

Project Gutenberg EBook, Night and Morning by E. B. Lytton, Vol. 5
#194 in our series by Edward Bulwer Lytton

Copyright laws are changing all over the world. Be sure to check the
copyright laws for your country before downloading or redistributing
this or any other Project Gutenberg eBook.

This header should be the first thing seen when viewing this Project
Gutenberg file. Please do not remove it. Do not change or edit the
header without written permission.

Please read the "legal small print," and other information about the
eBook and Project Gutenberg at the bottom of this file. Included is
important information about your specific rights and restrictions in
how the file may be used. You can also find out about how to make a
donation to Project Gutenberg, and how to get involved.

Welcome To The World of Free Plain Vanilla Electronic Texts

EBooks Readable By Both Humans and By Computers, Since 1971

*****These EBooks Were Prepared By Thousands of Volunteers*****

Title: Night and Morning, Volume 5

Author: Edward Bulwer Lytton

Release Date: January 2006 [EBook #9754]
[Yes, we are more than one year ahead of schedule]
[This file was first posted on October 9, 2003]

Edition: 10

Language: English

Character set encoding: ASCII

*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK, NIGHT AND MORNING, V5 ***

This eBook was produced by David Widger [widger@cecomet.net]

THE WORKS
OF
EDWARD BULWER LYTTON
(LORD LYTTON)
NIGHT AND MORNING
Book V

CHAPTER I.

"Per ambages et ministeria deorum."--PETRONTUS.

[Through the mysteries and ministrings of the gods.]

Mr. Roger Morton was behind his counter one drizzling, melancholy day. Mr. Roger Morton, alderman, and twice mayor of his native town, was a thriving man. He had grown portly and corpulent. The nightly potations of brandy and water, continued year after year with mechanical perseverance, had deepened the roses on his cheek. Mr. Roger Morton was never intoxicated--he "only made himself comfortable." His constitution was strong; but, somehow or other, his digestion was not as good as it might be. He was certain that something or other disagreed with him. He left off the joint one day--the pudding another. Now he avoided vegetables as poison--and now he submitted with a sigh to the doctor's interdict of his cigar. Mr. Roger Morton never thought of leaving off the brandy and water: and he would have resented as the height of impertinent insinuation any hint upon that score to a man of so sober and respectable a character.

Mr. Roger Morton was seated--for the last four years, ever since his second mayoralty, he had arrogated to himself the dignity of a chair. He received rather than served his customers. The latter task was left to two of his sons. For Tom, after much cogitation, the profession of an apothecary had been selected. Mrs. Morton observed, that it was a genteel business, and Tom had always been a likely lad. And Mr. Roger considered that it would be a great comfort and a great saving to have his medical adviser in his own son.

The other two sons and the various attendants of the shop were plying the profitable trade, as customer after customer, with umbrellas and in pattens, dropped into the tempting shelter--when a man, meanly dressed, and who was somewhat past middle age, with a careworn, hungry face, entered timidly. He waited in patience by the crowded counter, elbowed

by sharp-boned and eager spinsters--and how sharp the elbows of spinsters are, no man can tell who has not forced his unwelcome way through the agitated groups in a linendraper's shop!--the man, I say, waited patiently and sadly, till the smallest of the shopboys turned from a lady, who, after much sorting and shading, had finally decided on two yards of lilac-coloured penny riband, and asked, in an insinuating professional tone,--

"What shall I show you, sir?"

"I wish to speak to Mr. Morton. Which is he?"

"Mr. Morton is engaged, sir. I can give you what you want."

"No--it is a matter of business--important business." The boy eyed the napless and dripping hat, the gloveless hands, and the rusty neckcloth of the speaker; and said, as he passed his fingers through a profusion of light curls "Mr. Morton don't attend much to business himself now; but that's he. Any cravats, sir?"

The man made no answer, but moved where, near the window, and chatting with the banker of the town (as the banker tried on a pair of beaver gloves), sat still--after due apology for sitting--Mr. Roger Morton.

The alderman lowered his spectacles as he glanced grimly at the lean apparition that shaded the spruce banker, and said,--

"Do you want me, friend?"

"Yes, sir, if you please;" and the man took off his shabby hat, and bowed low.

"Well, speak out. No begging petition, I hope?"

"No, sir! Your nephews--"

The banker turned round, and in his turn eyed the newcomer. The linendraper started back.

"Nephews!" he repeated, with a bewildered look. "What does the man mean? Wait a bit."

"Oh, I've done!" said the banker, smiling. "I am glad to find we agree so well upon this question: I knew we should. Our member will never suit us if he goes on in this way. Trade must take care of itself. Good day to You!"

"Nephews!" repeated Mr. Morton, rising, and beckoning to the man to follow him into the back parlour, where Mrs. Morton sat casting up the washing bills.

"Now," said the husband, closing the door, "what do you mean, my good fellow?"

"Sir, what I wish to ask you is-if you can tell me what has become of--of the young Beau--, that is, of your sister's sons. I understand there were two--and I am told that--that they are both dead. Is it so?"

"What is that to you, friend?"

"An please you, sir, it is a great deal to them!"

"Yes--ha! ha! it is a great deal to everybody whether they are alive or dead!" Mr. Morton, since he had been mayor, now and then had his joke.

"But really--"

"Roger!" said Mrs. Morton, under her breath--"Roger!"

"Yes, my dear."

"Come this way--I want to speak to you about this bill." The husband approached, and bent over his wife. "Who's this man?"

"I don't know."

"Depend on it, he has some claim to make--some bills or something. Don't commit yourself--the boys are dead for what we know!"

Mr. Morton hemmed and returned to his visitor.

"To tell you the truth, I am not aware of what has become of the young men."

"Then they are not dead--I thought not!" exclaimed the man, joyously.

"That's more than I can say. It's many years since I lost sight of the only one I ever saw; and they may be both dead for what I know."

"Indeed!" said the man. "Then you can give me no kind of--of--hint like, to find them out?"

"No. Do they owe you anything?"

"It does not signify talking now, sir. I beg your pardon."

"Stay--who are you?"

"I am a very poor man, sir."

Mr. Morton recoiled.

"Poor! Oh, very well--very well. You have done with me now. Good day--good day. I'm busy."

The stranger pecked for a moment at his hat--turned the handle of the door--peered under his grey eyebrows at the portly trader, who, with both

hands buried in his pockets, his mouth pursed up, like a man about to say "No" fidgeted uneasily behind Mrs. Morton's chair. He sighed, shook his head, and vanished.

Mrs. Morton rang the bell--the maid-servant entered. "Wipe the carpet, Jenny;--dirty feet! Mr. Morton, it's a Brussels!"

"It was not my fault, my dear. I could not talk about family matters before the whole shop. Do you know, I'd quite forgot those poor boys. This unsettles me. Poor Catherine! she was so fond of them. A pretty boy that Sidney, too. What can have become of them? My heart rebukes me. I wish I had asked the man more."

"More!--why he was just going to beg."

"Beg--yes--very true!" said Mr. Morton, pausing irresolutely; and then, with a hearty tone, he cried out, "And, damme, if he had begged, I could afford him a shilling! I'll go after him." So saying, he hastened back through the shop, but the man was gone--the rain was falling, Mr. Morton had his thin shoes on--he blew his nose, and went back to the counter. But, there, still rose to his memory the pale face of his dead sister; and a voice murmured in his ear, "Brother, where is my child?"

"Pshaw! it is not my fault if he ran away. Bob, go and get me the county paper."

Mr. Morton had again settled himself, and was deep in a trial for murder, when another stranger strode haughtily into the shop. The new-comer, wrapped in a pelisse of furs, with a thick moustache, and an eye that took in the whole shop, from master to boy, from ceiling to floor, in a glance, had the air at once of a foreigner and a soldier. Every look fastened on him, as he paused an instant, and then walking up to the alderman, said,--

"Sir, you are doubtless Mr. Morton?"

"At your commands, sir," said Roger, rising involuntarily.

"A word with you, then, on business."

"Business!" echoed Mr. Morton, turning rather pale, for he began to think himself haunted; "anything in my line, sir? I should be--"

The stranger bent down his tall stature, and hissed into Mr. Morton's foreboding ear:

"Your nephews!"

Mr. Morton was literally dumb-stricken. Yes, he certainly was haunted! He stared at this second questioner, and fancied that there was something very supernatural and unearthly about him. He was so tall, and so dark, and so stern, and so strange. Was it the Unspeakable himself come for the linendraper? Nephews again! The uncle of the babes in the wood

could hardly have been more startled by the demand!

"Sir," said Mr. Morton at last, recovering his dignity and somewhat peevishly,--"sir, I don't know why people should meddle with my family affairs. I don't ask other folks about their nephews. I have no nephew that I know of."

"Permit me to speak to you, alone, for one instant." Mr. Morton sighed, hitched up his trousers, and led the way to the parlour, where Mrs. Morton, having finished the washing bills, was now engaged in tying certain pieces of bladder round certain pots of preserves. The eldest Miss Morton, a young woman of five or six-and-twenty, who was about to be very advantageously married to a young gentleman who dealt in coals and played the violin (for N----- was a very musical town), had just joined her for the purpose of extorting "The Swiss Boy, with variations," out of a sleepy little piano, that emitted a very painful cry under the awakening fingers of Miss Margaret Morton.

Mr. Morton threw open the door with a grunt, and the stranger pausing at the threshold, the full flood of sound (key C) upon which "the Swiss Boy" was swimming along, "kine" and all, for life and death, came splash upon him.

"Silence! can't you?" cried the father, putting one hand to his ear, while with the other he pointed to a chair; and as Mrs. Morton looked up from the preserves with that air of indignant suffering with which female meekness upbraids a husband's wanton outrage, Mr. Roger added, shrugging his shoulders,--

"My nephews again, Mrs. K!"

Miss Margaret turned round, and dropped a courtesy. Mrs. Morton gently let fall a napkin over the preserves, and muttered a sort of salutation, as the stranger, taking off his hat, turned to mother and daughter one of those noble faces in which Nature has written her grant and warranty of the lordship of creation.

"Pardon me," he said, "if I disturb you. But my business will be short. I have come to ask you, sir, frankly, and as one who has a right to ask it, what tidings you can give me of Sidney Morton?"

