl gave no taste to the wine: it only dissolved itself—idly, and in vain."

"Ah, my dear Lady Erpingham, the dullest of us, having once seen the pearl, could at least imagine that we were able to appreciate the subtleties of its influence. Where, in this little world of tedious realities, can we find anything even to imagine about, when you abandon us?"

"Nay! do you conceive that I am so ignorant of the framework of society as to suppose that I shall not be easily replaced? King succeeds king, without reference to the merits of either: so, in London, idol follows idol, though one be of jewels and the other of brass. Perhaps, when I return, I shall find you kneeling to the dull Lady A—, or worshipping the hideous Lady Z—."

"*Le temps assez souvent a rendu legitime
Ce qui sembloit d'abord ne se pouvoir sans crime;*"

answered Saville with a mock heroic air. "The fact is, that we are an indolent people; the person who succeeds the most with us has but to push the most. You know how Mrs. —, in spite of her red arms, her red gown, her city pronunciation, and her city connexions, managed—by dint of perseverance alone—to become a dispenser of consequence to the very countesses whom she at first could scarcely coax into a courtesy. The person who can stand ridicule and rudeness has only to desire to become the fashion—she or he must be so sooner or later."

"Of the immutability of one thing among all the changes I may witness on my return, at least I am certain no one still will dare to think for himself. The great want of each individual is, the want of an opinion! For instance, who judges of a picture from his own knowledge of painting? Who does not wait to hear what Mr. —, or Lord — (one of the six or seven privileged connoisseurs), says of it? Nay, not only the fate of a single picture, but of a whole school of painting, depends upon the caprice of some one of the self-elected dictators. The King, or the Duke of —, has but to love the Dutch school and ridicule the Italian, and behold a Raphael will not sell, and a Teniers rises into infinite value! Dutch representations of candlesticks and boors are sought after with the most rapturous delight; the most disagreeable objects of nature become the most worshipped treasures of art; and we emulate each other in testifying our exaltation of taste by contending for the pictured vulgarities by which taste itself is the most essentially degraded. In fact, too, the meaner the object, the more certain it is with us of becoming the rage. In the theatre, we run after the farce; in painting, we worship the Dutch school; in —"

"Literature?" said Saville.

"No!—our literature still breathes of something noble; but why? Because books do not always depend upon a clique. A book, in order to succeed, does not require the opinion of Mr. Saville or Lady Erpingham so much as a picture or a ballet."

"I am not sure of that," answered Saville, as he withdrew presently afterwards to a card-table, to share in the premeditated plunder of a young banker, who was proud of the honour of being ruined by persons of rank.

In another part of the rooms Constance found a certain old philosopher, whom I will call David Mandeville. There was something about this man that always charmed those who had sense enough to be discontented with the ordinary inhabitants of the Microcosm,—Society. The expression of his countenance was different from that of others: there was a breathing goodness in his face—an expansion of mind on his forehead. You perceived at once that he did not live among triflers, nor agitate himself with trifles. Serenity beamed from his look—but it was the serenity of thought. Constance sat down by him.

"Are you not sorry," said Mandeville, "to leave England? You, who have made yourself the centre of a circle which, for the varieties of its fascination, has never perhaps been equalled in this country? Wealth—rank—even wit—others might assemble round them: but none ever before convened into one splendid galaxy all who were eminent in art, famous in letters, wise in politics, and even (for who but you were ever above rivalry?) attractive in beauty. I should have thought it easier for us to fly from the Armida, than for the Armida to renounce the scene of her enchantment—the scene in which De Stael bowed to the charms of her conversation, and Byron celebrated those of her person."

We may conceive the spell Constance had cast around her, when even philosophy (and Mandeville of all philosophers) had learned to flatter; but his flattery was sincerity.

"Alas!" said Constance, sighing, "even if your compliment were altogether true, you have mentioned nothing that should cause me regret. Vanity is one source of happiness, but it does not suffice to recompense us for the absence of all others. In leaving England, I leave the scene of everlasting weariness. I am the victim of a feeling of sameness, and I look with hope to the prospect of change."

"Poor thing!" said the old philosopher, gazing mournfully on a creature who, so resplendent with advantages, yet felt the crumpled rose-leaf more than the luxury of the couch. "Wherever you go the same polished society will present to you the same monotony. All courts are alike: men have change in action; but to women of your rank all scenes are alike. You must not look without for an object—you must create one within. To be happy we must render ourselves independent of others."

"Like all philosophers, you advise the impossible," said Constance.

"How so? Have not the generality of your sex their peculiar object? One has the welfare of her children; another the interest of her husband; a third makes a passion of economy; a fourth of extravagance; a fifth of fashion; a sixth of solitude. Your friend yonder is always employed in nursing her own health: hypochondria supplies her with an object; she is really happy because she fancies herself ill. Every one you name has an object in life that drives away ennui, save yourself."

"I have one too," said Constance, smiling, "but it does not fill up all the spaces of time. The intervals between the acts are longer than the acts themselves."

"Is your object religion?" asked Mandeville, simply. Constance was startled: the question was novel. "I fear not," said she, after a moment's hesitation, and with a downcast face.

"As I thought," returned Mandeville. "Now listen. The reason why you feel weariness more than those around you, is solely because your mind is more expansive. Small minds easily find objects: trifles amuse them; but a high soul covets things beyond its daily reach; trifles occupy its aim mechanically; the thought still wanders restless. This is the case with you. Your intellect preys upon itself. You would have been happier if your rank had been less;" Constance winced—(she thought of Godolphin); "for then you would have been ambitious, and aspired to the very rank that now palls upon you." Mandeville continued—

"You women are at once debarred from public life and yet influence it. You are the prisoners, and yet the despots of society. Have you talents? it is criminal to indulge them in public; and thus, as talent cannot be stifled, it is misdirected in private; you seek ascendancy over your own limited circle; and what should have been genius degenerates into cunning. Brought up from your cradles to dissembling your most beautiful emotions—your finest principles are always tainted with artifice. As your talents, being stripped of their wings are driven to creep along the earth, and imbibe its mire and clay; so are your affections perpetually checked and tortured into conventional paths, and a spontaneous feeling is punished as a deliberate crime. You are untaught the broad and sound principles of life; all that you know of morals are its decencies and forms. Thus you are incapable of estimating the public virtues and the public deficiencies of a brother or a son; and one reason why we have no Brutus, is because you have no Portia. Turkey has its seraglio for the person; but custom in Europe has also a seraglio for the mind."

Constance smiled at the philosopher's passion; but she was a woman, and she was moved by it.

"Perhaps," said she, "in the progress of events, the state of the women may be improved as well as

that of the men."

"Doubtless, at some future stage of the world. And believe me, Lady Erpingham, politician and schemer as you are, that no legislative reform alone will improve mankind: it is the social state which requires reformation."

"But you asked me some minutes since," said Constance, after a pause, "if the object of my pursuit was religion. I disappointed but not surprised you by my answer."

"Yes: you grieved me, because, in your case, religion could alone fill the dreary vacuum of your time. For, with your enlarged and cultivated mind, you would not view the grandest of earthly questions in a narrow and sectarian light. You would not think religion consisted in a sanctified demeanour, in an ostentatious almsgiving, in a harsh judgment of all without the pale of your opinions. You would behold in it a benign and harmonious system of morality, which takes from ceremony enough not to render it tedious but impressive. The school of the Bayles and Voltaires is annihilated. Men begin now to feel that to philosophise is not to sneer. In Doubt, we are stopped short at every outlet beyond the Sensual. In Belief lies the secret of all our valuable exertion. Two sentiments are enough to preserve even the idlest temper from stagnation—a desire and a hope. What then can we say of the desire to be useful, and the hope to be immortal?"

This was language Constance had not often heard before, nor was it frequent on the lips of him who now uttered it. But an interest in the fate and happiness of one in whom he saw so much to admire, had made Mandeville anxious that she should entertain some principle which he could also esteem. And there was a fervour, a sincerity, in his voice and manner, that thrilled to the very heart of Lady Erpingham. She pressed his hand in silence. She thought afterwards over his words; but worldly life is not easily accessible to any lasting impressions save those of vanity and love. Religion has two sources; the habit of early years, or the process of after thought. But to Constance had not been fated the advantage of the first; and how can deep thought of another world be a favourite employment with the scheming woman of this?

This is the only time that Mandeville appears in this work: a type of the rarity of the intervention of religious wisdom on the scenes of real life.

"By the way," said Saville, as, in departing, he encountered Constance by the door, and made his final adieu; "by the way; you will perhaps meet, somewhere in Italy, my old young friend, Percy Godolphin. He has not been pleased to prate of his whereabouts to me; but I hear that he has been seen lately at Naples."

Constance coloured, and her heart beat violently; but she answered indifferently, and turned away.

The next morning they set off for Italy. But within one week from that day, what a change awaited Constance!

[1] After all, an astrologer,—nay, a cabalist—is not so monstrous a prodigy in the nineteenth century! In the year 1801, Lackington published a quarto, entitled *Magus: a Complete System of Occult Philosophy; treating of Alchemy, the Cabalistic Art, Natural and Celestial Magic, &c.*—and a very impudent publication it is too. That Raphael should put forth astrological manuals is not a proof of his belief in the science he professes; but that it should *answer* to Raphael to put them forth, shows a tendency to belief in his purchasers.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

AMBITION VINDICATED.—THE HOME OF GODOLPHIN AND LUCILLA.—LUCILLA'S MIND.—THE EFFECT OF HAPPY LOVE ON FEMALE TALENT.—THE EVE OF FAREWELL. LUCILLA ALONE.—TEST OF A WOMAN'S AFFECTION.

O much-abused and highly-slandered passion!—passion rather of the soul than the heart: hateful to the pseudo-moralist, but viewed with favouring, though not indiscriminating eyes by the true philosopher: bright-winged and august ambition! It is well for fools to revile thee, because thou art liable, like other utilities, to abuse! The wind uproots the oak—but for every oak it uproots it scatters a thousand acorns. Ixion embraced the cloud, but from the embrace sprang a hero. Thou, too, hast thy fits of violence and storm; but without thee, life would stagnate:—thou, too, embracest thy clouds; but even thy clouds have the demigods for their offspring!

