

An Outline Sketch

Theodore S. Fay

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The young Lord D. yawned. Why did the young lord yawn? He had recently come into ten thousand a year. His home was a palace His sisters were angels. His cousin was—in love with him. He, himself, was an Apollo. His horses might have drawn the chariot of Phoebus, but in their journey around the globe, would never have crossed above grounds more Eden-like than his. Around him were streams, lawns, groves, and fountains. He could hunt, fish, ride, read, flirt, sleep, swim, drink, muse, write, or lounge. All the appliances of affluence were at his command. The young Lord D. was the admiration and envy of all the country. The young Lord D.'s step sent a palpitating flutter through many a lovely bosom. His smile awakened many a dream of bliss and wealth. The Lady S.,—that queenly woman, with her majestic bearing, and her train of dying adorers, grew lovelier and livelier beneath the spell of his smile; and even Ellen B.,—the modest, beautiful creature, with her large, timid, tender blue eyes, and her pouting red lips—that rosebud— sighed audibly, only the day before, when he left the room—and yet—and yet—the young Lord D. yawned.

It was a rich still hour. The afternoon sunlight overspread all nature. Earth, sky, lake, and air were full of its dying glory, as it streamed into the apartment where they were sitting, through the foliage of a magnificent oak, and the caressing tendrils of a profuse vine, that half buried the verandah beneath its heavy masses of foliage.

"I am tired to death," said the sleepy lord.

His cousin Rosalie sighed.

"The package of papers from London is full of news, and —" murmured her sweet voice timidly.

"I hate news."

"The poetry in the New Monthly is —"

"You set my teeth on edge. I have had a surfeit of poetry."

"Ellen B. is to spend the day with us, to-morrow."

Rosalie lifted her hazel eyes full upon his face.

"Ellen B.?" drawled the youth, "she is a child, a pretty child. I shall ride over to Lord A's."

Rosalie's face betrayed that a mountain was off her heart.

"Lord A. starts for Italy in a few weeks," said Rosalie.

"Happy dog!"

"He will be delighted with Rome and Naples."

"Rome and Naples," echoed D., in a musing voice.

"Italy is a delightful heavenly spot," continued his cousin, anxious to lead him into conversation.

"So I'm told," said Lord D., abstractedly.

"It is the garden of the world," rejoined Rosalie.

Lord D. opened his eyes. He evidently was just struck with an idea. Young lords with ten thousand a year are not often troubled with ideas. He sprang from his seat. He paced the apartment twice. His countenance glowed. His eyes sparkled.

"Rose —."

"Cousin —."

What a beautiful break. Rose trembled to the heart. Could it be possible that he was —.

He took her hand. He kissed it, eagerly, earnestly, and enthusiastically.

She blushed and turned away her face in graceful confusion.

"Rose!"

"Dear, *dear* cousin!"—

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"I have made up my mind."

"Charles!—"

"To-morrow!"

"Heavens!"

"I will start for Italy."

Ocean! Superb—endless—sublime, rolling, tumbling, dashing, heaving, foaming—*coelum undique et undique pontus*. Lord D. gazed around. The white cliffs of Dover were fading in the distance. Farewell, England. It is a sweet melancholy, this bidding adieu to a mass—a speck in the horizon—a mere cloud, yet which contains in its airy and dim outline all that you ever knew of existence.

"Noble England!" ejaculated Lord D., "and dear mother—Ellen B.—pretty fawn—Rose too—sweet pretty dear Rose—what could mean those glittering drops that hung upon her lashes when I said adieu? Can it be that?—pshaw—I am a coxcomb. What! Rose? the little sunshiny Rose—the cheerful philosopher—the logical—the studious—the—the—the—!"

Alas! alas! What are logic, study, cheerfulness, philosophy, sunshine, to a warm hearted girl of twenty—in love?

Lord D. went below.

Italy *is* a paradise. Surely Adam looked on such skies, such rivers, such woods, such mountains, such fields. How lavish, how bright, how rich is every thing around. Lord D. guided his horse up a mountain near Rome. The sun had just set; the warm heavens stretched above him perfectly unclouded; what a time to muse! what a place! The young nobleman fell into a reverie, which, the next moment, was broken by a shout of terror—the clashing of arms—a pistol shot, and a groan. He flew to the spot. A youth of twenty lay at the root of a tall tree, weltering in his blood. The assassin, terrified at the sight of a stranger, fled.

"I die," murmured the youth, with ashy lips.

"Can I aid you?" asked Lord D., thrilling with horror and compassion.

"Take this box. It contains jewels, and a *secret*, which I would not have revealed for the world. Carry it to England, to the Duke of R—. Open it not, no matter what happens. Swear never to reveal to any human being that you possess it—swear."

Lord D. hesitated.

"My life—blood ebbs away apace. Speak, oh speak, and bless a dying man—swear."

"I swear."

"Enough. I thank you—hide it in your bosom. God bless you—my—England—never see—home—again—never, nev—."