"Sir, I know nothing whatever about him. He was taken from my house, about twelve years since, by his brother. Myself, and the two Mr. Beauforts, and another friend of the family, went in search of them both. My search failed."

"And theirs?"

"I understood from Mr. Beaufort that they had not been more successful. I have had no communication with those gentlemen since. But that's neither here nor there. In all probability, the elder of the boys--who, I fear, was a sad character--corrupted and ruined his brother; and, by this time, Heaven knows what and where they are."

"And no one has inquired of you since--no one has asked the brother of Catherine Morton, nay, rather of Catherine Beaufort--where is the child intrusted to your care?"

This question, so exactly similar to that which his superstition had rung on his own ears, perfectly appalled the worthy alderman. He staggered back--stared at the marked and stern face that lowered upon him--and at last cried,--

"For pity's sake, sir, be just! What could I do for one who left me of his own accord?--"

"The day you had beaten him like a dog. You see, Mr. Morton, I know all."

"And what are you?" said Mr. Morton, recovering his English courage, and feeling himself strangely browbeaten in his own house;--"What and who are you, that you thus take the liberty to catechise a man of my character and respectability?"

"Twice mayor--" began Mrs. Morton.

"Hush, mother!" whispered Miss Margaret,--"don't work him up."

"I repeat, sir, what are you?"

"What am I?--your nephew! Who am I? Before men, I bear a name that I have assumed, and not dishonoured--before Heaven I am Philip Beaufort!"

Mrs. Morton dropped down upon her stool. Margaret murmured "My cousin!" in a tone that the ear of the musical coal-merchant might not have greatly relished. And Mr. Morton, after a long pause, came up with a frank and manly expression of joy, and said:--

"Then, sir, I thank Heaven, from my heart, that one of my sister's children stands alive before me!"

"And now, again, I--I whom you accuse of having corrupted and ruined him --him for whom I toiled and worked--him, who was to me, then, as a last surviving son to some anxious father--I, from whom he was reft and robbed --I ask you again for Sidney--for my brother!"

"And again, I say, that I have no information to give you--that--Stay a moment--stay. You must pardon what I have said of you before you made yourself known. I went but by the accounts I had received from Mr. Beaufort. Let, me speak plainly; that gentleman thought, right or wrong, that it would be a great thing to separate your brother from you. He may have found him--it must be so--and kept his name and condition concealed from us all, lest you should detect it. Mrs. M., don't you think so?"

"I'm sure I'm so terrified I don't know what to think," said Mrs. Morton, putting her hand to her forehead, and see-sawing herself to and fro upon

her stool.

"But since they wronged you--since you--you seem so very--very--"

"Very much the gentleman," suggested Miss Margaret. "Yes, so much the gentleman;--well off, too, I should hope, sir,"--and the experienced eye of Mr. Morton glanced at the costly sables that lined the pelisse,--
"there can be no difficulty in your learning from Mr. Beaufort all that you wish to know. And pray, sir, may I ask, did you send any one here to-day to make the very inquiry you have made?"

"I?--No. What do you mean?"

"Well, well--sit down--there may be something in all this that you may make out better than I can."

And as Philip obeyed, Mr. Morton, who was really and honestly rejoiced to see his sister's son alive and apparently thriving, proceeded to relate pretty exactly the conversation he had held with the previous visitor. Philip listened earnestly and with attention. Who could this questioner be? Some one who knew his birth--some one who sought him out?--some one, who--Good Heavens! could it be the long-lost witness of the marriage?

As soon as that idea struck him, he started from his seat and entreated Morton to accompany him in search of the stranger. "You know not," he said, in a tone impressed with that energy of will in which lay the talent of his mind,--"you know not of what importance this may be to my prospects--to your sister's fair name. If it should be the witness returned at last! Who else, of the rank you describe, would be interested in such inquiries? Come!"

"What witness?" said Mrs. Morton, fretfully. "You don't mean to come over us with the old story of the marriage?"

"Shall your wife slander your own sister, sir? A marriage there was--God yet will proclaim the right--and the name of Beaufort shall be yet placed on my mother's gravestone. Come!"

"Here are your shoes and umbrella, pa," cried Miss Margaret, inspired by Philip's earnestness.

"My fair cousin, I guess," and as the soldier took her hand, he kissed the reluctant cheek--turned to the door--Mr. Morton placed his arm in his, and the next moment they were in the street.

When Catherine, in her meek tones, had said, "Philip Beaufort was my husband," Roger Morton had disbelieved her. And now one word from the son, who could, in comparison, know so little of the matter, had almost sufficed to convert and to convince the sceptic. Why was this? Because--Man believes the Strong!

CHAPTER II.

"--Quid Virtus et quid Sapientia possit
Utile proposuit nobis exemplar _Ulssem_." HOR.

["He has proposed to us Ulysses as a useful example of how
much may be accomplished by Virtue and Wisdom."]

Meanwhile the object of their search, on quitting Mr. Morton's shop, had walked slowly and sadly on, through the plashing streets, till he came to a public house in the outskirts and on the high road to London. Here he took shelter for a short time, drying himself by the kitchen fire, with the license purchased by fourpenny-worth of gin; and having learned that the next coach to London would not pass for some hours, he finally settled himself in the Ingle, till the guard's horn should arouse him. By the same coach that the night before had conveyed Philip to N----, had the very man he sought been also a passenger!

The poor fellow was sickly and wearied out: he had settled into a doze, when he was suddenly wakened by the wheels of a coach and the trampling of horses. Not knowing how long he had slept, and imagining that the vehicle he had awaited was at the door, he ran out. It was a coach coming from London, and the driver was joking with a pretty barmaid who, in rather short petticoats, was fielding up to him the customary glass. The man, after satisfying himself that his time was not yet come, was turning back to the fire, when a head popped itself out of the window, and a voice cried, "Stars and garters! Will--so that's you!" At the sound of the voice the man halted abruptly, turned very pale, and his limbs trembled. The inside passenger opened the door, jumped out with a little carpet-bag in his hand, took forth a long leathern purse from which he ostentatiously selected the coins that paid his fare and satisfied the coachman, and then, passing his arm through that of the acquaintance he had discovered, led him back into the house.

"Will--Will," he whispered, "you have been to the Mortons. Never moind--let's hear all. Jenny or Dolly, or whatever your sweet praetty name is--a private room and a pint of brandy, my dear. Hot water and lots of the grocery. That's right."

And as soon as the pair found themselves, with the brandy before them, in a small parlour with a good fire, the last comer went to the door, shut it cautiously, flung his bag under the table, took off his gloves, spread himself wider and wider before the fire, until he had entirely excluded every ray from his friend, and then suddenly turning so that the back might enjoy what the front had gained, he exclaimed.

"Damme, Will, you're a praetty sort of a broather to give me the slip in that way. But in this world every man for his-self!"

"I tell you," said William, with something like decision in his voice, "that I will not do any wrong to these young men if they live."

"Who asks you to do a wrong to them?--booby! Perhaps I may be the best friend they may have yet--ay, or you too, though you're the ungratefulest whimsicallist sort of a son of a gun that ever I came across. Come, help yourself, and don't roll up your eyes in that way, like a Muggletonian asoide of a Fye-Fye!"

Here the speaker paused a moment, and with a graver and more natural tone of voice proceeded:

"So you did not believe me when I told you that these brothers were dead, and you have been to the Mortons to learn more?"

"Yes."

"Well, and what have you learned?"

"Nothing. Morton declares that he does not know that they are alive, but he says also that he does not know that they are dead."

"Indeed," said the other, listening with great attention; "and you really think that he does not know anything about them?"

"I do, indeed."

"Hum! Is he a sort of man who would post down the rhino to help the search?"

"He looked as if he had the yellow fever when I said I was poor," returned William, turning round, and trying to catch a glimpse at the fire, as he gulped his brandy and water.

"Then I'll be d---d if I run the risk of calling. I have done some things in this town by way of business before now; and though it's a long time ago, yet folks don't forget a handsome man in a hurry--especially if he has done 'em! Now, then, listen to me. You see, I have given this matter all the 'tention in my power. 'If the lads be dead,' said I to you, 'it is no use burning one's fingers by holding a candle to bones in a coffin. But Mr. Beaufort need not know they are dead, and we'll see what we can get out of him; and if I succeeds, as I think I shall, you and I may hold up our heads for the rest of our life.' Accordingly, as I told you, I went to Mr. Beaufort, and--'Gad, I thought we had it all our own way. But since I saw you last, there's been the devil and all. When I called again, Will, I was shown in to an old lord, sharp as a gimblet. Hang me, William, if he did not frighten me out of my seven senses!"

Here Captain Smith (the reader has, no doubt, already discovered that the speaker was no less a personage) took three or four nervous strides across the room, returned to the table, threw himself in a chair, placed one foot on one hob, and one on the other, laid his finger on his nose, and, with a significant wink, said in a whisper, "Will, he knew I had been lagged! He not only refused to hear all I had to say, but threatened to prosecute--persecute, hang, draw, and quarter us both, if we ever dared to come out with the truth."

"But what's the good of the truth if the boys are dead?" said William, timidly.

The captain, without heeding this question, continued, as he stirred the sugar in his glass, "Well, out I sneaked, and as soon as I had got to my own door I turned round and saw Sharp the runner on the other side of the way--I felt deuced queer. However, I went in, sat down, and began to think. I saw that it was up with us, so far as the old uns were concerned; and it might be worth while to find out if the young uns really were dead."

"Then you did not know that after all! I thought so. Oh, Jerry!"

"Why, look you, man, it was not our interest to take their side if we could make our bargain out of the other. 'Cause why? You are only one witness--you are a good fellow, but poor, and with very shaky nerves, Will. You does not know what them big wigs are when a roan's caged in a witness-box--they flank one up, and they flank one down, and they bully and bother, till one's like a horse at Astley's dancing on hot iron. If your testimony broke down, why it would be all up with the case, and what then would become of us? Besides," added the captain, with dignified candour, "I have been lagged, it's no use denying it; I am back before my time. Inquiries about your respectability would soon bring the bulkies about me. And you would not have poor Jerry sent back to that d---d low place on t'other side of the herring-pond, would you?"

