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#92 in our series by Edward Bulwer-Lytton

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BOOK VI.

CHAPTER I.

Etchings of Hyde Park in the month of June, which, if this history escapes those villains the trunk-makers, may be of inestimable value to unborn antiquarians.--Characters, long absent, reappear and give some account of themselves.

Five years have passed away since this history opened. It is the month of June once more,--June, which clothes our London in all its glory, fills its languid ballrooms with living flowers, and its stony causeways with human butterflies. It is about the hour of six P.M. The lounge in Hyde Park is crowded; along the road that skirts the Serpentine crawl the carriages one after the other; congregate by the rails the lazy lookers-on,--lazy in attitude, but with active eyes, and tongues sharpened on the whetstone of scandal,--the Scaligers of club windows airing their vocabulary in the Park. Slowly saunter on foot idlers of all degrees in the hierarchy of London idlesse: dandies of established-fame; youthful tyros in their first season. Yonder in the Ride, forms less inanimate seem condemned to active exercise; young ladies doing penance in a canter; old beaux at hard labour in a trot. Sometimes, by a more thoughtful brow, a still brisker pace, you recognize a busy member of the Imperial Parliament, who, advised by physicians to be as much on horseback as possible, snatches an hour or so in the interval between the close of his Committee and the interest of the Debate, and shirks the opening speech of a well-known bore. Among such truant lawgivers (grief it is to say it) may be seen that once model member, Sir Gregory Stollhead. Grim dyspepsia seizing on him at last, "relaxation from his duties" becomes the adequate punishment for all his sins. Solitary he rides, and communing with himself, yawns at every second. Upon chairs beneficently located under the trees towards the north side of the walk are interspersed small knots and coteries in repose. There you might see the Ladies Prymme, still the Ladies Prymme,--Janet and Wilhelmina; Janet has grown fat, Wilhelmina thin. But thin or fat, they are no less Prymmes. They do not lack male attendants; they are girls of high fashion, with whom young men think it a distinction to be seen talking; of high principle, too, and high pretensions (unhappily for themselves, they are co-heiresses), by whom young men under the rank of earls need not fear to be artfully entrapped into "honourable intentions." They coquet majestically, but they never flirt; they exact devotion, but they do not ask in each victim a sacrifice on the horns of the altar; they will never give their hands where they do not give their hearts; and being ever afraid that they are courted for their money, they will never give their hearts save to wooers who have much more money than themselves. Many young men stop to do passing homage to the Ladies Prymme: some linger to converse; safe young men,--they are all younger sons. Farther on, Lady Frost and Mr. Crampe, the wit, sit amicably side by side, pecking at each other with sarcastic beaks; occasionally desisting, in order to fasten nip and claw upon that common enemy, the passing friend! The Slowes, a numerous family, but taciturn, sit by themselves; bowed to much, accosted rarely.

Note that man of good presence, somewhere about thirty, or a year or two more, who, recognized by most of the loungers, seems not at home in the lounge. He has passed by the various coteries just described, made his obeisance to the Ladies Prymme, received an icy epigram from Lady Frost, and a laconic sneer from Mr. Crampe, and exchanged silent bows with seven silent Slowes. He has wandered on, looking high in the air, but still looking for some one not in the air, and evidently disappointed in his search, comes to a full stop at length, takes off his hat, wipes his brow, utters a petulant "Prr--r--pshaw!" and seeing, a little in the background, the chairless shade of a thin, emaciated, dusty tree, thither he retires, and seats himself with as little care whether there to seat himself be the right thing in the right place, as if in the honeysuckle arbour of a village inn. "It serves me right," said he to himself: "a precocious villain bursts in upon me, breaks my day, makes an appointment to meet me here, in these very walks, ten minutes before six; decoys me with the promise of a dinner at Putney,--room looking on the river and fried flounders. I have the credulity to yield: I derange my habits; I leave my cool studio; I put off my easy blouse; I imprison my freeborn throat in a cravat invented by the Thugs; the dog-days are at hand, and I walk rashly over scorching pavements in a black frock-coat and a brimless hat; I annihilate 3s. 6d. in a pair of kid gloves; I arrive at this haunt of spleen; I run the gauntlet of Frosts, Slowes, and Prymmes: and my traitor fails me! Half-past six,--not a sign of him! and the dinner at Putney,--fried flounders? Dreams! Patience, five minutes more; if then he comes not, breach for life between him and me! Ah, voila! there he comes, the laggard! But how those fine folks are catching at him! Has he asked them also to dinner at Putney, and do they care for fried flounders?"

The soliloquist's eye is on a young man, much younger than himself, who is threading the motley crowd with a light quick step, but is compelled to stop at each moment to interchange a word of welcome, a shake of the hand. Evidently he has already a large acquaintance; evidently he is popular, on good terms with the world and himself. What free grace in his bearing! what gay good-humour in his smile! Powers above! Lady Wilhelmina surely blushes as she returns his bow. He has passed Lady Frost unblighted; the Slowes evince emotion, at least the female Slowes, as he shoots by them with that sliding bow. He looks from side to side, with the rapid glance of an eye in which light seems all dance and sparkle: he sees the soliloquist under the meagre tree; the pace quickens, the lips part half laughing.

"Don't scold, Vance. I am late, I know; but I did not make allowance for interceptions."

"Body o' me, interceptions! For an absentee just arrived in London, you seem to have no lack of friends."

"Friends made in Paris and found again here at every corner, like pleasant surprises,--but no friend so welcome and dear as Frank Vance."

"Sensible of the honour, O Lionello the Magnificent. Verily you are /bon

prince! The Houses of Valois and of Medici were always kind to artists. But whither would you lead me? Back into that treadmill? Thank you, humbly; no."

"A crowd in fine clothes is of all mobs the dullest. I can look undismayed on the many-headed monster, wild and rampant; but when the many-headed monster buys its hats in Bond Street, and has an eyeglass at each of its inquisitive eyes, I confess I take fright. Besides, it is near seven o'clock; Putney not visible, and the flounders not fried!"

"My cab is waiting yonder; we must walk to it: we can keep on the turf, and avoid the throng. But tell me honestly, Vance, do you really dislike to mix in crowds; you, with your fame, dislike the eyes that turn back to look again, and the lips that respectfully murmur, 'Vance the Painter'? Ah, I always said you would be a great painter,--and in five short years you have soared high."

"Pooh!" answered Vance, indifferently. "Nothing is pure and unadulterated in London use; not cream, nor cayenne pepper; least of all Fame,--mixed up with the most deleterious ingredients. Fame! did you read the 'Times' critique on my pictures in the present Exhibition? Fame indeed Change the subject. Nothing so good as flounders. Ho! is that your cab? Superb! Car fit for the 'Grecian youth of talents rare,' in Mr. Enfield's 'Speaker;' horse that seems conjured out of the Elgin Marbles. Is he quiet?"

"Not very; but trust to my driving. You may well admire the horse,--present from Darrell, chosen by Colonel Morley." When the young men had settled themselves into the vehicle, Lionel dismissed his groom, and, touching his horse, the animal trotted out briskly.

"Frank," said Lionel, shaking his dark curls with a petulant gravity, "your cynical definitions are unworthy that masculine beard. You despise fame! what sheer affectation!"

"Pulverem Olympicum
Collegisse juvat; metaque fervidis
Evitata rotis----"

"Take care," cried Vance; "we shall be over." For Lionel, growing excited, teased the horse with his whip; and the horse bolting, took the cab within an inch of a water-cart.

"Fame, fame!" cried Lionel, unheeding the interruption. "What would I not give to have and to hold it for an hour?" "Hold an eel, less slippery; a scorpion, less stinging! But--" added Vance, observing his companion's heightened colour--"but," he added seriously, and with an honest compunction, "I forgot, you are a soldier, you follow the career of arms! Never heed what is said on the subject by a querulous painter! The desire of fame may be folly in civilians: in soldiers it is wisdom. Twin-born with the martial sense of honour, it cheers the march; it warms the bivouac; it gives music to the whirl of the bullet, the roar of the ball; it plants hope in the thick of peril; knits rivals with the bond

of brothers; comforts the survivor when the brother falls; takes from war its grim aspect of carnage; and from homicide itself extracts lessons that strengthen the safeguards to humanity, and perpetuate life to nations. Right: pant for fame; you are a soldier!"

This was one of those bursts of high sentiment from Vance, which, as they were very rare with him, had the dramatic effect of surprise. Lionel listened to him with a thrilling delight. He could not answer: he was too moved. The artist resumed, as the cabriolet now cleared the Park, and rolled safely and rapidly along the road. "I suppose, during the five years you have spent abroad completing your general education, you have made little study, or none, of what specially appertains to the profession you have so recently chosen."

"You are mistaken there, my dear Vance. If a man's heart be set on a thing, he is always studying it. The books I loved best, and most pondered over, were such as, if they did not administer lessons, suggested hints that might turn to lessons hereafter. In social intercourse, I never was so pleased as when I could fasten myself to some practical veteran,--question and cross-examine him. One picks up more ideas in conversation than from books; at least I do. Besides, my idea of a soldier who is to succeed some day is not that of a mere mechanician -at-arms. See how accomplished most great captains have been. What observers of mankind! what diplomatists! what reasoners! what men of action, because men to whom reflection had been habitual before they acted! How many stores of idea must have gone to the judgment which hazards the sortie or decides on the retreat!"

"Gently, gently!" cried Vance. "We shall be into that omnibus! Give me the whip,--do; there, a little more to the left,--so. Yes; I am glad to see such enthusiasm in your profession: 't is half the battle. Hazlitt said a capital thing, 'The 'prentice who does not consider the Lord Mayor in his gilt coach the greatest man in the world will live to be hanged!'"

"Pish!" said Lionel, catching at the whip.

VANCE (holding it back).--"No. I apologize. I retract the Lord Mayor: comparisons are odious. I agree with you, nothing like leather. I mean nothing like a really great soldier,--Hannibal, and so forth. Cherish that conviction, my friend: meanwhile, respect human life; there is another omnibus!"

The danger past, the artist thought it prudent to divert the conversation into some channel less exciting.

"Mr. Darrell, of course, consents to your choice of a profession?"

"Consents! approves, encourages. Wrote me such a beautiful letter! what a comprehensive intelligence that man has!"

"Necessarily; since he agrees with you. Where is he now?"

"I have no notion: it is some months since I heard from him. He was then

at Malta, on his return from Asia Minor."

"So! you have never seen him since he bade you farewell at his old Manor-house?"

"Never. He has not, I believe, been in England."

"Nor in Paris, where you seem to have chiefly resided."

"Nor in Paris. Ah, Vance, could I but be of some comfort to him. Now that I am older, I think I understand in him much that perplexed me as a boy when we parted. Darrell is one of those men who require a home. Between the great world and solitude, he needs the intermediate filling-up which the life domestic alone supplies: a wife to realize the sweet word helpmate; children, with whose future he could knit his own toils and his ancestral remembrances. That intermediate space annihilated, the great world and the solitude are left, each frowning on the other."

"My dear Lionel, you must have lived with very clever people: you are talking far above your years."

"Am I? True; I have lived, if not with very clever people, with people far above my years. That is a secret I learned from Colonel Morley, to whom I must present you,--the subtlest intellect under the quietest manner. Once he said to me, 'Would you throughout life be up to the height of your century,--always in the prime of man's reason, without crudeness and without decline,--live habitually while young with persons older, and when old with persons younger, than yourself.'"

"Shrewdly said indeed. I felicitate you on the evident result of the maxim. And so Darrell has no home,--no wife and no children?"

"He has long been a widower; he lost his only son in boyhood, and his daughter--did you never hear?"

"No, what?"

"Married so ill--a runaway match--and died many years since, without issue."

"Poor man! It was these afflictions, then, that soured his life, and made him the hermit or the wanderer?"

"There," said Lionel, "I am puzzled; for I find that, even after his son's death and his daughter's unhappy marriage and estrangement from him, he was still in Parliament and in full activity of career. But certainly he did not long keep it up. It might have been an effort to which, strong as he is, he felt himself unequal; or, might he have known some fresh disappointment, some new sorrow, which the world never guesses? What I have said as to his family afflictions the world knows. But I think he will marry again. That idea seemed strong in his own mind when we parted; he brought it out bluntly, roughly. Colonel Morley is convinced that he will marry, if but for the sake of an heir."

VANCE.--"And if so, my poor Lionel, you are ousted of--"

LIONEL (quickly interrupting).--"Hush! Do not say, my dear Vance, do not you say--you!--one of those low, mean things which, if said to me even by men for whom I have no esteem, make my ears tingle and my cheek blush. When I think of what Darrell has already done for me,--me who have no claim on him,--it seems to me as if I must hate the man who insinuates, 'Fear lest your benefactor find a smile at his own hearth, a child of his own blood; for you may be richer at his death in proportion as his life is desolate.'"

VANCE.--"You are a fine young fellow, and I beg your pardon. Take care of that milestone: thank you. But I suspect that at least two-thirds of those friendly hands that detained you on the way to me were stretched out less to Lionel Haughton, a subaltern in the Guards, than to Mr. Darrell's heir presumptive."

LIONEL.--"That thought sometimes galls me, but it does me good; for it goads on my desire to make myself some one whom the most worldly would not disdain to know for his own sake. Oh for active service! Oh for a sharp campaign! Oh for fair trial how far a man in earnest can grapple Fortune to his breast with his own strong hands! You have done so, Vance; you had but your genius and your painter's brush. I have no genius; but I have a resolve, and resolve is perhaps as sure of its ends as genius. Genius and Resolve have three grand elements in common,--Patience, Hope, and Concentration."

