

ЭДВАРД БУЛЬВЕР-ЛИТТОН

**NIGHT AND
MORNING, VOLUME 4**

Эдвард Джордж Бульвер-Литтон
Night and Morning, Volume 4

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Night and Morning, Volume 4:*

Edward Bulwer Lytton

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Book IV

CHAPTER I

"O that sweet gleam of sunshine on the lake!"
WILSON'S City of the Plague

If, reader, you have ever looked through a solar microscope at the monsters in a drop of water, perhaps you have wondered to yourself how things so terrible have been hitherto unknown to you—you have felt a loathing at the limpid element you hitherto deemed so pure—you have half fancied that you would cease to be a water-drinker; yet, the next day you have forgotten the grim life that started before you, with its countless shapes, in that teeming globule; and, if so tempted by your thirst, you have not shrunk from the lying crystal, although myriads of the horrible Unseen are mangling, devouring, gorging each other in the liquid you so tranquilly imbibe; so is it with that ancestral and master element called Life. Lapped in your sleek comforts, and lolling on the sofa of your patent conscience—when, perhaps

for the first time, you look through the glass of science upon one ghastly globule in the waters that heave around, that fill up, with their succulence, the pores of earth, that moisten every atom subject to your eyes or handled by your touch—you are startled and dismayed; you say, mentally, "Can such things be? I never dreamed of this before! I thought what was invisible to me was non-existent in itself—I will remember this dread experiment." The next day the experiment is forgotten.—The Chemist may purify the Globule—can Science make pure the World?

Turn we now to the pleasant surface, seen in the whole, broad and fair to the common eye. Who would judge well of God's great designs, if he could look on no drop pendent from the rose-tree, or sparkling in the sun, without the help of his solar microscope?

It is ten years after the night on which William Gawtreay perished:—I transport you, reader, to the fairest scenes in England,—scenes consecrated by the only true pastoral poetry we have known to Contemplation and Repose.

Autumn had begun to tinge the foliage on the banks of Winandermere. It had been a summer of unusual warmth and beauty; and if that year you had visited the English lakes, you might, from time to time, amidst the groups of happy idlers you encountered, have singled out two persons for interest, or, perhaps, for envy. Two who might have seemed to you in peculiar harmony with those serene and soft retreats, both young—both beautiful. Lovers you would have guessed them to be; but such lovers as Fletcher might have placed under the care of his "Holy

Shepherdess"— forms that might have reclined by

"The virtuous well, about whose flowery banks
The nimble-footed fairies dance their rounds
By the pale moonshine."

For in the love of those persons there seemed a purity and innocence that suited well their youth and the character of their beauty. Perhaps, indeed, on the girl's side, love sprung rather from those affections which the spring of life throws upward to the surface, as the spring of earth does its flowers, than from that concentrated and deep absorption of self in self, which alone promises endurance and devotion, and of which first love, or rather the first fancy, is often less susceptible than that which grows out of the more thoughtful fondness of maturer years. Yet he, the lover, was of so rare and singular a beauty, that he might well seem calculated to awake, to the utmost, the love which wins the heart through the eyes.

But to begin at the beginning. A lady of fashion had, in the autumn previous to the year in which our narrative re-opens, taken, with her daughter, a girl then of about eighteen, the tour of the English lakes. Charmed by the beauty of Winandermere, and finding one of the most commodious villas on its banks to be let, they had remained there all the winter. In the early spring a severe illness had seized the elder lady, and finding herself, as she slowly recovered, unfit for the gaities of a London season, nor unwilling, perhaps,—for she had been a

beauty in her day—to postpone for another year the debut of her daughter, she had continued her sojourn, with short intervals of absence, for a whole year. Her husband, a busy man of the world, with occupation in London, and fine estates in the country, joined them only occasionally, glad to escape the still beauty of landscapes which brought him no rental, and therefore afforded no charm to his eye.

In the first month of their arrival at Winandermere, the mother and daughter had made an eventful acquaintance in the following manner.

One evening, as they were walking on their lawn, which sloped to the lake, they heard the sound of a flute, played with a skill so exquisite as to draw them, surprised and spellbound, to the banks. The musician was a young man, in a boat, which he had moored beneath the trees of their demesne. He was alone, or, rather, he had one companion, in a large Newfoundland dog, that sat watchful at the helm of the boat, and appeared to enjoy the music as much as his master. As the ladies approached the spot, the dog growled, and the young man ceased, though without seeing the fair causes of his companion's displeasure. The sun, then setting, shone full on his countenance as he looked round; and that countenance was one that might have haunted the nymphs of Delos; the face of Apollo, not as the hero, but the shepherd—not of the bow, but of the lute—not the Python-slayer, but the young dreamer by shady places—he whom the sculptor has portrayed leaning idly against the tree—the boy-god whose home is yet on

earth, and to whom the Oracle and the Spheres are still unknown.

At that moment the dog leaped from the boat, and the elder lady uttered a faint cry of alarm, which, directing the attention of the musician, brought him also ashore. He called off his dog, and apologised, with a not ungraceful mixture of diffidence and ease, for his intrusion. He was not aware the place was inhabited—it was a favourite haunt of his—he lived near. The elder lady was pleased with his address, and struck with his appearance. There was, indeed, in his manner that indefinable charm, which is more attractive than mere personal appearance, and which can never be imitated or acquired. They parted, however, without establishing any formal acquaintance. A few days after, they met at dinner at a neighbouring house, and were introduced by name. That of the young man seemed strange to the ladies; not so theirs to him. He turned pale when he heard it, and remained silent and aloof the rest of the evening. They met again and often; and for some weeks—nay, even for months—he appeared to avoid, as much as possible, the acquaintance so auspiciously begun; but, by little and little, the beauty of the younger lady seemed to gain ground on his diffidence or repugnance. Excursions among the neighbouring mountains threw them together, and at last he fairly surrendered himself to the charm he had at first determined to resist.

This young man lived on the opposite side of the lake, in a quiet household, of which he was the idol. His life had been one of almost monastic purity and repose; his tastes

were accomplished, his character seemed soft and gentle; but beneath that calm exterior, flashes of passion—the nature of the poet, ardent and sensitive—would break forth at times. He had scarcely ever, since his earliest childhood, quitted those retreats; he knew nothing of the world, except in books—books of poetry and romance. Those with whom he lived—his relations, an old bachelor, and the cold bachelor's sisters, old maids—seemed equally innocent and inexperienced. It was a family whom the rich respected and the poor loved—inoffensive, charitable, and well off. To whatever their easy fortune might be, he appeared the heir. The name of this young man was Charles Spencer; the ladies were Mrs. Beaufort, and Camilla her daughter.

Mrs. Beaufort, though a shrewd woman, did not at first perceive any danger in the growing intimacy between Camilla and the younger Spencer. Her daughter was not her favourite—not the object of her one thought or ambition. Her whole heart and soul were wrapped in her son Arthur, who lived principally abroad. Clever enough to be considered capable, when he pleased, of achieving distinction, good-looking enough to be thought handsome by all who were on the *qui vive* for an advantageous match, good-natured enough to be popular with the society in which he lived, scattering to and fro money without limit,—Arthur Beaufort, at the age of thirty, had established one of those brilliant and evanescent reputations, which, for a few years, reward the ambition of the fine gentleman. It was precisely the reputation that the mother could appreciate, and

which even the more saving father secretly admired, while, ever respectable in phrase, Mr. Robert Beaufort seemed openly to regret it. This son was, I say, everything to them; they cared little, in comparison, for their daughter. How could a daughter keep up the proud name of Beaufort? However well she might marry, it was another house, not theirs, which her graces and beauty would adorn. Moreover, the better she might marry the greater her dowry would naturally be,—the dowry, to go out of the family! And Arthur, poor fellow! was so extravagant, that really he would want every sixpence. Such was the reasoning of the father. The mother reasoned less upon the matter. Mrs. Beaufort, faded and meagre, in blonde and cashmere, was jealous of the charms of her daughter; and she herself, growing sentimental and lachrymose as she advanced in life, as silly women often do, had convinced herself that Camilla was a girl of no feeling.

Miss Beaufort was, indeed, of a character singularly calm and placid; it was the character that charms men in proportion, perhaps, to their own strength and passion. She had been rigidly brought up—her affections had been very early chilled and subdued; they moved, therefore, now, with ease, in the serene path of her duties. She held her parents, especially her father, in reverential fear, and never dreamed of the possibility of resisting one of their wishes, much less their commands. Pious, kind, gentle, of a fine and never-ruffled temper, Camilla, an admirable daughter, was likely to make no less admirable a wife; you might depend on her principles, if ever you could doubt her

affection. Few girls were more calculated to inspire love. You would scarcely wonder at any folly, any madness, which even a wise man might commit for her sake. This did not depend on her beauty alone, though she was extremely lovely rather than handsome, and of that style of loveliness which is universally fascinating: the figure, especially as to the arms, throat, and bust, was exquisite; the mouth dimpled; the teeth dazzling; the eyes of that velvet softness which to look on is to love. But her charm was in a certain prettiness of manner, an exceeding innocence, mixed with the most captivating, because unconscious, coquetry. With all this, there was a freshness, a joy, a virgin and bewitching candour in her voice, her laugh—you might almost say in her very movements. Such was Camilla Beaufort at that age. Such she seemed to others. To her parents she was only a great girl rather in the way. To Mrs. Beaufort a rival, to Mr. Beaufort an encumbrance on the property.

CHAPTER II

* * * *"The moon*

*Saddening the solemn night, yet with that sadness
Mingling the breath of undisturbed Peace."*

WILSON: City of the Plague

* * * *"Tell me his fate.*

Say that he lives, or say that he is dead

But tell me—tell me!

* * * * *

I see him not—some cloud envelopes him."

—Ibid.

One day (nearly a year after their first introduction) as with a party of friends Camilla and Charles Spencer were riding through those wild and romantic scenes which lie between the sunny Winandermere and the dark and sullen Wastwater, their conversation fell on topics more personal than it had hitherto done, for as yet, if they felt love, they had never spoken of it.

The narrowness of the path allowed only two to ride abreast, and the two to whom I confine my description were the last of the little band.

"How I wish Arthur were here!" said Camilla; "I am sure you would like him."

"Are you? He lives much in the world—the world of which I know nothing.

Are we then characters to suit each other?"

"He is the kindest—the best of human beings!" said Camilla, rather evasively, but with more warmth than usually dwelt in her soft and low voice.

"Is he so kind?" returned Spencer, musingly. "Well, it may be so. And who would not be kind to you? Ah! it is a beautiful connexion that of brother and sister—I never had a sister!"

"Have you then a brother?" asked Camilla, in some surprise, and turning her ingenuous eyes full on her companion.

Spencer's colour rose—rose to his temples: his voice trembled as he answered, "No;—no brother!" then, speaking in a rapid and hurried tone, he continued, "My life has been a strange and lonely one. I am an orphan. I have mixed with few of my own age: my boyhood and youth have been spent in these scenes; my education such as Nature and books could bestow, with scarcely any guide or tutor save my guardian—the dear old man! Thus the world, the stir of cities, ambition, enterprise,—all seem to me as things belonging to a distant land to which I shall never wander. Yet I have had my dreams, Miss Beaufort; dreams of which these solitudes still form a part—but solitudes not unshared. And lately I have thought that those dreams might be prophetic. And you—do you love the world?"

"I, like you, have scarcely tried it," said Camilla, with a sweet laugh. "but I love the country better,—oh! far better than what

little I have seen of towns. But for you," she continued with a charming hesitation, "a man is so different from us,—for you to shrink from the world—you, so young and with talents too—nay, it is true!—it seems to me strange."

"It may be so, but I cannot tell you what feelings of dread—what vague forebodings of terror seize me if I carry my thoughts beyond these retreats. Perhaps my good guardian—"

"Your uncle?" interrupted Camilla.

"Ay, my uncle—may have contributed to engender feelings, as you say, strange at my age; but still—"

"Still what!"

"My earlier childhood," continued Spencer, breathing hard and turning pale, "was not spent in the happy home I have now; it was passed in a premature ordeal of suffering and pain. Its recollections have left a dark shadow on my mind, and under that shadow lies every thought that points towards the troublous and labouring career of other men. But," he resumed after a pause, and in a deep, earnest, almost solemn voice,— "but after all, is this cowardice or wisdom? I find no monotony—no tedium in this quiet life. Is there not a certain morality—a certain religion in the spirit of a secluded and country existence? In it we do not know the evil passions which ambition and strife are said to arouse. I never feel jealous or envious of other men; I never know what it is to hate; my boat, my horse, our garden, music, books, and, if I may dare to say so, the solemn gladness that comes from the hopes of another life,— these fill up every hour with thoughts

and pursuits, peaceful, happy, and without a cloud, till of late, when—when—"

"When what?" said Camilla, innocently.

"When I have longed, but did not dare to ask another, if to share such a lot would content her!"

He bent, as he spoke, his soft blue eyes full upon the blushing face of her whom he addressed, and Camilla half smiled and half sighed:

"Our companions are far before us," said she, turning away her face, "and see, the road is now smooth." She quickened her horse's pace as she said this; and Spencer, too new to women to interpret favourably her evasion of his words and looks, fell into a profound silence which lasted during the rest of their excursion.

As towards the decline of day he bent his solitary way home, emotions and passions to which his life had hitherto been a stranger, and which, alas! he had vainly imagined a life so tranquil would everlastingly restrain, swelled his heart.

"She does not love me," he muttered, half aloud; "she will leave me, and what then will all the beauty of the landscape seem in my eyes? And how dare I look up to her? Even if her cold, vain mother—her father, the man, they say, of forms and scruples, were to consent, would they not question closely of my true birth and origin? And if the one blot were overlooked, is there no other? His early habits and vices, his?—a brother's—his unknown career terminating at any day, perhaps, in shame, in crime, in exposure, in the gibbet,—will they overlook this?"

As he spoke, he groaned aloud, and, as if impatient to escape himself, spurred on his horse and rested not till he reached the belt of trim and sober evergreens that surrounded his hitherto happy home.

Leaving his horse to find its way to the stables, the young man passed through rooms, which he found deserted, to the lawn on the other side, which sloped to the smooth waters of the lake.

Here, seated under the one large tree that formed the pride of the lawn, over which it cast its shadow broad and far, he perceived his guardian poring idly over an oft-read book, one of those books of which literary dreamers are apt to grow fanatically fond—books by the old English writers, full of phrases and conceits half quaint and half sublime, interspersed with praises of the country, imbued with a poetical rather than orthodox religion, and adorned with a strange mixture of monastic learning and aphorisms collected from the weary experience of actual life.

To the left, by a greenhouse, built between the house and the lake, might be seen the white dress and lean form of the eldest spinster sister, to whom the care of the flowers—for she had been early crossed in love—was consigned; at a little distance from her, the other two were seated at work, and conversing in whispers, not to disturb their studious brother, no doubt upon the nephew, who was their all in all. It was the calmest hour of eve, and the quiet of the several forms, their simple and harmless occupations—if occupations they might be called—the breathless foliage rich in the depth of summer; behind, the

old-fashioned house, unpretending, not mean, its open doors and windows giving glimpses of the comfortable repose within; before, the lake, without a ripple and catching the gleam of the sunset clouds,—all made a picture of that complete tranquillity and stillness, which sometimes soothes and sometimes saddens us, according as we are in the temper to woo CONTENT.

The young man glided to his guardian and touched his shoulder,—“Sir, may I speak to you?—Hush! they need not see us now! it is only you I would speak with.”

The elder Spencer rose; and, with his book still in his hand, moved side by side with his nephew under the shadow of the tree and towards a walk to the right, which led for a short distance along the margin of the lake, backed by the interlaced boughs of a thick copse.

“Sir!” said the young man, speaking first, and with a visible effort, “your cautions have been in vain! I love this girl—this daughter of the haughty Beauforts! I love her—better than life I love her!”

“My poor boy,” said the uncle tenderly, and with a simple fondness passing his arm over the speaker's shoulder, “do not think I can chide you—I know what it is to love in vain!”

“In vain!—but why in vain?” exclaimed the younger Spencer, with a vehemence that had in it something of both agony and fierceness. “She may love me—she shall love me!” and almost for the first time in his life, the proud consciousness of his rare gifts of person spoke in his kindled eye and dilated stature. “Do

they not say that Nature has been favourable to me?—What rival have I here?—Is she not young?—And (sinking his voice till it almost breathed like music) is not love contagious?"