"Ah, Jerry!" said William, kindly placing his hand in his brother's, you know I helped you to escape; I left all to come over with you."

"So you did, and you're a good fellow; though as to leaving all, why you had got rid of all first. And when you told me about the marriage, did not I say that I saw our way to a snug thing for life? But to return to my story. There is a danger in going with the youngsters. But since, Will,--since nothing but hard words is to be got on the other side, we'll do our duty, and I'll find them out, and do the best I can for us--that is, if they be yet above ground. And now I'll own to you that I think I knows that the younger one is alive."

"You do?"

"Yes! But as he won't come in for anything unless his brother is dead, we must have a hunt for the heir. Now I told you that, many years ago, there was a lad with me, who, putting all things together--seeing how the Beauforts came after him, and recollecting different things he let out at the time--I feel pretty sure is your old master's Hopeful. I know that poor Will Gawtreay gave this lad the address of Old Gregg, a friend of mine. So after watching Sharp off the sly, I went that very night, or rather at two in the morning, to Gregg's house, and, after brushing up his memory, I found that the lad had been to him, and gone over afterwards to Paris in search of Gawtreay, who was then keeping a matrimony shop. As I was not rich enough to go off to Paris in a pleasant, gentlemanlike way, I allowed Gregg to put me up to a noice

quiet little bit of business. Don't shake your head--all safe--a rural affair! That took some days. You see it has helped to new rig me," and the captain glanced complacently over a very smart suit of clothes. "Well, on my return I went to call on you, but you had flown. I half suspected you might have gone to the mother's relations here; and I thought, at all events, that I could not do better than go myself and see what they knew of the matter. From what you say I feel I had better now let that alone, and go over to Paris at once; leave me alone to find out. And faith, what with Sharp and the old lord, the sooner I quit England the better."

"And you really think you shall get hold of them after all? Oh, never fear my nerves if I'm once in the right; it's living with you, and seeing you do wrong, and hearing you talk wickedly, that makes me tremble."

"Bother!" said the captain, "you need not crow over me. Stand up, Will; there now, look at us two in the glass! Why, I look ten years younger than you do, in spite of all my troubles. I dress like a gentleman, as I am; I have money in my pocket; I put money in yours; without me you'd starve. Look you, you carried over a little fortune to Australia--you married--you farmed--you lived honestly, and yet that d---d shilly-shally disposition of yours, 'ticed into one speculation to-day, and scared out of another to-morrow, ruined you!"

"Jerry! Jerry!" cried William, writhing; "don't--don't."

"But it's all true, and I wants to cure you of preaching. And then, when you were nearly run out, instead of putting a bold face on it, and setting your shoulder to the wheel, you gives it up--you sells what you have--you bolts over, wife and all, to Boston, because some one tells you you can do better in America--you are out of the way when a search is made for you--years ago when you could have benefited yourself and your master's family without any danger to you or me--nobody can find you; 'cause why, you could not bear that your old friends in England, or in the colony either, should know that you were turned a slave-driver in Kentucky. You kick up a mutiny among the niggers by moaning over them, instead of keeping 'em to it--you get kicked out yourself--your wife begs you to go back to Australia, where her relations will do something for you--you work your passage out, looking as ragged as a colt from grass--wife's uncle don't like ragged nephews-in-law--wife dies broken-hearted --and you might be breaking stones on the roads with the convicts, if I, myself a convict, had not taken compassion on you. Don't cry, Will, it is all for your own good--I hates cant! Whereas I, my own master from eighteen, never stooped to serve any other--have dressed like a gentleman--kissed the pretty girls--drove my pheaton--been in all the papers as 'the celebrated Dashing Jerry'--never wanted a guinea in my pocket, and even when lagged at last, had a pretty little sum in the colonial bank to lighten my misfortunes. I escape,--I bring you over--and here I am, supporting you, and in all probability, the one on whom depends the fate of one of the first families in the country. And you preaches at me, do you? Look you, Will;--in this world, honesty's nothing without force of character! And so your health!"

Here the captain emptied the rest of the brandy into his glass, drained it at a draught, and, while poor William was wiping his eyes with a ragged blue pocket-handkerchief, rang the bell, and asked what coaches would pass that way to ----, a seaport town at some distance. On hearing that there was one at six o'clock, the captain ordered the best dinner the larder would afford to be got ready as soon as possible; and, when they were again alone, thus accosted his brother:--

"Now you go back to town--here are four shiners for you. Keep quiet--don't speak to a soul--don't put your foot in it, that's all I beg, and I'll find out whatever there is to be found. It is damnably out of my way embarking at ----, but I had best keep clear of Lunnon. And I tell you what, if these youngsters have hopped the twig, there's another bird on the bough that may prove a goldfinch after all--Young Arthur Beaufort: I hear he is a wild, expensive chap, and one who can't live without lots of money. Now, it's easy to frighten a man of that sort, and I cha'n't have the old lord at his elbow."

"But I tell you, that I only care for my poor master's children."

"Yes; but if they are dead, and by saying they are alive, one can make old age comfortable, there's no harm in it--eh?"

"I don't know," said William, irresolutely. "But certainly it is a hard thing to be so poor at my time of life; and so honest a man as I've been, too!"

Captain Smith went a little too far when he said that "honesty's nothing without force of character." Still, Honesty has no business to be helpless and draggle-tailed;--she must be active and brisk, and make use of her wits; or, though she keep clear of the prison, 'tis no very great wonder if she fall on the parish.

CHAPTER III.

"Mitis.--This Macilente, signior, begins to be more sociable on a sudden." _Every Man out of his Humour_.

"Punt. Signior, you are sufficiently instructed.

"Fast. Who, I, sir?"--Ibid.

After spending the greater part of the day in vain inquiries and a vain search, Philip and Mr. Morton returned to the house of the latter.

"And now," said Philip, "all that remains to be done is this: first give to the police of the town a detailed description of the man; and secondly, let us put an advertisement both in the county journal and in some of the London papers, to the effect, that if the person who called on you will take the trouble to apply again, either personally or by

letter, he may obtain the information sought for. In case he does, I will trouble you to direct him to--yes--to Monsieur de Vaudemont, according to this address."

"Not to you, then?"

"It is the same thing," replied Philip, drily. "You have confirmed my suspicions, that the Beauforts know some thing of my brother. What did you say of some other friend of the family who assisted in the search?"

"Oh,--a Mr. Spencer! an old acquaintance of your mother's." Here Mr. Morton smiled, but not being encouraged in a joke, went on, "However, that's neither here nor there; he certainly never found out your brother. For I have had several letters from him at different times, asking if any news had been heard of either of you."

And, indeed, Spencer had taken peculiar pains to deceive the Mortons, whose interposition he feared little less than that of the Beauforts.

"Then it can be of no use to apply to him," said Philip, carelessly, not having any recollection of the name of Spencer, and therefore attaching little importance to the mention of him.

"Certainly, I should think not. Depend on it, Mr. Beaufort must know."

"True," said Philip. "And I have only to thank you for your kindness, and return to town."

"But stay with us this day--do--let me feel that we are friends. I assure you poor Sidney's fate has been a load on my mind ever since he left. You shall have the bed he slept in, and over which your mother bent when she left him and me for the last time."

These words were said with so much feeling, that the adventurer wrung his uncle's hand, and said, "Forgive me, I wronged you--I will be your guest."

Mrs. Morton, strange to say, evinced no symptoms of ill-humour at the news of the proffered hospitality. In fact, Miss Margaret had been so eloquent in Philip's praise during his absence, that she suffered herself to be favourably impressed. Her daughter, indeed, had obtained a sort of ascendancy over Mrs. M. and the whole house, ever since she had received so excellent an offer. And, moreover, some people are like dogs--they snarl at the ragged and fawn on the well-dressed. Mrs. Morton did not object to a nephew *_de facto_*, she only objected to a nephew in *_forma pauperis_*. The evening, therefore, passed more cheerfully than might have been anticipated, though Philip found some difficulty in parrying the many questions put to him on the past. He contented himself with saying, as briefly as possible, that he had served in a foreign service, and acquired what sufficed him for an independence; and then, with the ease which a man picks up in the great world, turned the conversation to the prospects of the family whose guest he was. Having listened with due attention to Mrs. Morton's eulogies on Tom, who had been sent for, and

who drank the praises on his own gentility into a very large pair of blushing ears,--also, to her self-felicitations on Miss Margaret's marriage,--_item_, on the service rendered to the town by Mr. Roger, who had repaired the town-hall in his first mayoralty at his own expense,--_item_, to a long chronicle of her own genealogy, how she had one cousin a clergyman, and how her great-grandfather had been knighted,--_item_, to the domestic virtues of all her children,--_item_, to a confused explanation of the chastisement inflicted on Sidney, which Philip cut short in the middle; he asked, with a smile, what had become of the Plaskwiths. "Oh!" said Mrs. Morton, "my brother Kit has retired from business. His son-in-law, Mr. Plimmins, has succeeded."

"Oh, then, Plimmins married one of the young ladies?"

"Yes, Jane--she had a sad squint!--Tom, there is nothing to laugh at,--we are all as God made us,--'Handsome is as handsome does,'--she has had three little uns!"

"Do they squint too?" asked Philip; and Miss Margaret giggled, and Tom roared, and the other young men roared too. Philip had certainly said something very witty.

This time Mrs. Morton administered no reproof; but replied pensively

"Natur is very mysterious--they all squint!"

Mr. Morton conducted Philip to his chamber. There it was, fresh, clean, unaltered--the same white curtains, the same honeysuckle paper as when Catherine had crept across the threshold.

"Did Sidney ever tell you that his mother placed a ring round his neck that night?" asked Mr. Morton.

"Yes; and the dear boy wept when he said that he had slept too soundly to know that she was by his side that last, last time. The ring--oh, how well I remember it! she never put it off till then; and often in the fields--for we were wild wanderers together in that day--often when his head lay on my shoulder, I felt that ring still resting on his heart, and fancied it was a talisman--a blessing. Well, well--good night to you!" And he shut the door on his uncle, and was alone.

CHAPTER IV.

"The Man of Law,

And a great suit is like to be between them."

BEN JONSON: *Staple of News*.