Vance, more and more surprised, looked hard at Lionel without speaking. Five years of that critical age, from seventeen to twenty-two, spent in the great capital of Europe; kept from its more dangerous vices partly by a proud sense of personal dignity, partly by a temperament which, regarding love as an ideal for all tender and sublime emotion, recoiled from low profligacy as being to love what the Yahoo of the mocking satirist was to man; absorbed much by the brooding ambition that takes youth out of the frivolous present into the serious future, and seeking companionship, not with contemporary idlers, but with the highest and maturest intellects that the free commonwealth of good society brought within his reach: five years so spent had developed a boy, nursing noble dreams, into a man fit for noble action,--retaining freshest youth in its enthusiasm, its elevation of sentiment, its daring, its energy, and divine credulity in its own unexhausted resources; but borrowing from maturity compactness and solidity of idea,--the link between speculation and practice, the power to impress on others a sense of the superiority which has been self-elaborated by unconscious culture.

"So!" said Vance, after a prolonged pause, "I don't know whether I have resolve or genius; but certainly if I have made my way to some small reputation, patience, hope, and concentration of purpose must have the credit of it; and prudence, too, which you have forgotten to name, and certainly don't evince as a charioteer. I hope, my dear fellow, you are not extravagant? No doubt, eh?--why do you laugh?"

"The question is so like you, Frank,--thrifty as ever."

"Do you think I could have painted with a calm mind if I knew that at my door there was a dun whom I could not pay? Art needs serenity; and if an artist begin his career with as few shirts to his back as I had, he must place economy amongst the rules of perspective."

Lionel laughed again, and made some comments on economy which were certainly, if smart, rather flippant, and tended not only to lower the favourable estimate of his intellectual improvement which Vance had just formed, but seriously disquieted the kindly artist. Vance knew the world,--knew the peculiar temptations to which a young man in Lionel's position would be exposed,--knew that contempt for economy belongs to that school of Peripatetics which reserves its last lessons for finished disciples in the sacred walks of the Queen's Bench.

However, that was no auspicious moment for didactic warnings.

"Here we are!" cried Lionel,--"Putney Bridge."

They reached the little inn by the river-side, and while dinner was getting ready they hired a boat. Vance took the oars.

VANCE.--"Not so pretty here as by those green quiet banks along which we glided, at moonlight, five years ago."

LIONEL.--"Ah, no! And that innocent, charming child, whose portrait you took,--you have never heard of her since?"

VANCE.--"Never! How should I? Have you?"

LIONEL.--"Only what Darrell repeated to me. His lawyer had ascertained that she and her grandfather had gone to America. Darrell gently implied that, from what he learned of them, they scarcely merited the interest I felt in their fate. But we were not deceived, were we, Vance?"

VANCE--"No; the little girl--what was her name? Sukey? Sally? Sophy, true--Sophy had something about her extremely prepossessing, besides her pretty face; and, in spite of that horrid cotton print, I shall never forget it."

LIONEL--"Her face! Nor I. I see it still before me!"

VANCE--"Her cotton print! I see it still before me! But I must not be ungrateful. Would you believe it,--that little portrait, which cost me three pounds, has made, I don't say my fortune, but my fashion?"

LIONEL--"How! You had the heart to sell it?"

VANCE.--"No; I kept it as a study for young female heads--'with variations,' as they say in music. It was by my female heads that I became the fashion; every order I have contains the condition, 'But be sure, one of your sweet female heads, Mr. Vance.' My female heads are as

necessary to my canvas as a white horse to Wouvermans'. Well, that child, who cost me three pounds, is the original of them all. Commencing as a Titania, she has been in turns a 'Psyche,' a 'Beatrice-Cenci,' a 'Minna,' 'A Portrait of a Nobleman's Daughter,' 'Burns's Mary in Heaven,' 'The Young Gleaner,' and 'Sabrina Fair,' in Milton's 'Comus.' I have led that child through all history, sacred and profane. I have painted her in all costumes (her own cotton print excepted). My female heads are my glory; even the 'Times' critic allows that! 'Mr. Vance, there, is inimitable! a type of childlike grace peculiarly his own,' etc. I'll lend you the article."

LIONEL.--"And shall we never again see the original darling Sophy? You will laugh, Vance, but I have been heartproof against all young ladies. If ever I marry, my wife must have Sophy's eyes! In America!"

VANCE.--"Let us hope by this time happily married to a Yankee! Yankees marry girls in their teens, and don't ask for dowries. Married to a Yankee! not a doubt of it! a Yankee who thaws, whittles, and keeps a 'store!'"

LIONEL.--"Monster! Hold your tongue. /A propos/ of marriage, why are you still single?"

VANCE.--"Because I have no wish to be doubled up! Moreover, man is like a napkin, the more neatly the housewife doubles him, the more carefully she lays him on the shelf. Neither can a man once doubled know how often he may be doubled. Not only his wife folds him in two, but every child quarters him into a new double, till what was a wide and handsome substance, large enough for anything in reason, dwindles into a pitiful square that will not cover one platter,--all puckers and creases, smaller and smaller with every double, with every double a new crease. Then, my friend, comes the washing-bill! and, besides all the hurts one receives in the mangle, consider the hourly wear and tear of the linen-press! In short, Shakspeare vindicates the single life, and depicts the double in the famous line, which is no doubt intended to be allegorical of marriage,

"Double, double, toil and trouble."

Besides, no single man can be fairly called poor. What double man can with certainty be called rich? A single man can lodge in a garret, and dine on a herring; nobody knows; nobody cares. Let him marry, and he invites the world to witness where he lodges, and how he dines. The first necessary a wife demands is the most ruinous, the most indefinite superfluity; it is Gentility according to what her neighbours call genteel. Gentility commences with the honeymoon; it is its shadow, and lengthens as the moon declines. When the honey is all gone, your bride says, 'We can have our tea without sugar when quite alone, love; but, in case Gentility drop in, here's a bill for silver sugar-tongs!' That's why I'm single."

"Economy again, Vance."

"Prudence,--dignity," answered Vance, seriously; and sinking into a reverie that seemed gloomy, he shot back to shore.

CHAPTER II.

Mr. Vance explains how he came to grind colours and save half-pence.
--A sudden announcement.

The meal was over; the table had been spread by a window that looked upon the river. The moon was up: the young men asked for no other lights; conversation between them--often shifting, often pausing--had gradually become grave, as it usually does with two companions in youth; while yet long vistas in the Future stretch before them deep in shadow, and they fall into confiding talk on what they wish,--what they fear; making visionary maps in that limitless Obscure.

"There is so much power in faith," said Lionel, "even when faith is applied but to things human and earthly, that let a man be but firmly persuaded that he is born to do, some day, what at the moment seems impossible, and it is fifty to one but what he does it before he dies. Surely, when you were a child at school, you felt convinced that there was something in your fate distinct from that of the other boys, whom the master might call quite as clever,--felt that faith in yourself which made you sure that you would be one day what you are."

"Well, I suppose so; but vague aspirations and self-conceits must be bound together by some practical necessity--perhaps a very homely and a very vulgar one--or they scatter and evaporate. One would think that rich people in high life ought to do more than poor folks in humble life. More pains are taken with their education; they have more leisure for following the bent of their genius: yet it is the poor folks, often half self-educated, and with pinched bellies, that do three-fourths of the world's grand labour. Poverty is the keenest stimulant; and poverty made me say, not 'I will do,' but 'I must.'"

"You knew real poverty in childhood, Frank?"

"Real poverty, covered over with sham affluence. My father was Genteel Poverty, and my mother was Poor Gentility. The sham affluence went when my father died. The real poverty then came out in all its ugliness. I was taken from a genteel school, at which, long afterwards, I genteelly paid the bills; and I had to support my mother somehow or other,--somehow or other I succeeded. Alas, I fear not genteelly! But before I lost her, which I did in a few years, she had some comforts which were not appearances; and she kindly allowed, dear soul, that gentility and shams do not go well together. Oh, beware of debt, Lionello mio; and never call that economy meanness which is but the safeguard from mean degradation."

"I understand you at last, Vance; shake hands: I know why you are

saving."

"Habit now," answered Vance, repressing praise of himself, as usual.

"But I remember so well when twopence was a sum to be respected that to this day I would rather put it by than spend it. All our ideas--like orange-plants--spread out in proportion to the size of the box which imprisons the roots. Then I had a sister." Vance paused a moment, as if in pain, but went on with seeming carelessness, leaning over the window-sill, and turning his face from his friend. "I had a sister older than myself, handsome, gentle."

"I was so proud of her! Foolish girl! my love was not enough for her. Foolish girl! she could not wait to see what I might live to do for her. She married--oh! so genteelly!--a young man, very well born, who had wooed her before my father died. He had the villany to remain constant when she had not a farthing, and he was dependent on distant relations, and his own domains in Parnassus. The wretch was a poet! So they married. They spent their honeymoon genteelly, I dare say. His relations cut him. Parnassus paid no rents. He went abroad. Such heart-rending letters from her. They were destitute. How I worked! how I raged! But how could I maintain her and her husband too, mere child that I was? No matter. They are dead now, both; all dead for whose sake I first ground colours and saved halfpence. And Frank Vance is a stingy, selfish bachelor. Never revive this dull subject again, or I shall borrow a crown from you and cut you dead. Waiter, ho!--the bill. I'll just go round to the stables, and see the horse put to."

As the friends re-entered London, Vance said, "Set me down anywhere in Piccadilly; I will walk home. You, I suppose, of course, are staying with your mother in Gloucester Place?"

"No," said Lionel, rather embarrassed; "Colonel Morley, who acts for me as if he were my guardian, took a lodging for me in Chesterfield Street, Mayfair. My hours, I fear, would ill suit my dear mother. Only in town two days; and, thanks to Morley, my table is already covered with invitations."

"Yet you gave me one day, generous friend!"

"You the second day, my mother the first. But there are three balls before me to-night. Come home with me, and smoke your cigar while I dress."

"No; but I will at least light my cigar in your hall, prodigal!"

Lionel now stopped at his lodging. The groom, who served him also as valet, was in waiting at the door. "A note for you, sir, from Colonel Morley,--just come." Lionel hastily opened it, and read,

MY DEAR HAUGHTON,--Mr. Darrell has suddenly arrived in London. Keep yourself free all to-morrow, when, no doubt, he will see you. I am hurrying off to him.

Yours in haste, A. V. M.

CHAPTER III.

Once more Guy Darrell.

Guy Darrell was alone: a lofty room in a large house on the first floor, --his own house in Carlton Gardens, which he had occupied during his brief and brilliant parliamentary career; since then, left contemptuously to the care of a house agent, to be let by year or by season, it had known various tenants of an opulence and station suitable to its space and site. Dinners and concerts, routs and balls, had assembled the friends and jaded the spirits of many a gracious host and smiling hostess. The tenure of one of these temporary occupants had recently expired; and, ere the agent had found another, the long absent owner dropped down into its silenced halls as from the clouds, without other establishment than his old servant Mills and the woman in charge of the house. There, as in a caravansery, the traveller took his rest, stately and desolate. Nothing so comfortless as one of those large London houses all to one's self. In long rows against the walls stood the empty fauteuils. Spectral from the gilded ceiling hung lightless chandeliers. --The furniture, pompous, but worn by use and faded by time, seemed mementos of departed revels. When you return to your house in the country--no matter how long the absence, no matter how decayed by neglect the friendly chambers may be, if it has only been deserted in the meanwhile (not let to new races, who, by their own shifting dynasties, have supplanted the rightful lord, and half-effaced his memorials)--the walls may still greet you forgivingly, the character of Home be still there. You take up again the thread of associations which had, been suspended, not snapped. But it is otherwise with a house in cities, especially in our fast-living London, where few houses descend from father to son,--where the title-deeds are rarely more than those of a purchased lease for a term of years, after which your property quits you. A house in London, which your father never entered, in which no elbow-chair, no old-fashioned work-table, recall to you the kind smile of a mother; a house that you have left as you leave an inn, let to people whose names you scarce know, with as little respect for your family records as you have for theirs,--when you return after a long interval of years to a house like that, you stand, as stood Darrell, a forlorn stranger under your own roof-tree. What cared he for those who had last gathered round those hearths with their chill steely grates, whose forms had reclined on those formal couches, whose feet had worn away the gloss from those costly carpets? Histories in the lives of many might be recorded within those walls. "Lovers there had breathed their first vows; bridal feasts had been held; babes had crowed in the arms of proud young mothers; politicians there had been raised into ministers; ministers there had fallen back into independent members;" through those doors corpses had been borne forth to relentless vaults. For these races and their records what cared the owner? Their writing was not on the walls. Sponged out, as from a slate, their reckonings with Time; leaving

dim, here and there, some chance scratch of his own, blurred and bygone. Leaning against the mantelpiece, Darrell gazed round the room with a vague wistful look, as if seeking to conjure up associations that might link the present hour to that past life which had slipped away elsewhere; and his profile, reflected on the mirror behind, pale and mournful, seemed like that ghost of himself which his memory silently evoked.

The man is but little altered externally since we saw him last, however inly changed since he last stood on those unwelcoming floors; the form still retained the same vigour and symmetry,--the same unspeakable dignity of mien and bearing; the same thoughtful bend of the proud neck, --so distinct, in its elastic rebound, from the stoop of debility or age. 'thick as ever the rich mass of dark-brown hair, though, when in the impatience of some painful thought his hand swept the loose curls from his forehead, the silver threads might now be seen shooting here and there,--vanishing almost as soon as seen. No, whatever the baptismal register may say to the contrary, that man is not old,--not even elderly; in the deep of that clear gray eye light may be calm, but in calm it is vivid; not a ray, sent from brain or from heart, is yet flickering down. On the whole, however, there is less composure than of old in his mien and bearing; less of that resignation which seemed to say, "I have done with the substances of life." Still there was gloom, but it was more broken and restless. Evidently that human breast was again admitting, or forcing itself to court, human hopes, human objects. Returning to the substances of life, their movement was seen in the shadows which, when they wrap us round at remoter distance, seem to lose their trouble as they gain their width. He broke from his musing attitude with an abrupt angry movement, as if shaking off thoughts which displeased him, and gathering his arms tightly to his breast, in a gesture peculiar to himself, walked to and fro the room, murmuring inaudibly. The door opened; he turned quickly, and with an evident sense of relief, for his face brightened. "Alban, my dear Alban!"