It was the great and prevailing misfortune of Godolphin's life, that he had early taught himself to be superior to exertion. His talents, therefore, only preyed on himself; and instead of the vigorous and daring actor of the world, he was alternately the indolent sensualist or the solitary dreamer. He did not view the stir of the great Babel as a man with a wholesome mind should do; and thus from his

infirmities we draw a moral. The moral is not the worse, in that it opposes the trite moralities of those who would take from action its motive: the men of genius, who are not also men of ambition, are either humourists, or visionaries, or hypochondriacs.

By the side of one of the Italian lakes, Godolphin and Lucilla fixed their abode; and here the young idealist for some time imagined himself happy. Never until now so fond of nature as of cities, he gave himself up to the enchantment of the Eden around him. He spent the long sunny hours of noon on the smooth lake, or among the sheltering trees by which it was encircled. The scenes he had witnessed in the world became to him the food of quiet meditation, and for the first time in his life, thought did not weary him with its sameness.

When his steps turned homeward, the anxious form of Lucilla waited for him: her eye brightened at his approach, her spirit escaped restraint and bounded into joy: and Godolphin, touched by her delight, became eager to witness it: he felt the magnet of a Home. Yet as the first enthusiasm of passion died away, he could not but be sensible that Lucilla was scarcely a companion. Her fancy was indeed lively, and her capacity acute; but experience had set a confined limit to her ideas. She had nothing save love, and a fitful temperament, upon which she could draw for conversation. Those whose education debars them from deriving instruction from things, have in general the power to extract amusement from persons:—they can talk of the ridiculous Mrs. So-and-so, or the absurd Mr. Blank. But our lovers saw no society: and thus their commune was thrown entirely on their internal resources.

There was always that in the peculiar mind of Godolphin which was inclined towards ideas too refined and subtle even for persons of cultivated intellect. If Constance could scarcely comprehend the tone of his character, we may believe that to Lucilla he was wholly a mystery. This, perhaps, enhanced her love, but the consciousness of it disappointed his. He felt that what he considered the noblest faculties he possessed were unappreciated. He was sometimes angry with Lucilla that she loved only those qualities in his character which he shared with the rest of mankind. His speculative and Hamlet-like temper—(let us here take Goethe's view of Hamlet, and combine a certain weakness with finer traits of the royal dreamer)—perpetually deserted the solid world, and flew to aerial creations. He could not appreciate the present. Had Godolphin loved Lucilla as he once thought that he should love her, the beauties of her character would have blinded him to its defects; but its passion had been too sudden to be thoroughly grounded. It had arisen from the knowledge of her affection—not grown step by step from the natural bias of his own. Between the interval of liking and possession, love (to be durable) should pass through many stages. The doubt, the fear, the first pressure of the hand, the first kiss, each should be an epoch for remembrance to cling to. In moments of after coolness or anger, the mind should fly from the sated present to the million tender and freshening associations of the past. With these associations the affection renews its youth. How vast a store of melting reflections, how countless an accumulation of the spells that preserve constancy, does that love forfeit, in which the memory only commences with possession!

And the more delicate and thoughtful our nature, the more powerful are these associations. Do they not constitute the immense difference between the love and the intrigue? All things that savour of youth make our most exquisite sensations, whether to experience, or recall:—thus, in the seasons of the year, we prize the spring; and in the effusions of the heart, the courtship.

Beautiful, too, and tender—wild and fresh in her tenderness—as Lucilla was, there was that in her character, in addition to her want of education, which did not wholly accord with Godolphin's preconception of the being his fancy had conjured up. His calm and profound nature desired one in whom he could not only confide, but, as it were, repose. Thus one great charm that had attracted him to Constance was the evenness and smoothness of her temper. But the self-formed mind of Lucilla was ever in a bright, and to him a wearying, agitation;—tears and smiles perpetually chased each other. Not comprehending his character, but thinking only and wholly of him, she distracted herself with conjectures and suspicions, which she was too ingenious and too impassioned to conceal. After watching him for hours, she would weep that he did not turn from his books or his reverie to search also for her, with eyes equally yearning and tender as her own. The fear in absence, the absorbed devotion when present, that absolutely made her existence—she was wretched because he did not reciprocate with the same intensity of soul. She could conceive nothing of love but that which she felt herself; and she saw, daily and hourly, that in that love he did not sympathise; and therefore she embittered her life by thinking that he did not return her affection.

"You wrong us both," said he in answer to her tearful accusations; "but our sex love differently from yours."

"Ah," she replied, "I feel that love has no varieties: there is but one love, but there may be many counterfeits."

Godolphin smiled to think how the untutored daughter of nature had unconsciously uttered the

sparkling aphorism of the most artificial of maxim-makers.[1] Lucilla saw the smile, and her tears flowed instantly. "Thou mockest me."

"Thou art a little fool," said Godolphin, kindly, and he kissed away the storm.

And this was ever an easy matter. There was nothing unfeminine or sullen in Lucilla's irregular moods; a kind word—a kind caress—allayed them in an instant, and turned the transient sorrow into sparkling delight. But they who know how irksome is the perpetual trouble of conciliation to a man meditative and indolent like Godolphin, will appreciate the pain that even her tenderness occasioned him.

There in one thing very noticeable in women when they have once obtained the object of their life—the sudden check that is given to the impulses of their genius!—Content to have found the realisation of their chief hope, they do not look beyond to other but lesser objects, as they had been wont to do before. Hence we see so many who, before marriage, strike us with admiration, from the vividness of their talents, and after marriage settle down into the mere machine. We wonder that we ever feared, while we praised, the brilliancy of an intellect that seems now never to wander from the limits of house and hearth. So with poor Lucilla; her restless mind and ardent genius had once seized on every object within their reach:—she had taught herself music; she had learned the colourings and lines of art; not a book came in her way, but she would have sought to extract from it a new idea. But she was now with Godolphin, and all other occupations for thought were gone; she had nothing beyond his love to wish for, nothing beyond his character to learn. He was the circle of hope, and her heart its centre; all lines were equal to that heart, so that they touched him. It is clear that this devotion prevented her, however, from fitting herself to be his companion; she did not seek to accomplish herself, but to study him: thus in her extreme love was another reason why that love was not adequately returned.

But Godolphin felt all the responsibility that he had taken on himself. He felt how utterly the happiness of this poor and solitary child—for a child she was in character, and almost in years—depended upon him. He roused himself, therefore, from his ordinary selfishness, and rarely, if ever, gave way to the irritation which she unknowingly but constantly kept alive. The balmy and delicious climate, the liquid serenity of the air, the majestic repose with which Nature invested the loveliness that surrounded their home, contributed to soften and calm his mind. And he had persuaded Lucilla to look without despair upon his occasional although short absences. Sometimes he passed two or three weeks at Rome, sometimes at Naples or Florence. He knew so well how necessary such intervals of absence are to the preservation of love, to the defeat of that satiety which creeps over us with custom, that he had resolutely enforced it as a necessity, although always under the excuse of business—a plea that Lucilla could understand and not resist; for the word business seemed to her like destiny—a call that, however odious, we cannot disobey. At first, indeed, she was disconsolate at the absence only of two days; but when she saw how eagerly her lover returned to her, with what a fresh charm he listened to her voice or her song, she began to confess that even in the evil might be good.

By degrees he accustomed her to longer intervals; and Lucilla relieved the dreariness of the time by the thousand little plans and surprises with which women delight in receiving the beloved wanderer after absence. His departure was a signal for a change in the house, the gardens, the arbour; and when she was tired with these occupations, she was not forbidden at least to write to him and receive his letters. Daily intoxication! and men's words are so much kinder when written, than they are when uttered! Fortunately for Lucilla, her early habits, and her strange qualities of mind, rendered her independent of companionship, and fond of solitude.

Often Godolphin, who could not conceive how persons without education could entertain themselves, taking pity on her loneliness and seclusion, would say,

"But how, Lucilla, have you passed this long day that I have spent away from you?—among the woods or on the lake?"

And Lucilla, delighted to recount to him the history of her hours, would go over each incident, and body forth every thought that had occurred to her, with a grave and serious minuteness that evinced her capabilities of dispensing with the world.

In this manner they passed somewhat more than two years: and in spite of the human alloy, it was perhaps the happiest period of Godolphin's life, and the one that the least disappointed his too exacting imagination. Lucilla had had one daughter, but she died a few weeks after birth. She wept over the perished flower, but was not inconsolable; for, before its loss, she had taught herself to think no affliction could be irremediable that did not happen to Godolphin. Perhaps Godolphin was the more grieved of the two; men of his character are fond of the occupation of watching the growth of minds; they put in practice their chimeras of education. Happy child, to have escaped an experiment!

It was the eve before one of Godolphin's periodical excursions, and it was Rome that he proposed to visit; Godolphin had lingered about the lake until the sun had set; and Lucilla, grown impatient, went forth to seek him. The day had been sultry, and now a sombre and breathless calm hung over the deepening eve. The pines, those gloomy children of the forest, which shed something of melancholy and somewhat of sternness over the brighter features of an Italian landscape, drooped heavily in the breezeless air. As she came on the border of the lake, its waves lay dark and voiceless; only, at intervals, the surf, fretting along the pebbles made a low and dreary sound, or from the trees some lingering songster sent forth a shrill and momentary note, and then again all became

"An atmosphere without a breath, A silence sleeping there."

There was a spot where the trees, receding in a ring, left some bare and huge fragments of stone uncovered by verdure. It was the only spot around that rich and luxuriant scene that was not in harmony with the soft spirit of the place: might I indulge a fanciful comparison, I should say that it was like one desolate and grey remembrance in the midst of a career of pleasure. On this spot Godolphin now stood alone, looking along the still and purple waters that lay before him. Lucilla, with a light step, climbed the rugged stones, and, touching his shoulder, reproached him with a tender playfulness for his trancy.