On arriving in London, Philip went first to the lodging he still kept there, and to which his letters were directed; and, among some communications from Paris, full of the politics and the hopes of the

Carlists, he found the following note from Lord Lilburne:--

"DEAR SIR,--When I met you the other day I told you I had been threatened with the gout. The enemy has now taken possession of the field. I am sentenced to regimen and the sofa. But as it is my rule in life to make afflictions as light as possible, so I have asked a few friends to take compassion on me, and help me 'to shuffle off this mortal coil' by dealing me, if they can, four by honours. Any time between nine and twelve to-night, or to-morrow night, you will find me at home; and if you are not better engaged, suppose you dine with me to-day--or rather dine opposite to me--and excuse my Spartan broth. You will meet (besides any two or three friends whom an impromptu invitation may find disengaged) my sister, with Beaufort and their daughter: they only arrived in town this morning, and are kind enough 'to nurse me,' as they call it,--that is to say, their cook is taken ill!

"Yours,

"LILBURNE

"Park Lane, Sept. --"

"The Beauforts. Fate favors me--I will go. The date is for to-day."

He sent off a hasty line to accept the invitation, and finding he had a few hours yet to spare, he resolved to employ them in consultation with some lawyer as to the chances of ultimately regaining his inheritance--a hope which, however wild, he had, since his return to his native shore, and especially since he had heard of the strange visit made to Roger Morton, permitted himself to indulge. With this idea he sallied out, meaning to consult Liancourt, who, having a large acquaintance among the English, seemed the best person to advise him as to the choice of a lawyer at once active and honest,--when he suddenly chanced upon that gentleman himself.

"This is lucky, my dear Liancourt. I was just going to your lodgings."

"And I was coming to yours to know if you dine with Lord Lilburne. He told me he had asked you. I have just left him. And, by the sofa of Mephistopheles, there was the prettiest Margaret you ever beheld."

"Indeed!--Who?"

"He called her his niece; but I should doubt if he had any relation on this side the Styx so human as a niece."

"You seem to have no great predilection for our host."

"My dear Vaudemont, between our blunt, soldierly natures, and those wily, icy, sneering intellects, there is the antipathy of the dog to the cat."

"Perhaps so on our side, not on his--or why does he invite us?"

"London is empty; there is no one else to ask. We are new faces, new minds to him. We amuse him more than the hackneyed comrades he has worn

out. Besides, he plays--and you, too. Fie on you!"

"Liancourt, I had two objects in knowing that man, and I pay to the toll for the bridge. When I cease to want the passage, I shall cease to pay the toll."

"But the bridge may be a draw-bridge, and the moat is devilish deep below. Without metaphor, that man may ruin you before you know where you are."

"Bah! I have my eyes open. I know how much to spend on the rogue whose service I hire as a lackey's; and I know also where to stop. Liancourt," he added, after a short pause, and in a tone deep with suppressed passion, "when I first saw that man, I thought of appealing to his heart for one who has a claim on it. That was a vain hope. And then there came upon me a sterner and deadlier thought--the scheme of the Avenger! This Lilburne--this rogue whom the world sets up to worship--ruined, body and soul ruined--one whose name the world gibbets with scorn! Well, I thought to avenge that man. In his own house--amidst you all--I thought to detect the sharper, and brand the cheat!"

"You startle me!--It has been whispered, indeed, that Lord Lilburne is dangerous,--but skill is dangerous. To cheat!--an Englishman!--a nobleman!--impossible!"

"Whether he do or not," returned Vaudemont, in a calmer tone, "I have foregone the vengeance, because he is--"

"Is what?"

"No matter," said Vaudemont aloud, but he added to himself,--"Because he is the grandfather of Fanny!"

"You are very enigmatical to-day."

"Patience, Liancourt; I may solve all the riddles that make up my life, yet. Bear with me a little longer. And now can you help me to a lawyer?--a man experienced, indeed, and of repute, but young, active, not overladen with business;--I want his zeal and his time, for a hazard that your monopolists of clients may not deem worth their devotion."

"I can recommend you, then, the very man you require. I had a suit some years ago at Paris, for which English witnesses were necessary. My avocat employed a solicitor here whose activity in collecting my evidence gained my cause. I will answer for his diligence and his honesty."

"His address?"

"Mr. Barlow--somewhere by the Strand--let me see--Essex--yes, Essex Street."

"Then good-bye to you for the present.--You dine at Lord Lilburne's too?"

"Yes. Adieu till then."

Vaudemont was not long before he arrived at Mr. Barlow's; a brass-plate announced to him the house. He was shown at once into a parlour, where he saw a man whom lawyers would call young, and spinsters middle-aged--viz., about two-and-forty; with a bold, resolute, intelligent countenance, and that steady, calm, sagacious eye, which inspires at once confidence and esteem.

Vaudemont scanned him with the look of one who has been accustomed to judge mankind--as a scholar does books--with rapidity because with practice. He had at first resolved to submit to him the heads of his case without mentioning names, and, in fact, he so commenced his narrative; but by degrees, as he perceived how much his own earnestness arrested and engrossed the interest of his listener, he warmed into fuller confidence, and ended by a full disclosure, and a caution as to the profoundest secrecy in case, if there were no hope to recover his rightful name, he might yet wish to retain, unannoyed by curiosity or suspicion, that by which he was not discreditably known.

"Sir," said Mr. Barlow, after assuring him of the most scrupulous discretion,--"sir, I have some recollection of the trial instituted by your mother, Mrs. Beaufort"--and the slight emphasis he laid on that name was the most grateful compliment he could have paid to the truth of Philip's recital. "My impression is, that it was managed in a very slovenly manner by her lawyer; and some of his oversights we may repair in a suit instituted by yourself. But it would be absurd to conceal from you the great difficulties that beset us--your mother's suit, designed to establish her own rights, was far easier than that which you must commence--viz., an action for ejectment against a man who has been some years in undisturbed possession. Of course, until the missing witness is found out, it would be madness to commence litigation. And the question, then, will be, how far that witness will suffice? It is true, that one witness of a marriage, if the others are dead, is held sufficient by law. But I need not add, that that witness must be thoroughly credible. In suits for real property, very little documentary or secondary evidence is admitted. I doubt even whether the certificate of the marriage on which--in the loss or destruction of the register--you lay so much stress, would be available in itself. But if an examined copy, it becomes of the last importance, for it will then inform us of the name of the person who extracted and examined it. Heaven grant it may not have been the clergyman himself who performed the ceremony, and who, you say, is dead; if some one else, we should then have a second, no doubt credible and most valuable witness. The document would thus become available as proof, and, I think, that we should not fail to establish our case."

"But this certificate, how is it ever to be found? I told you we had searched everywhere in vain."

"True; but you say that your mother always declared that the late Mr. Beaufort had so solemnly assured her, even just prior to his decease, that it was in existence, that I have no doubt as to the fact. It may be

possible, but it is a terrible insinuation to make, that if Mr. Robert Beaufort, in examining the papers of the deceased, chanced upon a document so important to him, he abstracted or destroyed it. If this should not have been the case (and Mr. Robert Beaufort's moral character is unspotted--and we have no right to suppose it), the probability is, either that it was intrusted to some third person, or placed in some hidden drawer or deposit, the secret of which your father never disclosed. Who has purchased the house you lived in?"

"Fernside? Lord Lilburne. Mrs. Robert Beaufort's brother."

"Humph--probably, then, he took the furniture and all. Sir, this is a matter that requires some time for close consideration. With your leave, I will not only insert in the London papers an advertisement to the effect that you suggested to Mr. Roger Morton (in case you should have made a right conjecture as to the object of the man who applied to him), but I will also advertise for the witness himself. William Smith, you say, his name is. Did the lawyer employed by Mrs. Beaufort send to inquire for him in the colony?"

"No; I fear there could not have been time for that. My mother was so anxious and eager, and so convinced of the justice of her case--"

"That's a pity; her lawyer must have been a sad driveller."

"Besides, now I remember, inquiry was made of his relations in England. His father, a farmer, was then alive; the answer was that he had certainly left Australia. His last letter, written two years before that date, containing a request for money, which the father, himself made a bankrupt by reverses, could not give, had stated that he was about to seek his fortune elsewhere--since then they had heard nothing of him."

"Ahem! Well, you will perhaps let me know where any relations of his are yet to be found, and I will look up the former suit, and go into the whole case without delay. In the meantime, you do right, sir--if you will allow me to say it--not to disclose either your own identity or a hint of your intentions. It is no use putting suspicion on its guard. And my search for this certificate must be managed with the greatest address. But, by the way--speaking of identity--there can be no difficulty, I hope, in proving yours."

Philip was startled. "Why, I am greatly altered."

"But probably your beard and moustache may contribute to that change; and doubtless, in the village where you lived, there would be many with whom you were in sufficient intercourse, and on whose recollection, by recalling little anecdotes and circumstances with which no one but yourself could be acquainted, your features would force themselves along with the moral conviction that the man who spoke to them could be no other but Philip Morton--or rather Beaufort."

"You are right; there must be many such. There was not a cottage in the place where I and my dogs were not familiar and half domesticated."

"All's right, so far, then. But I repeat, we must not be too sanguine.
Law is not justice--"

"But God is," said Philip; and he left the room.

CHAPTER V.

"_Volpone_. A little in a mist, but not dejected;
Never--but still myself."

BEN JONSON: _Volpone_.

"_Peregrine_. Am I enough disguised?

Mer. Ay. I warrant you.

Per. Save you, fair lady."--Ibid.

It is an ill wind that blows nobody good. The ill wind that had blown gout to Lord Lilburne had blown Lord Lilburne away from the injury he had meditated against what he called "the object of his attachment." How completely and entirely, indeed, the state of Lord Lilburne's feelings depended on the state of his health, may be seen in the answer he gave to his valet, when, the morning after the first attack of the gout, that worthy person, by way of cheering his master, proposed to ascertain something as to the movements of one with whom Lord Lilburne professed to be so violently in love,--"Confound you, Dykeman!" exclaimed the invalid,--"why do you trouble me about women when I'm in this condition? I don't care if they were all at the bottom of the sea! Reach me the colchicum! I must keep my mind calm."