"I do not doubt that she may love you—who would not?—but—but—the parents, will they ever consent?" "Nay!" answered the lover, as with that inconsistency common to passion, he now argued stubbornly against those fears in another to which he had just before yielded in himself,— "Nay!—after all, am I not of their own blood?—Do I not come from the elder branch?—Was I not reared in equal luxury and with higher hopes?— And my mother—my poor mother—did she not to the last maintain our birthright—her own honour?—Has not accident or law unjustly stripped us of our true station?—Is it not for us to forgive spoliation?—Am I not, in fact, the person who descends, who forgets the wrongs of the dead—the heritage of the living?"

The young man had never yet assumed this tone—had never yet shown that he looked back to the history connected with his birth with the feelings of resentment and the remembrance of wrong. It was a tone contrary to his habitual calm and contentment—it struck forcibly on his listener—and the elder Spencer was silent for some moments before he replied, "If you feel thus (and it is natural), you have yet stronger reason to struggle against this unhappy affection."

"I have been conscious of that, sir," replied the young man, mournfully. "I have struggled!—and I say again it is in vain! I turn, then, to face the obstacles! My birth—let us suppose

that the Beauforts overlook it. Did you not tell me that Mr. Beaufort wrote to inform you of the abrupt and intemperate visit of my brother—of his determination never to forgive it? I think I remember something of this years ago."

"It is true!" said the guardian; "and the conduct of that brother is, in fact, the true cause why you never ought to reassume your proper name!— never to divulge it, even to the family with whom you connect yourself by marriage; but, above all, to the Beauforts, who for that cause, if that cause alone, would reject your suit."

The young man groaned—placed one hand before his eyes, and with the other grasped his guardian's arm convulsively, as if to check him from proceeding farther; but the good man, not divining his meaning, and absorbed in his subject, went on, irritating the wound he had touched.

"Reflect!—your brother in boyhood—in the dying hours of his mother, scarcely saved from the crime of a thief, flying from a friendly pursuit with a notorious reprobate; afterwards implicated in some discreditable transaction about a horse, rejecting all—every hand that could save him, clinging by choice to the lowest companions and the meanest-habits, disappearing from the country, and last seen, ten years ago—the beard not yet on his chin—with that same reprobate of whom I have spoken, in Paris; a day or so only before his companion, a coiner—a murderer—fell by the hands of the police! You remember that when, in your seventeenth year, you evinced some desire to

retake your name—nay, even to re-find that guilty brother—I placed before you, as a, sad, and terrible duty, the newspaper that contained the particulars of the death and the former adventures of that wretched accomplice, the notorious Gawtreys. And,—telling you that Mr. Beaufort had long since written to inform me that his own son and Lord Lilburne had seen your brother in company with the miscreant just before his fate—nay, was, in all probability, the very youth described in the account as found in his chamber and escaping the pursuit—I asked you if you would now venture to leave that disguise—that shelter under which you would for ever be safe from the opprobrium of the world—from the shame that, sooner or later, your brother must bring upon your name!"

"It is true—it is true!" said the pretended nephew, in a tone of great anguish, and with trembling lips which the blood had forsaken. "Horrible to look either to his past or his future! But—but—we have heard of him no more—no one ever has learned his fate. Perhaps—perhaps" (and he seemed to breathe more freely) —"my brother is no more!"

And poor Catherine—and poor Philip—had it come to this? Did the one brother feel a sentiment of release, of joy, in conjecturing the death—perhaps the death of violence and shame—of his fellow-orphan? Mr. Spencer shook his head doubtingly, but made no reply. The young man sighed heavily, and strode on for several paces in advance of his protector, then, turning back, he laid his hand on his shoulder.

"Sir," he said in a low voice and with downcast eyes, you are right: this disguise—this false name—must be for ever borne! Why need the Beauforts, then, ever know who and what I am? Why not as your nephew— nephew to one so respected and exemplary—proffer my claims and plead my cause?"

"They are proud—so it is said—and worldly;—you know my family was in trade—still—but—" and here Mr. Spencer broke off from a tone of doubt into that of despondency, "but, recollect, though Mrs. Beaufort may not remember the circumstance, both her husband and her son have seen me— have known my name. Will they not suspect, when once introduced to you, the stratagem that has been adopted?—Nay, has it not been from that very fear that you have wished me to shun the acquaintance of the family? Both Mr. Beaufort and Arthur saw you in childhood, and their suspicion once aroused, they may recognise you at once; your features are developed, but not altogether changed. Come, come!—my adopted, my dear son, shake off this fantasy betimes: let us change the scene: I will travel with you—read with you—go where—"

"Sir—sir!" exclaimed the lover, smiting his breast, "you are ever kind, compassionate, generous; but do not—do not rob me of hope. I have never—thanks to you—felt, save in a momentary dejection, the curse of my birth. Now how heavily it falls! Where shall I look for comfort?"

As he spoke, the sound of a bell broke over the translucent air and the slumbering lake: it was the bell that every eve and morn

summoned that innocent and pious family to prayer. The old man's face changed as he heard it—changed from its customary indolent, absent, listless aspect, into an expression of dignity, even of animation.

"Hark!" he said, pointing upwards; "Hark! it chides you. Who shall say,

'Where shall I look for comfort' while God is in the heavens?"

The young man, habituated to the faith and observance of religion, till they had pervaded his whole nature, bowed his head in rebuke; a few tears stole from his eyes.

"You are right, father—," he said tenderly, giving emphasis to the deserved and endearing name. "I am comforted already!"

So, side by side, silently and noiselessly, the young and the old man glided back to the house. When they gained the quiet room in which the family usually assembled, the sisters and servants were already gathered round the table. They knelt as the loiterers entered. It was the wonted duty of the younger Spencer to read the prayers; and, as he now did so, his graceful countenance more hushed, his sweet voice more earnest than usual, in its accents: who that heard could have deemed the heart within convulsed by such stormy passions? Or was it not in that hour—that solemn commune—soothed from its woe? O beneficent Creator! thou who inspirest all the tribes of earth with the desire to pray, hast Thou not, in that divinest instinct, bestowed on us the happiest of Thy gifts?

CHAPTER III

"Bertram. I mean the business is not ended, as fearing to hear of it hereafter.

*"1st Soldier. Do you know this Captain Dumain?"
All's Well that Ends Well.*

One evening, some weeks after the date of the last chapter, Mr. Robert Beaufort sat alone in his house in Berkeley Square. He had arrived that morning from Beaufort Court, on his way to Winandermere, to which he was summoned by a letter from his wife. That year was an agitated and eventful epoch in England; and Mr. Beaufort had recently gone through the bustle of an election—not, indeed, contested; for his popularity and his property defied all rivalry in his own county.

The rich man had just dined, and was seated in lazy enjoyment by the side of the fire, which he had had lighted, less for the warmth—though it was then September—than for the companionship;—engaged in finishing his madeira, and, with half-closed eyes, munching his devilled biscuits. "I am sure," he soliloquised while thus employed, "I don't know exactly what to do,—my wife ought to decide matters where the girl is concerned; a son is another affair—that's the use of a wife. Humph!"

"Sir," said a fat servant, opening the door, "a gentleman wishes to see you upon very particular business."

"Business at this hour! Tell him to go to Mr. Blackwell."

"Yes, sir."

"Stay! perhaps he is a constituent, Simmons. Ask him if he belongs to the county."

"Yes, Sir."

"A great estate is a great plague," muttered Mr. Beaufort; "so is a great constituency. It is pleasanter, after all, to be in the House of Lords. I suppose I could if I wished; but then one must rat—that's a bore. I will consult Lilburne. Humph!"

The servant re-appeared. "Sir, he says he does belong to the county."

"Show him in!—What sort of a person?"

"A sort of gentleman, sir; that is," continued the butler, mindful of five shillings just slipped within his palm by the stranger, "quite the gentleman."

"More wine, then—stir up the fire."

In a few moments the visitor was ushered into the apartment. He was a man between fifty and sixty, but still aiming at the appearance of youth. His dress evinced military pretensions; consisting of a blue coat, buttoned up to the chin, a black stock, loose trousers of the fashion called Cossacks, and brass spurs. He wore a wig, of great luxuriance in curl and rich auburn in hue; with large whiskers of the same colour slightly tinged with grey at the roots. By the imperfect light of the room it was not perceptible that the clothes were somewhat threadbare, and that the boots, cracked at the side, admitted glimpses of no very white

hosiery within. Mr. Beaufort, reluctantly rising from his repose and gladly sinking back to it, motioned to a chair, and put on a doleful and doubtful semi-smile of welcome. The servant placed the wine and glasses before the stranger;—the host and visitor were alone.

"So, sir," said Mr. Beaufort, languidly, "you are from —shire; I suppose about the canal,—may I offer you a glass of wine?"

"Most hauppy, sir—your health!" and the stranger, with evident satisfaction, tossed off a bumper to so complimentary a toast.

"About the canal?" repeated Mr. Beaufort.

"No, sir, no! You parliament gentlemen must hauve a vaust deal of trouble on your haunds—very foine property I understaund yours is, sir. Sir, allow me to drink the health of your good lady!"

"I thank you, Mr.—, Mr.—, what did you say your name was?—I beg you a thousand pardons."

"No offaunce in the least, sir; no ceremony with me—this is perticler good madeira!"

"May I ask how I can serve you?" said Mr. Beaufort, struggling between the sense of annoyance and the fear to be uncivil. "And pray, had I the honour of your vote in the last election!"

"No, sir, no! It's mauny years since I have been in your part of the world, though I was born there."

"Then I don't exactly see—" began Mr. Beaufort, and stopped with dignity.

"Why I call on you," put in the stranger, tapping his boots with his cane; and then recognising the rents, he thrust both feet under the table.

"I don't say that; but at this hour I am seldom at leisure—not but what I am always at the service of a constituent, that is, a voter! Mr.—, I beg your pardon, I did not catch your name."

"Sir," said the stranger, helping himself to a third glass of wine; "here's a health to your young folk! And now to business." Here the visitor, drawing his chair nearer to his host, assuming a more grave aspect, and dropping something of his stilted pronunciation, continued, "You had a brother?"

"Well, sir," said Mr. Beaufort, with a very changed countenance.

"And that brother had a wife!"

Had a cannon gone off in the ear of Mr. Robert Beaufort, it could not have shocked or stunned him more than that simple word with which his companion closed his sentence. He fell back in his chair—his lips apart, his eyes fixed on the stranger. He sought to speak, but his tongue clove to his mouth.

"That wife had two sons, born in wedlock!"

"It is false!" cried Mr. Beaufort, finding a voice at length, and springing to his feet. "And who are you, sir? and what do you mean by—"

"Hush!" said the stranger, perfectly unconcerned, and regaining the dignity of his haw-haw enunciation, "better not let the servants hear auything. For my pawt, I think servants haue

the longest pair of ears of any persons, not excepting jauckasses; their ears stretch from the pauntry to the parlour. Hush, sir!—perticler good madeira, this!"

"Sir!" said Mr. Beaufort, struggling to preserve, or rather recover, his temper, "your conduct is exceedingly strange; but allow me to say that you are wholly misinformed. My brother never did marry; and if you have anything to say on behalf of those young men—his natural sons—I refer you to my solicitor, Mr. Blackwell, of Lincoln's Inn. I wish you a good evening."

"Sir!—the same to you—I won't trouble you any farther; it was only out of kindness I called—I am not used to be treated so—sir, I am in his majesty's service—sir, you will find that the witness of the marriage is forthcoming; you will think of me then, and, perhaps, be sorry. But I've done, 'Your most obedient humble, sir!'" And the stranger, with a flourish of his hand, turned to the door. At the sight of this determination on the part of his strange guest, a cold, uneasy, vague presentiment seized Mr. Beaufort. There, not flashed, but rather froze, across him the recollection of his brother's emphatic but disbelieved assurances—of Catherine's obstinate assertion of her son's alleged rights—rights which her lawsuit, undertaken on her own behalf, had not compromised;—a fresh lawsuit might be instituted by the son, and the evidence which had been wanting in the former suit might be found at last. With this remembrance and these reflections came a horrible train of shadowy fears,—witnesses, verdict, surrender, spoliation—arrears—ruin!

The man, who had gained the door, turned back and looked at him with a complacent, half-triumphant leer upon his impudent, reckless face.

"Sir," then said Mr. Beaufort, mildly, "I repeat that you had better see Mr. Blackwell."

The tempter saw his triumph. "I have a secret to communicate which it is best for you to keep snug. How many people do you wish me to see about it? Come, sir, there is no need of a lawyer; or, if you think so, tell him yourself. Now or never, Mr. Beaufort."

"I can have no objection to hear anything you have to say, sir," said the rich man, yet more mildly than before; and then added, with a forced smile, "though my rights are already too confirmed to admit of a doubt."

Without heeding the last assertion, the stranger coolly walked back, resumed his seat, and, placing both arms on the table and looking Mr. Beaufort full in the face, thus proceeded,—

"Sir, of the marriage between Philip Beaufort and Catherine Morton there were two witnesses: the one is dead, the other went abroad—the last is alive still!"

"If so," said Mr. Beaufort, who, not naturally deficient in cunning and sense, felt every faculty now prodigiously sharpened, and was resolved to know the precise grounds for alarm,— "if so, why did not the man—it was a servant, sir, a man-servant, whom Mrs. Morton pretended to rely on— appear on the trial?"

"Because, I say, he was abroad and could not be found; or,

the search after him miscarried, from clumsy management and a lack of the rhino."

"Hum!" said Mr. Beaufort—"one witness—one witness, observe, there *is* only one!—does not alarm me much. It is not what a man deposes, it is what a jury believe, sir! Moreover, what has become of the young men? They have never been heard of for years. They are probably dead; if so, I am heir-at-law!"

"I know where one of them is to be found at all events."

"The elder?—Philip?" asked Mr. Beaufort anxiously, and with a fearful remembrance of the energetic and vehement character prematurely exhibited by his nephew.

"Pawdon me! I need not answer that question."

"Sir! a lawsuit of this nature, against one in possession, is very doubtful, and," added the rich man, drawing himself up—"and, perhaps very expensive!"

"The young man I speak of does not want friends, who will not grudge the money."

"Sir!" said Mr. Beaufort, rising and placing his back to the fire—"sir! what is your object in this communication? Do you come, on the part of the young man, to propose a compromise? If so, be plain!"

"I come on my own pawt. It rests with you to say if the young men shall never know it!"

"And what do you want?"

"Five hundred a year as long as the secret is kept."

"And how can you prove that there is a secret, after all?"

"By producing the witness if you wish."

"Will he go halves in the L500. a year?" asked Mr. Beaufort artfully.

"That is my affair, sir," replied the stranger.

"What you say," resumed Mr. Beaufort, "is so extraordinary—so unexpected, and still, to me, seems so improbable, that I must have time to consider. If you will call on me in a week, and produce your facts, I will give you my answer. I am not the man, sir, to wish to keep any one out of his true rights, but I will not yield, on the other hand, to imposture."

"If you don't want to keep them out of their rights, I'd best go and tell my young gentlemen," said the stranger, with cool impudence.

"I tell you I must have time," repeated Beaufort, disconcerted. "Besides, I have not myself alone to look to, sir," he added, with dignified emphasis—"I am a father!"

"This day week I will call on you again. Good evening, Mr. Beaufort!"

And the man stretched out his hand with an air of amicable condescension. The respectable Mr. Beaufort changed colour, hesitated, and finally suffered two fingers to be enticed into the grasp of the visitor, whom he ardently wished at that bourne whence no visitor returns.

The stranger smiled, stalked to the door, laid his finger on his lip, winked knowingly, and vanished, leaving Mr. Beaufort a prey to such feelings of uneasiness, dread, and terror, as may be

experienced by a man whom, on some inch or two of slippery rock, the tides have suddenly surrounded.

He remained perfectly still for some moments, and then glancing round the dim and spacious room, his eyes took in all the evidences of luxury and wealth which it betrayed. Above the huge sideboard, that on festive days groaned beneath the hoarded weight of the silver heirlooms of the Beauforts, hung, in its gilded frame, a large picture of the family seat, with the stately porticoes—the noble park—the groups of deer; and around the wall, interspersed here and there with ancestral portraits of knight and dame, long since gathered to their rest, were placed masterpieces of the Italian and Flemish art, which generation after generation had slowly accumulated, till the Beaufort Collection had become the theme of connoisseurs and the study of young genius.

The still room, the dumb pictures—even the heavy sideboard seemed to gain voice, and speak to him audibly. He thrust his hand into the folds of his waistcoat, and griped his own flesh convulsively; then, striding to and fro the apartment, he endeavoured to re-collect his thoughts.