"Lucilla," said he, when peace was restored, "what impressions does this dreary and prophetic pause of nature before the upgathering of the storm, create in you? Does it inspire you with melancholy, or thought, or fear?"

"I see my star," answered Lucilla, pointing to a far and solitary orb, which hung islanded in a sea of cloud, that swept slowly and blackly onward:—"I see my star, and I think more of that little light than of the darkness around it."

"But it will presently be buried among the clouds," said Godolphin, smiling at that superstition which Lucilla had borrowed from her father.

"But the clouds pass away, and the star endures."

"You are of a sanguine nature, my Lucilla." Lucilla sighed.

"Why that sigh, dearest?"

"Because I am thinking how little even those who love us most know of us! I never tell my disquiet and sorrow. There are times when thou wouldst not think me too warmly addicted to hope!"

"And what, poor idler, have you to fear?"

"Hast thou never felt it possible that thou couldst love me less?"

"Never!"

Lucilla raised her large searching eyes, and gazed eagerly on his face; but in its calm features and placid brow she saw no ground for augury, whether propitious or evil. She turned away.

"I cannot think, Lucilla," said Godolphin, "that you ever direct those thoughts of yours, wandering though they be, to the future. Do they ever extend to the space of some ten or twenty years?"

"No. But one year may contain the whole history of my future."

As she spoke, the clouds gathered round the solitary star to which Lucilla had pointed. The storm was at hand; they felt its approach, and turned homeward.

There is something more than ordinarily fearful in the tempests that visit those soft and garden climes. The unfrequency of such violent changes in the mood of nature serves to appal us as with an omen; it is like a sudden affliction in the midst of happiness—or a wound from the hand of one we love. For the stroke for which we are not prepared we have rather despondency than resistance.

As they reached their home, the heavy rain-drops began to fall. They stood for some minutes at the casement, watching the coruscations of the lightning as it played over the black and heavy waters of the lake. Lucilla, whom the influences of nature always strangely and mysteriously affected, clung pale and almost trembling to Godolphin; but even in her fear there was delight in being so near to him in whose love alone she thought there was protection. Oh what luxury so dear to a woman as is the sense of dependence! Poor Lucilla! it was the last evening she ever spent with one whom she worshipped so entirely.

Godolphin remained up longer than Lucilla. When he joined her in her room, the storm had ceased;

and he found her standing by the open window, and gazing on the skies that were now bright and serene. Far in the deep stillness of midnight crept the waters of the lake, hushed once more into silence, and reflecting the solemn and unfathomable stars. That chain of hills, which but to name, awakens countless memories of romance, stretched behind—their blue and dim summits melting into the skies, and over one higher than the rest, paused the new risen moon, silvering the first beneath, and farther down, breaking with one long and yet mellow track of light over the waters of the lake.

As Godolphin approached he did so, unconsciously, with a hushed and noiseless step. There is something in the quiet of nature like worship; it is as if, from the breathless heart of Things, went up a prayer or a homage to the Arch-Creator. One feels subdued by a stillness so utter and so august; it extends itself to our own sensations, and deepens into an awe.

Both, then, looked on in silence, indulging it may be different thoughts. At length, Lucilla said softly:—"Tell me, hast thou really no faith in my father's creed? Are the stars quite dumb? Is there no truth in their movements, no prophecy in their lustre?"

"My Lucilla, reason and experience tell us that the astrologers nurse a dream that has no reality."

"Reason! well!—Experience!—why, did not thy father's mortal illness hurry thee from home at the very time in which mine foretold thy departure and its cause? I was then but a child; yet I shall never forget the paleness of thy cheek when my father uttered his prediction."

"I, too, was almost a child then, Lucilla."

"But that prediction was verified?"

"It was so; but how many did Volktman utter that were never verified? In true science there are no chances—no uncertainties."

"And my father," said Lucilla, unheeding the answer, "always foretold that thy lot and mine were to be entwined."

"And the prophecy, perhaps, disposed you to the fact. You might never have loved me, Lucilla, if your thoughts had not been driven to dwell upon me by the prediction."

"Nay; I thought of thee before I heard the prophecy."

"But your father foretold me, dearest—cross and disappointment in my love—was he not wrong? am I not blest with you?"

Lucilla threw herself into her lover's arms, and, as she kissed him, murmured, "Ah, if I could make thee happy!" The next day Godolphin departed for Rome. Lucilla was more dejected at his departure than she had been even in his earliest absence. The winter was now slowly approaching, and the weather was cold and dreary. That year it was unusually rainy and tempestuous, and as the wild gusts howled around her solitary home—how solitary now!—or she heard the big drops hurrying down on the agitated lake, she shuddered at her own despondent thoughts, and dreaded the gloom and loneliness of the lengthened night. For the first time since she had lived with Godolphin she turned, but disconsolately, to the company of books.

Works of all sorts filled their home, but the spell that once spoke to her from the page was broken. If the book was not of love, it possessed no interest;—if of love, she thought the description both tame and false. No one ever painted love so as fully to satisfy another:—to some it is too florid—to some too commonplace; the god, like other gods, has no likeness on earth, and every wave on which the star of passion beams, breaks the lustre into different refractions of light.

As one day she was turning listlessly over some books that had been put aside by Godolphin in a closet, and hoping to find one that contained, as sometimes happened, his comments or at least his marks—she was somewhat startled to find among them several volumes which she remembered to have belonged to her father. Godolphin had bought them after Volktman's death, and put them by as relics of his singular friend, and as samples of the laborious and selfwilled aberration of the human intellect.

Few among these works could Lucilla comprehend, for they were chiefly in other tongues than the only two with which she was acquainted. But some, among which were manuscripts by her father, beautifully written, and curiously ornamented (some of the chief works on the vainer sciences are only to be found in manuscript), she could contrive to decipher by a little assistance from her memory, in recalling the signs and hieroglyphics which her father had often explained to her, and, indeed, caused her to copy out for him in his calculations. Always possessing an untaxed and unquestioned belief in the astral powers, she now took some interest in reading of their mysteries. Her father, secretly, perhaps,

hoping to bequeath his name to the gratitude of some future Hermes, had in his manuscripts reduced into a system many scattered theories of others, and many dogmas of his own. Over these, for they were simpler and easier than the crabbed and mystical speculations in the printed books, she more especially pored; and she was not sorry at finding fresh reasons for her untutored adoration of the stars and apparitions of the heavens.

Still, however, these bewildering researches made but a small part, comparatively speaking, of the occupation of her thoughts. To write to, and hear from, Godolphin had become to her more necessary than ever, and her letters were fuller and more minute in their details of love than even in the period of their first passion. Wouldst thou know if the woman thou lovest still loves thee, trust not her spoken words, her present smiles; examine her letters in absence, see if she dwells, as she once did, upon trifles—but trifles relating to thee. The things which the indifferent forget are among the most treasured meditations of love.

But Lucilla was not satisfied with the letters—frequent as they were—that she received in answer; they were kind, affectionate, but the something was wanting. "The best part of beauty is that which no picture can express." That which the heart most asks is that which no words can convey. Honesty—patriotism—religion—these have had their hypocrites for life;—but passion permits only momentary dissemblers.

[1] Rochefoucauld.

CHAPTER XXXV.

GODOLPHIN AT ROME.—THE CURE FOR A MORBID IDEALISM.—HIS EMBARRASSMENT IN REGARD TO LUCILLA.—THE RENCONTRE WITH AN OLD FRIEND.—THE COLOSSEUM.—A SURPRISE.

Godolphin arrived at Rome: it was thronged with English. Among them were some whom he remembered with esteem in England. He had grown a little weary of his long solitude, and he entered with eagerness into the society of those who courted him. He was still an object of great interest to the idle; and as men grow older they become less able to dispense with attention.

He was pleased to find his own importance, and he tasted the sweets of companionship with more gust than he had yet done. His talents, buried in obscurity, and uncalled for by the society of Lucilla, were now perpetually tempted into action, and stimulated by reward. It had never before appeared to him so charming a thing to shine; for, before, he had been sated with even that pleasure. Now, from long relaxation, it had become new; vanity had recovered its nice perception. He was no longer so absorbed as he had been by visionary images. He had given his fancy food in his long solitude, and with its wild co-mate; and being somewhat disappointed in the result, the living world became to him a fairer prospect than it had seemed while the world of imagination was untried. Nothing more confirms the health of the mind than indulging its favourite infirmity to its own cure. So Goethe, in his memoirs, speaking of Werther, remarks, that "the composition of that extravagant work cured his character of extravagance."

Godolphin thought often of Lucilla; but perhaps, if the truth of his heart were known even to himself, a certain sentiment of pain and humiliation was associated with the tenderness of his remembrance. With her he had led a life, romantic, it is true, but somewhat effeminate; and he thought now, surrounded by the gay and freshening tide of the world, somewhat mawkish in its romance. He did not experience a desire to return to the still lake and the gloomy pines;—he felt that Lucilla did not suffice to make his world. He would have wished to bring her to Rome; to live with her more in public than he had hitherto done; to conjoin, in short, her society, with the more recreative dissipation of the world: but there were many obstacles to this plan in his fastidious imagination. So new to the world, its ways, its fashions, so strange and infantine in all things, as Lucilla was, he trembled to expose her inexperience to the dangers that would beset it. He knew that his "friends" would pay very little respect to her reserve; and that for one so lovely and unhackneyed, the snares of the wildest and most subtle adepts of intrigue would be set. Godolphin did not undervalue Lucilla's pure and devoted heart; but he knew that the only sure antidote against the dangers of the world is the knowledge of the world. There was nothing in Lucilla that ever promised to attain that knowledge; her very nature seemed to depend on her ignorance of the nature of others. Joined to this fear and a confused sentiment of delicacy towards her, a certain remorseful feeling in himself made him dislike bringing their connexion immediately before the curious and malignant world: so much had circumstance, and Lucilla's own self-willed temper and uncalculating love, contributed to drive the poor girl into his arms,—and so truly had he chosen the generous not the selfish part, until passion and nature were exposed to a temptation that could have been withstood by none but the adherent to sterner principles than he (the creature of indolence and feeling) had ever clung to—that Godolphin, viewing his habits—his education—his whole bias and frame of mind—the estimates and customs of the world—may not, perhaps be very rigidly

judged for the nature of his tie to Lucilla. But I do not seek to excuse it, nor did he wholly excuse it to himself. The image of Voltman often occurred to him, and always in reproach. Living with Lucilla in a spot only trod by Italians, so indulgent to love, and where the whisper of shame could never reach her ear, or awaken his remorse, her state did not, however, seem to her or himself degraded, and the purity of her girlish mind almost forbade the intrusion of the idea. But to bring her into public—among his own countrymen—and to feel that the generous and devoted girl, now so unconscious of sin, would be rated by English eyes with the basest and most abandoned of the sex,—with the glorifiers in vice or the hypocrites for money,—this was a thought which he could not contemplate, and which he felt he would rather pass his life in solitude than endure. But this very feeling gave an embarrassment to his situation with Lucilla, and yet more fixedly combined her image with that of a wearisome seclusion and an eternal ennui.