"Darrell! old friend! old school-friend! dear, dear Guy Darrell!" The two Englishmen stood, hands tightly clasped in each other, in true English greeting, their eyes moistening with remembrances that carried them back to boyhood.

Alban was the first to recover self-possession; and, when the friends had seated themselves, he surveyed Darrell's countenance deliberately, and said, "So little change!--wonderful! What is your secret?"

"Suspense from life,--hibernating. But you beat me; you have been spending life, yet seem as rich in it as when we parted."

"No; I begin to decry the present and laud the past; to read with glasses, to decide from prejudice, to recoil from change, to find sense in twaddle, to know the value of health from the fear to lose it; to feel an interest in rheumatism, an awe of bronchitis; to tell anecdotes, and to wear flannel. To you in strict confidence I disclose the truth: I am no longer twenty-five. You laugh; this is civilized talk: does it not refresh you after the gibberish you must have chattered in Asia Minor?"

Darrell might have answered in the affirmative with truth. What man, after long years of solitude, is not refreshed by talk, however trivial, that recalls to him the gay time of the world he remembered in his young day,--and recalls it to him on the lips of a friend in youth! But Darrell said nothing; only he settled himself in his chair with a more cheerful ease, and inclined his relaxing brows with a nod of encouragement or assent.

Colonel Morley continued. "But when did you arrive? whence? How long do you stay here? What are your plans?"

DARRELL.--"Caesar could not be more laconic. When arrived? this evening. Whence? Ouzelford. How long do I stay? uncertain. What are my plans? let us discuss them."

COLONEL MORLEY.--"With all my heart. You have plans, then?--a good sign. Animals in hibernation form none."

DARRELL (putting aside the lights on the table, so as to leave, his face in shade, and looking towards the floor as he speaks).--"For the last five years I have struggled hard to renew interest in mankind, reconnect myself with common life and its healthful objects. Between Fawley and London I desired to form a magnetic medium. I took rather a vast one, --nearly all the rest of the known world. I have visited both Americas, either end. All Asia have I ransacked, and pierced as far into Africa as traveller ever went in search of Timbuctoo. But I have sojourned also, at long intervals, at least they seemed long to me,--in the gay capitals of Europe (Paris excepted); mixed, too, with the gayest; hired palaces, filled them with guests; feasted and heard music. 'Guy Darrell,' said I, 'shake off the rust of years: thou hadst no youth while young,--be young now. A holiday may restore thee to wholesome work, as a holiday restores the wearied school-boy.'"

COLONEL MORLEY.--"I comprehend; the experiment succeeded?"

DARRELL.--"I don't know: not yet; but it may. I am here, and I intend to stay. I would not go to a hotel for a single day, lest my resolution should fail me. I have thrown myself into this castle of care without even a garrison. I hope to hold it. Help me to man it. In a word, and without metaphor, I am here with the design of re-entering London life."

COLONEL MORLEY.--"I am so glad. Hearty congratulations! How rejoiced all the Viponts will be! Another 'CRISIS' is at hand. You have seen the newspapers regularly, of course: the state of the country interests you. You say that you come from Ouzelford, the town you once represented. I guess you will re-enter Parliament; you have but to say the word."

DARRELL.--"Parliament! No. I received, while abroad, so earnest a request from my old constituents to lay the foundation-stone of a new Town-Hall, in which they are much interested; and my obligations to them have been so great that I could not refuse. I wrote to fix the day as soon as I had resolved to return to England, making a condition that I should be spared the infliction of a public dinner, and landed just in

time to keep my appointment; reached Ouzelford early this morning, went through the ceremony, made a short speech, came on at once to London, not venturing to diverge to Fawley (which is not very far from Ouzelford), lest, once there again, I should not have strength to leave it; and here I am." Darrell paused, then repeated, in brisk emphatic tone, "Parliament? No. Labour? No. Fellow-man, I am about to confess to you: I would snatch back some days of youth,--a wintry likeness of youth, better than none. Old friend, let us amuse ourselves! When I was working hard, hard, hard! it was you who would say: 'Come forth, be amused,'--you! happy butterfly that you were! Now, I say to you, 'Show me this flaunting town that you know so well; initiate me into the joys of polite pleasures, social commune,

"Dulce mihi furere est amico."

You have amusements,--let me share them."

"Faith," quoth the Colonel, crossing his legs, "you come late in the day! Amusements cease to amuse at last. I have tried all, and begin to be tired. I have had my holiday, exhausted its sports; and you, coming from books and desk fresh into the playground, say, 'Football and leapfrog.' Alas! my poor friend, why did not you come sooner?"

DARRELL.--"One word, one question. You have made EASE a philosophy and a system; no man ever did so with more felicitous grace: nor, in following pleasure, have you parted company with conscience and shame. A fine gentleman ever, in honour as in elegance. Well, are you satisfied with your choice of life? Are you happy?"

"Happy! who is? Satisfied, perhaps."

"Is there any one you envy,--whose choice, other than your own, you would prefer?"

"Certainly."

"Who?"

"You."

"!!" said Darrell, opening his eyes with unaffected amaze. "I! envy me! prefer my choice!"

COLONEL MORLEY (peevishly).--"Without doubt. You have had gratified ambition, a great career. Envy you! who would not? Your own objects in life fulfilled: you coveted distinction,--you won it; fortune,--your wealth is immense; the restoration of your name and lineage from obscurity and humiliation,--are not name and lineage again written in the Libro d'oro? What king would not hail you as his counsellor? What senate not open its ranks to admit you as a chief? What house, though the haughtiest in the land, would not accept your alliance? And withal, you stand before me stalwart and unbowed, young blood still in your veins. Ungrateful man, who would not change lots with Guy Darrell?"

Fame, fortune, health, and, not to flatter you, a form and presence that would be remarked, though you stood in that black frock by the side of a monarch in his coronation robes."

DARRELL.--"You have turned my question against myself with a kindliness of intention that makes me forgive your belief in my vanity. Pass on, --or rather pass back; you say you have tried all in life that distracts or sweetens. Not so, lone bachelor; you have not tried wedlock. Has not that been your mistake?"

COLONEL MORLEY.--"Answer for yourself. You have tried it." The words were scarce out of his mouth ere he repented the retort; for Darrell started as if stung to the quick; and his brow, before serene, his lip, before playful, grew, the one darkly troubled, the other tightly compressed. "Pardon me," faltered out the friend.

DARRELL.--"Oh, yes! I brought it on myself. What stuff we have been talking! Tell me the news, not political, any other. But first, your report of young Haughton. Cordial thanks for all your kindness to him. You write me word that he is much improved,--most likeable; you add, that at Paris he became the rage, that in London you are sure he will be extremely popular. Be it so, if for his own sake. Are you quite sure that it is not for the expectations which I come here to disperse?"

COLONEL MORLEY.--"Much for himself, I am certain; a little, perhaps, because--whatever he thinks, and I say to the contrary--people seeing no other heir to your property--"

"I understand," interrupted Darrell, quickly. "But he does not nurse those expectations? he will not be disappointed?"

COLONEL MORLEY.--"Verily I believe that, apart from his love for you and a delicacy of sentiment that would recoil from planting hopes of wealth in the graves of benefactors, Lionel Haughton would prefer carving his own fortunes to all the ingots hewed out of California by another's hand and bequeathed by another's will."

DARRELL.--"I am heartily glad to hear and to trust you."

COLONEL MORLEY.--"I gather from what you say that you are here with the intention to--to--"

"Marry again," said Darrell, firmly. "Right. I am."

"I always felt sure you would marry again. Is the lady here too?"

"What lady?"

"The lady you have chosen."

"Tush! I have chosen none. I come here to choose; and in this I ask advice from your experience. I would marry again! !! at my age! Ridiculous! But so it is. You know all the mothers and marriageable

daughters that London--/arida nutrix/--rears for nuptial altars: where, amongst them, shall I, Guy Darrell, the man whom you think so enviable, find the safe helpmate, whose love he may reward with munificent jointure, to whose child he may bequeath the name that has now no successor, and the wealth he has no heart to spend?"

Colonel Morley--who, as we know, is by habit a matchmaker, and likes the vocation--assumes a placid but cogitative mien, rubs his brow gently, and says in his softest, best-bred accents, "You would not marry a mere girl? some one of suitable age. I know several most superior young women on the other side of thirty, Wilhelmina Prymme, for instance, or Janet--"

DARRELL.--"Old maids. No! decidedly no!"

COLONEL MORLEY (suspiciously).--"But you would not risk the peace of your old age with a girl of eighteen, or else I do know a very accomplished, well-brought-up girl; just eighteen, who--"

DARRELL.--"Re-enter life by the side of Eighteen! am I a madman?"

COLONEL MORLEY.--"Neither old maids nor young maids; the choice becomes narrowed. You would prefer a widow. Ha! I have thought of one; a prize, indeed, could you but win her, the widow of--"

DARRELL.--"Ephesus!--Bah! suggest no widow to me. A widow, with her affections buried in the grave!"

MORLEY.--"Not necessarily. And in this case--"

DARRELL (interrupting, and with warmth).--"In every case I tell you: no widow shall doff her weeds for me. Did she love the first man? Fickle is the woman who can love twice. Did she not love him? Why did she marry him? Perhaps she sold herself to a rent-roll? Shall she sell herself again to me for a jointure? Heaven forbid! Talk not of widows. No dainty so flavourless as a heart warmed up again."

COLONEL MORLEY.--"Neither maids, be they old or young, nor widows. Possibly you want an angel. London is not the place for angels."

DARRELL.--"I grant that the choice seems involved in perplexity. How can it be otherwise if one's self is perplexed? And yet, Alban, I am serious; and I do not presume to be so exacting as my words have implied. I ask not fortune, nor rank beyond gentle blood, nor youth nor beauty nor accomplishments nor fashion, but I do ask one thing, and one thing only."

COLONEL MORLEY.--"What is that? you have left nothing worth the having to ask for."

DARRELL.--"Nothing! I have left all! I ask some one whom I can love; love better than all the world,--not the /mariage de convenance/, not the /mariage de raison/, but the /mariage d'amour/. All other marriage, with vows of love so solemn, with intimacy of commune so close,--all other marriage, in my eyes, is an acted falsehood, a varnished sin. Ah, if I

had thought so always! But away regret and repentance! The future alone is now before me! Alban Morley! I would sign away all I have in the world (save the old house at Fawley), ay, and after signing, cut off to boot this right hand, could I but once fall in love; love, and be loved again, as any two of Heaven's simplest human creatures may love each other while life is fresh! Strange! strange! look out into the world; mark the man of our years who shall be most courted, most adulated, or admired. Give him all the attributes of power, wealth, royalty, genius, fame. See all the younger generation bow before him with hope or awe: his word can make their fortune; at his smile a reputation dawns. Well; now let that man say to the young, 'Room amongst yourselves: all that wins me this homage I would lay at the feet of Beauty. I enter the lists of love,' and straightway his power vanishes, the poorest booby of twenty-four can jostle him aside; before, the object of reverence, he is now the butt of ridicule. The instant he asks right to win the heart of a woman, a boy whom in all else he could rule as a lackey cries, 'Off, Graybeard, that realm at least is mine!'"

COLONEL MORLEY.--"This were but eloquent extravagance, even if your beard were gray. Men older than you, and with half your pretensions, even of outward form, have carried away hearts from boys like Adonis. Only choose well: that's the difficulty; if it was not difficult, who would be a bachelor?"

DARRELL.--"Guide my choice. Pilot me to the haven."

COLONEL MORLEY.--"Accepted! But you must remount a suitable establishment; reopen your way to the great world, and penetrate those sacred recesses where awaiting spinsters weave the fatal web. Leave all to me. Let Mills (I see you have him still) call on me to-morrow about your menage. You will give dinners, of course?"

DARRELL.--"Oh, of course; must I dine at them myself?"

Morley laughed softly, and took up his hat.

"So soon!" cried Darrell. "If I fatigue you already, what chance shall I have with new friends?"

"So soon! it is past eleven. And it is you who must be fatigued."

"No such good luck; were I fatigued, I might hope to sleep. I will walk back with you. Leave me not alone in this room,--alone in the jaws of a fish; swallowed up by a creature whose blood is cold."

"You have something still to say to me," said Alban, when they were in the open air: "I detect it in your manner; what is it?"

"I know not. But you have told me no news; these streets are grown strange to me. Who live now in yonder houses? once the dwellers were my friends."

"In that house,--oh, new people! I forget their names,--but rich; in a

year or two, with luck, they may be exclusives, and forget my name. In the other house, Carr Vipont still."

"Vipont; those dear Viponts! what of them all? Crawl they, sting they, bask they in the sun, or are they in anxious process of a change of skin?"

"Hush! my dear friend: no satire on your own connections; nothing so injudicious. I am a Vipont, too, and all for the family maxim, 'Vipont with Vipont, and come what may!'"