The full round moon, beautifully bright, went solemnly up the azure track of sky.

Lord D. dashed a tear from his eye, as he gazed on the pallid features of the youth, who stretched himself out in the last shuddering agony and convulsion of death. He placed, his hand upon the stranger's bosom. The heart had ceased to beat. No longer the crimson gore flowed from the wound. The light foam stood on his pale lips.

"And he has a mother," said the chilled nobleman—"and a once happy home. For their sake, as well as his, his wishes shall be obeyed."

The tread of horses' feet came to his ear, and shouts and confused voices.

Lord D. thought the fugitive ruffian was returning with more of the gang.

"Shall I fly like a coward?" was his first thought; but again, he said, "why should I waste my life upon a set of banditti?"

He sprang to his saddle, in his hurry, leaving behind him a kerchief—dashed the rowels into the flanks of the snorting steed, and was presently lost in the winding paths of the forest.

The midnight moon was shining silently into the apartment, as Lord D.'s eyes closed in sleep, after having lain for some time lost in thought upon his couch. His senses gradually melted into dreams.

"Ah, Rosalie. Dear Rosalie."

The maiden suddenly grasped his throat with the ferocity of a fiend, when—hah! no Rosalie—but the iron gripe of a muscular arm dragged him from the bed, and shook his idle dreams to air.

"Bind the villain!" said a hoarse voice.

"Away, away to the duke's!"

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Bewildered, indignant, alarmed, the astonished lord found himself bound, and borne to a carriage—the beautiful and soft fragments of Italian scenery flew by the coach windows.

If you would freeze the heart of an Englishman, and yet suffocate him with anger, thrust him into a dungeon. Lord D. never was so unceremoniously assisted to a change of location. A black-browed, dark-complexioned, mustachio-lipped soldier hurled him down a flight of broken steps, and threw after him a bundle of clothes.

"By St. George, my friend, if I had you on the side of a green English hill, I would make your brains and bones acquainted with an oaken cudgel. The uncivilized knave."

He lay for hours on a little straw. By—and—by some one came in with a lamp.

"Pray, friend, where am I?"

The stranger loosened his cord, and motioned him to put on his clothes. He did so—unable to repress the occasional explosion of an honest, heart-felt execration. When his toilet was completed, his guide took him by the arm, and led him through a long corridor, till, lo! a blaze of sunshiny daylight dazzled his eyes.

"You are accused of murder," said the duke, in French.

"Merciful Providence!" ejaculated D.

"Your victim was found weltering in his blood, at your feet. You left this kerchief on his body. It bears your name. By your hand he fell. You have been traced to your lodgings. You must die."

A witness rushed forward to bear testimony in favor of the prisoner. Lord D. *could* not be the perpetrator of such a crime. He was a nobleman of honor and wealth.

"Where are his letters?"

He had brought none.

"What is the result of the search which I ordered to be made at his lodgings?"

"This box, my lord duke, an—"

The box was opened. It contained a set of superb jewels, the miniature of the murdered youth, and of a fair creature, probably his mistress.

Lord D. started.

"By heavens, it is Rosalie! I am thunderstruck."

"Enough," said the duke, "guilt is written in every feature. Wretch, murderer! To the block with him. To-morrow at daybreak let his doom be executed. Nay, sir, lower that high bearing, those fiery and flashing eyes, that haughty and commanding frown. Not thus should you meet your Creator."

Night, deep night. How silent! How sublime! The fated lord lay watching the sky, through the iron grating of his cell.

"Ah, flash on, myriads of overhanging worlds—ye suns, whose blaze is quenched by immeasurable distance. To-morrow just so with your calm, bright, everlasting faces, ye will look down upon my grave. Jupiter, brilliant orb! How lustrous! How wonderful! Ha! the north star—ever constant! Axis on which revolves this stupendous, heavenly globe. How often *at home* I have watched thy beams, with Rosalie on my arm. Rosalie, *dear* Rosalie—"

"I come to save you," said a soft, sweet voice.

"What! Boy—who art thou? Why dost—"

The young stranger took off his cap.

"No—yes! That forehead—those eyes—enchancing girl—angel—"

"Hush!" said Rosalie, laying her finger upon her lip.

Ocean—again—the deep, magnificent ocean— and life and freedom.

"Blow, grateful breeze—on, on, over the washing billows, light-winged bark. Ha! land ahead! England! Rosalie, my girl, see—"

Again on her lashes tears stood glittering.

How different from those that—

Onward, like the wind, revolve the rattling wheels. The setting sun reveals the tall groves, the great oak, the lawns, the meadows, the fountains.

"My mother!"

"My son!"

"Friends!"

A package from the duke.

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"The murderer of — is discovered, and has paid the forfeit of his crimes. Will Lord D. again visit Italy?"

"Ay, with my *wife*—with Rosalie."

"And with *letters* and a *good character*," said Rosalie, archly.