Whenever tolerably well, Lord Lilburne was careless of his health; the moment he was ill, Lord Lilburne paid himself the greatest possible attention. Though a man of firm nerves, in youth of remarkable daring, and still, though no longer rash, of sufficient personal courage, he was by no means fond of the thought of death--that is, of his own death. Not that he was tormented by any religious apprehensions of the Dread Unknown, but simply because the only life of which he had any experience seemed to him a peculiarly pleasant thing. He had a sort of instinctive persuasion that John Lord Lilburne would not be better off anywhere else. Always disliking solitude, he disliked it more than ever when he was ill, and he therefore welcomed the visit of his sister and the gentle hand of his pretty niece. As for Beaufort, he bored the sufferer; and when that gentleman, on his arrival, shutting out his wife and daughter, whispered to Lilburne, "Any more news of that impostor?" Lilburne answered peevishly, "I never talk about business when I have the gout! I have set Sharp to keep a lookout for him, but he has learned nothing as yet. And now go to your club. You are a worthy creature, but too solemn for my spirits just at this moment. I have a few people coming to dine with me, your wife will do the honors, and--you can come in the evening." Though Mr. Robert Beaufort's sense of importance swelled and chafed at this very unceremonious conge, he forced a smile, and said:--

"Well, it is no wonder you are a little fretful with the gout. I have plenty to do in town, and Mrs. Beaufort and Camilla can come back without waiting for me."

"Why, as your cook is ill, and they can't dine at a club, you may as well leave them here till I am a little better; not that I care, for I can hire a better nurse than either of them."

"My dear Lilburne, don't talk of hiring nurses; certainly, I am too happy if they can be of comfort to you."

"No! on second thoughts, you may take back your wife, she's always talking of her own complaints, and leave me Camilla: you can't want her for a few days."

"Just as you like. And you really think I have managed as well as I could about this young man,--eh?"

"Yes--yes! And so you go to Beaufort Court in a few days?"

"I propose doing so. I wish you were well enough to come."

"Um! Chambers says that it would be a very good air for me--better than Fernside; and as to my castle in the north, I would as soon go to Siberia. Well, if I get better, I will pay you a visit, only you always have such a stupid set of respectable people about you. I shock them, and they oppress me."

"Why, as I hope soon to see Arthur, I shall make it as agreeable to him as I can, and I shall be very much obliged to you if you would invite a few of your own friends."

"Well, you are a good fellow, Beaufort, and I will take you at your word; and, since one good turn deserves another, I have now no scruples in telling you that I feel quite sure that you will have no further annoyance from this troublesome witness-monger."

"In that case," said Beaufort, "I may pick up a better match for Camilla! Good-bye, my dear Lilburne."

"Form and Ceremony of the world!" snarled the peer, as the door closed on his brother-in-law, "ye make little men very moral, and not a bit the better for being so."

It so happened that Vaudemont arrived before any of the other guests that day, and during the half hour which Dr. Chambers assigned to his illustrious patient, so that, when he entered, there were only Mrs. Beaufort and Camilla in the drawing-room.

Vaudemont drew back involuntarily as he recognized in the faded countenance of the elder lady, features associated with one of the dark passages in his earlier life; but Mrs. Beaufort's gracious smile, and

urbane, though languid welcome, sufficed to assure him that the recognition was not mutual. He advanced, and again stopped short, as his eye fell upon that fair and still childlike form, which had once knelt by his side and pleaded, with the orphan, for his brother. While he spoke to her, many recollections, some dark and stern--but those, at least, connected with Camilla, soft and gentle--thrilled through his heart. Occupied as her own thoughts and feelings necessarily were with Sidney, there was something in Vaudemont's appearance--his manner, his voice--which forced upon Camilla a strange and undefined interest; and even Mrs. Beaufort was roused from her customary apathy, as she glanced at that dark and commanding face with something between admiration and fear. Vaudemont had scarcely, however, spoken ten words, when some other guests were announced, and Lord Lilburne was wheeled in upon his sofa shortly afterwards. Vaudemont continued, however, seated next to Camilla, and the embarrassment he had at first felt disappeared. He possessed, when he pleased, that kind of eloquence which belongs to men who have seen much and felt deeply, and whose talk has not been frittered down to the commonplace jargon of the world. His very phraseology was distinct and peculiar, and he had that rarest of all charms in polished life, originality both of thought and of manner. Camilla blushed, when she found at dinner that he placed himself by her side. That evening De Vaudemont excused himself from playing, but the table was easily made without him, and still he continued to converse with the daughter of the man whom he held as his worst foe. By degrees, he turned the conversation into a channel that might lead him to the knowledge he sought.

"It was my fate," said he, "once to become acquainted with an intimate friend of the late Mr. Beaufort. Will you pardon me if I venture to fulfil a promise I made to him, and ask you to inform me what has become of a--a--that is, of Sidney Morton?"

"Sidney Morton! I don't even remember the name. Oh, yes! I have heard it," added Camilla, innocently, and with a candour that showed how little she knew of the secrets of the family; "he was one of two poor boys in whom my brother felt a deep interest--some relations to my uncle. Yes--yes! I remember now. I never knew Sidney, but I once did see his brother."

"Indeed! and you remember--"

"Yes! I was very young then. I scarcely recollect what passed, it was all so confused and strange; but, I know that I made papa very angry, and I was told never to mention the name of Morton again. I believe they behaved very ill to papa."

"And you never learned--never!--the fate of either--of Sidney?"

"Never!"

"But your father must know?"

"I think not; but tell me,"--said Camilla, with girlish and unaffected

innocence, "I have always felt anxious to know,--what and who were those poor boys?"

What and who were they? So deep, then, was the stain upon their name, that the modest mother and the decorous father had never even said to that young girl, "They are your cousins--the children of the man in whose gold we revel!"

Philip bit his lip, and the spell of Camilla's presence seemed vanished. He muttered some inaudible answer, turned away to the card-table, and Liancourt took the chair he had left vacant.

"And how does Miss Beaufort like my friend Vaudemont? I assure you that I have seldom seen him so alive to the fascination of female beauty!"

"Oh!" said Camilla, with her silver laugh, "your nation spoils us for our own countrymen. You forget how little we are accustomed to flattery."

"Flattery! what truth could flatter on the lips of an exile? But you don't answer my question--what think you of Vaudemont? Few are more admired. He is handsome!"

"Is he?" said Camilla, and she glanced at Vaudemont, as he stood at a little distance, thoughtful and abstracted. Every girl forms to herself some untold dream of that which she considers fairest. And Vaudemont had not the delicate and faultless beauty of Sidney. There was nothing that corresponded to her ideal in his marked features and lordly shape! But she owned, reluctantly to herself, that she had seldom seen, among the trim gallants of everyday life, a form so striking and impressive. The air, indeed, was professional--the most careless glance could detect the soldier. But it seemed the soldier of an elder age or a wilder clime. He recalled to her those heads which she had seen in the Beaufort Gallery and other Collections yet more celebrated--portraits by Titian of those warrior statesman who lived in the old Republics of Italy in a perpetual struggle with their kind--images of dark, resolute, earnest men. Even whatever was intellectual in his countenance spoke, as in those portraits, of a mind sharpened rather in active than in studious life;--intellectual, not from the pale hues, the worn exhaustion, and the sunken cheek of the bookman and dreamer, but from its collected and stern repose, the calm depth that lay beneath the fire of the eyes, and the strong will that spoke in the close full lips, and the high but not cloudless forehead.

And, as she gazed, Vaudemont turned round--her eyes fell beneath his, and she felt angry with herself that she blushed. Vaudemont saw the downcast eye, he saw the blush, and the attraction of Camilla's presence was restored. He would have approached her, but at that moment Mr. Beaufort himself entered, and his thoughts went again into a darker channel.

"Yes," said Liancourt, "you must allow Vaudemont looks what he is--a noble fellow and a gallant soldier. Did you never hear of his battle with the tigress? It made a noise in India. I must tell it you as I have heard it."

And while Laincourt was narrating the adventure, whatever it was, to which he referred, the card-table was broken up, and Lord Lilburne, still reclining on his sofa, lazily introduced his brother-in-law to such of the guests as were strangers to him--Vaudemont among the rest. Mr. Beaufort had never seen Philip Morton more than three times; once at Fernside, and the other times by an imperfect light, and when his features were convulsed by passion, and his form disfigured by his dress. Certainly, therefore, had Robert Beaufort even possessed that faculty of memory which is supposed to belong peculiarly to kings and princes, and which recalls every face once seen, it might have tasked the gift to the utmost to have detected, in the bronzed and decorated foreigner to whom he was now presented, the features of the wild and long-lost boy. But still some dim and uneasy presentiment, or some struggling and painful effort of recollection, was in his mind, as he spoke to Vaudemont, and listened to the cold calm tone of his reply.

"Who do you say that Frenchman is?" he whispered to his brother-in-law, as Vaudemont turned away.

"Oh! a cleverish sort of adventurer--a gentleman; he plays.--He has seen a good deal of the world--he rather amuses me--different from other people. I think of asking him to join our circle at Beaufort Court."

Mr. Beaufort coughed huskily, but not seeing any reasonable objection to the proposal, and afraid of rousing the sleeping hyaena of Lord Lilburne's sarcasm, he merely said:--

"Any one you like to invite:" and looking round for some one on whom to vent his displeasure, perceived Camilla still listening to Liancourt. He stalked up to her, and as Liancourt, seeing her rise, rose also and moved away, he said peevishly, "You will never learn to conduct yourself properly; you are to be left here to nurse and comfort your uncle, and not to listen to the gibberish of every French adventurer. Well, Heaven be praised, I have a son--girls are a great plague!"

"So they are, Mr. Beaufort," sighed his wife, who had just joined him, and who was jealous of the preference Lilburne had given to her daughter.

"And so selfish," added Mrs. Beaufort; "they only care for their own amusements, and never mind how uncomfortable their parents are for want of them."

"Oh! dear mamma, don't say so--let me go home with you--I'll speak to my uncle!"

"Nonsense, child! Come along, Mr. Beaufort;" and the affectionate parents went out arm in arm. They did not perceive that Vaudemont had been standing close behind them; but Camilla, now looking up with tears in her eyes, again caught his gaze: he had heard all.