From the thought of Lucilla, coupled with its many embarrassments, Godolphin turned with avidity to the easy enjoyments of life—enjoyments that ask no care and dispense with the trouble of reflection.

But among the visitors to Rome, the one whose sight gave to Godolphin the greatest pleasure was his old friend Augustus Saville. A decaying constitution, and a pulmonary attack in especial, had driven the accomplished voluptuary to a warmer climate. The meeting of the two friends was quite characteristic: it was at a soiree at an English house. Saville had managed to get up a whist-table.

"Look, Saville, there is Godolphin, your old friend!" cried the host, who was looking on the game, and waiting to cut in.

"Hist!" said Saville; "don't direct his attention to me until after the odd trick!"

Notwithstanding this coolness when a point was in question, Saville was extremely glad to meet his former pupil. They retired into a corner of the room, and talked over the world. Godolphin hastened to turn the conversation on Lady Erpingham.

"Ah!" said Saville, "I see from your questions, and yet more your tone of voice, that although it is now several years since you met, you still preserve the sentiment—the weakness—Ah!—bah!"

"Pshaw!" said Godolphin; "I owe her revenge, not love. But Erpingham? Does she love him? He is handsome."

"Erpingham? What—you have not heard——"

"Heard what?"

"Oh, nothing: but, pardon me, they wait for me at the card-table. I should like to stay with you, but you know one must not be selfish; the table would be broken up without me. No virtue without self-sacrifice—eh?"

"But one moment. What is the matter with the Erpinghams? have they quarrelled?"

"Quarrelled?—bah! Quarrelled—no; I dare say she likes him better now than ever she did before." And Saville limped away to the table.

Godolphin remained for some time abstracted and thoughtful. At length, just as he was going away, Saville, who, having an unplayable hand and a bad partner, had somewhat lost his interest in the game, looked up and beckoned to him.

"Godolphin, my clear fellow, I am to escort a lady to see the lions to-morrow; a widow—a rich widow; handsome, too. Do, for charity's sake, accompany us, or meet us at the Colosseum. How well that sounds—eh? About two."

Godolphin refused at first, but being pressed, assented.

Not surrounded by the lesser glories of modern Rome, but girt with the mighty desolation of the old city of Romulus, stands the most wonderful monument, perhaps, in the world, of imperial magnificence—the Flavian Amphitheatre, to which, it has been believed, the colossal statue of the worst of emperors gave that name (the Colosseum), allied with the least ennobling remembrances yet giving food to the loftiest thoughts. The least ennobling remembrances; for what can be more degrading than the amusements of a degraded people, who reserved meekness for their tyrants, and lavished ferocity on their shows? From that of the wild beast to that of the Christian martyr, blood has been the only sanctification of this temple to the Arts. The history of the Past broods like an air over those mighty arches; but Memory can find no reminiscence worthy of the spot. The amphitheatre was not built until history had become a record of the vice and debasement of the human race. The Faun and the Dryad had deserted the earth, no sweet superstition, the faith of the grotto and the green hill, could stamp

with a delicate and undying spell the labours of man. Nor could the ruder but august virtues of the heroic age give to the tradition of the arch and column some stirring remembrance or exalting thought. Not only the warmth of fancy, but the greatness of soul was gone; the only triumph left to genius was to fix on its page the gloomy vices which made the annals of the world. Tacitus is the Historian of the Colosseum. But the very darkness of the past gives to the thoughts excited within that immense pile a lofty but mournful character. A sense of vastness—for which, as we gaze, we cannot find words, but which bequeaths thoughts that our higher faculties would not willingly forego—creeps within us as we gaze on this Titan relic of gigantic crimes for ever passed away from the world.

And not only within the scene, but around the scene, what voices of old float upon the air? Yonder the triumphal arch of Constantine, its Corinthian arcades, and the history of Trajan sculptured upon its marble; the dark and gloomy verdure of the Palatine; the ruins of the palace of the Caesars; the mount of Fable, of Fame, of Luxury (the Three Epochs of Nations); the habitation of Saturn; the home of Tully; the sight of the Golden House of Nero! Look at your feet,—look around; the waving weed, the broken column—Time's witness, and the Earthquake's. In that contrast between grandeur and decay,—in the unutterable and awful solemnity that, while rife with the records of past ages, is sad also with their ravage, you have felt the nature of eternity!

Through this vast amphitheatre, and giving way to such meditations, Godolphin passed on alone, the day after his meeting with Saville; and at the hour he had promised the latter to seek him, he mounted the wooden staircase which conducts the stranger to the wonders above the arena, and by one of the arches that looked over the still pines that slept afar off in the sun of noon, he saw a female in deep mourning, whom Saville appeared to be addressing. He joined them; the female turned round, and he beheld, pale and saddened, but how glorious still, the face of Constance! To him the interview was unexpected, by her foreseen. The colour flushed over her cheek, the voice sank inaudible within. But Godolphin's emotion was more powerful and uncontrolled: violent tremblings literally shook him as he stood; he gasped for breath: the sight of the dead returned to earth would have affected him less.

In this immense ruin—in the spot where, most of earth, man feels the significance of an individual life, or of the rapid years over which it extends, he had encountered, suddenly, the being who had coloured all his existence. He was reminded at once of the grand epoch of his life and of its utter unimportance. But these are the thoughts that would occur rather to us than him. Thought at that moment was an intolerable flash that burst on him for an instant, and then left all in darkness. He clung to the shattered corridor for support. Constance seemed touched and surprised by so overwhelming an emotion, and the habitual hypocrisy in which women are reared, and by which they learn to conceal the sentiments they experience, and affect those they do not, came to her assistance and his own.

"It is many years, Mr. Godolphin," said she in a collected but soft voice, "since we met."

"Years!" repeated Godolphin, vaguely; and approaching her with a slow and faltering step. "Years! you have not numbered them!"

Saville had retired a few steps on Godolphin's arrival, and had watched with a sardonic yet indifferent smile the proof of his friend's weakness. He joined Godolphin, and said,—

"You must forgive me, my dear Godolphin, for not apprising you before of Lady Erpingham's arrival at Rome. But a delight is perhaps the greater for being sudden."

The word Erpingham thrilled displeasingly through Godolphin's veins; in some measure it restored him to himself. He bowed coldly, and muttered a few ceremonious words; and while he was yet speaking, some stragglers that had belonged to Lady Erpingham's party came up. Fortunately, perhaps, for the self-possession of both, they, the once lovers, were separated from each other. But whenever Constance turned her glance to Godolphin, she saw those large, searching, melancholy eyes, whose power she well recalled, fixed unmovingly on her, as seeking to read in her cheek the history of the years which had ripened its beauties—for another.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

DIALOGUE BETWEEN GODOLPHIN AND SAVILLE.—CERTAIN EVENTS EXPLAINED.—SAVILLE'S APOLOGY FOR A BAD HEART.—GODOLPHIN'S CONFUSED SENTIMENTS FOR LADY ERPINGHAM.

"Good Heavens! Constance Vernon once more free!"

"And did you not really know it? Your retreat by the lake must have been indeed seclusion. It is seven months since Lord Erpingham died."

"Do I dream?" murmured Godolphin, as he strode hurriedly to and fro the apartment of his friend.

Saville, stretched on the sofa, diverted himself with mixing snuffs on a little table beside him. Nothing is so mournfully amusing in life as to see what trifles the most striking occurrences to us appear to our friends.

"But," said Saville, not looking up, "you seem very incurious to know how he died, and where. You must learn that Erpingham had two ruling passions—one for horses, the other for fiddlers. In setting off for Italy he expected, naturally enough, to find the latter, but he thought he might as well export the former. He accordingly filled the vessel with quadrupeds, and the second day after landing he diverted the tedium of a foreign clime with a gentle ride. He met with a fall, and was brought home speechless. The loss of speech was not of great importance to his acquaintance; but he died that night, and the loss of his life was! for he gave very fair dinners—ah,—bah!" And Saville inhaled the fragrance of a new mixture.

Saville had a very pleasant way of telling a story, particularly if it related to a friend's death, or some such agreeable incident. "Poor Lady Erpingham was exceedingly shocked; and well she might be, for I don't think weeds become her. She came here by slow stages, in order that the illustrious Dead might chase away the remembrance of the deceased."

Your heart has not improved, Saville."

"Heart! What's that? Oh, a thing servant-maids have, and break for John the footman. Heart! my dear fellow, you are turned canter, and make use of words without meaning."