"I dare not consult Mrs. Beaufort," he muttered; "no—no,—she is a fool!

Besides, she's not in the way. No time to lose—I will go to Lilburne."

Scarce had that thought crossed him than he hastened to put it into execution. He rang for his hat and gloves and sallied out on foot to Lord Lilburne's house in Park Lane,—the distance was

short, and impatience has long strides.

He knew Lord Lilburne was in town, for that personage loved London for its own sake; and even in September he would have said with the old Duke of Queensberry, when some one observed that London was very empty—"Yes; but it is fuller than the country."

Mr. Beaufort found Lord Lilburne reclined on a sofa, by the open window of his drawing-room, beyond which the early stars shone upon the glimmering trees and silver turf of the deserted park. Unlike the simple dessert of his respectable brother-in-law, the costliest fruits, the richest wines of France, graced the small table placed beside his sofa; and as the starch man of forms and method entered the room at one door, a rustling silk, that vanished through the aperture of another, seemed to betray tokens of a *tete-a-tete*, probably more agreeable to Lilburne than the one with which only our narrative is concerned.

It would have been a curious study for such men as love to gaze upon the dark and wily features of human character, to have watched the contrast between the reciter and the listener, as Beaufort, with much circumlocution, much affected disdain and real anxiety, narrated the singular and ominous conversation between himself and his visitor.

The servant, in introducing Mr. Beaufort, had added to the light of the room; and the candles shone full on the face and form of Mr. Beaufort. All about that gentleman was so completely in unison with the world's forms and seemings, that there was

something moral in the very sight of him! Since his accession of fortune he had grown less pale and less thin; the angles in his figure were filled up. On his brow there was no trace of younger passion. No able vice had ever sharpened the expression—no exhausting vice ever deepened the lines. He was the beau-ideal of a county member,—so sleek, so staid, so business-like; yet so clean, so neat, so much the gentleman. And now there was a kind of pathos in his grey hairs, his nervous smile, his agitated hands, his quick and uneasy transition of posture, the tremble of his voice. He would have appeared to those who saw, but heard not, The Good Man in trouble. Cold, motionless, speechless, seemingly apathetic, but in truth observant, still reclined on the sofa, his head thrown back, but one eye fixed on his companion, his hands clasped before him, Lord Lilburne listened; and in that repose, about his face, even about his person, might be read the history of how different a life and character! What native acuteness in the stealthy eye! What hardened resolve in the full nostril and firm lips! What sardonic contempt for all things in the intricate lines about the mouth. What animal enjoyment of all things so despised in that delicate nervous system, which, combined with original vigour of constitution, yet betrayed itself in the veins on the hands and temples, the occasional quiver of the upper lip! His was the frame above all others the most alive to pleasure—deep-chested, compact, sinewy, but thin to leanness—delicate in its texture and extremities, almost to effeminacy. The indifference of the posture, the very habit of the dress —

not slovenly, indeed, but easy, loose, careless—seemed to speak of the man's manner of thought and life—his profound disdain of externals.

Not till Beaufort had concluded did Lord Lilburne change his position or open his lips; and then, turning to his brother-in-law his calm face, he said drily,—

"I always thought your brother had married that woman; he was the sort of man to do it. Besides, why should she have gone to law without a vestige of proof, unless she was convinced of her rights? Imposture never proceeds without some evidence. Innocence, like a fool as it is, fancies it has only to speak to be believed. But there is no cause for alarm."

"No cause!—And yet you think there was a marriage."

"It is quite clear," continued Lilburne, without heeding this interruption; "that the man, whatever his evidence, has not got sufficient proofs. If he had, he would go to the young men rather than you: it is evident that they would promise infinitely larger rewards than he could expect from yourself. Men are always more generous with what they expect than with what they have. All rogues know this. 'Tis the way Jews and usurers thrive upon heirs rather than possessors; 'tis the philosophy of post-obits. I dare say the man has found out the real witness of the marriage, but ascertained, also, that the testimony of that witness would not suffice to dispossess you. He might be discredited—rich men have a way sometimes of discrediting poor witnesses. Mind, he says nothing of the lost copy of the register— whatever may be

the value of that document, which I am not lawyer enough to say—of any letters of your brother avowing the marriage. Consider, the register itself is destroyed—the clergyman dead. Pooh! make yourself easy."

"True," said Mr. Beaufort, much comforted; "what a memory you have!"

"Naturally. Your wife is my sister—I hate poor relations—and I was therefore much interested in your accession and your lawsuit. No—you may feel—at rest on this matter, so far as a successful lawsuit is concerned. The next question is, Will you have a lawsuit at all? and is it worth while buying this fellow? That I can't say unless I see him myself."

"I wish to Heaven you would!"

"Very willingly: 'tis a sort of thing I like—I'm fond of dealing with rogues—it amuses me. This day week? I'll be at your house—your proxy; I shall do better than Black well. And since you say you are wanted at the Lakes, go down, and leave all to me."

"A thousand thanks. I can't say how grateful I am. You certainly are the kindest and cleverest person in the world."

"You can't think worse of the world's cleverness and kindness than I do," was Lilburne's rather ambiguous answer to the compliment. "But why does my sister want to see you?"

"Oh, I forgot!—here is her letter. I was going to ask your advice in this too."

Lord Lilburne took the letter, and glanced over it with the rapid eye of a man accustomed to seize in everything the main

gist and pith.

"An offer to my pretty niece—Mr. Spencer—requires no fortune—his uncle will settle all his own—(poor silly old man!) All! Why that's only L1000. a year. You don't think much of this, eh? How my sister can even ask you about it puzzles me."

"Why, you see, Lilburne," said Mr. Beaufort, rather embarrassed, "there is no question of fortune—nothing to go out of the family; and, really, Arthur is so expensive, and, if she were to marry well, I could not give her less than fifteen or twenty thousand pounds."

"Aha!—I see—every man to his taste: here a daughter—there a dowry.

You are devilish fond of money, Beaufort. Any pleasure in avarice,—eh?"

Mr. Beaufort coloured very much at the remark and the question, and, forcing a smile, said,—

"You are severe. But you don't know what it is to be father to a young man."

"Then a great many young women have told me sad fibs! But you are right in your sense of the phrase. No, I never had an heir apparent, thank Heaven! No children imposed upon me by law—natural enemies, to count the years between the bells that ring for their majority, and those that will toll for my decease. It is enough for me that I have a brother and a sister—that my brother's son will inherit my estates—and that, in the meantime, he grudges me every tick in that clock. What then? If he had

been my uncle, I had done the same. Meanwhile, I see as little of him as good breeding will permit. On the face of a rich man's heir is written the rich man's *memento mori*! But *revenons a nos moutons*. Yes, if you give your daughter no fortune, your death will be so much the more profitable to Arthur!"

"Really, you take such a very odd view of the matter," said Mr. Beaufort, exceedingly shocked. "But I see you don't like the marriage; perhaps you are right."

"Indeed, I have no choice in the matter; I never interfere between father and children. If I had children myself, I will, however, tell you, for your comfort, that they might marry exactly as they pleased—I would never thwart them. I should be too happy to get them out of my way. If they married well, one would have all the credit; if ill, one would have an excuse to disown them. As I said before, I dislike poor relations. Though if Camilla lives at the Lakes when she is married, it is but a letter now and then; and that's your wife's trouble, not yours. But, Spencer—what Spencer!—what family? Was there not a Mr. Spencer who lived at Winandermere—who—"

"Who went with us in search of these boys, to be sure. Very likely the same—nay, he must be so. I thought so at the first."

"Go down to the Lakes to-morrow. You may hear something about your nephews;" at that word Mr. Beaufort winced.

"'Tis well to be forearmed."

"Many thanks for all your counsel," said Beaufort, rising, and glad to escape; for though both he and his wife held the advice

of Lord Lilburne in the highest reverence, they always smarted beneath the quiet and careless stings which accompanied the honey. Lord Lilburne was singular in this,—he would give to any one who asked it, but especially a relation, the best advice in his power; and none gave better, that is, more worldly advice. Thus, without the least benevolence, he was often of the greatest service; but he could not help mixing up the draught with as much aloes and bitter-apple as possible. His intellect delighted in exhibiting itself even gratuitously. His heart equally delighted in that only cruelty which polished life leaves to its tyrants towards their equals,—thrusting pins into the feelings and breaking self-love upon the wheel. But just as Mr. Beaufort had drawn on his gloves and gained the doorway, a thought seemed to strike Lord Lilburne:

"By the by," he said, "you understand that when I promised I would try and settle the matter for you, I only meant that I would learn the exact causes you have for alarm on the one hand, or for a compromise with this fellow on the other. If the last be advisable you are aware that I cannot interfere. I might get into a scrape; and Beaufort Court is not my property."

"I don't quite understand you."

"I am plain enough, too. If there is money to be given it is given in order to defeat what is called justice—to keep these nephews of yours out of their inheritance. Now, should this ever come to light, it would have an ugly appearance. They who risk the blame must be the persons who possess the estate."

"If you think it dishonourable or dishonest—" said Beaufort, irresolutely.

"I! I never can advise as to the feelings; I can only advise as to the policy. If you don't think there ever was a marriage, it may, still, be honest in you to prevent the bore of a lawsuit."

"But if he can prove to me that they were married?"

"Pooh!" said Lilburne, raising his eyebrows with a slight expression of contemptuous impatience; "it rests on yourself whether or not he prove it to YOUR satisfaction! For my part, as a third person, I am persuaded the marriage did take place. But if I had Beaufort Court, my convictions would be all the other way. You understand. I am too happy to serve you. But no man can be expected to jeopardise his character, or coquet with the law, unless it be for his own individual interest. Then, of course, he must judge for himself. Adieu! I expect some friends foreigners—Carlists—to whist. You won't join them?"

"I never play, you know. You will write to me at Winandermere: and, at all events, you will keep off the man till I return?"

"Certainly."

Beaufort, whom the latter part of the conversation had comforted far less than the former, hesitated, and turned the door-handle three or four times; but, glancing towards his brother-in-law, he saw in that cold face so little sympathy in the struggle between interest and conscience, that he judged it best to withdraw at once.

As soon as he was gone, Lilburne summoned his valet, who had lived with him many years, and who was his confidant in all the adventurous gallantries with which he still enlivened the autumn of his life.

"Dykeman," said he, "you have let out that lady?"

"Yes, my lord."

"I am not at home if she calls again. She is stupid; she cannot get the girl to come to her again. I shall trust you with an adventure, Dykeman—an adventure that will remind you of our young days, man. This charming creature—I tell you she is irresistible—her very oddities bewitch me. You must—well, you look uneasy. What would you say?"

"My lord, I have found out more about her—and—and—"

"Well, well."

The valet drew near and whispered something in his master's ear.

"They are idiots who say it, then," answered Lilburne. "And," faltered the man, with the shame of humanity on his face, "she is not worthy your lordship's notice—a poor—"

"Yes, I know she is poor; and, for that reason, there can be no difficulty, if the thing is properly managed. You never, perhaps, heard of a certain Philip, king of Macedon; but I will tell you what he once said, as well as I can remember it: 'Lead an ass with a pannier of gold; send the ass through the gates of a city, and all the sentinels will run away.' Poor!—where there is love, there is charity also, Dykeman. Besides—"

Here Lilburne's countenance assumed a sudden aspect of dark and angry passion,—he broke off abruptly, rose, and paced the room, muttering to himself. Suddenly he stopped, and put his hand to his hip, as an expression of pain again altered the character of his face.

"The limb pains me still! Dykeman—I was scarce twenty-one—when I became a cripple for life." He paused, drew a long breath, smiled, rubbed his hands gently, and added: "Never fear—you shall be the ass; and thus Philip of Macedon begins to fill the pannier." And he tossed his purse into the hands of the valet, whose face seemed to lose its anxious embarrassment at the touch of the gold. Lilburne glanced at him with a quiet sneer: "Go!—I will give you my orders when I undress."

"Yes!" he repeated to himself, "the limb pains me still. But he died!—shot as a man would shoot a jay or a polecat!

"I have the newspaper still in that drawer. He died an outcast—a felon—a murderer! And I blasted his name—and I seduced his mistress—and I— am John Lord Lilburne!"

About ten o'clock, some half-a-dozen of those gay lovers of London, who, like Lilburne, remain faithful to its charms when more vulgar worshippers desert its sunburnt streets—mostly single men—mostly men of middle age—dropped in. And soon after came three or four high-born foreigners, who had followed into England the exile of the unfortunate Charles X. Their looks, at once proud and sad—their moustaches curled downward—their beards permitted to grow—made at first a strong contrast

with the smooth gay Englishmen. But Lilburne, who was fond of French society, and who, when he pleased, could be courteous and agreeable, soon placed the exiles at their ease; and, in the excitement of high play, all differences of mood and humour speedily vanished. Morning was in the skies before they sat down to supper.

"You have been very fortunate to-night, milord," said one of the Frenchmen, with an envious tone of congratulation.

"But, indeed," said another, who, having been several times his host's partner, had won largely, "you are the finest player, milord, I ever encountered."

"Always excepting Monsieur Deschappelles and—," replied Lilburne, indifferently. And, turning the conversation, he asked one of the guests why he had not introduced him to a French officer of merit and distinction; "With whom," said Lord Lilburne, "I understand that you are intimate, and of whom I hear your countrymen very often speak."

"You mean De Vaudemont. Poor fellow!" said a middle-aged Frenchman, of a graver appearance than the rest.

"But why 'poor fellow!' Monsieur de Liancourt?"

"He was rising so high before the revolution. There was not a braver officer in the army. But he is but a soldier of fortune, and his career is closed."

"Till the Bourbons return," said another Carlist, playing with his moustache.

"You will really honour me much by introducing me to him,"

said Lord Lilburne. "De Vaudemont—it is a good name,—perhaps, too, he plays at whist."

"But," observed one of the Frenchmen, "I am by no means sure that he has the best right in the world to the name. 'Tis a strange story."

"May I hear it?" asked the host.

"Certainly. It is briefly this: There was an old Vicomte de Vaudemont about Paris; of good birth, but extremely poor—a mauvais sujet. He had already had two wives, and run through their fortunes. Being old and ugly, and men who survive two wives having a bad reputation among marriageable ladies at Paris, he found it difficult to get a third. Despairing of the noblesse he went among the bourgeoisie with that hope. His family were kept in perpetual fear of a ridiculous mesalliance. Among these relations was Madame de Merville, whom you may have heard of."

"Madame de Merville! Ah, yes! Handsome, was she not?"

"It is true. Madame de Merville, whose failing was pride, was known more than once to have bought off the matrimonial inclinations of the amorous vicomte. Suddenly there appeared in her circles a very handsome young man. He was presented formally to her friends as the son of the Vicomte de Vaudemont by his second marriage with an English lady, brought up in England, and now for the first time publicly acknowledged. Some scandal was circulated—"

"Sir," interrupted Monsieur de Liancourt, very gravely, "the

scandal was such as all honourable men must stigmatise and despise—it was only to be traced to some lying lackey—a scandal that the young man was already the lover of a woman of stainless reputation the very first day that he entered Paris! I answer for the falsity of that report. But that report I own was one that decided not only Madame de Merville, who was a sensitive—too sensitive a person, but my friend young Vaudemont, to a marriage, from the pecuniary advantages of which he was too high-spirited not to shrink."

"Well," said Lord Lilburne, "then this young De Vaudemont married Madame de Merville?"

"No," said Liancourt somewhat sadly, "it was not so decreed; for Vaudemont, with a feeling which belongs to a gentleman, and which I honour, while deeply and gratefully attached to Madame de Merville, desired that he might first win for himself some honourable distinction before he claimed a hand to which men of fortunes so much higher had aspired in vain. I am not ashamed," he added, after a slight pause, "to say that I had been one of the rejected suitors, and that I still revere the memory of Eugenie de Merville. The young man, therefore, was to have entered my regiment. Before, however, he had joined it, and while yet in the full flush of a young man's love for a woman formed to excite the strongest attachment, she—she—" The Frenchman's voice trembled, and he resumed with affected composure: "Madame de Merville, who had the best and kindest heart that ever beat in a human breast, learned one day that there was a poor widow in

the garret of the hotel she inhabited who was dangerously ill—without medicine and without food—having lost her only friend and supporter in her husband some time before. In the impulse of the moment, Madame de Merville herself attended this widow—caught the fever that preyed upon her—was confined to her bed ten days—and died as she had lived, in serving others and forgetting self.—And so much, sir, for the scandal you spoke of!"