"And they ill-treat her," he muttered: "that divides her from them!--she will be left here--I shall see her again." As he turned to depart,

Lilburne beckoned to him.

"You do not mean to desert our table?"

"No: but I am not very well to-night--to-morrow, if you will allow me."

"Ay, to-morrow; and if you can spare an hour in the morning it will be a charity. You see," he added in a whisper, "I have a nurse, though I have no children. D'ye think that's love? Bah! sir--a legacy! Good night."

"No--no--no!" said Vaudemont to himself, as he walked through the moonlit streets. "No! though my heart burns,--poor murdered felon!--to avenge thy wrongs and thy crimes, revenge cannot come from me--he is Fanny's grandfather and--Camilla's uncle!"

And Camilla, when that uncle had dismissed her for the night, sat down thoughtfully in her own room. The dark eyes of Vaudemont seemed still to shine on her; his voice yet rung in her ear; the wild tales of daring and danger with which Liancourt had associated his name yet haunted her bewildered fancy--she started, frightened at her own thoughts. She took from her bosom some lines that Sidney had addressed to her, and, as she read and re-read, her spirit became calmed to its wonted and faithful melancholy. Vaudemont was forgotten, and the name of Sidney yet murmured on her lips, when sleep came to renew the image of the absent one, and paint in dreams the fairy land of a happy Future!

CHAPTER VI

"Ring on, ye bells--most pleasant is your chime!"

WILSON. Isle of Palms.

"O fairy child! What can I wish for thee?"--Ibid.

Vaudemont remained six days in London without going to H----, and on each of those days he paid a visit to Lord Lilburne. On the seventh day, the invalid being much better, though still unable to leave his room, Camilla returned to Berkeley Square. On the same day, Vaudemont went once more to see Simon and poor Fanny.

As he approached the door, he heard from the window, partially opened, for the day was clear and fine, Fanny's sweet voice. She was chanting one of the simple songs she had promised to learn by heart; and Vaudemont, though but a poor judge of the art, was struck and affected by the music of the voice and the earnest depth of the feeling. He paused opposite the window and called her by her name. Fanny looked forth joyously, and ran, as usual, to open the door to him.

"Oh! you have been so long away; but I already know many of the songs: they say so much that I always wanted to say!"

Vaudemont smiled, but languidly.

"How strange it is," said Fanny, musingly, "that there should be so much in a piece of paper! for, after all," pointing to the open page of her book, "this is but a piece of paper--only there is life in it!"

"Ay," said Vaudemont, gloomily, and far from seizing the subtle delicacy of Fanny's thought--her mind dwelling upon Poetry, and his upon Law,--"ay, and do you know that upon a mere scrap of paper, if I could but find it, may depend my whole fortune, my whole happiness, all that I care for in life?"

"Upon a scrap of paper? Oh! how I wish I could find it! Ah! you look as if you thought I should never be wise enough for that!"

Vaudemont, not listening to her, uttered a deep sigh. Fanny approached him timidly.

"Do not sigh, brother,--I can't bear to hear you sigh. You are changed. Have you, too, not been happy?"

"Happy, Fanny! yes, lately very happy--too happy!"

"Happy, have you? and I--" the girl stopped short--her tone had been that of sadness and reproach, and she stopped--why, she knew not, but she felt her heart sink within her. Fanny suffered him to pass her, and he went straight to his room. Her eyes followed him wistfully: it was not his habit to leave her thus abruptly. The family meal of the day was over; and it was an hour before Vaudemont descended to the parlour. Fanny had put aside the songs; she had no heart to recommence those gentle studies that had been so sweet,--they had drawn no pleasure, no praise from him. She was seated idly and listlessly beside the silent old man, who every day grew more and more silent still. She turned her head as Vaudemont entered, and her pretty lip pouted as that of a neglected child. But he did not heed it, and the pout vanished, and tears rushed to her eyes.

Vaudemont was changed. His countenance was thoughtful and overcast. His manner abstracted. He addressed a few words to Simon, and then, seating himself by the window, leant his cheek on his hand, and was soon lost in reverie. Fanny, finding that he did not speak, and after stealing many a long and earnest glance at his motionless attitude and gloomy brow, rose gently, and gliding to him with her light step, said, in a trembling voice,--

"Are you in pain, brother?"

"No, pretty one!"

"Then why won't you speak to Fanny? Will you not walk with her? Perhaps my grandfather will come too."

"Not this evening. I shall go out; but it will be alone."

"Where? Has not Fanny been good? I have not been out since you left. us. And the grave--brother!--I sent Sarah with the flowers--but--"

Vaudemont rose abruptly. The mention of the grave brought back his thoughts from the dreaming channel into which they had flowed. Fanny, whose very childishness had once so soothed him, now disturbed; he felt the want of that complete solitude which makes the atmosphere of growing passion: he muttered some scarcely audible excuse, and quitted the house. Fanny saw him no more that evening. He did not return till midnight. But Fanny did not sleep till she heard his step on the stairs, and his chamber door close: and when she did sleep, her dreams were disturbed and painful. The next morning, when they met at breakfast (for Vaudemont did not return to London), her eyes were red and heavy, and her cheek pale. And, still buried in meditation, Vaudemont's eye, usually so kind and watchful, did not detect those signs of a grief that Fanny could not have explained. After breakfast, however, he asked her to walk out; and her face brightened as she hastened to put on her bonnet, and take her little basket full of fresh flowers which she had already sent Sarah forth to purchase.

"Fanny," said Vaudemont, as leaving the house, he saw the basket on her arm, "to-day you may place some of those flowers on another tombstone!-- Poor child, what natural goodness there is in that heart!--what pity that--"

He paused. Fanny looked delightedly in his face. "You were praising me --you! And what is a pity, brother?"

While she spoke, the sound of the joy-bells was heard near at hand.

"Hark!" said Vaudemont, forgetting her question--and almost gaily--
"Hark!--I accept the omen. It is a marriage peal!"

He quickened his steps, and they reached the churchyard.

There was a crowd already assembled, and Vaudemont and Fanny paused; and, leaning over the little gate, looked on.

"Why are these people here, and why does the bell ring so merrily?"

"There is to be a wedding, Fanny."

"I have heard of a wedding very often," said Fanny, with a pretty look of puzzlement and doubt, "but I don't know exactly what it means. Will you tell me?--and the bells, too!"

"Yes, Fanny, those bells toll but three times for man! The first time, when he comes into the world; the last time, when he leaves it; the time between when he takes to his side a partner in all the sorrows--in all the joys that yet remain to him; and who, even when the last bell announces his death to this earth, may yet, for ever and ever, be his partner in that world to come--that heaven, where they who are as

innocent as you, Fanny, may hope to live and to love each other in a land in which there are no graves!"

"And this bell?"

"Tolls for that partnership--for the wedding!"

"I think I understand you;--and they who are to be wed are happy?"

"Happy, Fanny, if they love, and their love continue. Oh! conceive the happiness to know some one person dearer to you than your own self--some one breast into which you can pour every thought, every grief, every joy! One person, who, if all the rest of the world were to calumniate or forsake you, would never wrong you by a harsh thought or an unjust word, --who would cling to you the closer in sickness, in poverty, in care,-- who would sacrifice all things to you, and for whom you would sacrifice all--from whom, except by death, night or day, you must be never divided --whose smile is ever at your hearth--who has no tears while you are well and happy, and your love the same. Fanny, such is marriage, if they who marry have hearts and souls to feel that there is no bond on earth so tender and so sublime. There is an opposite picture;--I will not draw that! And as it is, Fanny, you cannot understand me!"

He turned away;--and Fanny's tears were falling like rain upon the grass below;--he did not see them! He entered the churchyard; for the bell now ceased. The ceremony was to begin. He followed the bridal party into the church, and Fanny, lowering her veil, crept after him, awed and trembling.

They stood, unobserved, at a little distance, and heard the service.

The betrothed were of the middle class of life, young, both comely; and their behaviour was such as suited the reverence and sanctity of the rite. Vaudemont stood looking on intently, with his arms folded on his breast. Fanny leant behind him, and apart from all, against one of the pews. And still in her hand, while the priest was solemnising Marriage, she held the flowers intended for the Grave. Even to that MORNING-- hushed, calm, earliest, with her mysterious and un conjectured heart--her shape brought a thought of NIGHT!

When the ceremony was over--when the bride fell on her mother's breast and wept; and then, when turning thence, her eyes met the bridegroom's, and the tears were all smiled away--when, in that one rapid interchange of looks, spoke all that holy love can speak to love, and with timid frankness she placed her hand in his to whom she had just vowed her life,--a thrill went through the hearts of those present. Vaudemont sighed heavily. He heard his sigh echoed; but by one that had in its sound no breath of pain; he turned; Fanny had raised her veil; her eyes met his, moistened, but bright, soft, and her cheeks were rosy-red. Vaudemont recoiled before that gaze, and turned from the church. The persons interested retired to the vestry to sign their names in the registry; the crowd dispersed, and Vaudemont and Fanny stood alone in the burial-ground.

"Look, Fanny," said the former, pointing to a tomb that stood far from his mother's (for those ashes were too hallowed for such a neighbourhood). "Look yonder; it is a new tomb. Fanny, let us approach it. Can you read what is there inscribed?"

The inscription was simply this:

TO W-- G--
MAN SEES THE DEED
GOD THE CIRCUMSTANCE.
JUDGE NOT,
THAT YE BE NOT JUDGED.

"Fanny, this tomb fulfils your pious wish: it is to the memory of him whom you called your father. Whatever was his life here--whatever sentence it hath received, Heaven, at least, will not condemn your piety, if you honour one who was good to you, and place flowers, however idle, even over that grave."

"It is his--my father's--and you have thought of this for me!" said Fanny, taking his hand, and sobbing. "And I have been thinking that you were not so kind to me as you were!"

"Have I not been so kind to you? Nay, forgive me, I am not happy."

"Not?--you said yesterday you had been too happy."

"To remember happiness is not to be happy, Fanny."

"That's true--and--"

Fanny stopped; and, as she bent over the tomb, musing, Vaudemont, willing to leave her undisturbed, and feeling bitterly how little his conscience could vindicate, though it might find palliation for, the dark man who slept not there--retired a few paces.