"I stand rebuked. But I am no Vipont. I married, it is true, into their house, and they married, ages ago, into mine; but no drop in the blood of time-servers flows through the veins of the last childless Darrell. Pardon. I allow the merit of the Vipont race; no family more excites my respectful interest. What of their births, deaths, and marriages?"

COLONEL MORLEY.--"As to the births, Carr has just welcomed the birth of a grandson; the first-born of his eldest son (who married last year a daughter of the Duke of Halifax),--a promising young man, a Lord in the Admiralty. Carr has a second son in the Hussars; has just purchased his step: the other boys are still at school. He has three daughters too, fine girls, admirably brought up; indeed, now I think of it, the eldest, Honoria, might suit you, highly accomplished; well read; interests herself in politics; a great admirer of intellect; of a very serious turn of mind too."

DARRELL.--"A female politician with a serious turn of mind,--a farthing rushlight in a London fog! Hasten on to subjects less gloomy. Whose funeral achievement is that yonder?"

COLONEL MORLEY.--"The late Lord Niton's, father to Lady Montfort."

DARRELL.--"Lady Montfort! Her father was a Lyndsay, and died before the Flood. A deluge, at least, has gone over me and my world since I looked on the face of his widow."

COLONEL MORLEY.--"I speak of the present Lord Montfort's wife,--the Earl's. You of the poor Marquess's, the last Marquess; the marquisate is extinct. Surely, whatever your wanderings, you must have heard of the death of the last Marquess of Montfort?"

"Yes, I heard of that," answered Darrell, in a somewhat husky and muttered voice. "So he is dead, the young man! What killed him?"

COLONEL MORLEY.--"A violent attack of croup,--quite sudden. He was staying at Carr's at the time. I suspect that Carr made him talk! a thing he was not accustomed to do. Deranged his system altogether. But don't let us revive painful subjects."

DARRELL.--"Was she with him at the time?"

COLONEL MORLEY.--"Lady Montfort? No; they were very seldom together."

DARRELL.--"She is not married again yet?"

COLONEL MORLEY.--"No, but still young and so beautiful she will have many offers. I know those who are waiting to propose. Montfort has been only dead eighteen months; died just before young Carr's marriage. His widow lives, in complete seclusion, at her jointure-house near Twickenham. She has only seen even me once since her loss."

DARRELL.--"When was that?"

MORLEY.--"About six or seven months ago; she asked after you with much interest."

DARRELL.--"After me!"

COLONEL MORLEY.--"To be sure. Don't I remember how constantly she and her mother were at your house? Is it strange that she should ask after you? You ought to know her better,--the most affectionate, grateful character."

DARRELL.--"I dare say. But at the time you refer to, I was too occupied to acquire much accurate knowledge of a young lady's character. I should have known her mother's character better, yet I mistook even that."

COLONEL MORLEY.--"Mrs. Lyndsay's character you might well mistake,--charming but artificial: Lady Montfort is natural. Indeed, if you had not that illiberal prejudice against widows, she was the very person I was about to suggest to you."

DARRELL.--"A fashionable beauty! and young enough to be my daughter. Such is human friendship! So the marquise is extinct, and Sir James Vipont, whom I remember in the House of Commons--respectable man, great authority on cattle, timid, and always saying, 'Did you read that article in to-day's paper?'--has the estates and the earldom?"

COLONEL MORLEY.--"Yes. There was some fear of a disputed succession, but Sir James made his claim very clear. Between you and me, the change has been a serious affliction to the Viponts. The late lord was not wise, but on state occasions he looked his part,--/tres grand seigneur/,--and Carr managed the family influence with admirable tact. The present lord has the habits of a yeoman; his wife shares his tastes. He has taken the management not only of the property, but of its influence, out of Carr's hands, and will make a sad mess of it, for he is an impracticable, obsolete politician. He will never keep the family together, impossible, a sad thing. I remember how our last muster, five years ago next Christmas, struck terror into Lord's Cabinet; the mere report of it in the newspapers set all people talking and thinking. The result was that, two weeks after, proper overtures were made to Carr: he consented to assist the ministers; and the country was saved! Now, thanks to this stupid new earl, in eighteen months we have lost ground which it took at least a century and a half to gain. Our votes are divided; our influence frittered away; Montfort House is shut up; and Carr, grown quite thin,

says that in the coming 'CRISIS' a Cabinet will not only be formed, but will also last--last time enough for irreparable mischief--without a single Vipont in office."

Thus Colonel Morley continued in mournful strain, Darrell silent by his side, till the Colonel reached his own door. There, while applying his latch-key to the lock, Alban's mind returned from the perils that threatened the House of Vipont and the Star of Brunswick to the petty claims of private friendship. But even these last were now blended with those grander interests, due care for which every true patriot of the House of Vipont imbibed with his mother's milk.

"Your appearance in town, my dear Darrell, is most opportune. It will be an object with the whole family to make the most of you at this coming 'CRISIS;' I say coming, for I believe it must come. Your name is still freshly remembered; your position greater for having been out of all the scrapes of the party the last sixteen or seventeen years: your house should be the nucleus of new combinations. Don't forget to send Mills to me; I will engage your chef and your house-steward to-morrow. I know just the men to suit you. Your intention to marry too, just at this moment, is most seasonable; it will increase the family interest. I may give out that you intend to marry?"

"Oh, certainly cry it at Charing Cross."

"A club-room will do as well. I beg ten thousand pardons; but people will talk about money whenever they talk about marriage. I should not like to exaggerate your fortune: I know it must be very large, and all at your own disposal, eh?"

"Every shilling."

"You must have saved a great deal since you retired into private life?"

"Take that for granted. Dick Fairthorn receives my rents, and looks to my various investments; and I accept him as an indisputable authority when I say that, what with the rental of lands I purchased in my poor boy's lifetime and the interest on my much more lucrative moneyed capital, you may safely whisper to all ladies likely to feel interest in that diffusion of knowledge, 'Thirty-five thousand a year, and an old fool.'"

"I certainly shall not say an old fool, for I am the same age as yourself; and if I had thirty-five thousand pounds a year, I would marry too."

"You would! Old fool!" said Darrell, turning away.

CHAPTER IV.

Revealing glimpses of Guy Darrell's past in his envied prime. Dig but deep enough, and under all earth runs water, under all life runs grief.

Alone in the streets, the vivacity which had characterized Darrell's countenance as well as his words, while with his old school friend, changed as suddenly and as completely into pensive abstracted gloom as if he had been acting a part, and with the exit the acting ceased. Disinclined to return yet to the solitude of his home, he walked on at first mechanically, in the restless desire of movement, he cared not whither. But as, thus chance-led, he found himself in the centre of that long straight thoroughfare which connects what once were the separate villages of Tyburn and Holborn, something in the desultory links of revery suggested an object to his devious feet. He had but to follow that street to his right hand, to gain in a quarter of an hour a sight of the humble dwelling-house in which he had first settled down, after his early marriage, to the arid labours of the bar. He would go, now that, wealthy and renowned, he was revisiting the long-deserted focus of English energies, and contemplate the obscure abode in which his powers had been first concentrated on the pursuit of renown and wealth. Who among my readers that may have risen on the glittering steep ("Ah, who can tell how hard it is to climb!") has not been similarly attracted towards the roof at the craggy foot of the ascent, under which golden dreams refreshed his straining sinews?

*[Ah, who can tell how hard it is to climb

The steep where Fame's proud temple shines afar? BEATTIE.]

Somewhat quickening his steps, now that a bourne was assigned to them, the man growing old in years, but, unhappily for himself, too tenacious of youth in its grand discontent and keen susceptibilities to pain, strode noiselessly on, under the gaslights, under the stars; gaslights primly marshalled at equidistance; stars that seem to the naked eye dotted over space without symmetry or method: man's order, near and finite, is so distinct; the Maker's order remote, infinite, is so beyond man's comprehension even of what is order!

Darrell paused hesitating. He had now gained a spot in which improvement had altered the landmarks. The superb broad thoroughfare continued where once it had vanished abrupt in a labyrinth of courts and alleys. But the way was not hard to find. He turned a little towards the left, recognizing, with admiring interest, in the gay, white, would-be Grecian edifice, with its French grille, bronzed, gilded, the transformed Museum, in the still libraries of which he had sometimes snatched a brief and ghostly respite from books of law. Onwards yet through lifeless Bloomsbury, not so far towards the last bounds of Atlas as the desolation of Podden Place, but the solitude deepening as he passed. There it is, a quiet street indeed! not a soul on its gloomy pavements, not even a policeman's soul. Nought stirring save a stealthy, profligate, good-for-nothing cat, flitting fine through yon area bars. Down that street had he come, I trowe, with a livelier, quicker step the day when, by the strange good-luck which had uniformly attended his worldly career of honours, he had been suddenly called upon to supply the place of an

absent senior, and in almost his earliest brief the Courts of Westminster had recognized a master, come, I trow, with a livelier step, knocked at that very door whereat he is halting now; entered the room where the young wife sat, and at sight of her querulous peevish face, and at sound of her unsympathizing languid voice, fled into his cupboard-like back parlour, and muttered "Courage! Courage!" to endure the home he had entered longing for a voice which should invite and respond to a cry of joy.

How closed up, dumb, and blind looked the small mean house, with its small mean door, its small mean rayless windows! Yet a FAME had been born there! Who are the residents now? Buried in slumber, have they any "golden dreams"? Works therein any struggling brain, to which the prosperous man might whisper "Courage!" or beats, there, any troubled heart to which faithful woman should murmur "Joy"? Who knows? London is a wondrous poem, but each page of it is written in a different language, --no lexicon yet composed for any.

Back through the street, under the gaslights, under the stars, went Guy Darrell, more slow and more thoughtful. Did the comparison between what he had been, what he was, the mean home just revisited, the stately home to which he would return, suggest thoughts of natural pride? It would not seem so; no pride in those close-shut lips, in that melancholy stoop.

He came into a quiet square,--still Bloomsbury,--and right before him was a large respectable mansion, almost as large as that one in courtlier quarters to which he loiteringly delayed the lone return. There, too, had been for a time the dwelling which was called his home; there, when gold was rolling in like a tide, distinction won, position assured; there, not yet in Parliament, but foremost at the bar,--already pressed by constituencies, already wooed by ministers; there, still young--O luckiest of lawyers!--there had he moved his household gods. Fit residence for a Prince of the Gown! Is it when living there that you would envy the prosperous man? Yes, the moment his step quits that door; but envy him when he enters its threshold?--nay, envy rather that roofless Savoyard who has crept under yonder portico, asleep with his ragged arm round the cage of his stupid dormice! There, in that great barren drawing-room, sits a

"Pale and elegant Aspasia."

Well, but the wife's face is not querulous now. Look again,--anxious, fearful, secret, sly. Oh! that fine lady, a Vipont Crooke, is not contented to be wife to the wealthy, great Mr. Darrell. What wants she? that he should be spouse to the fashionable fine Mrs. Darrell? Pride in him! not a jot of it; such pride were unchristian. Were he proud of her, as a Christian husband ought to be of so elegant a wife, would he still be in Bloomsbury? Envy him! the high gentleman, so true to his blood, all galled and blistered by the moral vulgarities of a tuft-hunting, toad-eating mimic of the Lady Selinas. Envy him! Well, why not? All women have their foibles. Wise husbands must bear and forbear. Is that all? wherefore, then, is her aspect so furtive, wherefore on his a wild, vigilant sternness? Tut, what so brings into coveted fashion a fair lady

exiled to Bloomsbury as the marked adoration of a lord, not her own, who gives law to St. James's! Untempted by passion, cold as ice to affection; if thawed to the gush of a sentiment secretly preferring the husband she chose, wooed, and won to idlers less gifted even in outward attractions,--all this, yet seeking, coquetting for, the eclat of dishonour! To elope? Oh, no, too wary for that, but to be gazed at and talked of as the fair Mrs. Darrell, to whom the Lovelace of London was so fondly devoted. Walk in, haughty son of the Dare-all. Darest thou ask who has just left thy house? Darest thou ask what and whence is the note that sly hand has secreted? Darest thou?--perhaps yes: what then? canst thou lock up thy wife? canst thou poniard the Lovelace? Lock up the air! poniard all whose light word in St. James's can bring into fashion the matron of Bloomsbury! Go, lawyer, go, study briefs, and be parchment.

Agonies, agonies, shot again through Guy Darrell's breast as he looked on that large, most respectable house, and remembered his hourly campaign against disgrace! He has triumphed. Death fights for him: on the very brink of the last scandal, a cold, caught at some Vipont's ball, became fever; and so from that door the Black Horses bore away the Bloomsbury Dame, ere she was yet--the fashion! Happy in grief the widower who may, with confiding hand, ransack the lost wife's harmless desk, sure that no thought concealed from him in life will rise accusing from the treasured papers. But that pale proud mourner, hurrying the eye over sweet-scented billets; compelled, in very justice to the dead, to convince himself that the mother of his children was corrupt only at heart,--that the Black Horses had come to the door in time,--and, wretchedly consoled by that niggardly conviction, flinging into the flames the last flimsy tatters on which his honour (rock-like in his own keeping) had been fluttering to and fro in the charge of a vain treacherous fool,--envy you that mourner? No! not even in his release. Memory is not nailed down in the velvet coffin; and to great loyal natures less bitter is the memory of the lost when hallowed by tender sadness than when coupled with scorn and shame.

The wife is dead. Dead, too, long years ago, the Lothario! The world has forgotten them; they fade out of this very record when ye turn the page; no influence, no bearing have they on such future events as may mark what yet rests of life to Guy Darrell. But as he there stands and gazes into space, the two forms are before his eye as distinct as if living still. Slowly, slowly he gazes them down: the false smiles flicker away from their feeble lineaments; woe and terror on their aspects,--they sink, they shrivel, they dissolve!