Godolphin was not prepared for a conversation of this order; and Saville, in a somewhat more serious air, continued:—"Every person, Godolphin, talks about the world. The world! it conveys different meanings to each, according to the nature of the circle which makes his world. But we all agree in one thing,—the worldliness of the world. Now, no man's world is so void of affection as ours—the polished, the courtly, the great world: the higher the air, the more pernicious to vegetation. Our very charm, our very fascination, depends upon a certain mockery; a subtle and fine ridicule on all persons and all things constitutes the essence of our conversation. Judge if that tone be friendly to the seriousness of the affections. Some poor dog among us marries, and household plebeianisms corrupt the most refined. Custom attaches the creature to his ugly wife and his squalling children; he grows affectionate, and becomes out of fashion. But we single men, dear Godolphin, have no one to care for but ourselves: the deaths that happen, unlike the ties that fall from the married men, do not interfere with our domestic comforts. We miss no one to make our tea, or give us our appetite-pills before dinner. Our losses are not intimate and household. We shrug our shoulders and are not a whit the worse for them. Thus, for want of grieving, and caring, and fretting, we are happy enough to grow—come, I will use an epithet to please you—hard-hearted! We congeal into philosophy; and are we not then wise in adopting this life of isolation and indifference?"

Godolphin, wrapt in reflection, scarcely heeded the voluptuary, but Saville continued: he had grown to that height in loneliness that he even loved talking to himself.

"Yes, wise! For this world is so filled with the selfish, that he who is not so labours under a disadvantage. Nor are we the worse for our apathy. If we jest at a man's misfortune, we do not do it to his face. Why not out of the ill, which is misfortune, extract good, which is amusement? Three men in this room are made cheerful by a jest at a broken leg in the next. Is the broken leg the worse for it? No; but the three men are made merry by the jest. Is the jest wicked, then? Nay, it is benevolence. But some cry, 'Ay, but this habit of disregarding misfortunes blunts your wills when you have the power to relieve them.' Relieve! was ever such delusion? What can we relieve in the vast mass of human misfortunes? As well might we take a drop from the ocean, and cry, 'Ha, ha! we have lessened the sea!' What are even your public charities? what your best institutions? How few of the multitude are relieved at all; how few of that few relieved permanently! Men die, suffer, starve just as soon, and just as numerously; these public institutions are only trees for the public conscience to go to roost upon. No, my dear fellow, everything I see in the world says, Take care of thyself. This is the true moral of life; every one who minds it gets on, thrives, and fattens; they who don't, come to us to borrow money, if gentlemen; or fall upon the parish, if plebeians. I mind it, my dear Godolphin; I have minded it all my life; I am very contented—content is the sign of virtue,—ah,—bah!"

Yes; Constance was a widow. The hand of her whom Percy Godolphin had loved so passionately, and whose voice even now thrilled to his inmost heart, and awakened the echoes that had slept for years, it was once more within her power to bestow, and within his to demand. What a host of emotions this thought gave birth to! Like the coming of the Hindoo god, she had appeared, and lo, there was a new world! "And her look," he thought, "was kind, her voice full of a gentle promise, her agitation was visible. She loves me still. Shall I fly to her feet? Shall I press for hope? And, oh what, what happiness! —but Lucilla!"

This recollection was indeed a barrier that never failed to present itself to every prospect of hope and joy which the image of Constance coloured and called forth. Even for the object of his first love, could he desert one who had forsaken all for him, whose life was wrapt up in his affection? The very coolness with which he was sensible he had returned the attachment of this poor girl made him more alive to the duties he owed her. If not bound to her by marriage, he considered with a generosity—barely, in truth, but justice, yet how rare in the world—that the tie between them was sacred, that only death could dissolve it. And now that tie was, perhaps, all that held him from attaining the dream of his past life.

Absorbed in these ideas, Godolphin contrived to let Saville's unsympathising discourse glide unheeded along, without reflecting its images on the sense, until the name of Lady Erpingham again awakened his attention.

"You are going to her this evening," said Saville; "and you may thank me for that; for I asked you if you were thither bound in her hearing, in order to force her into granting you an invitation. She only sees her most intimate friends—you, me, and Lady Charlotte Deerham. Widows are shy of acquaintance during their first affliction. I always manage, however, to be among the admitted—caustic is good for some wounds."

"Nay," said Godolphin, smiling, "it is your friendly disposition that makes them sure of sympathy."

"You have hit it. But," continued Saville, "do you think Madame likely to marry again, or shall you yourself adventure? Erpingham has left her nearly his whole fortune."

Irritated and impatient at Saville's tone, Godolphin rose. "Between you and me," said Saville, in wishing him goodbye, "I don't think she will ever marry again. Lady Erpingham is fond of power and liberty; even the young Godolphin—and you are not so handsome as you were—will find it a hopeless suit."

"Pshaw!" muttered Godolphin, as he departed. But the last words of Saville had created a new feeling in his breast. It was then possible, nay, highly probable, that he might have spared himself the contest he had undergone, and that the choice between Lucilla and Constance might never be permitted him. "At all events," said he, almost aloud, "I will see if this conjecture be true: if Constance, yet remembering our early love, yet feeling for the years of secret pining which her ambition bequeathed me, should appear willing to grant me the atonement fate has placed within her power, then, then, it will be time for this self-sacrifice."

The social relations of the sex often make men villanous—they more often make them weak.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

AN EVENING WITH CONSTANCE.

Constance's heart was in her eyes when she saw Godolphin that evening. She had, it is true, as Saville observed, been compelled by common courtesy to invite him; and although there was an embarrassment in their meeting, who shall imagine that it did not bring to Constance more of pleasure than pain? She had been deeply shocked by Lord Erpingham's sudden death: they had not been congenial minds, but the great have an advantage denied to the less wealthy orders. Among the former, a husband and wife need not weary each other with constant companionships; different establishments, different hours, different pursuits, allow them to pass life in great measure apart, so that there is no necessity for hatred, and indifference is the coldest feeling which custom induces.

Still in the prime of youth and at the zenith of her beauty, Constance was now independent. She was in the enjoyment of the wealth and rank her early habits of thought had deemed indispensable, and she now for the first time possessed the power of sharing them with whom she pleased. At this thought how naturally her heart flew back to Godolphin! And while she now gazed, although by stealth, at his countenance, as he sat at a little distance from her, and in his turn watched for the tokens of past remembrance, she was deeply touched by the change (light as it seemed to others) which years had brought to him; and in recalling the emotion he had testified at meeting her, she suffered her heart to soften, while it reproached her in whispering, "Thou art the cause!"—All the fire—the ardour of a character not then confirmed, which, when she last saw him spoke in his eye and mien, were gone for ever. The irregular brilliancy of his conversation—the earnestness of his air and gesture were replaced by a calm, and even, and melancholy composure. His forehead was stamped with the lines of thought; and the hair, grown thinner toward the temples, no longer concealed by its luxuriance the pale expanse of his brow. The air of delicate health which had at first interested her in his appearance, still lingered, and gave its wonted and ineffable charm to his low voice, and the gentle expression of his eyes. By degrees, the conversation, at first partial and scattered, became more general. Constance and Godolphin were drawn into it.

"It is impossible," said Godolphin, "to compare life in a southern climate with that which we lead in colder countries. There is an indolence, a laissez aller, a philosophical insouciance, produced by living under these warm suns, and apart from the ambition of the objects of our own nation, which produce at last a state of mind that divides us for ever from our countrymen. It is like living amidst perpetual music—a different kind of life—a soft, lazy, voluptuous romance of feeling, that indisposes us to action—almost to motion. So far from a sojourn in Italy being friendly to the growth of ambition, it nips and almost destroys the germ."

"In fact, it leaves us fit for nothing but love," said Saville; "an occupation that levels us with the silliest part of our species."

"Fools cannot love," said Lady Charlotte.

"Pardon me, love and folly are synonymous in more languages than the French," answered Saville.

"In truth," said Godolphin, "the love which you both allude to is not worth disputing about."

"What love is?" asked Saville.

"First love," cried Lady Charlotte; "is it not, Mr. Godolphin?"

Godolphin changed color, and his eyes met those of Constance. She too sighed and looked down: Godolphin remained silent.

"Nay, Mr. Godolphin, answer me," said Lady Charlotte; "I appeal to you!"

"First love, then," said Godolphin, endeavouring to speak composedly, "has this advantage over others—it is usually disappointed, and regret for ever keeps it alive."

The tone of his voice struck Constance to the heart. Nor did she speak again—save with visible effort—during the rest of the evening.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

CONSTANCE'S UNDIMINISHED LOVE FOR GODOLPHIN.—HER REMORSE AND HER HOPE.—THE CAPITOL.—THE DIFFERENT THOUGHTS OF GODOLPHIN AND CONSTANCE AT THE VIEW.—THE TENDER EXPRESSIONS OF CONSTANCE.

All that Constance heard from others of Godolphin's life since they parted, increased her long-nursed interest in his fate. His desultory habits, his long absences from cities, which were understood to be passed in utter and obscure solitude (for the partner of the solitude and its exact spot were not known), she coupled with the quiet melancholy in his aspect, with his half-reproachful glances toward herself, and with the emotions which he had given vent to in their conversation. And of this objectless and unsatisfactory life she was led to consider herself the cause. With a bitter pang she recalled his early words, when he said, "My future is in your hands;" and she contrasted his vivid energies—his cultivated mind—his high talents—with the life which had rendered them all so idle to others and unprofitable to himself. Few, very few, know how powerfully the sentiment that another's happiness is at her control speaks to a woman's heart. Accustomed to dependence herself, the feeling that another depends on her is the most soothing aliment to her pride. This makes a main cause of her love to her children; they would be incomparably less dear to her if they were made independent of her cares. And years, which had brought the young countess acquainted with the nothingness of the world, had softened and deepened the sources of her affections, in proportion as they had checked those of her ambition. She could not, she did not, seek to disguise from herself that Godolphin yet loved her; she anticipated the hour when he would avow that love, and when she might be permitted to atone for all of disappointment that her former rejection might have brought to him. She felt, too, that it would be a noble as well as delightful task, to awaken an intellect so brilliant to the natural objects of its display; to call forth into active life his teeming thought, and the rich eloquence with which he could convey it. Nor in this hope were her more selfish designs, her political schemings, and her desire of sway over those whom she loved to humble, forgotten; but they made, however,—to be just,—a small part of her meditations. Her hopes were chiefly of a more generous order. "I refused thee," she thought, "when I was poor and dependent—now that I have wealth and rank, how gladly will I yield them to thy bidding!"