At this time the new-married pair, with their witnesses, the clergyman, &c., came from the vestry, and crossed the path. Fanny, as she turned from the tomb, saw them, and stood still, looking earnestly at the bride.

"What a lovely face!" said the mother. "Is it--yes it is--the poor idiot girl."

"Ah!" said the bridegroom, tenderly, "and she, Mary, beautiful as she is, she can never make another as happy as you have made me."

Vaudemont heard, and his heart felt sad. "Poor Fanny!--And yet, but for that affliction--I might have loved her, ere I met the fatal face of the daughter of my foe!" And with a deep compassion, an inexpressible and holy fondness, he moved to Fanny.

"Come, my child; now let us go home."

"Stay," said Fanny--"you forget." And she went to strew the flowers still left over Catherine's grave.

"Will my mother," thought Vaudemont, "forgive me, if I have other thoughts than hate and vengeance for that house which builds its greatness over her slandered name?" He groaned:--and that grave had lost its melancholy charm.

CHAPTER VII.

"Of all men, I say,
That dare, for 'tis a desperate adventure,
Wear on their free necks the yoke of women,
Give me a soldier."--_Knight of Malta_.

"So lightly doth this little boat
Upon the scarce-touch'd billows float;
So careless doth she seem to be,
Thus left by herself on the homeless sea,
To lie there with her cheerful sail,
Till Heaven shall send some gracious gale."
WILSON: _Isle of Palms_.

Vaudemont returned that evening to London, and found at his lodgings a note from Lord Lilburne, stating that as his gout was now somewhat mitigated, his physician had recommended him to try change of air--that Beaufort Court was in one of the western counties, in a genial climate--that he was therefore going thither the next day for a short time--that he had asked some of Monsieur de Vaudemont's countrymen, and a few other friends, to enliven the circle of a dull country-house--that Mr. and Mrs. Beaufort would be delighted to see Monsieur de Vaudemont also--and that his compliance with their invitation would be a charity to Monsieur de Vaudemont's faithful and obliged, LILBURNE.

The first sensation of Vaudemont on reading this effusion was delight. "I shall see _her_," he cried; "I shall be under the same roof!" But the glow faded at once from his cheek;--the roof!--what roof? Be the guest where he held himself the lord!--be the guest of Robert Beaufort!--Was that all? Did he not meditate the deadliest war which civilised life admits of--the _War of Law_--war for name, property, that very hearth, with all its household gods, against this man--could he receive his hospitality? "And what then!" he exclaimed, as he paced to and fro the room,--"because her father wronged me, and because I would claim mine own--must I therefore exclude from my thoughts, from my sight, an image so fair and gentle;--the one who knelt by my side, an infant, to that hard man?--Is hate so noble a passion that it is not to admit one glimpse of Love?--_Love_! what word is that? Let me beware in time!" He paused in fierce self-contest, and, throwing open the window, gasped for air. The street in which he lodged was situated in the neighbourhood of St.

James's; and, at that very moment, as if to defeat all opposition, and to close the struggle, Mrs. Beaufort's barouche drove by, Camilla at her side. Mrs. Beaufort, glancing up; languidly bowed; and Camilla herself perceived him, and he saw her change colour as she inclined her head. He gazed after them almost breathless, till the carriage disappeared; and then reclosing the window, he sat down to collect his thoughts, and again to reason with himself. But still, as he reasoned, he saw ever before him that blush and that smile. At last he sprang up, and a noble and bright expression elevated the character of his face,—"Yes, if I enter that house, if I eat that man's bread, and drink of his cup, I must forego, not justice--not what is due to my mother's name--but whatever belongs to hate and vengeance. If I enter that house--and if Providence permit me the means whereby to regain my rights, why she--the innocent one--she may be the means of saving her father from ruin, and stand like an angel by that boundary where justice runs into revenge!--Besides, is it not my duty to discover Sidney? Here is the only clue I shall obtain." With these thoughts he hesitated no more--he decided he would not reject this hospitality, since it might be in his power to pay it back ten thousandfold. "And who knows," he murmured again, "if Heaven, in throwing this sweet being in my way, might not have designed to subdue and chasten in me the angry passions I have so long fed on? I have seen her,--can I now hate her father?"

He sent off his note accepting the invitation. When he had done so, was he satisfied? He had taken as noble and as large a view of the duties thereby imposed on him as he well could take: but something whispered at his heart, "There is weakness in thy generosity--Darest thou love the daughter of Robert Beaufort?" And his heart had no answer to this voice.

The rapidity with which love is ripened depends less upon the actual number of years that have passed over the soil in which the seed is cast, than upon the freshness of the soil itself. A young man who lives the ordinary life of the world, and who fritters away, rather than exhausts, his feelings upon a variety of quick succeeding subjects--the Cynthias of the minute--is not apt to form a real passion at the first sight. Youth is inflammable only when the heart is young!

There are certain times of life when, in either sex, the affections are prepared, as it were, to be impressed with the first fair face that attracts the fancy and delights the eye. Such times are when the heart has been long solitary, and when some interval of idleness and rest succeeds to periods of harsher and more turbulent excitement. It was precisely such a period in the life of Vaudemont. Although his ambition had been for many years his dream, and his sword his mistress, yet naturally affectionate, and susceptible of strong emotion, he had often repined at his lonely lot. By degrees the boy's fantasy and reverence which had wound themselves round the image of Eugenie subsided into that gentle and tender melancholy which, perhaps by weakening the strength of the sterner thoughts, leaves us inclined rather to receive, than to resist, a new attachment;--and on the verge of the sweet Memory trembles the sweet Hope. The suspension of his profession, his schemes, his struggles, his career, left his passions unemployed. Vaudemont was thus unconsciously prepared to love. As we have seen, his first and earliest

feelings directed themselves to Fanny. But he had so immediately detected the clanger, and so immediately recoiled from nursing those thoughts and fancies, without which love dies for want of food, for a person to whom he ascribed the affliction of an imbecility which would give to such a sentiment all the attributes either of the weakest rashness or of dishonour approaching to sacrilege--that the wings of the deity were scared away the instant their very shadow fell upon his mind. And thus, when Camilla rose upon him his heart was free to receive her image. Her graces, her accomplishments, a certain nameless charm that invested her, pleased him even more than her beauty; the recollections connected with that first time in which he had ever beheld her, were also grateful and endearing; the harshness with which her parents spoke to her moved his compassion, and addressed itself to a temper peculiarly alive to the generosity that leans towards the weak and the wronged; the engaging mixture of mildness and gaiety with which she tended her peevish and sneering uncle, convinced him of her better and more enduring qualities of disposition and womanly heart. And even--so strange and contradictory are our feelings--the very remembrance that she was connected with a family so hateful to him made her own image the more bright from the darkness that surrounded it. For was it not with the daughter of his foe that the lover of Verona fell in love at first sight? And is not that a common type of us all--as if Passion delighted in contradictions? As the Diver, in Schiller's exquisite ballad, fastened upon the rock of coral in the midst of the gloomy sea, so we cling the more gratefully to whatever of fair thought and gentle shelter smiles out to us in the depths of Hate and Strife.

But, perhaps, Vaudemont would not so suddenly and so utterly have rendered himself to a passion that began, already, completely to master his strong spirit, if he had not, from Camilla's embarrassment, her timidity, her blushes, intoxicated himself with the belief that his feelings were not unshared. And who knows not that such a belief, once cherished, ripens our own love to a development in which hours are as years?

It was, then, with such emotions as made him almost insensible to every thought but the luxury of breathing the same air as his cousin, which swept from his mind the Past, the Future--leaving nothing but a joyous, a breathless PRESENT on the Face of Time, that he repaired to Beaufort Court. He did not return to H---- before he went, but he wrote to Fanny a short and hurried line to explain that he might be absent for some days at least, and promised to write again, if he should be detained longer than he anticipated.

In the meanwhile, one of those successive revolutions which had marked the eras in Fanny's moral existence took its date from that last time they had walked and conversed together.

The very evening of that day, some hours after Philip was gone, and after Simon had retired to rest, Fanny was sitting before the dying fire in the little parlour in an attitude of deep and pensive reverie. The old woman-servant, Sarah, who, very different from Mrs. Boxer, loved Fanny with her whole heart, came into the room as was her wont before going to

bed, to see that the fire was duly out, and all safe: and as she approached the hearth, she started to see Fanny still up.

"Dear heart alive!" she said; "why, Miss Fanny, you will catch your death of cold,-what are you thinking about?"

"Sit down, Sarah; I want to speak to you." Now, though Fanny was exceedingly kind, and attached to Sarah, she was seldom communicative to her, or indeed to any one. It was usually in its own silence and darkness that that lovely mind worked out its own doubts.

"Do you, my sweet young lady? I'm sure anything I can do--" and Sarah seated herself in her master's great chair, and drew it close to Fanny. There was no light in the room but the expiring fire, and it threw upward a pale glimmer on the two faces bending over it,--the one so strangely beautiful, so smooth, so blooming, so exquisite in its youth and innocence,--the other withered, wrinkled, meagre, and astute. It was like the Fairy and the Witch together.

"Well, miss," said the crone, observing that, after a considerable pause, Fanny was still silent,--"Well--"

"Sarah, I have seen a wedding!"

"Have you?" and the old woman laughed. "Oh! I heard it was to be to-day!--young Waldron's wedding! Yes, they have been long sweethearts."

"Were you ever married, Sarah?"

"Lord bless you,--yes! and a very good husband I had, poor man! But he's dead these many years; and if you had not taken me, I must have gone to the workhus."

"He is dead! Wasn't it very hard to live after that, Sarah?"

"The Lord strengthens the hearts of widders!" observed Sarah, sanctimoniously.

"Did you marry your brother, Sarah?" said Fanny, playing with the corner of her apron.

"My brother!" exclaimed the old woman, aghast. "La! miss, you must not talk in that way,--it's quite wicked and heathenish! One must not marry one's brother!"

"No!" said Fanny, tremblingly, and turning very pale, even by that light. "No!--are you sure of that?"

"It is the wickedest thing even to talk about, my dear young mistress;--but you're like a babby unborn!"