"A warning," observed Lord Lilburne, "against trifling with one's health by that vanity of parading a kind heart, which is called charity. If charity, *mon cher*, begins at home, it is in the drawing-room, not the garret!"

The Frenchman looked at his host in some disdain, bit his lip, and was silent.

"But still," resumed Lord Lilburne, "still it is so probable that your old vicomte had a son; and I can so perfectly understand why he did not wish to be embarrassed with him as long as he could help it, that I do not understand why there should be any doubt of the younger De Vaudemont's parentage."

"Because," said the Frenchman who had first commenced the narrative,— "because the young man refused to take the legal steps to proclaim his birth and naturalise himself a Frenchman; because, no sooner was Madame de Merville dead than he forsook the father he had so newly discovered— forsook France, and entered with some other officers, under the brave, in the service of one of the native princes of India."

"But perhaps he was poor," observed Lord Lilburne. "A father

is a very good thing, and a country is a very good thing, but still a man must have money; and if your father does not do much for you, somehow or other, your country generally follows his example."

"My lord," said Liancourt, "my friend here has forgotten to say that Madame de Merville had by deed of gift; (though unknown to her lover), before her death, made over to young Vaudemont the bulk of her fortune; and that, when he was informed of this donation after her decease, and sufficiently recovered from the stupor of his grief, he summoned her relations round him, declared that her memory was too dear to him for wealth to console him for her loss, and reserving to himself but a, modest and bare sufficiency for the common necessaries of a gentleman, he divided the rest amongst them, and repaired to the East; not only to conquer his sorrow by the novelty and stir of an exciting life, but to carve out with his own hand the reputation of an honourable and brave man. My friend remembered the scandal long buried—he forgot the generous action."

"Your friend, you see, my dear Monsieur de Liancourt," remarked Lilburne, "is more a man of the world than you are!"

"And I was just going to observe," said the friend thus referred to, "that that very action seemed to confirm the rumour that there had been some little manoeuvring as to this unexpected addition to the name of De Vaudemont; for, if himself related to Madame de Merville, why have such scruples to receive her gift?"

"A very shrewd remark," said Lord Lilburne, looking with

some respect at the speaker; "and I own that it is a very unaccountable proceeding, and one of which I don't think you or I would ever have been guilty. Well, and the old Vicomte?"

"Did not live long!" said the Frenchman, evidently gratified by his host's compliment, while Liancourt threw himself back in his chair in grave displeasure. "The young man remained some years in India, and when he returned to Paris, our friend here, Monsieur de Liancourt (then in favour with Charles X.), and Madame de Merville's relations took him up. He had already acquired a reputation in this foreign service, and he obtained a place at the court, and a commission in the king's guards. I allow that he would certainly have made a career, had it not been for the Three Days. As it is, you see him in London, like the rest of us, an exile!"

"And I suppose, without a sous."

"No, I believe that he had still saved, and even augmented, in India, the portion he allotted to himself from Madame de Merville's bequest."

"And if he don't play whist, he ought to play it," said Lilburne. "You have roused my curiosity; I hope you will let me make his acquaintance, Monsieur de Liancourt. I am no politician, but allow me to propose this toast, 'Success to those who have the wit to plan, and the strength to execute.' In other words, 'the Right Divine!'"

Soon afterwards the guests retired.

CHAPTER IV

*"Ros. Happily, he's the second time come to them."—
Hamlet.*

It was the evening after that in which the conversations recorded in our last chapter were held;—evening in the quiet suburb of H—. The desertion and silence of the metropolis in September had extended to its neighbouring hamlets;—a village in the heart of the country could scarcely have seemed more still; the lamps were lighted, many of the shops already closed, a few of the sober couples and retired spinsters of the place might, here and there, be seen slowly wandering homeward after their evening walk: two or three dogs, in spite of the prohibitions of the magistrates placarded on the walls,—(manifestoes which threatened with death the dogs, and predicted more than ordinary madness to the public,)—were playing in the main road, disturbed from time to time as the slow coach, plying between the city and the suburb, crawled along the thoroughfare, or as the brisk mails whirled rapidly by, announced by the cloudy dust and the guard's lively horn. Gradually even these evidences of life ceased—the saunterers disappeared, the mails had passed, the dogs gave place to the later and more stealthy perambulations of their feline successors "who love the moon." At unfrequent intervals, the more important shops—the

linen-drapers', the chemists', and the gin-palace— still poured out across the shadowy road their streams of light from windows yet unclosed: but with these exceptions, the business of the place stood still.

At this time there emerged from a milliner's house (shop, to outward appearance, it was not, evincing its gentility and its degree above the Capelocracy, to use a certain classical neologism, by a brass plate on an oak door, whereon was graven, "Miss Semper, Milliner and Dressmaker, from Madame Devy,")—at this time, I say, and from this house there emerged the light and graceful form of a young female. She held in her left hand a little basket, of the contents of which (for it was empty) she had apparently just disposed; and, as she stepped across the road, the lamplight fell on a face in the first bloom of youth, and characterised by an expression of childlike innocence and candour. It was a face regularly and exquisitely lovely, yet something there was in the aspect that saddened you; you knew not why, for it was not sad itself; on the contrary, the lips smiled and the eyes sparkled. As she now glided along the shadowy street with a light, quick step, a man, who had hitherto been concealed by the portico of an attorney's house, advanced stealthily, and followed her at a little distance. Unconscious that she was dogged, and seemingly fearless of all danger, the girl went lightly on, swinging her basket playfully to and fro, and chaunting, in a low but musical tone, some verses that seemed rather to belong to the nursery than to that age which the fair

singer had attained.

As she came to an angle which the main street formed with a lane, narrow and partially lighted, a policeman, stationed there, looked hard at her, and then touched his hat with an air of respect, in which there seemed also a little of compassion.

"Good night to you," said the girl, passing him, and with a frank, gay tone.

"Shall I attend you home, Miss?" said the man.

"What for? I am very well!" answered the young woman, with an accent and look of innocent surprise.

Just at this time the man, who had hitherto followed her, gained the spot, and turned down the lane.

"Yes," replied the policeman; "but it is getting dark, Miss."

"So it is every night when I walk home, unless there's a moon.—Good-bye.—The moon," she repeated to herself, as she walked on, "I used to be afraid of the moon when I was a little child;" and then, after a pause, she murmured, in a low chaunt:

"The moon she is a wandering ghost,
That walks in penance nightly;
How sad she is, that wandering moon,
For all she shines so brightly!

"I watched her eyes when I was young,
Until they turned my brain,
And now I often weep to think
'Twill ne'er be right again."

As the murmur of these words died at a distance down the lane in which the girl had disappeared, the policeman, who had paused to listen, shook his head mournfully, and said, while he moved on,—

"Poor thing! they should not let her always go about by herself; and yet, who would harm her?"

Meanwhile the girl proceeded along the lane, which was skirted by small, but not mean houses, till it terminated in a cross-stile that admitted into a church yard. Here hung the last lamp in the path, and a few dint stars broke palely over the long grass, and scattered gravestones, without piercing the deep shadow which the church threw over a large portion of the sacred ground. Just as she passed the stile, the man, whom we have before noticed, and who had been leaning, as if waiting for some one, against the pales, approached, and said gently,—

"Ah, Miss! it is a lone place for one so beautiful as you are to be alone. You ought never to be on foot."

The girl stopped, and looked full, but without any alarm in her eyes, into the man's face.

"Go away!" she said, with a half-peevish, half-kindly tone of command.

"I don't know you."

"But I have been sent to speak to you by one who does know you, Miss—one who loves you to distraction—he has seen you before at Mrs. West's. He is so grieved to think you should walk

—you ought, he says, to have every luxury—that he has sent his carriage for you. It is on the other side of the yard. Do come now;" and he laid his hand, though very lightly, on her arm.

"At Mrs. West's!" she said; and, for the first time, her voice and look showed fear. "Go away directly! How dare you touch me!"

"But, my dear Miss, you have no idea how my employer loves you, and how rich he is. See, he has sent you all this money; it is gold—real gold. You may have what you like, if you will but come. Now, don't be silly, Miss." The girl made no answer, but, with a sudden spring, passed the man, and ran lightly and rapidly along the path, in an opposite direction from that to which the tempter had pointed, when inviting her to the carriage. The man, surprised, but not baffled, reached her in an instant, and caught hold of her dress.

"Stay! you must come—you must!" he said, threateningly; and, loosening his grasp on her shawl, he threw his arm round her waist.

"Don't!" cried the girl, pleadingly, and apparently subdued, turning her fair, soft face upon her pursuer, and clasping her hands. "Be quiet! Fanny is silly! No one is ever rude to poor Fanny!"

"And no one will be rude to you, Miss," said the man, apparently touched; "but I dare not go without you. You don't know what you refuse. Come;" and he attempted gently to draw her back.

"No, no!" said the girl, changing from supplication to anger, and raising her voice into a loud shriek, "No! I will—"

"Nay, then," interrupted the man, looking round anxiously, and, with a quick and dexterous movement he threw a large handkerchief over her face, and, as he held it fast to her lips with one hand, he lifted her from the ground. Still violently struggling, the girl contrived to remove the handkerchief, and once more her shriek of terror rang through the violated sanctuary.

At that instant a loud deep voice was heard, "Who calls?" And a tall figure seemed to rise, as from the grave itself, and emerge from the shadow of the church. A moment more, and a strong gripe was laid on the shoulder of the ravisher. "What is this? On God's ground, too! Release her, wretch!"

The man, trembling, half with superstitious, half with bodily fear, let go his captive, who fell at once at the knees of her deliverer. "Don't you hurt me too," she said, as the tears rolled down her eyes. "I am a good girl—and my grandfather's blind."

The stranger bent down and raised her; then looking round for the assailant with an eye whose dark fire shone through the gloom, he perceived the coward stealing off. He disdained to pursue.

"My poor child," said he, with that voice which the strong assume to the weak—the man to some wounded infant—the voice of tender superiority and compassion, "there is no cause for fear now. Be soothed. Do you live near? Shall I see you home?"

"Thank you! That's kind. Pray do!" And, with an infantine

confidence she took his hand, as a child does that of a grown-up person;—so they walked on together.

"And," said the stranger, "do you know that man? Has he insulted you before?"

"No—don't talk of him: *ce me fait mal!*" And she put her hand to her forehead.

The French was spoken with so French an accent, that, in some curiosity, the stranger cast his eye over her plain dress.

"You speak French well."

"Do I? I wish I knew more words—I only recollect a few. When I am very happy or very sad they come into my head. But I am happy now. I like your voice—I like you—Oh! I have dropped my basket!"

"Shall I go back for it, or shall I buy you another?"

"Another!—Oh, no! come back for it. How kind you are!—Ah! I see it!" and she broke away and ran forward to pick it up.

When she had recovered it, she laughed—she spoke to it—she kissed it.

Her companion smiled as he said: "Some sweetheart has given you that basket—it seems but a common basket too."

"I have had it—oh, ever since—since—I don't know how long! It came with me from France—it was full of little toys. They are gone—I am so sorry!"

"How old are you?"

"I don't know."

"My pretty one," said the stranger, with deep pity in his rich

voice, "your mother should not let you go out alone at this hour."

"Mother!—mother!" repeated the girl, in a tone of surprise.

"Have you no mother?"

"No! I had a father once. But he died, they say. I did not see him die. I sometimes cry when I think that I shall never, never see him again! But," she said, changing her accent from melancholy almost to joy, "he is to have a grave here like the other girl's fathers—a fine stone upon it—and all to be done with my money!"

"Your money, my child?"

"Yes; the money I make. I sell my work and take the money to my grandfather; but I lay by a little every week for a gravestone for my father."

"Will the gravestone be placed in that churchyard?" They were now in another lane; and, as he spoke, the stranger checked her, and bending down to look into her face, he murmured to himself, "Is it possible?—it must be—it must!"

"Yes! I love that churchyard—my brother told me to put flowers there; and grandfather and I sit there in the summer, without speaking. But I don't talk much, I like singing better:—

"All things that good and harmless are
Are taught, they say, to sing
The maiden resting at her work,
The bird upon the wing;
The little ones at church, in prayer;
The angels in the sky

The angels less when babes are born
Than when the aged die."

And unconscious of the latent moral, dark or cheering, according as we estimate the value of this life, couched in the concluding rhyme, Fanny turned round to the stranger, and said, "Why should the angels be glad when the aged die?"

"That they are released from a false, unjust, and miserable world, in which the first man was a rebel, and the second a murderer!" muttered the stranger between his teeth, which he gnashed as he spoke.

The girl did not understand him: she shook her head gently, and made no reply. A few moments, and she paused before a small house.

"This is my home."

"It is so," said her companion, examining the exterior of the house with an earnest gaze; "and your name is Fanny."

"Yes—every one knows Fanny. Come in;" and the girl opened the door with a latch-key.

The stranger bowed his stately height as he crossed the low threshold and followed his guide into a little parlour. Before a table on which burned dimly, and with unheeded wick, a single candle, sat a man of advanced age; and as he turned his face to the door, the stranger saw that he was blind.

The girl bounded to his chair, passed her arms round the old man's neck, and kissed his forehead; then nestling herself at his

feet, and leaning her clasped hands caressingly on his knee, she said,—

"Grandpapa, I have brought you somebody you must love. He has been so kind to Fanny."

"And neither of you can remember me!" said the guest.

The old man, whose dull face seemed to indicate dotage, half raised himself at the sound of the stranger's voice. "Who is that?" said he, with a feeble and querulous voice. "Who wants me?"

"I am the friend of your lost son. I am he who, ten years ago, brought Fanny to your roof, and gave her to your care—your son's last charge. And you blessed your son, and forgave him, and vowed to be a father to his Fanny." The old man, who had now slowly risen to his feet, trembled violently, and stretched out his hands.

"Come near—near—let me put my hands on your head. I cannot see you; but Fanny talks of you, and prays for you; and Fanny—she has been an angel to me!"

The stranger approached and half knelt as the old man spread his hands over his head, muttering inaudibly. Meanwhile Fanny, pale as death—her lips apart—an eager, painful expression on her face—looked inquiringly on the dark, marked countenance of the visitor, and creeping towards him inch by inch, fearfully touched his dress—his arms—his countenance.

"Brother," she said at last, doubtingly and timidly, "Brother, I thought I could never forget you! But you are not like my brother; you are older;—you are—you are!—no! no! you are not my

brother!"

"I am much changed, Fanny; and you too!"

He smiled as he spoke; and the smile-sweet and pitying—thoroughly changed the character of his face, which was ordinarily stern, grave, and proud.

"I know you now!" exclaimed Fanny, in a tone of wild joy. "And you come back from that grave! My flowers have brought you back at last! I knew they would! Brother! Brother!"

And she threw herself on his breast and burst into passionate tears. Then, suddenly drawing herself back, she laid her finger on his arm, and looked up at him beseechingly.

"Pray, now, is he really dead? He, my father!—he, too, was lost like you. Can't he come back again as you have done?"

"Do you grieve for him still, then? Poor girl!" said the stranger, evasively, and seating himself. Fanny continued to listen for an answer to her touching question; but finding that none was given, she stole away to a corner of the room, and leaned her face on her hands, and seemed to think—till at last, as she so sat, the tears began to flow down her cheeks, and she wept, but silently and unnoticed.

"But, sir," said the guest, after a short pause, "how is this? Fanny tells me she supports you by her work. Are you so poor, then? Yet I left you your son's bequest; and you, too, I understood, though not rich, were not in want!"

"There was a curse on my gold," said the old man, sternly. "It was stolen from us."

There was another pause. Simon broke it.

"And you, young man—how has it fared with you? You have prospered, I hope."

"I am as I have been for years—alone in the world, without kindred and without friends. But, thanks to Heaven, I am not a beggar!"

"No kindred and no friends!" repeated the old man. "No father—no brother—no wife—no sister!"

"None! No one to care whether I live or die," answered the stranger, with a mixture of pride and sadness in his voice. "But, as the song has it—

"I care for nobody—no, not I,
For nobody cares for me!"

There was a certain pathos in the mockery with which he repeated the homely lines, although, as he did, he gathered himself up, as if conscious of a certain consolation and reliance on the resources not dependent on others which he had found in his own strong limbs and his own stout heart.

At that moment he felt a soft touch upon his hand, and he saw Fanny looking at him through the tears that still flowed.