CHAPTER V.

The wreck cast back from Charybdis.

/Souviens-toi de to Gabrielle/.

Guy Darrell turned hurriedly from the large house in the great square, and, more and more absorbed in revery, he wandered out of his direct way

homeward, clear and broad though it was, and did not rouse himself till he felt, as it were, that the air had grown darker; and looking vaguely round, he saw that he had strayed into a dim maze of lanes and passages. He paused under one of the rare lamp-posts, gathering up his recollections of the London he had so long quitted, and doubtful for a moment or two which turn to take. Just then, up from an alley fronting him at right angles, came suddenly, warily, a tall, sinewy, ill-boding tatterdemalion figure, and, seeing Darrell's face under the lamp, halted abrupt at the mouth of the narrow passage from which it had emerged, --a dark form filling up the dark aperture. Does that ragged wayfarer recognize a foe by the imperfect ray of the lamplight? or is he a mere vulgar footpad, who is doubting whether he should spring upon a prey? Hostile his look, his gestures, the sudden cowering down of the strong frame as if for a bound; but still he is irresolute. What awes him? What awes the tiger, who would obey his blood-instinct without fear, in his rush on the Negro, the Hindoo; but who halts and hesitates at the sight of the white man, the lordly son of Europe? Darrell's eye was turned towards the dark passage, towards the dark figure,--carelessly, neither recognizing nor fearing nor defying,--carelessly, as at any harmless object in crowded streets and at broad day. But while that eye was on him, the tatterdemalion halted; and indeed, whatever his hostility, or whatever his daring, the sight of Darrell took him by so sudden a surprise that he could not at once re-collect his thoughts, and determine how to approach the quiet unconscious man, who, in reach of his spring, fronted his overwhelming physical strength with the habitual air of dignified command. His first impulse was that of violence; his second impulse curbed the first. But Darrell now turns quickly, and walks straight on; the figure quits the mouth of the passage, and follows with a long and noiseless stride. It has nearly gained Darrell. With what intent? A fierce one, perhaps,--for the man's face is sinister, and his state evidently desperate,--when there emerges unexpectedly from an ugly looking court or cul-de-sac, just between Darrell and his pursuer, a slim, long-backed, buttoned-up, weazel-faced policeman. The policeman eyes the tatterdemalion instinctively, then turns his glance towards the solitary defenceless gentleman in advance, and walks on, keeping himself between the two. The tatterdemalion stifles an impatient curse. Be his purpose force, be it only supplication, be it colloquy of any kind, impossible to fulfil it while that policeman is there. True that in his powerful hands he could have clutched that slim, long-backed officer, and broken him in two as a willow-wand. But that officer is the Personation of Law, and can stalk through a legion of tatterdemalions as a ferret may glide through a barn full of rats. The prowler feels he is suspected. Unknown as yet to the London police, he has no desire to invite their scrutiny. He crosses the way; he falls back; he follows from afar. The policeman may yet turn away before the safer streets of the metropolis be gained. No; the cursed Incarnation of Law, with eyes in its slim back, continues its slow strides at the heels of the unsuspecting Darrell. The more solitary defiles are already passed,--now that dim lane, with its dead wall on one side. By the dead wall skulks the prowler; on the other side still walks the Law. Now--alas for the prowler!--shine out the thoroughfares, no longer dim nor deserted,--Leicester Square, the Haymarket, Pall Mall, Carlton Gardens; Darrell is at his door. The policeman turns sharply round. There, at the corner near the learned

Club-house, halts the tatterdemalion. Towards the tatterdemalion the policeman now advances quickly. The tatterdemalion is quicker still; fled like a guilty thought.

Back, back, back into that maze of passages and courts, back to the mouth of that black alley. There he halts again. Look at him. He has arrived in London but that very night, after an absence of more than four years. He has arrived from the sea-side on foot; see, his shoes are worn into holes. He has not yet found a shelter for the night. He has been directed towards that quarter, thronged with adventurers, native and foreign, for a shelter, safe, if squalid. It is somewhere near that court at the mouth of which he stands. He looks round: the policeman is baffled; the coast clear. He steals forth, and pauses under the same gaslight as that under which Guy Darrell had paused before,--under the same gaslight, under the same stars. From some recess in his rags he draws forth a large, distained, distended pocket-book,--last relic of sprucer days,--leather of dainty morocco, once elaborately tooled, patent springs, fairy lock, fit receptacle for bank-notes, /billets-doux/, memoranda of debts of honour, or pleasurable engagements. Now how worn, tarnished, greasy, rascallion-like, the costly bauble! Filled with what motley, unlovable contents: stale pawn-tickets of foreign /monts de piete/, pledges never henceforth to be redeemed; scrawls by villanous hands in thievish hieroglyphics; ugly implements replacing the malachite penknife, the golden toothpick, the jewelled pencil-case, once so neatly set within their satin lappets. Ugly implements, indeed,--a file, a gimlet, loaded dice. Pell-mell, with such more hideous and recent contents, dishonoured evidences of gaudier summer life,--locks of ladies' hair, love-notes treasured mechanically, not from amorous sentiment, but perhaps from some vague idea that they might be of use if those who gave the locks or wrote the notes should be raised in fortune, and could buy back the memorials of shame. Diving amidst these miscellaneous documents and treasures, the prowler's hand rested on some old letters, in clerk-like fair calligraphy, tied round with a dirty string, and on them, in another and fresher writing, a scrap that contained an address,--"Samuel Adolphus Poole, Esq., Alhambra Villa, Regent's Park." "To-morrow, Nix my Dolly; to-morrow," muttered the tatterdemalion; "but to-night,--plague on it, where is the other blackguard's direction? Ah, here!" And he extracted from the thievish scrawls a peculiarly thievish-looking hieroglyph. Now, as he lifts it up to read by the gaslight, survey him well. Do you not know him? Is it possible? What! the brilliant sharper! The ruffian exquisite! Jasper Losely! Can it be? Once before, in the fields of Fawley, we beheld him out at elbows, seedy, shabby, ragged. But then it was the decay of a foppish spendthrift,--clothes distained, ill-assorted, yet, still of fine cloth; shoes in holes, yet still pearl-coloured brodequins. But now it is the decay of no foppish spendthrift: the rags are not of fine cloth; the tattered shoes are not the brodequins. The man has fallen far below the politer grades of knavery, in which the sharper affects the beau. And the countenance, as we last saw it, if it had lost much of its earlier beauty, was still incontestably handsome. What with vigour and health and animal spirits, then on the aspect still lingered light; now from corruption the light itself was gone. In that herculean constitution excess of all kinds had at length forced its ravage, and the ravage was

visible in the ruined face. The once sparkling eye was dull and bloodshot. The colours of the cheek, once clear and vivid, to which fiery drink had only sent the blood in a warmer glow, were now of a leaden dulness, relieved but by broken streaks of angry red, like gleams of flame struggling through gathered smoke. The profile, once sharp and delicate like Apollo's, was now confused in its swollen outline; a few years more, and it would be gross as that of Silenus,--the nostrils, distended with incipient carbuncles, which betray the gnawing fang that alcohol fastens into the liver. Evil passions had destroyed the outlines of the once beautiful lips, arched as a Cupid's bow. The sidelong, lowering, villanous expression which had formerly been but occasional was now habitual and heightened. It was the look of the bison before it gores. It is true, however, that even yet on the countenance there lingered the trace of that lavish favour bestowed on it by nature. An artist would still have said, "How handsome that ragamuffin must have been!" And true is it, also, that there was yet that about the bearing of the man which contrasted his squalor, and seemed to say that he had not been born to wear rags and loiter at midnight amongst the haunts of thieves. Nay, I am not sure that you would have been as incredulous now, if told that the wild outlaw before you had some claim by birth or by nurture to the rank of gentleman, as you would had you seen the gay spendthrift in his gaudy day. For then he seemed below, and now he seemed above, the grade in which he took place. And all this made his aspect yet more sinister, and the impression that he was dangerous yet more profound. Muscular strength often remains to a powerful frame long after the constitution is undermined, and Jasper Losely's frame was still that of a formidable athlete; nay, its strength was yet more apparent now that the shoulders and limbs had increased in bulk than when it was half-disguised in the lissome symmetry of exquisite proportion,--less active, less supple, less capable of endurance, but with more crushing weight in its rush or its blow. It was the figure in which brute force seems so to predominate that in a savage state it would have worn a crown,--the figure which secures command and authority in all societies where force alone gives the law. Thus, under the gaslight and under the stars, stood the terrible animal,--a strong man imbruted; SOUVIENS-TOI DE TA GABRIELLE." There, still uneffaced, though the gold threads are all tarnished and ragged, are the ominous words on the silk of the she-devil's love-token! But Jasper has now inspected the direction on the paper he held to the lamp-light, and, satisfying himself that he was in the right quarter, restored the paper to the bulky distended pocket-book and walked sullenly on towards the court from which had emerged the policeman who had crossed his prowling chase.

"It is the most infernal shame," said Losely between his grinded teeth, "that I should be driven to these wretched dens for a lodging, while that man, who ought to feel bound to maintain me, should be rolling in wealth, and cottoned up in a palace. But he shall fork out. Sophy must be hunted up. I will clothe her in rags like these. She shall sit at his street-door. I will shame the miserly hunks. But how track the girl? Have I no other hold over him? Can I send Dolly Poole to him? How addled my brains are!--want of food, want of sleep. Is this the place? Peuh!--"

Thus murmuring, he now reached the arch of the court, and was swallowed up in its gloom. A few strides and he came into a square open space only lighted by the skies. A house, larger than the rest, which were of the meanest order, stood somewhat back, occupying nearly one side of the quadrangle,--old, dingy, dilapidated. At the door of this house stood another man, applying his latch-key to the lock. As Losely approached, the man turned quickly, half in fear, half in menace,--a small, very thin, impish-looking man, with peculiarly restless features that seemed trying to run away from his face. Thin as he was, he looked all skin and no bones, a goblin of a man whom it would not astonish you to hear could creep through a keyhole, seeming still more shadowy and impalpable by his slight, thin, sable dress, not of cloth, but a sort of stuff like alpaca. Nor was that dress ragged, nor, as seen but in starlight, did it look worn or shabby; still you had but to glance at the creature to feel that it was a child in the same Family of Night as the ragged felon that towered by its side. The two outlaws stared at each other. "Cutts!" said Losely, in the old rollicking voice, but in a hoarser, rougher key, "Cutts, my boy, here I am; welcome me!

"What? General Jas.!" returned Cutts, in a tone which was not without a certain respectful awe, and then proceeded to pour out a series of questions in a mysterious language, which may be thus translated and abridged: "How long have you been in England? How has it fared with you? You seem very badly off; coming here to hide? Nothing very bad, I hope? What is it?"

Jasper answered in the same language, though with less practised mastery of it, and with that constitutional levity which, whatever the time or circumstances, occasionally gave a strange sort of wit, or queer, uncanny, devil-me-care vein of drollery, to his modes of expression.

"Three months of the worst luck man ever had; a row with the gens-d'armes,--long story: three of our pals seized; affair of the galleys for them, I suspect (French frogs can't seize me!); fricasseed one or two of them; broke away, crossed the country, reached the coast; found an honest smuggler; landed off Sussex with a few other kegs of brandy; remembered you, preserved the address you gave me, and condescend to this rat-hole for a night or so. Let me in; knock up somebody, break open the larder. I want to eat, I am famished; I should have eaten you by this time, only there's nothing on your bones."

The little man opened the door,--a passage black as Erebus. "Give me your hand, General." Jasper was led through the pitchy gloom for a few yards; then the guide found a gas-cock, and the place broke suddenly into light: a dirty narrow staircase on one side; facing it a sort of lobby, in which an open door showed a long sanded parlour, like that in public houses; several tables, benches, the walls whitewashed, but adorned with sundry ingenious designs made by charcoal or the smoked ends of clay-pipes; a strong smell of stale tobacco and of gin and rum. Another gaslight, swinging from the centre of the ceiling, sprang into light as Cutts touched the tap-cock.

"Wait here," said the guide. "I will go and get you some supper."

"And some brandy," said Jasper.

"Of course."

The bravo threw himself at length on one of the tables, and, closing his eyes, moaned. His vast strength had become acquainted with physical pain. In its stout knots and fibres, aches and sharp twinges, the dragon-teeth of which had been sown years ago in revels or brawls, which then seemed to bring but innocuous joy and easy triumph, now began to gnaw and grind. But when Cutts reappeared with coarse viands and the brandy bottle, Jasper shook off the sense of pain, as does a wounded wild beast that can still devour; and after regaling fast and ravenously, he emptied half the bottle at a draught, and felt himself restored and fresh.

"Shall you fling yourself amongst the swell fellows who hold their club here, General?" asked Cutts; "'tis a bad trade; every year it gets worse. Or have you not some higher game in your eye?"

"I have higher game in my eye. One bird I marked down this very night. But that may be slow work, and uncertain. I have in this pocket-book a bank to draw upon meanwhile."

"How? forged French /billets de banque/? dangerous."

"Pooh! better than that,--letters which prove theft against a respectable rich man."

"Ah, you expect hush-money?"

"Exactly so. I have good friends in London."

"Among them, I suppose, that affectionate 'adopted mother,' who would have kept you in such order."

"Thousand thunders! I hope not. I am not a superstitious man, but I fear that woman as if she were a witch, and I believe she is one. You remember black Jean, whom we call Sansculotte. He would have filled a churchyard with his own brats for a five-franc piece; but he would not have crossed a churchyard alone at night for a thousand naps. Well, that woman to me is what a churchyard was to black Jean. No: if she is in London, I have but to go to her house and say, 'Food, shelter, money;' and I would rather ask Jack Ketch for a rope."