But Godolphin, as if unconscious of this favorable bias of her inclinations, did not warm from his reserve. On the contrary, his first abstraction, and his first agitation, had both subsided into a distant and cool self-possession. They met often, but he avoided all nearer or less general communication. She saw, however, that his eyes were constantly in search of her, and that a slight trembling in his voice when he addressed her, belied the calmness of his manner. Sometimes, too, a word, or a touch from

her, would awaken the ill-concealed emotions—his lips seemed about to own the triumph of her and of the past; but, as if by a violent effort, they were again sealed; and not unoften, evidently unwilling to trust his self-command, he would abruptly depart. In short, Constance perceived that a strange embarrassment, the causes of which she could not divine, hung about him, and that his conduct was regulated by some secret motive, which did not spring from the circumstances that had occurred between them. For it was evident that he was not withheld by any resentment toward her from her former rejection: even his looks, his words, had betrayed that he had done more than forgive. Lady Charlotte Deerham had heard from Saville of their former attachment: she was a woman of the world, and thought it but common delicacy to give them all occasion to renew it. She always, therefore, took occasion to retire from the immediate vicinity of Constance whenever Godolphin approached, and, as if by accident, to leave them the opportunity to be sufficiently alone. This was a danger that Godolphin had, however, hitherto avoided. One day fate counteracted prudence, and a conference ensued which perplexed Constance and tried severely the resolution of Godolphin.

They went together to the Capitol, from whose height is beheld perhaps the most imposing landscape in the world. It was a sight pre-eminently calculated to arouse and inspire the ambitious and working mind of the young countess.

"Do you think," said she to Godolphin, who stood beside her, that there lives any one who could behold these countless monuments of eternal glory, and not sigh to recall the triteness, or rather burn to rise from the level, of our ordinary life?"

"Nay," said Godolphin, "to you the view may be an inspiration, to others a warning. The arch and the ruin you survey speak of change yet more eloquently than glory. Look on the spot where once was the temple of Romulus:—there stands the little church of an obscure saint. Just below you is the Tarpeian Rock: we cannot see it; it is hidden from us by a crowd of miserable houses. Along the ancient plain of the Campus Martins behold the numberless spires of a new religion, and the palaces of a modern race! Amidst them you see the triumphal columns of Trajan and Marcus Antoninus; but whose are the figures that crown their summits? St. Peter's and St. Paul's! And this awful wilderness of men's labours—this scene and token of human revolutions—inspires you with a love of glory; to me it proves its nothingness. An irresistible—a crushing sense of the littleness and brief life of our most ardent and sagacious achievements seems to me to float like a voice over the place!"

"And are you still, then," said Constance, with a half sigh, "dead to all but the enjoyment of the present moment?"

"No," replied Godolphin, in a low and trembling voice: "I am not dead to the regret of the past!"

Constance blushed deeply; but Godolphin, as if feeling he had committed himself too far, continued in a hurried tone:—"Let us turn our eyes," said he, "yonder among the olive groves. There

'Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife,'

were the summer retreats of Rome's brightest and most enduring spirits. There was the retirement of Horace and Mæcenas: there Brutus forgot his harsher genius; and there the inscrutable and profound Augustus indulged in those graceful relaxations—those sacrifices to wit, and poetry, and wisdom—which have made us do so unwilling and reserved a justice to the crimes of his earlier and the hypocrisy of his later years. Here, again, is a reproach to your ambition," added Godolphin, smiling; "his ambition made Augustus odious; his occasional forgetfulness of ambition alone redeems him."

"And what, then," said Constance, "would you consider inactivity the happiest life for one sensible of talents higher than the common standard?"

"Nay, let those talents be devoted to the discovery of pleasures, not the search after labours; the higher our talents, the keener our perceptions; the keener our perceptions the more intense our capacities for pleasure:[1]—let pleasure then, be our object. Let us find out what is best fitted to give our peculiar tastes gratification, and, having found out, steadily pursue it."

"Out on you! it is a selfish, an ignoble system," said Constance. "You smile—well, I may be unphilosophical, I do not deny it. But, give me one hour of glory, rather than a life of luxurious indolence. Oh, would," added Constance, kindling as she spoke, "that you—you, Mr. Godolphin,—with an intellect so formed for high accomplishment—with all the weapons and energies of life at your command,—would that you could awaken to a more worthy estimate—pardon me—of the uses of exertion! Surely, surely, you must be sensible of the calls that your country, that mankind, have at this epoch of the world, upon all—all, especially, possessing your advantages and powers. Can we pierce one inch beyond the surface of society, and not see that great events are hastening to their birth? Will you let those inferior to yourself hurry on before you, and sit inactive while they win the reward? Will

you have no share in the bright drama that is already prepared behind the dark curtain of fate, and which will have a world for its spectators? Ah, how rejoiced, how elated with myself I should feel, if I could will over one like you to the great cause of honourable exertion!"

For one instant Godolphin's eye sparkled, and his pale cheek burned—but the transient emotion faded away as he answered—

"Eight years ago, when she who spoke to me was Constance Vernon, her wish might have moulded me according to her will. Now," and he struggled with emotion, and turned away his face,—“now it is too late!"

Constance was smitten to the heart. She laid her hand gently on his arm, and said, in a sweet and soothing tone, "No, Percy, not too late!"

At that instant, and before Godolphin could reply, they were joined by Saville and Lady Charlotte Deerham.

[1] I suppose Godolphin by the word pleasure rather signifies happiness.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

LUCILLA'S LETTER.—THE EFFECT IT PRODUCES ON GODOLPHIN.

The short conversation recorded in the last chapter could not but show to Godolphin the dangerous ground on which his fidelity to Lucilla rested. Never before,—no, not in the young time of their first passion, had Constance seemed to him so lovely or so worthy of love. Her manners now were so much more soft and unreserved than they had necessarily been at a period when Constance had resolved not to listen to his addresses or her own heart, that the only part of her character that had ever repulsed his pride or offended his tastes seemed vanished for ever. A more subdued and gentle spirit had descended on her surpassing beauty, and the change was of an order that Percy Godolphin could especially appreciate. And the world, for which he owned reluctantly that she yet lived too much, had, nevertheless, seemed rather to enlarge and animate the natural nobleness of her mind, than to fritter it down to the standard of its common votaries. When she spoke he delighted in, even while he dissented from, the high and bold views which she conceived. He loved her indignation of all that was mean and low—her passion for all that was daring and exalted. Never was he cast down from the height of the imaginative part of his love by hearing from her lips one petty passion or one sordid desire; much about her was erroneous, but all was lofty and generous—even in error. And the years that had divided them had only taught him to feel more deeply how rare was the order of her character, and how impossible it was ever to behold her like. All the sentiments, faculties, emotions, which in his affection for Lucilla had remained dormant, were excited into full play the moment he was in the presence of Constance. She engrossed no petty portion—she demanded and obtained the whole empire—of his soul. And against this empire he had now to contend! Torn as he was by a thousand conflicting emotions, a letter from Lucilla was suddenly put into his hands; its contents were as follows:—

LUCILLA'S LETTER.

"Thy last letter, my love, was so short and hurried, that it has not cost me my usual pains to learn it by heart; nor (shall I tell the truth?) have I been so eager as I once was to commit all thy words to my memory. Why, I know not, and will guess not,—but there is something ill thy letters since we parted that chills me;—they throw back my heart upon itself. I tear open the seal with so much eagerness—thou wouldst smile if thou couldst see me, and when I discover how few are the words upon which I am to live for many days, I feel sick and disappointed, and lay down the letter. Then I chide myself and say, 'At least these few words will be kind!'—and I spell them one by one, not to hurry over my only solace. Alas! before I arrive at the end, I am blinded by my tears; my love for thee, so bounding and full of life, seems frozen and arrested at every line. And then I lie down for very weariness, and wish to die. O God, if the time has come which I have always dreaded—if thou shouldst no longer love me!—And how reasonable this fear is! For what am I to thee? How often dost thou complain that I can understand thee not—how often dost thou imply that there is much of thy nature which I am incapable— unworthy—to learn! If this be so, how natural is it to dread that thou wilt find others whom thou wilt fancy more congenial to thee, and that absence will only remind thee more of my imperfections!

"And yet I think that I have read thee to the letter; I think that my love, which is always following thee, always watching thee, always conjecturing thy wishes, must have penetrated into every secret of thy heart: only I want words to express what I feel, and thou layest the blame upon the want of feeling! I know how untutored, how ignorant, I must seem to thee; and sometimes—and lately very often—I reproach myself that I have not more diligently sought to make myself a worthier companion to thee. I think if I had the same means as others; I should acquire the same facility of expressing my thoughts;

and my thoughts thou couldst never blame, for I know that they are full of a love to thee which—not the wisest—the most brilliant—whom thou mayest see could equal even in imagination. But I have sought to mend this deficiency since we parted; and I have looked into all the books thou hast loved to read, and I fancy that I have imbibed now the same ideas which pleased thee, and in which once thou imaginedst I could not sympathise. Yet how mistaken thou hast been! I see, by marks thou hast placed on the page, the sentiments that more especially charm thee; and I know that I have felt them much, oh! how much more deeply and vividly than they are there expressed—only they seem to me to have no language—methinks that I have learned the language now. And I have taught myself songs that thou wilt love to hear when thou returnest home to me; and I have practised music, and I think—nay, I am sure, that time will not pass so heavily with thee as when thou wast last here.