"You have no one to care for you? Don't say so! Come and live with us, brother; we'll care for you. I have never forgotten the flowers—never! Do come! Fanny shall love you. Fanny can work for three!"

"And they call her an idiot!" mumbled the old man, with a vacant smile on his lips.

"My sister! You shall be my sister! Forlorn one—whom even Nature has fooled and betrayed! Sister!—we, both orphans! Sister!" exclaimed that dark, stern man, passionately, and with a broken voice; and he opened his arms, and Fanny, without a blush or a thought of shame, threw herself on his breast. He kissed her forehead with a kiss that was, indeed, pure and holy as a brother's: and Fanny felt that he had left upon her cheek a tear that was not her own.

"Well," he said, with an altered voice, and taking the old man's hand, "what say you? Shall I take up my lodging with you? I have a little money; I can protect and aid you both. I shall be often away—in London or else where—and will not intrude too much on you. But you blind, and she—(here he broke off the sentence abruptly and went on)—you should not be left alone. And this neighbourhood, that burial-place, are dear to me. I, too, Fanny, have lost a parent; and that grave—"

He paused, and then added, in a trembling voice, "And you have placed flowers over that grave?"

"Stay with us," said the blind man; "not for our sake, but your own. The world is a bad place. I have been long sick of the world. Yes! come and live near the burial-ground—the nearer you are to the grave, the safer you are;—and you have a little money, you say!"

"I will come to-morrow, then. I must return now. Tomorrow,

Fanny, we shall meet again."

"Must you go?" said Fanny, tenderly. "But you will come again; you know I used to think every one died when he left me. I am wiser now. Yet still, when you do leave me, it is true that you die for Fanny!"

At this moment, as the three persons were grouped, each had assumed a posture of form, an expression of face, which a painter of fitting sentiment and skill would have loved to study. The visitor had gained the door; and as he stood there, his noble height—the magnificent strength and health of his manhood in its full prime—contrasted alike the almost spectral debility of extreme age and the graceful delicacy of Fanny—half girl, half child. There was something foreign in his air—and the half military habit, relieved by the red riband of the Bourbon knighthood. His complexion was dark as that of a Moor, and his raven hair curled close to the stately head. The soldier-moustache—thick, but glossy as silk—shaded the firm lip; and the pointed beard, assumed by the exiled Carlists, heightened the effect of the strong and haughty features and the expression of the martial countenance.

But as Fanny's voice died on his ear, he half averted that proud face; and the dark eyes—almost Oriental in their brilliancy and depth of shade—seemed soft and humid. And there stood Fanny, in a posture of such unconscious sadness—such childlike innocence; her arms drooping—her face wistfully turned to his—and a half smile upon the lips, that made still more touching

the tears not yet dried upon her cheeks. While thin, frail, shadowy, with white hair and furrowed cheeks, the old man fixed his sightless orbs on space; and his face, usually only animated from the lethargy of advancing dotage by a certain querulous cynicism, now grew suddenly earnest, and even thoughtful, as Fanny spoke of Death!

CHAPTER V

*"Ulyss. Time hath a wallet at his back
Wherein he puts alms for oblivion.
* * Perseverance, dear my lord,
Keeps honour bright."*

—Troilus and Cressida.

I have, not sought—as would have been easy, by a little ingenuity in the earlier portion of this narrative—whatever source of vulgar interest might be derived from the mystery of names and persons. As in Charles Spencer the reader is allowed at a glance to detect Sidney Morton, so in Philip de Vaudemont (the stranger who rescued Fanny) the reader at once recognises the hero of my tale; but since neither of these young men has a better right to the name resigned than to the name adopted, it will be simpler and more convenient to designate them by those appellations by which they are now known to the world. In truth, Philip de Vaudemont was scarcely the same being as Philip Morton. In the short visit he had paid to the elder Gawtreys, when he consigned Fanny to his charge, he had given no name; and the one he now took (when, towards the evening of the next day he returned to Simon's house) the old man heard for the first time. Once more sunk into his usual apathy, Simon did not express any surprise that a Frenchman should be so well

acquainted with English—he scarcely observed that the name was French. Simon's age seemed daily to bring him more and more to that state when life is mere mechanism, and the soul, preparing for its departure, no longer heeds the tenement that crumbles silently and neglected into its lonely dust. Vaudemont came with but little luggage (for he had an apartment also in London), and no attendant,—a single horse was consigned to the stables of an inn at hand, and he seemed, as soldiers are, more careful for the comforts of the animal than his own. There was but one woman servant in the humble household, who did all the ruder work, for Fanny's industry could afford it. The solitary servant and the homely fare sufficed for the simple and hardy adventurer.

Fanny, with a countenance radiant with joy, took his hand and led him to his room. Poor child! with that instinct of woman which never deserted her, she had busied herself the whole day in striving to deck the chamber according to her own notions of comfort. She had stolen from her little hoard wherewithal to make some small purchases, on which the Dowbiggin of the suburb had been consulted. And what with flowers on the table, and a fire at the hearth, the room looked cheerful.

She watched him as he glanced around, and felt disappointed that he did not utter the admiration she expected. Angry at last with the indifference which, in fact, as to external accommodation, was habitual to him, she plucked his sleeve, and said,—

"Why don't you speak? Is it not nice?—Fanny did her best."

"And a thousand thanks to Fanny! It is all I could wish."

"There is another room, bigger than this, but the wicked woman who robbed us slept there; and besides, you said you liked the churchyard. See!" and she opened the window and pointed to the church-tower rising dark against the evening sky.

"This is better than all!" said Vaudemont; and he looked out from the window in a silent reverie, which Fanny did not disturb.

And now he was settled! From a career so wild, agitated, and various, the adventurer paused in that humble resting-nook. But quiet is not repose—obscurity is not content. Often as, morn and eve, he looked forth upon the spot, where his mother's heart, unconscious of love and woe, mouldered away, the indignant and bitter feelings of the wronged outcast and the son who could not clear the mother's name swept away the subdued and gentle melancholy into which time usually softens regret for the dead, and with which most of us think of the distant past, and the once joyous childhood!

In this man's breast lay, concealed by his external calm, those memories and aspirations which are as strong as passions. In his earlier years, when he had been put to hard shifts for existence, he had found no leisure for close and brooding reflection upon that spoliation of just rights—that calumny upon his mother's name, which had first brought the Night into his Morning. His resentment towards the Beauforts, it is true, had ever been an intense but a fitful and irregular passion. It was exactly in

proportion as, by those rare and romantic incidents which Fiction cannot invent, and which Narrative takes with diffidence from the great Store-house of Real Life, his steps had ascended in the social ladder—that all which his childhood had lost—all which the robbers of his heritage had gained, the grandeur and the power of WEALTH—above all, the hourly and the tranquil happiness of a stainless name, became palpable and distinct. He had loved Eugenie as a boy loves for the first time an accomplished woman. He regarded her, so refined—so gentle—so gifted, with the feelings due to a superior being, with an eternal recollection of the ministering angel that had shone upon him when he stood on the dark abyss. She was the first that had redeemed his fate—the first that had guided aright his path—the first that had tamed the savage at his breast:—it was the young lion charmed by the eyes of Una. The outline of his story had been truly given at Lord Lilburne's. Despite his pride, which revolted from such obligations to another, and a woman—which disliked and struggled against a disguise which at once and alone saved him from the detection of the past and the terrors of the future—he had yielded to her, the wise and the gentle, as one whose judgment he could not doubt; and, indeed, the slanderous falsehoods circulated by the lackey, to whose discretion, the night of Gawtrey's death, Eugenie had preferred to confide her own honour, rather than another's life, had (as Liancourt rightly stated) left Philip no option but that which Madame de Merville deemed the best, whether for her happiness or her good name.

Then had followed a brief season—the holiday of his life—the season of young hope and passion, of brilliancy and joy, closing by that abrupt death which again left him lonely in the world.

When, from the grief that succeeded to the death of Eugenie, he woke to find himself amidst the strange faces and exciting scenes of an Oriental court, he turned with hard and disgustful contempt from Pleasure, as an infidelity to the dead. Ambition crept over him—his mind hardened as his cheek bronzed under those burning suns—his hardy frame, his energies prematurely awakened, his constitutional disregard to danger,—made him a brave and skilful soldier. He acquired reputation and rank. But, as time went on, the ambition took a higher flight—he felt his sphere circumscribed; the Eastern indolence that filled up the long intervals between Eastern action chafed a temper never at rest: he returned to France: his reputation, Liancourt's friendship, and the relations of Eugenie—grateful, as has before been implied, for the generosity with which he surrendered the principal part of her donation—opened for him a new career, but one painful and galling. In the Indian court there was no question of his birth—one adventurer was equal with the rest. But in Paris, a man attempting to rise provoked all the sarcasm of wit, all the cavils of party; and in polished and civil life, what valour has weapons against a jest? Thus, in civilisation, all the passions that spring from humiliated self-love and baffled aspiration again preyed upon his breast. He saw, then, that the more he struggled from obscurity, the more acute would become

research into his true origin; and his writhing pride almost stung to death his ambition. To succeed in life by regular means was indeed difficult for this man; always recoiling from the name he bore— always strong in the hope yet to regain that to which he conceived himself entitled—cherishing that pride of country which never deserts the native of a Free State, however harsh a parent she may have proved; and, above all, whatever his ambition and his passions, taking, from the very misfortunes he had known, an indomitable belief in the ultimate justice of Heaven;—he had refused to sever the last ties that connected him with his lost heritage and his forsaken land—he refused to be naturalised—to make the name he bore legally undisputed—he was contented to be an alien. Neither was Vaudemont fitted exactly for that crisis in the social world when the men of journals and talk bustle aside the men of action. He had not cultivated literature, he had no book- knowledge—the world had been his school, and stern life his teacher. Still, eminently skilled in those physical accomplishments which men admire and soldiers covet, calm and self-possessed in manner, of great personal advantages, of much ready talent and of practised observation in character, he continued to breast the obstacles around him, and to establish himself in the favour of those in power. It was natural to a person so reared and circumstanced to have no sympathy with what is called the popular cause. He was no citizen in the state—he was a stranger in the land. He had suffered and still suffered too much from mankind to have that philanthropy, sometimes visionary

but always noble, which, in fact, generally springs from the studies we cultivate, not in the forum, but the closet. Men, alas! too often lose the Democratic Enthusiasm in proportion as they find reason to suspect or despise their kind. And if there were not hopes for the Future, which this hard, practical daily life does not suffice to teach us, the vision and the glory that belong to the Great Popular Creed, dimmed beneath the injustice, the follies, and the vices of the world as it is, would fade into the lukewarm sectarianism of temporary Party. Moreover, Vaudemont's habits of thought and reasoning were those of the camp, confirmed by the systems familiar to him in the East: he regarded the populace as a soldier enamoured of discipline and order usually does. His theories, therefore, or rather his ignorance of what is sound in theory, went with Charles the Tenth in his excesses, but not with the timidity which terminated those excesses by dethronement and disgrace. Chafed to the heart, gnawed with proud grief, he obeyed the royal mandates, and followed the exiled monarch: his hopes overthrown, his career in France annihilated forever. But on entering England, his temper, confident and ready of resource, fastened itself on new food. In the land where he had no name he might yet rebuild his fortunes. It was an arduous effort—an improbable hope; but the words heard by the bridge of Paris—words that had often cheered him in his exile through hardships and through dangers which it is unnecessary to our narrative to detail—yet rung again in his ear, as he leaped on his native land,—"Time, Faith, Energy."

While such his character in the larger and more distant relations of life, in the closer circles of companionship many rare and noble qualities were visible. It is true that he was stern, perhaps imperious —of a temper that always struggled for command; but he was deeply susceptible of kindness, and, if feared by those who opposed, loved by those who served him. About his character was that mixture of tenderness and fierceness which belonged, of old, to the descriptions of the warrior. Though so little unlettered, Life had taught him a certain poetry of sentiment and idea—More poetry, perhaps, in the silent thoughts that, in his happier moments, filled his solitude, than in half the pages that his brother had read and written by the dreaming lake. A certain largeness of idea and nobility of impulse often made him act the sentiments of which bookmen write. With all his passions, he held licentiousness in disdain; with all his ambition for the power of wealth, he despised its luxury. Simple, masculine, severe, abstemious, he was of that mould in which, in earlier times, the successful men of action have been cast. But to successful action, circumstance is more necessary than to triumphant study.

It was to be expected that, in proportion as he had been familiar with a purer and nobler life, he should look with great and deep self- humiliation at his early association with Gawtreys. He was in this respect more severe on himself than any other mind ordinarily just and candid would have been,—when fairly surveying the circumstances of penury, hunger, and despair,

which had driven him to Gawtreys's roof, the imperfect nature of his early education, the boyish trust and affection he had felt for his protector, and his own ignorance of, and exemption from, all the worst practices of that unhappy criminal. But still, when, with the knowledge he had now acquired, the man looked calmly back, his cheek burned with remorseful shame at his unreflecting companionship in a life of subterfuge and equivocation, the true nature of which, the boy (so circumstanced as we have shown him) might be forgiven for not at that time comprehending. Two advantages resulted, however, from the error and the remorse: first, the humiliation it brought curbed, in some measure, a pride that might otherwise have been arrogant and unamiable, and, secondly, as I have before intimated, his profound gratitude to Heaven for his deliverance from the snares that had beset his youth gave his future the guide of an earnest and heartfelt faith. He acknowledged in life no such thing as accident. Whatever his struggles, whatever his melancholy, whatever his sense of worldly wrong, he never despaired; for nothing now could shake his belief in one directing Providence.

The ways and habits of Vaudemont were not at discord with those of the quiet household in which he was now a guest. Like most men of strong frames, and accustomed to active, not studious pursuits, he rose early; —and usually rode to London, to come back late at noon to their frugal meal. And if again, perhaps after the hour when Fanny and Simon retired, he would often return to London, his own pass-key re-admitted him, at

whatever time he came back, without disturbing the sleep of the household. Sometimes, when the sun began to decline, if the air was warm, the old man would crawl out, leaning on that strong arm, through the neighbouring lanes, ever returning through the lonely burial-ground; or when the blind host clung to his fireside, and composed himself to sleep, Philip would saunter forth along with Fanny; and on the days when she went to sell her work, or select her purchases, he always made a point of attending her. And her cheek wore a flush of pride when she saw him carrying her little basket, or waiting without, in musing patience, while she performed her commissions in the shops. Though in reality Fanny's intellect was ripening within, yet still the surface often misled the eye as to the depths. It was rather that something yet held back the faculties from their growth than that the faculties themselves were wanting. Her weakness was more of the nature of the infant's than of one afflicted with incurable imbecility. For instance, she managed the little household with skill and prudence; she could calculate in her head, as rapidly as Vaudemont himself, the arithmetic necessary to her simple duties; she knew the value of money, which is more than some of us wise folk do. Her skill, even in her infancy so remarkable, in various branches of female handiwork, was carried, not only by perseverance, but by invention and peculiar talent, to a marvellous and exquisite perfection. Her embroidery, especially in what was then more rare than at present, viz., flowers on silk, was much in request among the great modistes of London,

to whom it found its way through the agency of Miss Semper. So that all this had enabled her, for years, to provide every necessary comfort of life for herself and her blind protector. And her care for the old man was beautiful in its minuteness, its vigilance. Wherever her heart was interested, there never seemed a deficiency of mind. Vaudemont was touched to see how much of affectionate and pitying respect she appeared to enjoy in the neighbourhood, especially among the humbler classes—even the beggar who swept the crossings did not beg of her, but bade God bless her as she passed; and the rude, discontented artisan would draw himself from the wall and answer, with a softened brow, the smile with which the harmless one charmed his courtesy. In fact, whatever attraction she took from her youth, her beauty, her misfortune, and her affecting industry, was heightened, in the eyes of the poorer neighbours, by many little traits of charity and kindness; many a sick child had she tended, and many a breadless board had stolen something from the stock set aside for her father's grave.

"Don't you think," she once whispered to Vaudemont, "that God attends to us more if we are good to those who are sick and hungry?"

"Certainly we are taught to think so."

"Well, I'll tell you a secret—don't tell again. Grandpapa once said that my father had done bad things; now, if Fanny is good to those she can help, I think that God will hear her more kindly when she prays him to forgive what her father did. Do you think

so too? Do say—you are so wise!"

"Fanny, you are wiser than all of us; and I feel myself better and happier when I hear you speak."