"How do you account for it, General? She does not beat you; she is not your wife. I have seen many a stout fellow, who would stand fire without blinking, show the white feather at a scold's tongue. But then he must be spliced to her--"

"Cutts, that Griffin does not scold: she preaches. She wants to make me spoony, Cutts: she talks of my young days, Cutts; she wants to blight me into what she calls an honest man, Cutts,--the virtuous dodge! She snubs

and crows me, and frightens me out of my wits, Cutts; for I do believe that the witch is determined to have me, body and soul, and to marry me some day in spite of myself, Cutts; and if ever you see me about to be clutched in those horrible paws, poison me with ratsbane, or knock me on the head, Cutts."

The little man laughed a little laugh, sharp and eldritch, at the strange cowardice of the stalwart dare-devil. But Jasper did not echo the laugh.

"Hush!" he said timidly, "and let me have a bed, if you can; I have not slept in one for a week, and my nerves are shaky."

The imp lighted a candle-end at the gas-lamp, and conducted Losely up the stairs to his own sleeping-room, which was less comfortable than might be supposed. He resigned his bed to the wanderer, who flung himself on it, rags and all. But sleep was no more at his command than it is at a king's.

"Why the ---- did you talk of that witch?" he cried peevishly to Cutts, who was composing himself to rest on the floor. "I swear I fancy I feel her sitting on my chest like a nightmare."

He turned with a vehemence which shook the walls, and wrapped the coverlet round him, plunging his head into its folds. Strange though it seem to the novice in human nature, to Jasper Losely the woman who had so long lived but for one object--namely, to save him from the gibbet--was as his evil genius, his haunting fiend. He had conceived a profound terror of her from the moment he perceived that she was resolutely bent upon making him honest. He had broken from her years ago, fled, resumed his evil courses, hid himself from her,--in vain. Wherever he went, there went she. He might baffle the police, not her. Hunger had often forced him to accept her aid. As soon as he received it, he hid from her again, burying himself deeper and deeper in the mud, like a persecuted tench. He associated her idea with all the ill-luck that had befallen him. Several times some villainous scheme on which he had counted to make his fortune had been baffled in the most mysterious way; and just when baffled, and there seemed no choice but to cut his own throat or some one else's, up turned grim Arabella Crane, in the iron-gray gown, and with the iron-gray ringlets,--hatefully, awfully beneficent,--offering food, shelter, gold,--and some demoniacal, honourable work. Often had he been in imminent peril from watchful law or treacherous accomplice. She had warned and saved him, as she had saved him from the fell Gabrielle Desmarets, who, unable to bear the sentence of penal servitude, after a long process, defended with astonishing skill and enlisting the romantic sympathies of young France, had contrived to escape into another world by means of a subtle poison concealed about her /distinguee/ person, and which she had prepared years ago with her own bloodless hands, and no doubt scientifically tested its effects on others. The cobra di capella is gone at last! "/Souviens-toi de ta Gabrielle/," O Jasper Losely! But why Arabella Crane should thus continue to watch over him whom she no longer professed to love, how she should thus have acquired the gift of ubiquity and the power to save him, Jasper Losely could not conjecture. The whole thing seemed to him weird and supernatural. Most truly did he

say that she had cowed him. He had often longed to strangle her; when absent from her, had often resolved upon that act of gratitude. The moment he came in sight of her stern, haggard face, her piercing lurid eyes; the moment he heard her slow, dry voice in some such sentences as these: "Again you come to me in your trouble, and ever shall. Am I not still as your mother, but with a wife's fidelity, till death us do part? There's the portrait of what you were: look at it, Jasper. Now turn to the glass: see what you are. Think of the fate of Gabrielle Desmarests! But for me, what, long since, had been your own? But I will save you: I have sworn it. You shall be wax in these hands at last,"--the moment that voice thus claimed and insisted on redeeming him, the ruffian felt a cold shudder, his courage oozed, he could no more have nerved his arm against her than a Thug would have lifted his against the dire goddess of his murderous superstition. Jasper could not resist a belief that the life of this dreadful protectress was, somehow or other, made essential to his; that, were she to die, he should perish in some ghastly and preternatural expiation. But for the last few months he had, at length, escaped from her; diving so low, so deep into the mud, that even her net could not mesh him. Hence, perhaps, the imminence of the perils from which he had so narrowly escaped, hence the utterness of his present destitution. But man, however vile, whatever his peril, whatever his destitution, was born free, and loves liberty. Liberty to go to Satan in his own way was to Jasper Losely a supreme blessing compared to that benignant compassionate espionage, with its relentless eye and restraining hand. Alas and alas! deem not this perversity unnatural in that headstrong self-destroyer! How many are there whom not a grim, hard-featured Arabella Crane, but the long-suffering, divine, omniscient, gentle Providence itself, seeks to warn, to aid, to save; and is shunned, and loathed, and fled from, as if it were an evil genius! How many are there who fear nothing so much as the being made good in spite of themselves?--how many? who can count them?

CHAPTER VI.

The public man needs but one patron; namely, THE LUCKY MOMENT.

"At his house in Carlton Gardens, Guy Darrell, Esq., for the season."

Simple insertion in the pompous list of Fashionable Arrivals! the name of a plain commoner embedded in the amber which glitters with so many coronets and stars! Yet such is England, with all its veneration for titles, that the eyes of the public passed indifferently over the rest of that chronicle of illustrious "whereabouts," to rest with interest, curiosity, speculation, on the unemblazoned name which but a day before had seemed slipped out of date,--obsolete as that of an actor who figures no more in play-bills. Unquestionably the sensation excited was due, in much, to the "ambiguous voices" which Colonel Morley had disseminated throughout the genial atmosphere of club-rooms. "Arrived in London for the season!"--he, the orator, once so famous, long so forgotten, who had been out of the London world for the space of more than half a

generation. "Why now? why for the season?" Quoth the Colonel, "He is still in the prime of life as a public man, and--a CRISIS is at hand!"

But that which gave weight and significance to Alban Morley's hints was the report in the newspapers of Guy Darrell's visit to his old constituents, and of the short speech he had addressed to them, to which he had so slightly referred in his conversation with Alban. True, the speech was short: true, it touched but little on passing topics of political interest; rather alluding, with modesty and terseness, to the contests and victories of a former day. But still, in the few words there was the swell of the old clarion, the wind of the Paladin's horn which woke Fontarabian echoes.

It is astonishing how capricious, how sudden, are the changes in value of a public man. All depends upon whether the public want, or believe they want, the man; and that is a question upon which the public do not know their own minds a week before; nor do they always keep in the same mind, when made up, for a week together. If they do not want a man; if he do not hit the taste, nor respond to the exigency of the time,--whatever his eloquence, his abilities, his virtues, they push him aside or cry him down. Is he wanted? does the mirror of the moment reflect his image?--that mirror is an intense magnifier--his proportions swell; they become gigantic. At that moment the public wanted some man; and the instant the hint was given, "Why not Guy Darrell?" Guy Darrell was seized upon as the man wanted. It was one of those times in our Parliamentary history when the public are out of temper with all parties; when recognized leaders have contrived to damage themselves; when a Cabinet is shaking, and the public neither care to destroy nor to keep it,--a time too, when the country seemed in some danger, and when, mere men of business held unequal to the emergency, whatever name suggested associations of vigour, eloquence, genius rose to a premium above its market price in times of tranquillity and tape. Without effort of his own, by the mere force of the undercurrent, Guy Darrell was thrown up from oblivion into note. He could not form a Cabinet, certainly not; but he might help to bring a Cabinet together, reconcile jarring elements, adjust disputed questions, take in such government some high place, influence its councils, and delight a public weary of the oratory of the day with the eloquence of a former race. For the public is ever a */laudator temporis acti/*, and whatever the authors or the orators immediately before it, were those authors and orators Homers and Ciceros, would still shake a disparaging head, and talk of these degenerate days as Homer himself talked ages before Leonidas stood in the pass of Thermopylae, or Miltiades routed Asian armaments at Marathon. Guy Darrell belonged to a former race. The fathers of those young members rising now into fame had quoted to their sons his pithy sentences, his vivid images; and added, as Fox added when quoting Burke, "But you should have heard and seen the man!"

Heard and seen the man! But there he was again! come up as from a grave,--come up to the public just when such a man was wanted. Wanted how? wanted where? Oh, somehow and somewhere! There he is! make the most of him. The house in Carlton Gardens is prepared, the establishment mounted. Thither flock all the Viponts, nor they alone; all the chiefs of all parties, nor they alone; all the notabilities of our grand

metropolis. Guy Darrell might be startled at his own position; but he comprehended its nature, and it did not discompose his nerves. He knew public life well enough to be aware how much the popular favour is the creature of an accident. By chance he had nicked the time; had he thus come to town the season before, he might have continued obscure, a man like Guy Darrell not being wanted then. Whether with or without design, his bearing confirmed and extended the effect produced by his reappearance. Gracious, but modestly reserved, he spoke little, listened beautifully. Many of the questions which agitated all around him had grown up into importance since his day of action; nor in his retirement had he traced their progressive development, with their changeful effects upon men and parties. But a man who has once gone deeply into practical politics might sleep in the Cave of Trophonius for twenty years, and find, on waking, very little to learn. Darrell regained the level of the day, and seized upon all the strong points on which men were divided, with the rapidity of a prompt and comprehensive intellect, his judgment perhaps the clearer from the freshness of long repose and the composure of dispassionate survey. When partisans wrangled as to what should have been done, Darrell was silent; when they asked what should be done, out came one of his terse sentences, and a knot was cut. Meanwhile it is true this man, round whom expectations grouped and rumour buzzed, was in neither House of Parliament; but that was rather a delay to his energies than a detriment to his consequence.

Important constituencies, anticipating a vacancy, were already on the look-out for him; a smaller constituency, in the interim, Carr Vipont undertook to procure him any day. There was always a Vipont ready to accept something, even the Chiltern Hundreds. But Darrell, not without reason, demurred at re-entering the House of Commons after an absence of seventeen years. He had left it with one of those rare reputations which no wise man likes rashly to imperil. The Viponts sighed. He would certainly be more useful in the Commons than the Lords, but still in the Lords he would be of great use. They would want a debating lord, perhaps a lord acquainted with law in the coming CRISIS,--if he preferred the peerage? Darrell demurred still. The man's modesty was insufferable; his style of speaking might not suit that august assembly: and as to law, he could never now be a law lord; he should be but a *ci-devant* advocate, affecting the part of a judicial amateur.

In short, without declining to re-enter public life, seeming, on the contrary, to resume all his interest in it, Darrell contrived with admirable dexterity to elude for the present all overtures pressed upon him, and even to convince his admirers, not only of his wisdom, but of his patriotism in that reticence. For certainly he thus managed to exercise a very considerable influence: his advice was more sought, his suggestions more heeded, and his power in reconciling certain rival jealousies was perhaps greater than would have been the case if he had actually entered either House of Parliament, and thrown himself exclusively into the ranks, not only of one party, but of one section of a party. Nevertheless, such suspense could not last very long; he must decide at all events before the next session. Once he was seen in the arena of his old triumphs, on the benches devoted to strangers distinguished by the Speaker's order. There, recognized by the older

members, eagerly gazed at by the younger, Guy Darrell listened calmly, throughout a long field-night, to voices that must have roused from forgotten graves kindling and glorious memories; voices of those veterans now--by whose side he had once struggled for some cause which he had then, in the necessary exaggeration of all honest enthusiasm, identified with a nation's life-blood. Voices, too of the old antagonists over whose routed arguments he had marched triumphant amidst applauses that the next day rang again through England from side to side. Hark! the very man with whom, in the old battle-days, he had been the most habitually pitted, is speaking now! His tones are embarrassed, his argument confused. Does he know who listens yonder? Old members think so,--smile; whisper each other, and glance significantly where Darrell sits.

Sits, as became him, tranquil, respectful, intent, seemingly, perhaps really, unconscious of the sensation he excites. What an eye for an orator! how like the eye in a portrait; it seems to fix on each other eye that seeks it,--steady, fascinating. Yon distant members, behind the Speaker's chair, at the far distance, feel the light of that eye travel towards them. How lofty and massive, among all those rows of human heads, seems that forehead, bending slightly down, with the dark strong line of the weighty eyebrow! But what is passing within that secret mind? Is there mournfulness in the retrospect? Is there eagerness to renew the strife? Is that interest in the hour's debate feigned or real? Impossible for him who gazed upon that face to say. And that eye would have seemed to the gazer to read himself through and through to the heart's core, long ere the gazer could hazard a single guess as to the thoughts beneath that marble forehead,--as to the emotions within the heart over which, in old senatorial fashion, the arms were folded with so conventional an ease.

CHAPTER VII.

Darrell and Lionel.