"And when shall I see thee again?—forgive me if I press thee to return. Thou hast stayed away longer than thou hast been wont; but that I would not heed; it is not the number of days, but the sensations with which I have counted them, that make me pine for thy beloved voice, and long once more to behold thee. Never before did I so feel thy absence, never before was I so utterly wretched. A secret voice whispers me that we are parted for ever. I cannot withstand the omens of my own heart. When my poor father lived, I did not, child as I was, partake of those sentiments with which he was wont to say the stars inspired us. I could not see in them the borders of fear and the preachers of sad tidings; they seemed to me only full of serenity and tenderness, and the promise of enduring love! And ever when I looked on them, I thought of thee; and thy image to me then, as thou knowest it was from childhood, was bright with unimaginable but never melancholy spells. But now, although I love thee so far more powerfully, I cannot divest the thoughts of thee from a certain sadness; and so the stars, which are like thee, which are full of thee, have a sadness also! And this, the bed, where every morning I stretch my arms for thee, and find thee not, and have yet to live through the day, and on which I now write this letter to thee—for, I who used to rise with the sun, am now too dispirited not to endeavour to cheat the weary day—I have made them place nearer to the window; and I look out upon the still skies every night, and have made a friend of every star I see. I question it of thyself, and wonder, when thou lookest at it, if thou hast any thought of me. I love to look upon the heavens much more than upon the earth; for the trees, and the waters and the hills around, thou canst not behold; but the same heaven which I survey is above thee also; and this, our common companion, seems in some measure to unite us. And I have thought over my father's lore, and have tried to learn it; Day, thou mayest smile, but it is thy absence that has taught me superstition.

"But tell me, dearest, kindest, tell me when—oh, when wilt thou return? Return only this once—if but for a day, and I will never persecute thee again. Truant as thou art, thou shalt have full liberty for life. But I cannot tell thee how sad and heavy I am grown, and every hour knocks at my heart like a knell! Come back to thy poor Lucilla—if only to see what joy is! Come—I know thou wilt! But should anything I do not foresee detain thee, fix at least the day—nay, if possible, the hour—when we shall meet, and let the letter which conveys such happy tidings be long, and kind, and full of thee, as thy letters once were. I know I weary thee, but I cannot help it. I am weak, and dejected, and cast down, and have only heart enough to pray for thy return."

"You have conquered—you have conquered, Lucilla!" said Godolphin, as he kissed this wild and reproachful letter, and thrust it into his bosom; "and I—I will be wretched rather than you shall be so!"

His heart rebuked him even for that last sentence. This pure and devoted attachment, was it indeed an unhappiness to obtain, and a sacrifice to return! Stung by his thoughts, and impatient of rest, he hurried into the air;—he traversed the city; he passed St. Sebastian's Gate, gained the Appia Via, and saw, lone and sombre, as of old—the house of the departed Volkman. He had half unconsciously sought that direction, in order to strengthen his purpose, and sustain his conscience in its right path. He now hurried onwards, and stopped not till he stood in that lovely and haunted spot—the valley of Egeria—in which he had met Lucilla on the day that he first learned her love. There was a gloom over the scene now, for the day was dark and clouded: the birds were silent; a heavy oppression seemed to brood upon the air. He entered that grotto which is the witness of the most beautiful love-story chronicled even in the soft south. He recalled the passionate and burning emotions which, the last time he had been within that cell, he had felt for Lucilla, and had construed erroneously into real love. As he looked around, how different an aspect the spot wore! Then, those walls, that spring, even that mutilated statue, had seemed to him the encouragers of the soft sensations he had indulged. Now, they appeared to reprove the very weakness which hallowed themselves—the associations spoke to him in another tone. The broken statue of the river god—the desert silence in which the water of the sweet fountain keeps its melancholy course—the profound and chilling Solitude of the spot—all seemed eloquent, not of love, but the broken hope and the dreary loneliness that succeed it! The gentle plant (the capillaire) that overhangs the sides of the grotto, and nourishes itself on the dews of the fountain, seemed an emblem of love itself after disappointment—the love that might henceforth be Lucilla's—drooping in silence on the spot once consecrated to rapture, and feeding itself with tears. There was something

mocking to human passion in the very antiquity of the spot; four-and-twenty centuries had passed away since the origin of the tale that made it holy—and that tale, too, was fable! What, in this vast accumulation of the sands of time, was a solitary atom! What, among the millions, the myriads, that around that desolate spot had loved, and forgotten love, was the brief passion of one mortal, withering as it sprung! Thus differently moralises the heart, according to the passion which bestows on it the text.

Before he regained his home, Godolphin's resolve was taken. The next day he had promised Constance to attend her to Tivoli; he resolved then to take leave of her, and on the following day to return to Lucilla. He remembered, with bitter reproach, that he had not written to her for a length of time, treble the accustomed interval between his letters; and felt that, while at the moment she had written the lines he had now pressed to his bosom, she was expecting, with unutterable fondness and anxiety, to receive his lukewarm assurances of continued love, the letter he was about to write in answer to hers was the first one that would greet her eyes. But he resolved, that in that letter, at least, she should not be disappointed. He wrote at length, and with all the outpourings of a tenderness reawakened by remorse. He informed her of his immediate return, and even forced himself to dwell upon it with kindly hypocrisy of transport. For the first time for several weeks, he felt satisfied with himself as he sealed his letter. It is doubtful whether that letter Lucilla ever received.

CHAPTER XL.

TIVOLI.—THE SIREN'S CAVE.—THE CONFESSION.

Along the deathly Campagna, a weary and desolate length of way,—through a mean and squalid row of houses—you thread your course; and behold—Tivoli bursts upon you!

"Look—look!" cried Constance, with enthusiasm, as she pointed to the rushing torrent that, through matted trees and cragged precipices, thundered on.

Astonished at the silence of Godolphin, whom scenery was usually so wont to kindle and inspire, she turned hastily round, and her whole tide of feeling was revulsed by the absorbed but intense dejection written on his countenance. "Why," said she, after a short pause, and affecting a playful smile, "why, how provoking is this! In general, not a common patch of green with an old tree in the centre, not a common rivulet with a willow hanging over it, escapes you. You insist upon our sharing your raptures—you dilate on the picturesque—you rise into eloquence; nay, you persuade us into your enthusiasm, or you quarrel with us for our coldness; and now, with this divinest of earthly scenes around us,—when even Lady Charlotte is excited, and Mr. Saville forgets himself, you are stricken into silence and apathy! The reason—if it be not too abstruse?"

"It is here!" said Godolphin, mournfully, and pressing his hand to his heart.

Constance turned aside; she indulged herself with the hope that he alluded to former scenes, and despaired of the future from their remembrance. She connected his melancholy with herself, and knew that, when referred to her, she could dispel it. Inspired by this idea, and exhilarated by the beauty of the morning, and the wonderful magnificence of nature, she indulged her spirits to overflowing. And as her brilliant mind lighted up every subject it touched, now glowing over description, now flashing into remark, Godolphin at one time forgot, and at another more keenly felt, the magnitude of the sacrifice he was about to make. But every one knows that feeling which, when we are unhappy, illumines (if I may so speak) our outward seeming from the fierceness of our inward despair,—that recklessness which is the intoxication of our grief.

By degrees Godolphin broke from his reserve. He seemed to catch the enthusiasm of Constance; he echoed back—he led into new and more dazzling directions—the delighted remarks of his beautiful companion. His mind, if not profoundly learned, at least irregularly rich, in the treasures of old times, called up a spirit from every object. The waterfall, the ruin, the hollow cave—the steep bank crested with the olive—the airy temple, the dark pomp of the cypress grove, and the roar of the headlong Anio,—all he touched with the magic of the past—clad with the glories of history and of legend—and decked ever and anon with the flowers of the eternal Poesy that yet walks, mourning for her children, amongst the vines and waterfalls of the ancient Tibur. And Constance, as she listened to him, entranced, until she herself unconsciously grew silent, indulged without reserve in that, the proudest luxury of love—pride in the beloved object. Never had the rare and various genius of Godolphin appeared so worthy of admiration. When his voice ceased, it seemed to Constance like a sudden blank in the creation.

Godolphin and the young countess were several paces before the little party, and they now took their way towards the Siren's Cave. The path that leads to that singular spot is humid with an eternal spray; and it is so abrupt and slippery, that in order to preserve your footing, you must cling to the bushes that vegetate around the sides of the precipice.

"Let us dispense with our guide," said Godolphin. "I know every part of the way, and I am sure you share with me in dislike to these hackneyed indicators and sign-posts for admiration. Let us leave him to Lady Charlotte and Saville, and suffer me to be your guide to the cavern." Constance readily enough assented, and they proceeded. Saville, by no means liking the difficult and perilous path which was to lead only to a very cold place, soon halted; and suggested to Lady Charlotte the propriety of doing the same. Lady Charlotte much preferred the wit of her companion's conversation to the picturesque. "Besides," as she said, "she had seen the cave before." Accordingly, they both waited for the return of the more adventurous countess and her guide.

Unconscious of the defalcation of her friends, and not—from the attention that every step required—once looking behind, Constance continued. And now, how delightful to her seemed that rugged way, as, with every moment, Godolphin's care—Godolphin's hand became necessary; and he, inspired, inflamed by her company, by her touch, by the softness of her manner, and the devotion of her attention—no, no! not yet was Lucilla forgotten!

And now they stood within the Siren's Cave. From this spot alone you can view that terrible descent of waters which rushes to earth like the coming of a god! The rocks dripped around them—the torrent dashed at their very feet. Down—down, in thunder, for ever and for ever, dashed the might of the maddening element; above, all wrath; below, all blackness;—there, the cataract; here, the abyss. Not a moment's pause to the fury, not a moment's silence to the roar;—forward to the last glimpse of the sun—the curse of labour, and the soul of unutterable strength, shall be upon those waters! The demon, tormented to an eternity, filling his dread dwelling-place with the unresting and unearthly voice of his rage and despair, is the only type meet for the spirit of the cataract.