There were, indeed, many moments when Vaudemont thought that her deficiencies of intellect might have been repaired, long since, by skilful culture and habitual companionship with those of her own age; from which companionship, however, Fanny, even when at school, had shrunk aloof. At other moments there was something so absent and distracted about her, or so fantastic and incoherent, that Vaudemont, with the man's hard, worldly eye, read in it nothing but melancholy confusion. Nevertheless, if the skein of ideas was entangled, each thread in itself was a thread of gold.

Fanny's great object—her great ambition—her one hope—was a tomb for her supposed father. Whether from some of that early religion attached to the grave, which is most felt in Catholic countries, and which she had imbibed at the convent; or from her residence so near the burial ground, and the affection with which she regarded the spot;—whatever the cause, she had cherished for some years, as young maidens usually cherish the desire of the Altar—the dream of the Gravestone. But the hoard was amassed so slowly;—now old Gawtreys was attacked by illness;—now there was some little difficulty in the rent; now some fluctuation in the price of work; and now, and more often than all, some demand on her charity, which interfered with, and drew from, the pious savings. This was a sentiment in which her new

friend sympathised deeply; for he, too, remembered that his first gold had bought that humble stone which still preserved upon the earth the memory of his mother.

Meanwhile, days crept on, and no new violence was offered to Fanny. Vaudemont learned, then, by little and little—and Fanny's account was very confused—the nature of the danger she had run.

It seemed that one day, tempted by the fineness of the weather up the road that led from the suburb farther into the country, Fanny was stopped by a gentleman in a carriage, who accosted her, as she said, very kindly: and after several questions, which she answered with her usual unsuspecting innocence, learned her trade, insisted on purchasing some articles of work which she had at the moment in her basket, and promised to procure her a constant purchaser, upon much better terms than she had hitherto obtained, if she would call at the house of a Mrs. West, about a mile from the suburb towards London. This she promised to do, and this she did, according to the address he gave her. She was admitted to a lady more gaily dressed than Fanny had ever seen a lady before,—the gentleman was also present,—they both loaded her with compliments, and bought her work at a price which seemed about to realise all the hopes of the poor girl as to the gravestone for William Gawtreay,—as if his evil fate pursued that wild man beyond the grave, and his very tomb was to be purchased by the gold of the polluter! The lady then appointed her to call again; but, meanwhile, she met Fanny in the streets,

and while she was accosting her, it fortunately chanced that Miss Semper the milliner passed that way—turned round, looked hard at the lady, used very angry language to her, seized Fanny's hand, led her away while the lady slunk off; and told her that the said lady was a very bad woman, and that Fanny must never speak to her again. Fanny most cheerfully promised this. And, in fact, the lady, probably afraid, whether of the mob or the magistrates, never again came near her.

"And," said Fanny, "I gave the money they had both given to me to Miss Semper, who said she would send it back."

"You did right, Fanny; and as you made one promise to Miss Semper, so you must make me one—never to stir from home again without me or some other person. No, no other person—only me. I will give up everything else to go with you."

"Will you? Oh, yes. I promise! I used to like going alone, but that was before you came, brother."

And as Fanny kept her promise, it would have been a bold gallant indeed who would have ventured to molest her by the side of that stately and strong protector.

CHAPTER VI

*"Timon. Each thing's a thief
The laws, your curb and whip, in their rough power
Have unchecked theft.
The sweet degrees that this brief world affords,
To such as may the passive drugs of it
Freely command."*

—*Timon of Athens.*

On the day and at the hour fixed for the interview with the stranger who had visited Mr. Beaufort, Lord Lilburne was seated in the library of his brother-in-law; and before the elbow-chair, on which he lolled carelessly, stood our old friend Mr. Sharp, of Bow Street notability.

"Mr. Sharp," said the peer, "I have sent for you to do me a little favour. I expect a man here who professes to give Mr. Beaufort, my brother-in-law, some information about a lawsuit. It is necessary to know the exact value of his evidence. I wish you to ascertain all particulars about him. Be so good as to seat yourself in the porter's chair in the hall; note him when he enters, unobserved yourself—but as he is probably a stranger to you, note him still more when he leaves the house; follow him at a distance; find out where he lives, whom he associates with, where he visits, their names and directions, what his character

and calling are;—in a word, everything you can, and report to me each evening. Dog him well, never lose sight of him—you will be handsomely paid. You understand?"

"Ah!" said Mr. Sharp, "leave me alone, my lord. Been employed before by your lordship's brother-in-law. We knows what's what."

"I don't doubt it. To your post—I expect him every moment."

And, in fact, Mr. Sharp had only just ensconced himself in the porter's chair when the stranger knocked at the door—in another moment he was shown in to Lord Lilburne.

"Sir," said his lordship, without rising, "be so good as to take a chair. Mr. Beaufort is obliged to leave town—he has asked me to see you—I am one of his family—his wife is my sister—you may be as frank with me as with him,—more so, perhaps."

"I beg the fauvour of your name, sir," said the stranger, adjusting his collar.

"Yours first—business is business."

"Well, then, Captain Smith."

"Of what regiment?"

"Half-pay."

"I am Lord Lilburne. Your name is Smith—humph!" added the peer, looking over some notes before him. "I see it is also the name of the witness appealed to by Mrs. Morton—humph!"

At this remark, and still more at the look which accompanied it, the countenance, before impudent and complacent, of Captain Smith fell into visible embarrassment; he cleared his throat and

said, with a little hesitation,—

"My lord, that witness is living!"

"No doubt of it—witnesses never die where property is concerned and imposture intended."

At this moment the servant entered, and placed a little note, quaintly folded, before Lord Lilburne. He glanced at it in surprise—opened, and read as follows, in pencil,—

"My LORD,—I knows the man; take caer of him; he is as big a roge as ever stept; he was transported some three year back, and unless his time has been shortened by the Home, he's absent without leve. We used to call him Dashing Jerry. That ere youngster we went arter, by Mr. Bofort's wish, was a pall of his. Scuze the liberty I take. "J. SHARP."

While Lord Lilburne held this effusion to the candle, and spelled his way through it, Captain Smith, recovering his self-composure, thus proceeded:

"Imposture, my lord! imposture! I really don't understand. Your lordship really seems so suspicious, that it is quite uncomfortable. I am sure it is all the same to me; and if Mr. Beaufort does not think proper to see me himself, why I'd best make my bow."

And Captain Smith rose.

"Stay a moment, sir. What Mr. Beaufort may yet do, I cannot say; but I know this, you stand charged of a very grave offence, and if your witness or witnesses—you may have fifty, for what I care—are equally guilty, so much the worse for them."

"My lord, I really don't comprehend."

"Then I will be more plain. I accuse you of devising an infamous falsehood for the purpose of extorting money. Let your witnesses appear in court, and I promise that you, they, and the young man, Mr. Morton, whose claim they set up, shall be indicted for conspiracy—conspiracy, if accompanied (as in the case of your witnesses) with perjury, of the blackest die. Mr. Smith, I know you; and, before ten o'clock to-morrow, I shall know also if you had his majesty's leave to quit the colonies! Ah! I am plain enough now, I see."

And Lord Lilburne threw himself back in his chair, and coldly contemplated the white face and dismayed expression of the crestfallen captain. That most worthy person, after a pause of confusion, amaze, and fear, made an involuntary stride, with a menacing gesture, towards Lilburne; the peer quietly placed his hand on the bell.

"One moment more," said the latter; "if I ring this bell, it is to place you in custody. Let Mr. Beaufort but see you here once again—nay, let him but hear another word of this pretended lawsuit—and you return to the colonies. Pshaw! Frown not at me, sir! A Bow Street officer is in the hall. Begone!—no, stop one moment, and take a lesson in life. Never again attempt to threaten people of property and station. Around every rich man is a wall—better not run your head against it."

"But I swear solemnly," cried the knave, with an emphasis so startling that it carried with it the appearance of truth, "that the

marriage did take place."

"And I say, no less solemnly, that any one who swears it in a court of law shall be prosecuted for perjury! Bah! you are a sorry rogue, after all!"

And with an air of supreme and half-compassionate contempt, Lord Lilburne turned away and stirred the fire. Captain Smith muttered and fumbled a moment with his gloves, then shrugged his shoulders and sneaked out.

That night Lord Lilburne again received his friends, and amongst his guests came Vaudemont. Lilburne was one who liked the study of character, especially the character of men wrestling against the world. Wholly free from every species of ambition, he seemed to reconcile himself to his apathy by examining into the disquietude, the mortification, the heart's wear and tear, which are the lot of the ambitious. Like the spider in his hole, he watched with hungry pleasure the flies struggling in the web; through whose slimy labyrinth he walked with an easy safety. Perhaps one reason why he loved gaming was less from the joy of winning than the philosophical complacency with which he feasted on the emotions of those who lost; always serene, and, except in debauch, always passionless,—Majendie, tracing the experiments of science in the agonies of some tortured dog, could not be more rapt in the science, and more indifferent to the dog, than Lord Lilburne, ruining a victim, in the analysis of human passions,—stoical in the writhings of the wretch whom he tranquilly dissected. He wished to win money

of Vaudemont—to ruin this man, who presumed to be more generous than other people—to see a bold adventurer submitted to the wheel of the Fortune which reigns in a pack of cards;—and all, of course, without the least hate to the man whom he then saw for the first time. On the contrary, he felt a respect for Vaudemont. Like most worldly men, Lord Lilburne was prepossessed in favour of those who seek to rise in life: and like men who have excelled in manly and athletic exercises, he was also prepossessed in favour of those who appeared fitted for the same success.

Liancourt took aside his friend, as Lord Lilburne was talking with his other guests:—

"I need not caution you, who never play, not to commit yourself to Lord Lilburne's tender mercies; remember, he is an admirable player."

"Nay," answered Vaudemont, "I want to know this man: I have reasons, which alone induce me to enter his house. I can afford to venture something, because I wish to see if I can gain something for one dear to me. And for the rest (he muttered)—I know him too well not to be on my guard." With that he joined Lord Lilburne's group, and accepted the invitation to the card-table. At supper, Vaudemont conversed more than was habitual to him; he especially addressed himself to his host, and listened, with great attention, to Lilburne's caustic comments upon every topic successively started. And whether it was the art of De Vaudemont, or from an interest that Lord Lilburne took

in studying what was to him a new character,—or whether that, both men excelling peculiarly in all masculine accomplishments, their conversation was of a nature that was more attractive to themselves than to others; it so happened that they were still talking while the daylight already peered through the window-curtains.

"And I have outstayed all your guests," said De Vaudemont, glancing round the emptied room.

"It is the best compliment you could pay me. Another night we can enliven our *tete-a-tete* with *ecarte*; though at your age, and with your appearance, I am surprised, Monsieur de Vaudemont, that you are fond of play: I should have thought that it was not in a pack of cards that you looked for hearts. But perhaps you are *blaze* betimes of the *beau sexe*."

"Yet your lordship's devotion to it is, perhaps, as great now as ever?"

"Mine?—no, not as ever. To different ages different degrees. At your age I wooed; at mine I purchase—the better plan of the two: it does not take up half so much time."

"Your marriage, I think, Lord Lilburne, was not blessed with children.

Perhaps sometimes you feel the want of them?"

"If I did, I could have them by the dozen. Other ladies have been more generous in that department than the late Lady Lilburne, Heaven rest her!"

"And," said Vaudemont, fixing his eyes with some earnestness

on his host, "if you were really persuaded that you had a child, or perhaps a grandchild—the mother one whom you loved in your first youth—a child affectionate, beautiful, and especially needing your care and protection, would you not suffer that child, though illegitimate, to supply to you the want of filial affection?"

"Filial affection, *mon cher!*" repeated Lord Lilburne, "needing my care and protection! Pshaw! In other words, would I give board and lodging to some young vagabond who was good enough to say he was son to Lord Lilburne?"

"But if you were convinced that the claimant were your son, or perhaps your daughter—a tenderer name of the two, and a more helpless claimant?"

"My dear Monsieur de Vaudemont, you are doubtless a man of gallantry and of the world. If the children whom the law forces on one are, nine times out of ten, such damnable plagues, judge if one would father those whom the law permits us to disown! Natural children are the pariahs of the world, and I—am one of the Brahmans."

"But," persisted Vaudemont, "forgive me if I press the question farther. Perhaps I seek from your wisdom a guide to my own conduct;—suppose, then, a man had loved, had wronged, the mother;—suppose that in the child he saw one who, without his aid, might be exposed to every curse with which the pariahs (true, the pariahs!) of the world are too often visited, and who with his aid might become, as age advanced, his companion, his nurse, his comforter—"

"Tush!" interrupted Lilburne, with some impatience; "I know not how our conversation fell on such a topic—but if you really ask my opinion in reference to any case in practical life, you shall have it. Look you, then Monsieur de Vaudemont, no man has studied the art of happiness more than I have; and I will tell you the great secret—have as few ties as possible. Nurse!—pooh! you or I could hire one by the week a thousand times more useful and careful than a bore of a child. Comforter!—a man of mind never wants comfort. And there is no such thing as sorrow while we have health and money, and don't care a straw for anybody in the world. If you choose to love people, their health and circumstances, if either go wrong, can fret you: that opens many avenues to pain. Never live alone, but always feel alone. You think this unamiable: possibly. I am no hypocrite, and, for my part, I never affect to be anything but what I am—John Lilburne."

As the peer thus spoke, Vaudemont, leaning against the door, contemplated him with a strange mixture of interest and disgust. "And John Lilburne is thought a great man, and William Gawtreys was a great rogue. You don't conceal your heart?—no, I understand. Wealth and power have no need of hypocrisy: you are the man of vice—Gawtreys, the man of crime. You never sin against the law—he was a felon by his trade. And the felon saved from vice the child, and from want the grandchild (Your flesh and blood) whom you disown: which will Heaven consider the worse man? No, poor Fanny, I see I am wrong. If he would own

you, I would not give you up to the ice of such a soul:—better the blind man than the dead heart!"

"Well, Lord Lilburne," said De Vaudemont aloud, shaking off his reverie,

"I must own that your philosophy seems to me the wisest for yourself.

For a poor man it might be different—the poor need affection."

"Ay, the poor, certainly," said Lord Lilburne, with an air of patronising candour.

"And I will own farther," continued De Vaudemont, "that I have willingly lost my money in return for the instruction I have received in hearing you converse."

"You are kind: come and take your revenge next Thursday. Adieu."

As Lord Lilburne undressed, and his valet attended him, he said to that worthy functionary,—

"So you have not been able to make out the name of the stranger—the new lodger you tell me of?"

"No, my lord. They only say he is a very fine-looking man."

"You have not seen him?"

"No, my lord. What do you wish me now to do?"

"Humph! Nothing at this moment! You manage things so badly, you might get me into a scrape. I never do anything which the law or the police, or even the news papers, can get hold of. I must think of some other way—humph! I never give up what I

once commence, and I never fail in what I undertake! If life had been worth what fools trouble it with— business and ambition—I suppose I should have been a great man with a very bad liver—ha ha! I alone, of all the world, ever found out what the world was good for! Draw the curtains, Dykeman."

CHAPTER VII

"Org. Welcome, thou ice that sitt'st about his heart No heat can ever thaw thee!"

—**FORD: Broken Heart.**

"Nearch. Honourable infamy!"

—**Ibid.**

"Amye. Her tenderness hath yet deserved no rigour, So to be crossed by fate!"

"Arm. You misapply, sir, With favour let me speak it, what Apollo Hath clouded in dim sense!"

—**Ibid.**

If Vaudemont had fancied that, considering the age and poverty of Simon, it was his duty to see whether Fanny's not more legal, but more natural protector were, indeed, the unredeemed and unmalleable egotist which Gawtreys had painted him, the conversation of one night was sufficient to make him abandon for ever the notion of advancing her claims upon Lord Lilburne. But Philip had another motive in continuing his acquaintance with that personage. The sight of his mother's grave had recalled to him the image of that lost brother over whom he had vowed to watch. And, despite the deep sense of wronged affection with which he yet remembered the cruel letter that had contained the last tidings of Sidney, Philip's heart clung with undying fondness

to that fair shape associated with all the happy recollections of childhood; and his conscience as well as his love asked him, each time that he passed the churchyard, "Will you make no effort to obey that last prayer of the mother who consigned her darling to your charge?" Perhaps, had Philip been in want, or had the name he now bore been sullied by his conduct, he might have shrunk from seeking one whom he might injure, but could not serve. But though not rich, he had more than enough for tastes as hardy and simple as any to which soldier of fortune ever limited his desires. And he thought, with a sentiment of just and noble pride, that the name which Eugenie had forced upon him had been borne spotless as the ermine through the trials and vicissitudes he had passed since he had assumed it. Sidney could give him nothing, and therefore it was his duty to seek Sidney out. Now, he had always believed in his heart that the Beauforts were acquainted with a secret which he more and more pined to penetrate. He would, for Sidney's sake, smother his hate to the Beauforts; he would not reject their acquaintance if thrown in his way; nay, secure in his change of name and his altered features, from all suspicion on their part, he would seek that acquaintance in order to find his brother and fulfil Catherine's last commands. His intercourse with Lilburne would necessarily bring him easily into contact with Lilburne's family. And in this thought he did not reject the invitations pressed on him. He felt, too, a dark and absorbing interest in examining a man who was in himself the incarnation of the World—the World of Art—the World as

the Preacher paints it—the hollow, sensual, sharp-witted, self-wrapped WORLD—the World that is all for this life, and thinks of no Future and no God!