Darrell had received Lionel with some evident embarrassment, which soon yielded to affectionate warmth. He took to the young man whose fortunes he had so improved; he felt that with the improved fortunes the young man's whole being was improved: assured position, early commune with the best social circles, in which the equality of fashion smooths away all disparities in rank, had softened in Lionel much of the wayward and morbid irritability of his boyish pride; but the high spirit, the generous love of independence, the scorn of mercenary calculation, were strong as ever; these were in the grain of his nature. In common with all who in youth aspire to be one day noted from the "undistinguishable many," Lionel had formed to himself a certain ideal standard, above the ordinary level of what the world is contented to call honest, or esteem clever. He admitted into his estimate of life the heroic element, not undesirable even in the most practical point of view, for the world is so in the habit of decrying; of disbelieving in high motives and pure

emotions; of daguerreotyping itself with all its ugliest wrinkles, stripped of the true bloom that brightens, of the true expression that redeems, those defects which it invites the sun to limn, that we shall never judge human nature aright, if we do not set out in life with our gaze on its fairest beauties, and our belief in its latent good. In a word we should begin with the Heroic, if we would learn the Human. But though to himself Lionel thus secretly prescribed a certain superiority of type, to be sedulously aimed at, even if never actually attained, he was wholly without pedantry and arrogance towards his own contemporaries. From this he was saved not only by good-nature, animal spirits, frank hardihood, but by the very affluence of ideas which animated his tongue, coloured his language, and whether to young or old, wise or dull, made his conversation racy and original. He was a delightful companion; and if he had taken much instruction from those older and wiser than himself, he so bathed that instruction in the fresh fountain of his own lively intelligence, so warmed it at his own beating impulsive heart, that he could make an old man's gleanings from experience seem a young man's guesses into truth. Faults he had, of course,--chiefly the faults common at his age; amongst them, perhaps, the most dangerous were,--firstly, carelessness in money matters; secondly, a distaste for advice in which prudence was visibly predominant. His tastes were not in reality extravagant: but money slipped through his hands, leaving little to show for it; and when his quarterly allowance became due, ample though it was,--too ample, perhaps,--debts wholly forgotten started up to seize hold of it. And debts as yet being manageable were not regarded with sufficient horror. Paid or put aside, as the case might be, they were merely looked upon as bores. Youth is in danger till it learn to look upon them as furies. For advice, he took it with pleasure, when clothed with elegance and art, when it addressed ambition, when it exalted the loftier virtues. But advice, practical and prosy, went in at one ear and out at the other. In fact, with many talents, he had yet no adequate ballast of common-sense; and if ever he get enough to steady his bark through life's trying voyage, the necessity of so much dull weight must be forcibly stricken home less to his reason than his imagination or his heart. But if, somehow or other, he get it not, I will not insure his vessel.

I know not if Lionel Haughton had genius; he never assumed that he had: but he had something more like genius than that prototype, RESOLVE, of which he boasted to the artist. He had YOUTH,--real youth,--youth of mind, youth of heart, youth of soul. Lithe and supple as he moved before you, with the eye to which light or dew sprang at once from a nature vibrating to every lofty, every tender thought, he seemed more than young,--the incarnation of youth.

Darrell took to him at once. Amidst all the engagements crowded on the important man, he contrived to see Lionel daily. And what may seem strange, Guy Darrell felt more at home with Lionel Haughton than with any of his own contemporaries,--than even with Alban Morley. To the last, indeed, he opened speech with less reserve of certain portions of the past, or of certain projects in the future. But still, even there, he adopted a tone of half-playful, half-mournful satire, which might be in itself disguise. Alban Morley, with all his good qualities, was a man of

the world; as a man of the world, Guy Darrell talked to him. But it was only a very small part of Guy Darrell the Man, of which the world could say "mine."

To Lionel he let out, as if involuntarily, the more amiable, tender, poetic attributes of his varying, complex, uncomprehended character; not professedly confiding, but not taking pains to conceal. Hearing what worldlings would call "Sentiment" in Lionel, he seemed to glide softly down to Lionel's own years and talk "sentiment" in return. After all, this skilled lawyer, this noted politician, had a great dash of the boy still in him. Reader, did you ever meet a really clever man who had not?

CHAPTER VIII.

Saith a very homely proverb (pardon its vulgarity), "You cannot make a silk purse out of a sow's ear." But a sow's ear is a much finer work of art than a silk purse; and grand, indeed, the mechanician who could make a sow's ear out of a silk purse, or conjure into creatures of flesh and blood the sarcenet and /tulle/ of a London drawing-room.

"Mamma," asked Honoria Carr Vipont, "what sort of a person was Mrs. Darrell?"

"She was not in our set, my dear," answered Lady Selina. "The Vipont Crookes are just one of those connections with which, though of course one is civil to all connections, one is more or less intimate according as they take after the Viponts or after the Crookes. Poor woman! she died just before Mr. Darrell entered Parliament and appeared in society. But I should say she was not an agreeable person. Not nice," added Lady Selina, after a pause, and conveying a world of meaning in that conventional monosyllable.

"I suppose she was very accomplished, very clever?"

"Quite the reverse, my dear. Mr. Darrell was exceedingly young when he married, scarcely of age. She was not the sort of woman to suit him."

"But at least she must have been very much attached to him, very proud of him?"

Lady Selina glanced aside from her work, and observed her daughter's face, which evinced an animation not usual to a young lady of a breeding so lofty, and a mind so well disciplined.

"I don't think," said Lady Selina, "that she was proud of him. She would have been proud of his station, or rather of that to which his fame and fortune would have raised her, had she lived to enjoy it. But for a few years after her marriage they were very poor; and though his rise at the bar was sudden and brilliant, he was long wholly absorbed in his

profession, and lived in Bloomsbury. Mrs. Darrell was not proud of that. The Crookes are generally fine, give themselves airs, marry into great houses if they can: but we can't naturalize them; they always remain Crookes,--useful connections, very! Carr says we have not a more useful,--but third-rate, my dear. All the Crookes are bad wives, because they are never satisfied with their own homes, but are always trying to get into great people's homes. Not very long before she died, Mrs. Darrell took her friend and relation, Mrs. Lyndsay, to live with her. I suspect it was not from affection, or any great consideration for Mrs. Lyndsay's circumstances (which were indeed those of actual destitution, till--thanks to Mr. Darrell--she won her lawsuit), but simply because she looked to Mrs. Lyndsay to get her into our set. Mrs. Lyndsay was a great favourite with all of us, charming manners,--perfectly correct, too,--thorough Vipont, thorough gentlewoman, but artful! Oh, so artful! She humoured poor Mrs. Darrell's absurd vanity; but she took care not to injure herself. Of course, Darrell's wife, and a Vipont--though only a Vipont Crooke--had free passport into the outskirts of good society, the great parties, and so forth. But there it stopped; even I should have been compromised if I had admitted into our set a woman who was bent on compromising herself. Handsome, in a bad style, not the Vipont /tournure/; and not only silly and flirting, but (we are alone, keep the secret) decidedly vulgar, my dear."

"You amaze me! How such a man--" Honoria stopped, colouring up to the temples.

"Clever men," said Lady Selina, "as a general rule, do choose the oddest wives! The cleverer a man is, the more easily, I do believe, a woman can take him in. However, to do Mr. Darrell justice, he has been taken in only once. After Mrs. Darrell's death, Mrs. Lyndsay, I suspect, tried her chance, but failed. Of course, she would not actually stay in the same house with a widower who was then young, and who had only to get rid of a wife to whom one was forced to be shy in order to be received into our set with open arms, and, in short, to be of the very best monde. Mr. Darrell came into Parliament immensely rich (a legacy from an old East Indian, besides his own professional savings); took the house he has now, close by us. Mrs. Lyndsay was obliged to retire to a cottage at Fulham. But as she professed to be a second mother to poor Matilda Darrell, she contrived to be very much at Carlton Gardens; her daughter Caroline was nearly always there, profiting by Matilda's masters; and I did think that Mrs. Lyndsay would have caught Darrell, but your papa said 'No,' and he was right, as he always is. Nevertheless, Mrs. Lyndsay would have been an excellent wife to a public man: so popular; knew the world so well; never made enemies till she made an enemy of poor dear Montfort, but that was natural. By the by, I must write to Caroline. Sweet creature! but how absurd, shutting herself up as if she were fretting for Montfort! That's so like her mother,--heartless, but full of propriety."

Here Carr Vipont and Colonel Morley entered the room. "We have just left Darrell," said Carr; "he will dine here to-day, to meet our cousin Alban. I have asked his cousin, young Haughton, and--and, your cousins, Selina (a small party of cousins); so lucky to find Darrell disengaged."

"I ventured to promise," said the Colonel, addressing Honoria in an under voice, "that Darrell should hear you play Beethoven."

HONORIA.--"Is Mr. Darrell so fond of music, then?"

COLONEL MORLEY.--"One would not have thought it. He keeps a secretary at Fawley who plays the flute. There's something very interesting about Darrell. I wish you could hear his ideas on marriage and domestic life: more freshness of heart than in the young men one meets nowadays. It may be prejudice; but it seems to me that the young fellows of the present race, if more sober and staid than we were, are sadly wanting in character and spirit,--no warm blood in their veins. But I should not talk thus to a demoiselle who has all those young fellows at her feet."

"Oh," said Lady Selina, overhearing, and with a half laugh, "Honorina thinks much as you do: she finds the young men so insipid; all like one another,--the same set phrases."

"The same stereotyped ideas," added Honoria, moving away with a gesture of calm disdain.

"A very superior mind hers," whispered the Colonel to Carr Vipont.
"She'll never marry a fool."

Guy Darrell was very pleasant at "the small family dinnerparty." Carr was always popular in his manners; the true old House of Commons manner, which was very like that of a gentleman-like public school. Lady Selina, as has been said before, in her own family circle was natural and genial. Young Carr, there, without his wife, more pretentious than his father,--being a Lord of the Admiralty,--felt a certain awe of Darrell, and spoke little, which was much to his own credit and to the general conviviality. The other members of the symposium, besides Lady Selina, Honoria, and a younger sister, were but Darrell, Lionel, and Lady Selina's two cousins; elderly peers,--one with the garter, the other in the Cabinet,--jovial men who had been wild fellows once in the same mess-room, and still joked at each other whenever they met as they met now. Lionel, who remembered Vance's description of Lady Selina, and who had since heard her spoken of in society as a female despot who carried to perfection the arts by which despots flourish, with majesty to impose, and caresses to deceive--an Aurungzebe in petticoats--was sadly at a loss to reconcile such portraiture with the good-humoured, motherly woman who talked to him of her home, her husband, her children, with open fondness and becoming pride, and who, far from being so formidably clever as the world cruelly gave out, seemed to Lionel rather below par in her understanding; strike from her talk its kindness, and the residue was very like twaddle. After dinner, various members of the Vipont family dropped in,--asked impromptu by Carr or by Lady Selina, in hasty three-cornered notes, to take that occasion of renewing their acquaintance with their distinguished connection. By some accident, amongst those invited there were but few young single ladies; and, by some other accident, those few were all plain. Honoria Vipont was unequivocally the belle of the room. It could not but be observed that Darrell seemed struck with her,--talked with her more than with any other lady; and when she went to the piano,

and played that great air of Beethoven's, in which music seems to have got into a knot that only fingers the most artful can unravel, Darrell remained in his seat aloof and alone, listening no doubt with ravished attention. But just as the air ended, and Honoria turned round to look for him, he was gone.

Lionel did not linger long after him. The gay young man went thence to one of those vast crowds which seemed convened for a practical parody of Mr. Bentham's famous proposition,--contriving the smallest happiness for the greatest number.

It was a very good house, belonging to a very great person. Colonel Morley had procured an invitation for Lionel, and said, "Go; you should be seen there." Colonel Morley had passed the age of growing into society: no such cares for the morrow could add a cubit to his conventional stature. One amongst a group of other young men by the doorway, Lionel beheld Darrell, who had arrived before him, listening to a very handsome young lady, with an attention quite as earnest as that which had gratified the superior mind of the well-educated Honoria,--a very handsome young lady certainly, but not with a superior mind, nor supposed hitherto to have found young gentlemen "insipid." Doubtless she would henceforth do so. A few minutes after Darrell was listening again; this time to another young lady, generally called "fast." If his attentions to her were not marked, hers to him were. She rattled on to him volubly, laughed, pretty hoyden, at her own sallies, and seemed at last so to fascinate him by her gay spirits that he sat down by her side; and the playful smile on his lips--lips that had learned to be so gravely firm--showed that he could enter still into the mirth of childhood; for surely to the time-worn man the fast young lady must have seemed but a giddy child. Lionel was amused. Could this be the austere recluse whom he had left in the shades of Fawley? Guy Darrell, at his years, with his dignified repute, the object of so many nods, and becks, and wreathed smiles,--could he descend to be that most frivolous of characters, a male coquet? Was he in earnest? Was his vanity duped? Looking again, Lionel saw in his kinsman's face a sudden return of the sad despondent expression which had moved his own young pity in the solitudes of Fawley. But in a moment the man roused himself: the sad expression was gone. Had the girl's merry laugh again chased it away? But Lionel's attention was now drawn from Darrell himself to the observations murmured round him, of which Darrell was the theme.

"Yes, he is bent on marrying again! I have it from Alban Morley: immense fortune; and so young-looking, any girl might fall in love with such eyes and forehead; besides, what a jointure he could settle! . . . Do look at that girl, Flora Vyvyan, trying to make a fool of him. She can't appreciate that kind of man, and she would not be caught by his money; does not want it. . . . I wonder she is not afraid of him. He is certainly quizzing her. . . . The men think her pretty; I don't. . . . They say he is to return to Parliament, and have a place in the Cabinet. . . . No! he has no children living: very natural he should marry again. . . . A nephew!--you are quite mistaken. Young Haughton is no nephew: a very distant connection; could not expect to be the heir It was given out, though, at Paris. The Duchess thought so,

and so did Lady Jane. They'll not be so civil to young Haughton now. .
. . Hush--"

Lionel, wishing to hear no more, glided by, and penetrated farther into the throng. And then, as he proceeded, with those last words on his ear, the consciousness came upon him that his position had undergone a change. Difficult to define it; to an ordinary bystander people would have seemed to welcome him cordially as ever. The gradations of respect in polite society are so exquisitely delicate, that it seems only by a sort of magnetism that one knows from day to day whether one has risen or declined. A man has lost high office, patronage, power, never perhaps to regain them. People don't turn their backs on him; their smiles are as gracious, their hands as flatteringly extended. But that man would be dull as a rhinoceros if he did not feel--as every one who accosts him feels--that he has descended in the ladder. So with all else. Lose even your fortune, it is not the next day in a London drawing-room that your friends look as if you were going to ask them for five pounds. Wait a year or so for that. But if they have just heard you are ruined, you will feel that they have heard it, let them bow ever so courteously, smile ever so kindly. Lionel at Paris, in the last year or so, had been more than fashionable: he had been the fashion,--courted, run after, petted, quoted, imitated. That evening he felt as an author may feel who has been the rage, and without fault of his own is so no more. The rays that had gilded him had gone back to the orb that lent. And they who were most genial still to Lionel Haughton were those who still most respected thirty-five thousand pounds a year--in Guy Darrell!