And there—amidst this awful and tremendous eternity of strife and power—stood two beings whose momentary existence was filled with the master-passion of humanity. And that passion was yet audible there: the nature without coal; I not subdue that within. Even amidst the icy showers of spray that fell around, and would have frozen the veins of others, Godolphin felt the burning at his heart. Constance was indeed utterly lost in a whirl and chaos of awe and admiration, which deprived her of all words. But it was the nature of her wayward lover to be aroused only to the thorough knowledge of his powers and passions among the more unfrequent and fierce excitements of life. A wild emotion now urged him on; something of that turbulent exaggeration of mind which gave rise to a memorable and disputed saying—"If thou stoodest on a precipice with thy mistress, hast thou ever felt the desire to plunge with her into the abyss?—If so—thou hast loved!" No doubt the sentiment is exaggerated, but there are times when love is exaggerated too. And now Constance, without knowing it, had clung closer and closer to Godolphin. His hand at first—now his arm—supported her; and at length, by an irresistible and maddening impulse, he clasped her to his breast, and whispered in a voice which was heard by her even amidst the thunder of the giant waters, "Here, here, my early—my only love, I feel, in spite of myself, that I never utterly, fully, adored you until now!"

CHAPTER XLI.

LUCILLA.—THE SOLITUDE.—THE SPELL.—THE DREAM AND THE RESOLVE.

While the above events, so fatal to Lucilla, were in progress at Rome, she was holding an unquiet commune with her own passionate and restless heart, by the borders of the lake, whose silver quiet mocked the mind it had, in happier moments, reflected. She had now dragged on the weary load of time throughout the winter; and the early and soft spring was already abroad—smoothing the face of the waters, and calling life into the boughs. Hitherto this time of the year had possessed a mysterious and earnest attraction for Lucilla—now all its voices were mute. The letters that Godolphin had written to her were so few, and so restrained, in comparison with those which she had received in the former periods of absence, that—ever alive as she was to impulse, and unregulated by settled principles of hope—her only relief to a tearful and spiritless dejection was in paroxysms of doubt, jealousy, and despair.

It is the most common thing in the world, that, when we have once wronged a person, we go on in the wrong, from a certain soreness with which conscience links the associations of the injured party. And thus, Godolphin, struggling with the return to his early and never-forgotten love, felt an unwillingness that he could seldom successfully combat, in playing the hypocrite to Lucilla. His very remorse made him unkind; the feeling that he ought to write often, made him write seldom: and conscious that he ought to return her expressions of eager devotion, he returned them with involuntary awkwardness and reserve. All this is very natural, and very evident to us; but a thousand mysteries were more acceptable to, more sought for and more clung to, by Lucilla, than a conjecture at the truth.

Meanwhile she fed more and more eagerly on those vain researches which yet beguiled her time, and flattered her imagination. In a science so false, and so unprofitable, it mattered, happily, little, whether

or not the poor disciple laboured with success; but I need scarcely tell to any who have had the curiosity to look over the entangled schemes and quaint figures of the art, how slender was the advancement of the daughter in the learning of the sire. Still it was a comfort and a soothing, even to look upon the placid heaven, and form a conjecture as to the language of its stars. And, above all, while she questioned the future, she thought only of her lover. But day after day passed—no letter, or worse than none; and at length Lucilla became utterly impatient of all rest: a nervous fever possessed her; the extreme solitude of the place filled her with that ineffable sensation of irritability which sometimes preludes the madness that has been produced in criminals by solitary confinement.

On the day that she wrote that letter to Godolphin which I have transcribed, this painful tension of the nerves was more than hitherto acute. She longed to fly somewhere; nay, once or twice, she remembered that Rome was easily gained, that she might be there as expeditiously as her letter. Although in that letter only we have signified that Lucilla had expressed her wish for Godolphin's return; yet, in all her later letters, she had (perhaps, more timidly) urged that desire. But they had not taken the same hold on Godolphin; nor, while he was playing with his danger, had they produced the same energetic resolution. Lucilla could not, however, hope with much reason that the success of her present letter would be greater than that of her former ones; and, at all events, she did not anticipate an immediate compliance with her prayers. She looked forward to some excuses, and to some delay. We cannot, therefore, wonder that she felt a growing desire to follow her own epistle to Rome; and although she had been prevented before, and still drew back from absolutely favoring and enforcing the idea, by the fear of Godolphin's displeasure; yet she trusted enough to his gentleness of character to feel sure that the displeasure could scarcely be lasting. Still the step was bold, and Lucilla loved devotedly enough to be timid; and besides, her inexperience made her look upon the journey as a far more formidable expedition than it really was.

Debating the notion in her mind, she sought her usual retreat, and turned listlessly over the books which she had so lately loved to study. At length, in moving one she had not looked into before, a paper fell to the ground; she picked it up; it was the paper containing that figure, which it will be remembered, the astrologer had shown to his daughter, as a charm to produce dreams prophetic of any circumstance or person concerning whom the believer might be anxious to learn aught. As she saw the image, which, the reader will recollect, was of a remarkable design, the whole of her conversation with Volkman on the subject rushed into her mind, and she resolved that very night to prove the efficacy of the charm on which he had so confidently insisted. Fraught with the chimerical delusion, she now longed for the hours to pass, and the night to come. She looked again and again at the singular image and the portentous figures wrought upon the charm; the very strangeness of the characters inspired her, as was natural, with a belief of their efficacy; and she felt a thrill, an awe, creep over her blood, as the shadows of eve, deepening over the far mountains, brought on the time of trial. At length it was night, and Lucilla sought her chamber.

The hour was exceedingly serene, and the stars shone through the casement with a lustre that to her seemed ominous. With bare feet, and only in her night-robe, she stole tremblingly across the threshold. She paused for a moment at the window, and looked out on the deep and quiet night; and as she so stood, it was a picture that, had I been a painter, I would have devoted a youth to accomplish. Half in light—half in shadow—her undress gave the outline, and somewhat more, of a throat and breast, whose roundness, shape, and hue, never were surpassed. Her arms were lightly crossed above her bosom; and her long rich hair seeming darker by that light, fell profusely, yet not dishevelled, around her neck; parting from her brow. Her attitude at that moment was quite still, as if in worship, and perhaps it was; her face was inclined slightly upward, looking to the heavens and towards Rome. But that face—there was the picture! It was so young, so infantine, so modest; and yet, the youth and the timidity were elevated and refined by the earnest doubt, the preternatural terror, the unearthly hope, which dwelt upon her forehead—her parted lip, and her wistful and kindled eye. There was a sublimity in her loneliness and her years, and in the fond and vain superstition, which was but a spirit called from the deeps of an unfathomable and mighty love. And afar was heard the breaking of the lake in upon the shore—no other sound! And now, among the unwavering pines, there was a silver shimmer as the moon rose into her empire, and deepened at once, along the universal scene, the loveliness and the awe.

Lucilla turned from the window, and kneeling down wrote with a trembling hand upon the figure one word—the name of Godolphin. She then placed it under her pillow, and the spell was concluded. The astrologer had told her of the necessary co-operation which the mind must afford to the charm; but it will easily be believed that Lucilla required no injunction to let her imagination dwell upon the vision she expected to invoke. And it would have been almost strange, if, so intently and earnestly brooding, as she had done over the image of Godolphin, that image had not, without recurring to any cabalistical spells, been present to her dreams.

She thought that it was broad noonday, and that she was sitting alone in the house she then inhabited, and weeping bitterly. Of a sudden the voice of Godolphin called to her; she ran eagerly forth,

but no sooner had she passed the threshold, than the scene so familiar to her vanished, and she was alone in an immense and pathless wilderness; there was no tree and no water in this desert; all was arid, solitary, and inanimate. But what seemed most strange to her was that in the heavens, although they were clear and bright, there was neither sun nor stars; the light seemed settled and stagnant—there was in it no life.

And she thought that she continued to move involuntarily along the waste; and that, ever and anon, she yearned and strove to rest, but her limbs did not obey her will, and a power she could not control urged her onward.

And now there was no longer an utter dumbness and death over the scene. Forth from the sands, as from the bowels of the reluctant earth, there crept, one by one, loathly and reptile shapes; obscene sounds rang in her ears—now in a hideous mockery, now in a yet more sickening solicitation. Shapes of terror thickened and crowded round her. She was roused by dread into action; she hurried faster and faster; she strove to escape; and ever as she fled, the sounds grew louder, and the persecuting shapes more ghastly,—abominations which her pure mind shuddered to behold, presented themselves at every turn: there was no spot for refuge, no cave for concealment. Wearied and despairing, she stopped short; but then the shapes and sounds seemed gradually to lose their terror; her eye and ear became familiar to them; and what at first seemed foes, grew into companions.

And now, again, the wilderness was gone; she stood in a strange spot, and opposite, and gazing upon her with intent and mournful eyes, stood Godolphin. But he seemed much older than he was, and the traces of care were ploughed deeply on his countenance; and above them both hung a motionless and livid cloud; and from the cloud a gigantic hand was stretched forth, pointing with a shadowy and unmoving finger towards a quarter of the earth which was enveloped in a thick gloom. While she sought with straining eyes, to penetrate the darkness of the spot thus fearfully marked out, she thought Godolphin vanished, and all was suddenly and utter night—night, but not stillness—for there was a roar as of many winds, and a dashing of angry waters, that seemed close beneath; and she heard the trees groan and bend, and felt the icy and rushing air: the tempests were abroad. But amidst the mingling of the mighty sounds, she heard distinctly the ringing of a horse's hoofs; and presently a wild cry, in which she recognised the voice of Godolphin, rang forth, adding to the wrath of nature the yet more appalling witness of a human despair. The cry was followed by the louder dashing of the waves, and the fiercer turmoil of the winds; and then her anguish and horror freeing her from the Prison of Sleep, she woke.

It was nearly day, but the serenity of the late night had gone; the rain fell in torrents, and the house shook beneath the fury of a violent storm. This change in the mood of nature had probably influenced the latter part of her dream. But Lucilla thought of no natural solution to the dreadful vision she had undergone. Her superstition was confirmed and ratified by the intense impression wrought upon her mind by the dream. A thousand unutterable fears, fears for Godolphin, rather than herself—or if for herself, only in connection with him—bore irresistible despotism over her thoughts. She could not endure to wait, to linger any longer in the dark and agitated suspense she herself had created; the idea she before had nursed now became resolve, she determined forthwith to set out for Rome—to see Godolphin. She rose, woke her attendant, and that very day she put her resolution into effect.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK GODOLPHIN, VOLUME 4 ***

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