Lord Lilburne was, indeed, a study for deep contemplation. A study to perplex the ordinary thinker, and task to the utmost the analysis of more profound reflection. William Gawtreys had possessed no common talents; he had discovered that his life had been one mistake; Lord Lilburne's intellect was far keener than Gawtreys's, and he had never made, and if he had lived to the age of Old Parr, never would have made a similar discovery. He never wrestled against a law, though he slipped through all laws! And he knew no remorse, for he knew no fear. Lord Lilburne had married early, and long survived, a lady of fortune, the daughter of the then Premier—the best match, in fact, of his day. And for one very brief period of his life he had suffered himself to enter into the field of politics the only ambition common with men of equal rank. He showed talents that might have raised one so gifted by circumstance to any height, and then retired at once into his old habits and old system of pleasure. "I wished to try," said he once, "if fame was worth one headache, and I have convinced myself that the man who can sacrifice the bone in his mouth to the shadow of the bone in the water is a fool." From that time he never attended the House of Lords, and declared himself of no political opinions one way or the other. Nevertheless, the world had a general belief in his powers, and Vaudemont reluctantly subscribed to the world's verdict. Yet he had done nothing, he had

read but little, he laughed at the world to its face,—and that last was, after all, the main secret of his ascendancy over those who were drawn into his circle. That contempt of the world placed the world at his feet. His sardonic and polished indifference, his professed code that there was no life worth caring for but his own life, his exemption from all cant, prejudice, and disguise, the frigid lubricity with which he glided out of the grasp of the Conventional, whenever it so pleased him, without shocking the Decorums whose sense is in their ear, and who are not roused by the deed but by the noise,—all this had in it the marrow and essence of a system triumphant with the vulgar; for little minds give importance to the man who gives importance to nothing. Lord Lilburne's authority, not in matters of taste alone, but in those which the world calls judgment and common sense, was regarded as an oracle. He cared not a straw for the ordinary baubles that attract his order; he had refused both an earldom and the garter, and this was often quoted in his honour. But you only try a man's virtue when you offer him something that he covets. The earldom and the garter were to Lord Lilburne no more tempting inducements than a doll or a skipping-rope; had you offered him an infallible cure for the gout, or an antidote against old age, you might have hired him as your lackey on your own terms. Lord Lilburne's next heir was the son of his only brother, a person entirely dependent on his uncle. Lord Lilburne allowed him L1000. a year and kept him always abroad in a diplomatic situation. He looked upon his successor as a man who

wanted power, but not inclination, to become his assassin.

Though he lived sumptuously and grudged himself nothing, Lord Lilburne was far from an extravagant man; he might, indeed, be considered close; for he knew how much of comfort and consideration he owed to his money, and valued it accordingly; he knew the best speculations and the best investments. If he took shares in an American canal, you might be sure that the shares would soon be double in value; if he purchased an estate, you might be certain it was a bargain. This pecuniary tact and success necessarily augmented his fame for wisdom.

He had been in early life a successful gambler, and some suspicions of his fair play had been noised abroad; but, as has been recently seen in the instance of a man of rank equal to Lilburne's, though, perhaps, of less acute if more cultivated intellect, it is long before the pigeon will turn round upon a falcon of breed and mettle. The rumours, indeed, were so vague as to carry with them no weight. During the middle of his career, when in the full flush of health and fortune, he had renounced the gaming-table. Of late years, as advancing age made time more heavy, he had resumed the resource, and with all his former good luck. The money-market, the table, the sex, constituted the other occupations and amusements with which Lord Lilburne filled up his rosy leisure.

Another way by which this man had acquired reputation for ability was this,—he never pretended to any branch of

knowledge of which he was ignorant, any more than to any virtue in which he was deficient. Honesty itself was never more free from quackery or deception than was this embodied and walking Vice. If the world chose to esteem him, he did not buy its opinion by imposture. No man ever saw Lord Lilburne's name in a public subscription, whether for a new church, or a Bible Society, or a distressed family, no man ever heard of his doing one generous, benevolent, or kindly action,—no man was ever startled by one philanthropic, pious, or amiable sentiment from those mocking lips. Yet, in spite of all this, John Lord Lilburne was not only esteemed but liked by the world, and set up in the chair of its Rhadamanthuses. In a word, he seemed to Vaudemont, and he was so in reality, a brilliant example of the might of Circumstance—an instance of what may be done in the way of reputation and influence by a rich, well-born man to whom the will a kingdom is. A little of genius, and Lord Lilburne would have made his vices notorious and his deficiencies glaring; a little of heart, and his habits would have led him into countless follies and discreditable scrapes. It was the lead and the stone that he carried about him that preserved his equilibrium, no matter which way the breeze blew. But all his qualities, positive or negative, would have availed him nothing without that position which enabled him to take his ease in that inn, the world—which presented, to every detection of his want of intrinsic nobleness, the irreproachable respectability of a high name, a splendid mansion, and a rent-roll without a flaw.

Vaudemont drew comparisons between Lilburne and Gawtreys, and he comprehended at last, why one was a low rascal and the other a great man.

Although it was but a few days after their first introduction to each other, Vaudemont had been twice to Lord Lilburne's, and their acquaintance was already on an easy footing—when one afternoon as the former was riding through the streets towards H—, he met the peer mounted on a stout cob, which, from its symmetrical strength, pure English breed, and exquisite grooming, showed something of those sporting tastes for which, in earlier life, Lord Lilburne had been noted.

"Why, Monsieur de Vaudemont, what brings you to this part of the town?—curiosity and the desire to explore?"

"That might be natural enough in me; but you, who know London so well; rather what brings you here?"

"Why I am returned from a long ride. I have had symptoms of a fit of the gout, and been trying to keep it off by exercise. I have been to a cottage that belongs to me, some miles from the town—a pretty place enough, by the way—you must come and see me there next month. I shall fill the house for a battue! I have some tolerable covers—you are a good shot, I suppose?"

"I have not practised, except with a rifle, for some years."

"That's a pity; for as I think a week's shooting once a year quite enough, I fear that your visit to me at Fernside may not be sufficiently long to put your hand in."

"Fernside!"

"Yes; is the name familiar to you?"

"I think I have heard it before. Did your lordship purchase or inherit it?"

"I bought it of my brother-in-law. It belonged to his brother—a gay, wild sort of fellow, who broke his neck over a six-barred gate; through that gate my friend Robert walked the same day into a very fine estate!"

"I have heard so. The late Mr. Beaufort, then, left no children?"

"Yes; two. But they came into the world in the primitive way in which Mr. Owen wishes us all to come—too naturally for the present state of society, and Mr. Owen's parallelogram was not ready for them. By the way, one of them disappeared at Paris;—you never met with him, I suppose?"

"Under what name?"

"Morton."

"Morton! hem! What Christian name?"

"Philip."

"Philip! no. But did Mr. Beaufort do nothing for the young men? I think I have heard somewhere that he took compassion on one of them."

"Have you? Ah, my brother-in-law is precisely one of those excellent men of whom the world always speaks well. No; he would very willingly have served either or both the boys, but the mother refused all his overtures and went to law, I fancy. The elder of these bastards turned out a sad fellow, and the younger,

—I don't know exactly where he is, but no doubt with one of his mother's relations. You seem to interest yourself in natural children, my dear Vaudemont?"

"Perhaps you have heard that people have doubted if I were a natural son?"

"Ah! I understand now. But are you going?—I was in hopes you would have turned back my way, and—"

"You are very good; but I have a particular appointment, and I am now too late. Good morning, Lord Lilburne." Sidney with one of his mother's relations! Returned, perhaps, to the Mortons! How had he never before chanced on a conjecture so probable? He would go at once!—that very night he would go to the house from which he had taken his brother. At least, and at the worst, they might give him some clue.

Buoyed with this hope and this resolve, he rode hastily to H—, to announce to Simon and Fanny that he should not return to them, perhaps, for two or three days. As he entered the suburb, he drew up by the statuary of whom he had purchased his mother's gravestone.

The artist of the melancholy trade was at work in his yard.

"Ho! there!" said Vaudemont, looking over the low railing; "is the tomb I have ordered nearly finished?" Why, sir, as you were so anxious for despatch, and as it would take a long time to get a new one ready, I thought of giving you this, which is finished all but the inscription. It was meant for Miss Deborah Primme; but her nephew and heir called on me yesterday to say, that as the

poor lady died worth less by L5,000. than he had expected, he thought a handsome wooden tomb would do as well, if I could get rid of this for him. It is a beauty, sir. It will look so cheerful—"

"Well, that will do: and you can place it now where I told you."

"In three days, sir."

"So be it." And he rode on, muttering, "Fanny, your pious wish will be fulfilled. But flowers,—will they suit that stone?"

He put up his horse, and walked through the lane to Simon's.

As he approached the house, he saw Fanny's bright eyes at the window. She was watching his return. She hastened to open the door to him, and the world's wanderer felt what music there is in the footstep, what summer there is in the smile, of Welcome!

"My dear Fanny," he said, affected by her joyous greeting, "it makes my heart warm to see you. I have brought you a present from town. When I was a boy, I remember that my poor mother was fond of singing some simple songs, which often, somehow or other, come back to me, when I see and hear you. I fancied you would understand and like them as well at least as I do—for Heaven knows (he added to himself) my ear is dull enough generally to the jingle of rhyme." And he placed in her hands a little volume of those exquisite songs, in which Burns has set Nature to music.

"Oh! you are so kind, brother," said Fanny, with tears swimming in her eyes, and she kissed the book.

After their simple meal, Vaudemont broke to Fanny and Simon the intelligence of his intended departure for a few days.

Simon heard it with the silent apathy into which, except on rare occasions, his life had settled. But Fanny turned away her face and wept.

"It is but for a day or two, Fanny."

"An hour is very—very long sometimes," said the girl, shaking her head mournfully.

"Come, I have a little time yet left, and the air is mild, you have not been out to-day, shall we walk—"

"Hem!" interrupted Simon, clearing his throat, and seeming to start into sudden animation; "had not you better settle the board and lodging before you go?"

"Oh, grandfather!" cried Fanny, springing to her feet, with such a blush upon her face.

"Nay, child," said Vaudemont, laughingly; your grandfather only anticipates me. But do not talk of board and lodging; Fanny is as a sister to me, and our purse is in common."

"I should like to feel a sovereign—just to feel it," muttered Simon, in a sort of apologetic tone, that was really pathetic; and as Vaudemont scattered some coins on the table, the old man clawed them up, chuckling and talking to himself; and, rising with great alacrity, hobbled out of the room like a raven carrying some cunning theft to its hiding-place.

This was so amusing to Vaudemont that he burst out fairly into an uncontrollable laughter. Fanny looked at him, humbled and wondering for some moments; and then, creeping to him, put her hand gently on his arm and said—

"Don't laugh—it pains me. It was not nice in grand papa; but—but, it does not mean anything. It—it—don't laugh—Fanny feels so sad!"

"Well, you are right. Come, put on your bonnet, we will go out."

Fanny obeyed; but with less ready delight than usual. And they took their way through lanes over which hung, still in the cool air, the leaves of the yellow autumn.

Fanny was the first to break silence.

"Do you know," she said, timidly, "that people here think me very silly?—do you think so too?"

Vaudemont was startled by the simplicity of the question, and hesitated.

Fanny looked up in his dark face anxiously and inquiringly.

"Well," she said, "you don't answer?"

"My dear Fanny, there are some things in which I could wish you less childlike and, perhaps, less charming. Those strange snatches of song, for instance!"

"What! do you not like me to sing? It is my way of talking."

"Yes; sing, pretty one! But sing something that we can understand,—sing the songs I have given you, if you will. And now, may I ask why you put to me that question?"

"I have forgotten," said Fanny, absently, and looking down.

Now, at that instant, as Philip Vaudemont bent over the exceeding sweetness of that young face, a sudden thrill shot through his heart, and he, too, became silent, and lost in thought.

Was it possible that there could creep into his breast a wilder affection for this creature than that of tenderness and pity? He was startled as the idea crossed him. He shrank from it as a profanation—as a crime—as a frenzy. He with his fate so uncertain and chequered—he to link himself with one so helpless—he to debase the very poetry that clung to the mental temperament of this pure being, with the feelings which every fair face may awaken to every coarse heart—to love Fanny! No, it was impossible! For what could he love in her but beauty, which the very spirit had forgotten to guard? And she—could she even know what love was? He despised himself for even admitting such a thought; and with that iron and hardy vigour which belonged to his mind, resolved to watch closely against every fancy that would pass the fairy boundary which separated Fanny from the world of women.

He was roused from this self-commune by an abrupt exclamation from his companion.

"Oh! I recollect now why I asked you that question. There is one thing that always puzzles me—I want you to explain it. Why does everything in life depend upon money? You see even my poor grandfather forgot how good you are to us both, when—when Ah! I don't understand—it pains—it puzzles me!"

"Fanny, look there—no, to the left—you see that old woman, in rags, crawling wearily along; turn now to the right—you see that fine house glancing through the trees, with a carriage and four at the gates? The difference between that old woman and

the owner of that house is—Money; and who shall blame your grandfather for liking Money?"

Fanny understood; and while the wise man thus moralised, the girl, whom his very compassion so haughtily contemned, moved away to the old woman to do her little best to smooth down those disparities from which wisdom and moralising never deduct a grain! Vaudemont felt this as he saw her glide towards the beggar; but when she came bounding back to him, she had forgotten his dislike to her songs, and was chaunting, in the glee of the heart that a kind act had made glad, one of her own impromptu melodies.

Vaudemont turned away. Poor Fanny had unconsciously decided his self-conquest; she guessed not what passed within him, but she suddenly recollected—what lie had said to her about her songs, and fancied him displeased.

"Ah I will never do it again. Brother, don't turn away!"

"But we must go home. Hark! the clock strikes seven—I have no time to lose. And you will promise me never to stir out till I return?"

"I shall have no heart to stir out," said Fanny, sadly; and then in a more cheerful voice, she added, "And I shall sing the songs you like before you come back again!"

CHAPTER VIII

"Well did they know that service all by rote;

*Some singing loud as if they had complained,
Some with their notes another manner feigned."*

*CHAUCER: Pie Cuckoo and the Nightingale,
modernised by WORDSWORTH.—HORNE's Edition.*

And once more, sweet Winandermere, we are on the banks of thy happy lake! The softest ray of the soft clear sun of early autumn trembled on the fresh waters, and glanced through the leaves of the limes and willows that were reflected—distinct as a home for the Naiads—beneath the limpid surface. You might hear in the bushes the young blackbirds trilling their first untutored notes. And the graceful dragon-fly, his wings glittering in the translucent sunshine, darted to and fro—the reeds gathered here and there in the mimic bays that broke the shelving marge of the grassy shore.

And by that grassy shore, and beneath those shadowy limes, sat the young lovers. It was the very place where Spencer had first beheld Camilla. And now they were met to say, "Farewell!"

"Oh, Camilla!" said he, with great emotion, and eyes that swam in tears, "be firm—be true. You know how my whole life is wrapped up in your love. You go amidst scenes where

all will tempt you to forget me. I linger behind in those which are consecrated by your remembrance, which will speak to me every hour of you. Camilla, since you do love me—you do—do you not?—since you have confessed it—since your parents have consented to our marriage, provided only that your love last (for of mine there can be no doubt) for one year—one terrible year—shall I not trust you as truth itself? And yet how darkly I despair at times!"

Camilla innocently took the hands that, clasped together, were raised to her, as if in supplication, and pressed them kindly between her own.

"Do not doubt me—never doubt my affection. Has not my father consented?"

Reflect, it is but a year's delay!"