Lionel was angry with himself that he felt galled. But in his wounded pride there was no mercenary regret,--only that sort of sickness which comes to youth when the hollowness of worldly life is first made clear to it. From the faces round him there fell that glamour by which the /amour propre/ is held captive in large assemblies, where the /amour propre/ is flattered. "Magnificent, intelligent audience," thinks the applauded actor. "Delightful party," murmurs the worshipped beauty. Glamour! glamour! Let the audience yawn while the actor mouths; let the party neglect the beauty to adore another, and straightway the "magnificent audience" is an "ignorant public," and the "delightful party" a "heartless world."

CHAPTER IX.

Escaped from a London drawing-room, flesh once more tingles and blood flows.--Guy Darrell explains to Lionel Haughton why he holds it a duty to be an old fool.

Lionel Haughton glided through the disenchanting rooms, and breathed a long breath of relief when he found himself in the friendless streets.

As he walked slow and thoughtful on, he suddenly felt a hand upon his shoulder, turned, and saw Darrell.

"Give me your arm, my dear Lionel; I am tired out. What a lovely night! What sweet scorn in the eyes of those stars that we have neglected for yon flaring lights."

LIONEL.--"Is it scorn? is it pity? is it but serene indifference?"

DARRELL.--"As we ourselves interpret: if scorn be present in our own hearts, it will be seen in the disc of Jupiter. Man, egotist though he be, exacts sympathy from all the universe. Joyous, he says to the sun, 'Life-giver, rejoice with me.' Grieving, he says to the moon, 'Pensive one, thou sharest my sorrow.' Hope for fame; a star is its promise!

"Mourn for the dead; a star is the land of reunion! Say to earth, 'I have done with thee;' to Time, 'Thou hast nought to bestow;' and all space cries aloud, 'The earth is a speck, thine inheritance infinity. Time melts while thou sighest. The discontent of a mortal is the instinct that proves thee immortal.' Thus construing Nature, Nature is our companion, our consoler. Benign as the playmate, she lends herself to our shifting humours. Serious as the teacher, she responds to the steadier inquiries of reason. Mystic and hallowed as the priestess, she keeps alive by dim oracles that spiritual yearning within us, in which, from savage to sage,--through all dreams, through all creeds,--thrills the sense of a link with Divinity. Never, therefore, while conferring with Nature, is Man wholly alone, nor is she a single companion with uniform shape. Ever new, ever various, she can pass from gay to severe, from fancy to science,--quick as thought passes from the dance of a leaf, from the tint of a rainbow, to the theory of motion, the problem of light. But lose Nature, forget or dismiss her, make companions, by hundreds, of men who ignore her, and I will not say with the poet, 'This is solitude.' But in the commune, what stale monotony, what weary sameness!"

Thus Darrell continued to weave together sentence with sentence, the intermediate connection of meaning often so subtle that when put down on paper it requires effort to discern it. But it was his peculiar gift to make clear when spoken what in writing would seem obscure. Look, manner, each delicate accent in a voice wonderfully distinct in its unrivalled melody, all so aided the sense of mere words that it is scarcely extravagant to say he might have talked an unknown language, and a listener would have understood. But, understood or not, those sweet intonations it was such delight to hear that any one with nerves alive to music would have murmured, "Talk on forever." And in this gift lay one main secret of the man's strange influence over all who came familiarly into his intercourse; so that if Darrell had ever bestowed confidential intimacy on any one not by some antagonistic idiosyncrasy steeled against its charm, and that intimacy had been withdrawn, a void never to be refilled must have been left in the life thus robbed.

Stopping at his door, as Lionel, rapt by the music, had forgotten the pain of the reverie so bewitchingly broken, Darrell detained the hand held out to him, and said, "No, not yet; I have something to say to you: come in; let me say it now."

Lionel bowed his head, and in surprised conjecture followed his kinsman up the lofty stairs into the same comfortless stately room that has been already described. When the servant closed the door, Darrell sank into a chair. Fixing his eye upon Lionel with almost parental kindness, and motioning his young cousin to sit by his side, close, he thus began,

"Lionel, before I was your age I was married; I was a father. I am lonely and childless now. My life has been moulded by a solemn obligation which so few could comprehend that I scarce know a man living beside yourself to whom I would frankly confide it. Pride of family is a common infirmity,--often petulant with the poor, often insolent with the rich; but rarely, perhaps, out of that pride do men construct a positive binding duty, which at all self-sacrifice should influence the practical choice of life. As a child, before my judgment could discern how much of vain superstition may lurk in our reverence for the dead, my whole heart was engaged in a passionate dream, which my waking existence became vowed to realize. My father!--my lip quivers, my eyes moisten as I recall him, even now,--my father!--I loved him so intensely!--the love of childhood, how fearfully strong it is! All in him was so gentle, yet so sensitive, --chivalry without its armour. I was his constant companion: he spoke to me unreservedly, as a poet to his muse. I wept at his sorrows; I chafed at his humiliations. He talked of ancestors as he thought of them; to him they were beings like the old Lares,--not dead in graves, but images ever present on household hearths. Doubtless he exaggerated their worth, as their old importance. Obscure, indeed, in the annals of empire, their deeds and their power, their decline and fall. Not so thought he; they were to his eyes the moon-track in the ocean of history,--light on the waves over which they had gleamed,--all the ocean elsewhere dark! With him thought I; as my father spoke, his child believed. But what to the eyes of the world was this inheritor of a vaunted name?--a threadbare, slighted, rustic pedant; no station in the very province in which mouldered away the last lowly dwelling-place of his line,--by lineage high above most nobles, in position below most yeomen. He had learning; he had genius: but the studies to which they were devoted only served yet more to impoverish his scanty means, and led rather to ridicule than to honour. Not a day but what I saw on his soft features the smart of a fresh sting, the gnawing of a new care. Thus, as a boy, feeling in myself a strength inspired by affection, I came to him one day as he sat grieving, and kneeling to him, said, 'Father, courage yet a little while; I shall soon be a man, and I swear to devote myself as man to revive the old fading race so prized by you; to rebuild the House that, by you so loved, is loftier in my eyes than all the heraldry of kings.' And my father's face brightened, and his voice blessed me; and I rose up-ambitious!" Darrell paused, heaved a short, quick sigh, and then rapidly continued,

"I was fortunate at the University. That was a day when chiefs of party looked for recruits amongst young men who had given the proofs and won the first-fruits of emulation and assiduity; for statesmanship then was deemed an art which, like that of war, needs early discipline. I had scarcely left college when I was offered a seat in Parliament by the head of the Viponts, an old Lord Montfort. I was dazzled but for one moment;

I declined the next. The fallen House of Darrell needed wealth; and Parliamentary success, in its higher honours, often requires wealth,-- never gives it. It chanced that I had a college acquaintance with a young man named Vipont Crooke. His grandfather, one of the numberless Viponts, had been compelled to add the name of Crooke to his own, on succeeding to the property of some rich uncle, who was one of the numberless Crookes. I went with this college acquaintance to visit the old Lord Montfort, at his villa near London, and thence to the country-house of the Vipont Crookes. I stayed at the last two or three weeks. While there, I received a letter from the elder Fairthorn, my father's bailiff, entreating me to come immediately to Fawley, hinting at some great calamity. On taking leave of my friend and his family, something in the manner of his sister startled and pained me,--an evident confusion, a burst of tears,--I know not what. I had never sought to win her affections. I had an ideal of the woman I could love,--it did not resemble her. On reaching Fawley, conceive the shock that awaited me. My father was like one heart-stricken. The principal mortgagee was about to foreclose,--Fawley about to pass forever from the race of the Darrells. I saw that the day my father was driven from the old house would be his last on earth. What means to save him?--how raise the pitiful sum--but a few thousands--by which to release from the spoiler's gripe those barren acres which all the lands of the Seymour or the Gower could never replace in my poor father's eyes? My sole income was a college fellowship, adequate to all my wants, but useless for sale or loan. I spent the night in vain consultation with Fairthorn. There seemed not a hope. Next morning came a letter from young Vipont Crooke. It was manly and frank, though somewhat coarse. With the consent of his parents he offered me his sister's hand, and a dowry of L10,000. He hinted, in excuse for his bluntness, that, perhaps from motives of delicacy, if I felt a preference for his sister, I might not deem myself rich enough to propose, and--but it matters not what else he said. You foresee the rest. My father's life could be saved from despair; his beloved home be his shelter to the last. That dowry would more than cover the paltry debt upon the lands. I gave myself not an hour to pause. I hastened back to the house to which fate had led me. But," said Darrell, proudly, "do not think I was base enough, even with such excuses, to deceive the young lady. I told her what was true; that I could not profess to her the love painted by romance-writers and poets; but that I loved no other, and that if she deigned to accept my hand, I should studiously consult her happiness and gratefully confide to her my own."

"I said also, what was true, that if she married me, ours must be for some years a life of privation and struggle; that even the interest of her fortune must be devoted to my father while he lived, though every shilling of its capital would be settled on herself and her children. How I blessed her when she accepted me, despite my candour!--how earnestly I prayed that I might love and cherish and requite her!" Darrell paused, in evident suffering. "And, thank Heaven! I have nothing on that score wherewith to reproach myself; and the strength of that memory enabled me to bear and forbear more than otherwise would have been possible to my quick spirit and my man's heart. My dear father! his death was happy: his home was saved; he never knew at what sacrifice

to his son! He was gladdened by the first honours my youth achieved. He was resigned to my choice of a profession, which, though contrary to his antique prejudices, that allowed to the representative of the Darrells no profession but the sword, still promised the wealth which would secure his name from perishing. He was credulous of my future, as if I had uttered not a vow, but a prediction. He had blessed my union, without foreseeing its sorrows. He had embraced my first-born,--true, it was a girl, but it was one link onward from ancestors to posterity. And almost his last words were these: 'You will restore the race; you will revive the name! and my son's children will visit the antiquary's grave, and learn gratitude to him for all that his idle lessons taught to your healthier vigour.' And I answered, 'Father, your line shall not perish from the land; and when I am rich and great, and lordships spread far round the lowly hall that your life ennobled, I will say to your grandchildren, 'Honour ye and your son's sons, while a Darrell yet treads the earth, honour him to whom I owe every thought which nerved me to toil for what you who come after me may enjoy.'

"And so the old man, whose life had been so smileless, died smiling."

By this time Lionel had stolen Darrell's hand into his own--his heart swelling with childlike tenderness, and the tears rolling down his cheeks.

Darrell gently kissed his young kinsman's forehead, and, extricating himself from Lionel's clasp, paced the room, and spoke on while pacing it.

"I made, then, a promise; it is not kept. No child of mine survives to be taught reverence to my father's grave. My wedded life was not happy: its record needs no words. Of two children born to me, both are gone. My son went first. I had thrown my life's life into him,--a boy of energy, of noble promise. 'T was for him I began to build that baffled fabric, 'Sepulchri immemor.' For him I bought, acre on acre, all the land within reach of Fawley,--lands twelve miles distant. I had meant to fill up the intervening space, to buy out a mushroom earl whose woods and cornfields lie between. I was scheming the purchase, scrawling on the county map, when they brought the news that the boy I had just taken back to school was dead,--drowned bathing on a calm summer eve. No, Lionel. I must go on. That grief I have wrestled with,--conquered. I was widowed then. A daughter still left,--the first-born, whom my father had blest on his death-bed. I transferred all my love, all my hopes, to her. I had no vain preference for male heirs. Is a race less pure that runs on through the female line? Well, my son's death was merciful compared to--" Again Darrell stopped, again hurried on. "Enough! all is forgiven in the grave! I was then still in the noon of man's life, free to form new ties. Another grief that I cannot tell you; it is not all conquered yet. And by that grief the last verdure of existence was so blighted that--that--in short, I had no heart for nuptial altars, for the social world. Years went by. Each year I said, 'Next year the wound will be healed; I have time yet.' Now age is near, the grave not far; now, if ever, I must fulfil the promise that cheered my father's death-bed. Nor does that duty comprise all my motives. If I would regain

healthful thought, manly action, for my remaining years, I must feel that one haunting memory is exorcised and forever laid at rest. It can be so only,--whatever my risk of new cares, whatever the folly of the hazard at my age,--be so only by--by--" Once more Darrell paused, fixed his eyes steadily on Lionel, and, opening his arms, cried out, "Forgive me, my noble Lionel, that I am not contented with an heir like you; and do not you mock at the old man who dreams that woman may love him yet, and that his own children may inherit his father's home."

Lionel sprang to the breast that opened to him; and if Darrell had planned how best to remove from the young man's mind forever the possibility of one selfish pang, no craft could have attained his object like that touching confidence before which the disparities between youth and age literally vanished. And, both made equal, both elevated alike, verily I know not which at the moment felt the elder or the younger! Two noble hearts, intermingled in one emotion, are set free from all time save the present: par each with each, they meet as brothers twin-born.

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