"A year!—can you speak thus of a year—a whole year? Not to see—not to hear you for a whole year, except in my dreams! And, if at the end your parents waver? Your father—I distrust him still. If this delay is but meant to wean you from me,—if, at the end, there are new excuses found, —if they then, for some cause or other not now foreseen, still refuse their assent? You—may I not still look to you?"

Camilla sighed heavily; and turning her meek face on her lover, said, timidly, "Never think that so short a time can make me unfaithful, and do not suspect that my father will break his promise."

"But, if he does, you will still be mine."

"Ah, Charles, how could you esteem me as a wife if I were to tell you I could forget I am a daughter?"

This was said so touchingly, and with so perfect a freedom from all affectation, that her lover could only reply by covering her hand with his kisses. And it was not till after a pause that he continued passionately,—

"You do but show me how much deeper is my love than yours. You can never dream how I love you. But I do not ask you to love me as well—it would be impossible. My life from my earliest childhood has been passed in these solitudes;—a happy life, though tranquil and monotonous, till you suddenly broke upon it. You seemed to me the living form of the very poetry I had worshipped—so bright—so heavenly—I loved you from the very first moment that we met. I am not like other men of my age. I have no pursuit—no occupation—nothing to abstract me from your thought. And I love you so purely—so devotedly, Camilla. I have never known even a passing fancy for another. You are the first—the only woman—it ever seemed to me possible to love. You are my Eve—your presence my paradise! Think how sad I shall be when you are gone—how I shall visit every spot your footstep has hallowed—how I shall count every moment till the year is past!"

While he thus spoke, he had risen in that restless agitation which belongs to great emotion; and Camilla now rose also, and said soothingly, as she laid her hand on his shoulder with tender but modest frankness:

"And shall I not also think of you? I am sad to feel that you will be so much alone—no sister—no brother!"

"Do not grieve for that. The memory of you will be dearer to me than comfort from all else. And you will be true!"

Camilla made no answer by words, but her eyes and her colour spoke. And in that moment, while plighting eternal truth, they forgot that they were about to part!

Meanwhile, in a room in the house which, screened by the foliage, was only partially visible where the lovers stood, sat Mr. Robert Beaufort and Mr. Spencer.

"I assure you, sir," said the former, "that I am not insensible to the merits of your nephew and to the very handsome proposals you make, still I cannot consent to abridge the time I have named. They are both very young. What is a year?"

"It is a long time when it is a year of suspense," said the recluse, shaking his head.

"It is a longer time when it is a year of domestic dissension and repentance. And it is a very true proverb, 'Marry in haste and repent at leisure.' No! If at the end of the year the young people continue of the same mind, and no unforeseen circumstances occur—"

"No unforeseen circumstances, Mr. Beaufort!—that is a new condition—it is a very vague phrase."

"My dear sir, it is hard to please you. Unforeseen circumstances," said the wary father, with a wise look, "mean circumstances that we don't foresee at present. I assure you that I

have no intention to trifle with you, and I shall be sincerely happy in so respectable a connexion."

"The young people may write to each other?"

Why, I'll consult Mrs. Beaufort. At all events, it must not be very often, and Camilla is well brought up, and will show all the letters to her mother. I don't much like a correspondence of that nature. It often leads to unpleasant results; if, for instance—"

"If what?"

"Why, if the parties change their minds, and my girl were to marry another. It is not prudent in matters of business, my dear sir, to put down anything on paper that can be avoided."

Mr. Spencer opened his eyes. "Matters of business, Mr. Beaufort!"

"Well, is not marriage a matter of business, and a very grave matter too? More lawsuits about marriage and settlements, &c., than I like to think of. But to change the subject. You have never heard anything more of those young men, you say?"

"No," said Mr. Spencer, rather inaudibly, and looking down.

"And it is your firm impression that the elder one, Philip, is dead?"

"I don't doubt it."

"That was a very vexatious and improper lawsuit their mother brought against me. Do you know that some wretched impostor, who, it appears, is a convict broke loose before his time, has threatened me with another, on the part of one of those young men? You never heard anything of it—eh?"

"Never, upon my honour."

"And, of course, you would not countenance so villanous an attempt?"

"Certainly not."

"Because that would break off our contract at once. But you are too much a gentleman and a man of honour. Forgive me so improper a question. As for the younger Mr. Morton, I have no ill-feeling against him. But the elder! Oh, a thorough reprobate! a very alarming character! I could have nothing to do with any member of the family while the elder lived; it would only expose me to every species of insult and imposition. And now I think we have left our young friends alone long enough.

"But stay, to prevent future misunderstanding, I may as well read over again the heads of the arrangement you honour me by proposing. You agree to settle your fortune after your decease, amounting to L23,000. and your house, with twenty-five acres one rood and two poles, more or less, upon your nephew and my daughter, jointly—remainder to their children. Certainly, without offence, in a worldly point of view, Camilla might do better; still, you are so very respectable, and you speak so handsomely, that I cannot touch upon that point; and I own, that though there is a large nominal rent-roll attached to Beaufort Court (indeed, there is not a finer property in the county), yet there are many incumbrances, and ready money would not be convenient to me. Arthur—poor fellow, a very fine young man, sir,—is, as I have told you in perfect confidence, a little

imprudent and lavish; in short, your offer to dispense with any dowry is extremely liberal, and proves your nephew is actuated by no mercenary feelings: such conduct prepossesses me highly in your favour and his too."

Mr. Spencer bowed, and the great man rising, with a stiff affectation of kindly affability, put his arm into the uncle's, and strolled with him across the lawn towards the lovers. And such is life-love on the lawn and settlements in the parlour.

The lover was the first to perceive the approach of the elder parties. And a change came over his face as he saw the dry aspect and marked the stealthy stride of his future father-in-law; for then there flashed across him a dreary reminiscence of early childhood; the happy evening when, with his joyous father, that grave and ominous aspect was first beheld; and then the dismal burial, the funereal sables, the carriage at the door, and he himself clinging to the cold uncle to ask him to say a word of comfort to the mother, who now slept far away. "Well, my young friend," said Mr. Beaufort, patronisingly, "your good uncle and myself are quite agreed—a little time for reflection, that's all. Oh! I don't think the worse of you for wishing to abridge it. But papas must be papas."

There was so little jocular about that sedate man, that this attempt at jovial good humour seemed harsh and grating—the hinges of that wily mouth wanted oil for a hearty smile.

"Come, don't be faint-hearted, Mr. Charles. 'Faint heart,'—you know the proverb. You must stay and dine with us. We return

to-morrow to town. I should tell you, that I received this morning a letter from my son Arthur, announcing his return from Baden, so we must give him the meeting—a very joyful one you may guess. We have not seen him these three years. Poor fellow! he says he has been very ill and the waters have ceased to do him any good. But a little quiet and country air at Beaufort Court will set him up, I hope."

Thus running on about his son, then about his shooting—about Beaufort Court and its splendours—about parliament and its fatigues—about the last French Revolution, and the last English election—about Mrs. Beaufort and her good qualities and bad health—about, in short, everything relating to himself, some things relating to the public, and nothing that related to the persons to whom his conversation was directed, Mr. Robert Beaufort wore away half an hour, when the Spencer's took their leave, promising to return to dinner.

"Charles," said Mr. Spencer, as the boat, which the young man rowed, bounded over the water towards their quiet home; "Charles, I dislike these Beauforts!"

"Not the daughter?"

"No, she is beautiful, and seems good; not so handsome as your poor mother, but who ever was?"—here Mr. Spencer sighed, and repeated some lines from Shenstone.

"Do you think Mr. Beaufort suspects in the least who I am?"

"Why, that puzzles me; I rather think he does."

"And that is the cause of the delay? I knew it."

"No, on the contrary, I incline to think he has some kindly feeling to you, though not to your brother, and that it is such a feeling that made him consent to your marriage. He sifted me very closely as to what I knew of the young Mortons—observed that you were very handsome, and that he had fancied at first that he had seen you before."

"Indeed !"

"Yes: and looked hard at me while he spoke; and said more than once, significantly, 'So his name is Charles?' He talked about some attempt at imposture and litigation, but that was, evidently, merely invented to sound me about your brother—whom, of course, he spoke ill of—impressing on me three or four times that he would never have anything to say to any of the family while Philip lived."

"And you told him," said the young man, hesitatingly, and with a deep blush of shame over his face, "that you were persuaded—that is, that you believed Philip was—was—"

"Was dead! Yes—and without confusion. For the more I reflect, the more I think he must be dead. At all events, you may be sure that he is dead to us, that we shall never hear more of him."

"Poor Philip!"

"Your feelings are natural; they are worthy of your excellent heart; but remember, what would have become of you if you had stayed with him!"

"True!" said the brother, with a slight shudder—"a career of

suffering—crime—perhaps the gibbet! Ah! what do I owe you?"

The dinner-party at Mr. Beaufort's that day was constrained and formal, though the host, in unusual good humour, sought to make himself agreeable. Mrs. Beaufort, languid and afflicted with headache, said little. The two Spencers were yet more silent. But the younger sat next to her he loved; and both hearts were full: and in the evening they contrived to creep apart into a corner by the window, through which the starry heavens looked kindly on them. They conversed in whispers, with long pauses between each: and at times Camilla's tears flowed silently down her cheeks, and were followed by the false smiles intended to cheer her lover.

Time did not fly, but crept on breathlessly and heavily. And then came the last parting—formal, cold—before witnesses. But the lover could not restrain his emotion, and the hard father heard his suppressed sob as he closed the door.

It will now be well to explain the cause of Mr. Beaufort's heightened spirits, and the motives of his conduct with respect to his daughter's suitor.

This, perhaps, can be best done by laying before the reader the following letters that passed between Mr. Beaufort and Lord Lilburne.

From LORD LILBURNE to ROBERT BEAUFORT, ESQ.,
M.P.

"DEAR BEAUFORT,—I think I have settled, pretty satisfactorily, your affair with your unwelcome visitor. The first

thing it seemed to me necessary to do, was to learn exactly what and who he was, and with what parties that could annoy you he held intercourse. I sent for Sharp, the Bow Street officer, and placed him in the hall to mark, and afterwards to dog and keep watch on your new friend. The moment the latter entered I saw at once, from his dress and his address, that he was a 'scamp;' and thought it highly inexpedient to place you in his power by any money transactions. While talking with him, Sharp sent in a billet containing his recognition of our gentleman as a transported convict.

"I acted accordingly; soon saw, from the fellow's manner, that he had returned before his time; and sent him away with a promise, which you may be sure he believes will be kept, that if he molest you farther, he shall return to the colonies, and that if his lawsuit proceed, his witness or witnesses shall be indicted for conspiracy and perjury. Make your mind easy so far. For the rest, I own to you that I think what he says probable enough: but my object in setting Sharp to watch him is to learn what other parties he sees. And if there be really anything formidable in his proofs or witnesses, it is with those other parties I advise you to deal. Never transact business with the go between, if you can with the principal. Remember, the two young men are the persons to arrange with after all. They must be poor, and therefore easily dealt with. For, if poor, they will think a bird in the hand worth two in the bush of a lawsuit.

"If, through Mr. Spencer, you can learn anything of either of

the young men, do so; and try and open some channel, through which you can always establish a communication with them, if necessary. Perhaps, by learning their early history, you may learn something to put them into your power.

"I have had a twinge of the gout this morning, and am likely, I fear, to be laid up for some weeks.

"Yours truly,
"LILBURNE.

"P.S.—Sharp has just been here. He followed the man who calls himself 'Captain Smith' to a house in Lambeth, where he lodges, and from which he did not stir till midnight, when Sharp ceased his watch. On renewing it this morning, he found that the captain had gone off, to what place Sharp has not yet discovered.

"Burn this immediately."

From ROBERT BEAUFORT, ESQ., M.P., to the LORD LILBURNE.

"DEAR, LILBURNE,—Accept my warmest thanks for your kindness; you have done admirably, and I do not see that I have anything further to apprehend. I suspect that it was an entire fabrication on that man's part, and your firmness has foiled his wicked designs. Only think, I have discovered—I am sure of it—one of the Mortons; and he, too, though the younger, yet, in all probability, the sole pretender the fellow could set up. You remember that the child Sidney had disappeared mysteriously,—you remember also, how much that Mr. Spencer had interested himself in finding out the same Sidney. Well,—this gentleman at

the Lakes is, as we suspected, the identical Mr. Spencer, and his soi-disant nephew, Camilla's suitor, is assuredly no other than the lost Sidney. The moment I saw the young man I recognised him, for he is very little altered, and has a great look of his mother into the bargain. Concealing my more than suspicions, I, however, took care to sound Mr. Spencer (a very poor soul), and his manner was so embarrassed as to leave no doubt of the matter; but in asking him what he had heard of the brothers, I had the satisfaction of learning that, in all human probability, the elder is dead: of this Mr. Spencer seems convinced. I also assured myself that neither Spencer nor the young man had the remotest connection with our Captain Smith, nor any idea of litigation. This is very satisfactory, you will allow. And now, I hope you will approve of what I have done. I find that young Morton, or Spencer, as he is called, is desperately enamoured of Camilla; he seems a meek, well-conditioned, amiable young man; writes poetry;—in short, rather weak than otherwise. I have demanded a year's delay, to allow mutual trial and reflection. This gives us the channel for constant information which you advise me to establish, and I shall have the opportunity to learn if the impostor makes any communication to them, or if there be any news of the brother. If by any trick or chicanery (for I will never believe that there was a marriage) a lawsuit that might be critical or hazardous can be cooked up, I can, I am sure, make such terms with Sidney, through his love for my daughter, as would effectively and permanently secure me from

all further trouble and machinations in regard to my property. And if, during the year, we convince ourselves that, after all, there is not a leg of law for any claimant to stand on, I may be guided by other circumstances how far I shall finally accept or reject the suit. That must depend on any other views we may then form for Camilla; and I shall not allow a hint of such an engagement to get abroad. At the worst, as Mr. Spencer's heir, it is not so very bad a match, seeing that they dispense with all marriage portion, &c.—a proof how easily they can be managed. I have not let Mr. Spencer see that I have discovered his secret—I can do that or not, according to circumstances hereafter; neither have I said anything of my discovery to Mrs. B., or Camilla. At present, 'Least said soonest mended.' I heard from Arthur to-day. He is on his road home, and we hasten to town, sooner than we expected, to meet him. He complains still of his health. We shall all go down to Beaufort Court. I write this at night, the pretended uncle and sham nephew having just gone. But though we start to-morrow, you will get this a day or two before we arrive, as Mrs. Beaufort's health renders short stages necessary. I really do hope that Arthur, also, will not be an invalid, poor fellow! one in a family is quite enough; and I find Mrs. Beaufort's delicacy very inconvenient, especially in moving about and in keeping up one's county connexions. A young man's health, however, is soon restored. I am very sorry to hear of your gout, except that it carries off all other complaints. I am very well, thank Heaven; indeed, my health has been much better of late years: Beaufort

Court agrees with me so well! The more I reflect, the more I am astonished at the monstrous and wicked impudence of that fellow—to defraud a man out of his own property! You are quite right,—certainly a conspiracy.

"Yours truly,

"R. B."

"P. S.—I shall keep a constant eye on the Spencers.

"Burn this immediately."

After he had written and sealed this letter, Mr. Beaufort went to bed and slept soundly.

And the next day that place was desolate, and the board on the lawn announced that it was again to be let. But thither daily, in rain or sunshine, came the solitary lover, as a bird that seeks its young in the deserted nest:—Again and again he haunted the spot where he had strayed with the lost one,—and again and again murmured his passionate vows beneath the fast-fading limes. Are those vows destined to be ratified or annulled? Will the absent forget, or the lingerer be consoled? Had the characters of that young romance been lightly stamped on the fancy where once obliterated they are erased for ever,—or were they graven deep in those tablets where the writing, even when invisible, exists still, and revives, sweet letter by letter, when the light and the warmth borrowed from the One Bright Presence are applied to the faithful record? There is but one Wizard to disclose that secret, as all others,—the old Grave-digger, whose Churchyard is the Earth,—whose trade is to find burial-places

for Passions that seemed immortal,—disinterring the ashes of
some long-crumbling Memory—to hollow out the dark bed of
some new-perished Hope:—He who determines all things, and
prophesies none,—for his oracles are uncomprehended till the
doom is sealed—He who in the bloom of the fairest affection
detects the hectic that consumes it, and while the hymn rings at
the altar, marks with his joyless eye the grave for the bridal vow.
—Wherever is the sepulchre, there is thy temple, O melancholy
Time!