Fanny was silent for some moments. At length she said, unconscious that she was speaking aloud, "But he is not my brother, after all!"

"Oh, miss, fie! Are you letting your pretty head run on the handsome gentleman. _You_, too,--dear, dear! I see we're all alike, we poor female creatures! You! who'd have thought it? Oh, Miss Fanny!--you'll break your heart if you goes for to fancy any such thing."

"Any what thing?"

"Why, that that gentleman will marry you!--I'm sure, tho' he's so simple like, he's some great gentleman! They say his hoss is worth a hundred pounds! Dear, dear! why didn't I ever think of this before? He must be a very wicked man. I see, now, why he comes here. I'll speak to him, that, I will!--a very wicked man!"

Sarah was startled from her indignation by Fanny's rising suddenly, and standing before her in the flickering twilight, almost like a shape transformed,--so tall did she seem, so stately, so dignified.

"Is it of him that you are speaking?" said she, in a voice of calm but deep resentment--"of him! If so, Sarah, we two can live no more in the same house."

And these words were said with a propriety and collectedness that even, through all her terrors, showed at once to Sarah how much they now wronged Fanny who had suffered their lips to repeat the parrot-cry of the "idiot girl!"

"O! gracious me!--miss--ma'am--I am so sorry--I'd rather bite out my tongue than say a word to offend you; it was only my love for you, dear innocent creature that you are!" and the honest woman sobbed with real passion as she clasped Fanny's hand. "There have been so many young persons, good and harmless, yes, even as you are, ruined. But you don't understand me. Miss Fanny! hear me; I must try and say what I would say. That man, that gentleman--so proud, so well-dressed, so grand-like, will never marry you, never--never. And if ever he says he does love you, and you say you love him, and you two don't marry, you will be ruined and wicked, and die--die of a broken heart!"

The earnestness of Sarah's manner subdued and almost awed Fanny. She sank down again in her chair, and suffered the old woman to caress and weep over her hand for some moments in a silence that concealed the darkest and most agitated feelings Fanny's life had hitherto known. At length she said:--

"Why may he not marry me if he loves me?--he is not my brother,--indeed he is not! I'll never call him so again."

"He cannot marry you," said Sarah, resolved, with a sort of rude nobleness, to persevere in what she felt to be a duty; "I don't say anything about money, because that does not always signify. But he cannot marry you, because--because people who are hedicated one way never marry those who are hedicated and brought up in another. A gentleman of that kind requires a wife to know--oh--to know ever so much; and you--"

"Sarah," interrupted Fanny, rising again, but this time with a smile on her face, "don't say anything more about it; I forgive you, if you promise never to speak unkindly of him again--never--never--never, Sarah!"

"But may I just tell him that--that--"

"That what?"

"That you are so young and innocent, and has no pector like; and that if you were to love him it would be a shame in him--that it would!"

And then (oh, no, Fanny, there was nothing clouded now in your reason!)--and then the woman's alarm, the modesty, the instinct, the terror came upon her:--

"Never! never! I will not love him, I do not love him, indeed, Sarah. If you speak to him, I will never look you in the face again. It is all past--all, dear Sarah!"

She kissed the old woman; and Sarah, fancying that her sagacity and counsel had prevailed, promised all she was asked; so they went up-stairs together--friends.

CHAPTER VIII.

"As the wind
Sobs, an uncertain sweetness comes from out
The orange-trees.

Rise up, Olympia.--She sleeps soundly. Ho!
Stirring at last." BARRY CORNWALL.

The next day, Fanny was seen by Sarah counting the little hoard that she had so long and so painfully saved for her benefactor's tomb. The money was no longer wanted for that object. Fanny had found another; she said nothing to Sarah or to Simon. But there was a strange complacent smile upon her lip as she busied herself in her work, that puzzled the old woman. Late at noon came the postman's unwonted knock at the door. A letter!--a letter for Miss Fanny. A letter!--the first she had ever received in her life! And it was from him!--and it began with "Dear Fanny." Vaudemont had called her "dear Fanny" a hundred times, and the expression had become a matter of course. But "Dear Fanny" seemed so very different when it was written. The letter could not well be shorter, nor, all things considered, colder. But the girl found no fault with it. It began with "Dear Fanny," and it ended with "yours truly."
"--Yours truly--mine truly--and how kind to write at all!" Now it so happened that Vaudemont, having never merged the art of the penman into that rapid scrawl into which people, who are compelled to write hurriedly

and constantly, degenerate, wrote a remarkably good hand,--bold, clear, symmetrical--almost too good a hand for one who was not to make money by calligraphy. And after Fanny had got the words by heart, she stole gently to a cupboard and took forth some specimens of her own hand, in the shape of house and work memoranda, and extracts which, the better to help her memory, she had made from the poem-book Vaudemont had given her. She gravely laid his letter by the side of these specimens, and blushed at the contrast; yet, after all, her own writing, though trembling and irresolute, was far from a bad or vulgar hand. But emulation was now fairly roused within her. Vaudemont, pre-occupied by more engrossing thoughts, and indeed, forgetting a danger which had seemed so thoroughly to have passed away, did not in his letter caution Fanny against going out alone. She remarked this; and having completely recovered her own alarm at the attempt that had been made on her liberty, she thought she was now released from her promise to guard against a past and imaginary peril. So after dinner she slipped out alone, and went to the mistress of the school where she had received her elementary education. She had ever since continued her acquaintance with that lady, who, kindhearted, and touched by her situation, often employed her industry, and was far from blind to the improvement that had for some time been silently working in the mind of her old pupil.

Fanny had a long conversation with this lady, and she brought back a bundle of books. The light might have been seen that night, and many nights after, burning long and late from her little window. And having recovered her old freedom of habits, which Simon, poor man, did not notice, and which Sarah, thinking that anything was better than moping at home, did not remonstrate against, Fanny went out regularly for two hours, or sometimes for even a longer period, every evening after old Simon had composed himself to the nap that filled up the interval between dinner and tea.

In a very short time--a time that with ordinary stimulants would have seemed marvellously short--Fanny's handwriting was not the same thing; her manner of talking became different; she no longer called herself "Fanny" when she spoke; the music of her voice was more quiet and settled; her sweet expression of face was more thoughtful; the eyes seemed to have deepened in their very colour; she was no longer heard chanting to herself as she tripped along. The books that she nightly fed on had passed into her mind; the poetry that had ever unconsciously sported round her young years began now to create poetry in herself. Nay, it might almost have seemed as if that restless disorder of the intellect, which the dullards had called Idiotcy, had been the wild efforts, not of Folly, but of GENIUS seeking to find its path and outlet from the cold and dreary solitude to which the circumstances of her early life had compelled it.

Days, even weeks, passed--she never spoke of Vaudemont. And once, when Sarah, astonished and bewildered by the change in her young mistress, asked:

"When does the gentleman come back?"

Fanny answered, with a mysterious smile, "Not yet, I hope,--not quite yet!"

CHAPTER IX.

"Thierry. I do begin
To feel an alteration in my nature,
And in his full-sailed confidence a shower
Of gentle rain, that falling on the fire
Hath quenched it.

How is my heart divided
Between the duty of a son and love!"

BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER: _Thierry and Theodorat_.

Vaudemont had now been a month at Beaufort Court. The scene of a country-house, with the sports that enliven it, and the accomplishments it calls forth, was one in which he was well fitted to shine. He had been an excellent shot as a boy; and though long unused to the fowling-piece, had, in India, acquired a deadly precision with the rifle; so that a very few days of practice in the stubbles and covers of Beaufort Court made his skill the theme of the guests and the admiration of the keepers. Hunting began, and--this pursuit, always so strong a passion in the active man, and which, to the turbulence and agitation of his half-tamed breast, now excited by a kind of frenzy of hope and fear, gave a vent and release--was a sport in which he was yet more fitted to excel. His horsemanship, his daring, the stone walls he leaped and the floods through which he dashed, furnished his companions with wondering tale and comment on their return home. Mr. Marsden, who, with some other of Arthur's early friends, had been invited to Beaufort Court, in order to welcome its expected heir, and who retained all the prudence which had distinguished him of yore, when having ridden over old Simon he dismounted to examine the knees of his horse;--Mr. Marsden, a skilful huntsman, who rode the most experienced horses in the world, and who generally contrived to be in at the death without having leaped over anything higher than a hurdle, suffering the bolder quadruped (in case what is called the "knowledge of the country"--that is, the knowledge of gaps and gates--failed him) to perform the more dangerous feats alone, as he quietly scrambled over or scrambled through upon foot, and remounted the well-taught animal when it halted after the exploit, safe and sound; --Mr. Marsden declared that he never saw a rider with so little judgment as Monsieur de Vaudemont, and that the devil was certainly in him.

This sort of reputation, commonplace and merely physical as it was in itself, had a certain effect upon Camilla; it might be an effect of fear. I do not say, for I do not know, what her feelings towards Vaudemont exactly were. As the calmest natures are often those the most hurried away by their contraries, so, perhaps, he awed and dazzled rather than pleased her;--at least, he certainly forced himself on her interest. Still she would have started in terror if any one had said to her, "Do

you love your betrothed less than when you met by that happy lake?"--and her heart would have indignantly rebuked the questioner. The letters of her lover were still long and frequent; hers were briefer and more subdued. But then there was constraint in the correspondence--it was submitted to her mother. Whatever might be Vaudemont's manner to Camilla whenever occasion threw them alone together, he certainly did not make his attentions glaring enough to be remarked. His eye watched her rather than his lip addressed; he kept as much aloof as possible from the rest of her family, and his customary bearing was silent even to gloom. But there were moments when he indulged in a fitful exuberance of spirits, which had something strained and unnatural. He had outlived Lord Lilburne's short liking; for since he had resolved no longer to keep watch on that noble gamester's method of play, he played but little himself; and Lord Lilburne saw that he had no chance of ruining him--there was, therefore, no longer any reason to like him. But this was not all; when Vaudemont had been at the house somewhat more than two weeks, Lilburne, petulant and impatient, whether at his refusals to join the card-table, or at the moderation with which, when he did, he confined his ill-luck to petty losses, one day limped up to him, as he stood at the embrasure of the window, gazing on the wide lands beyond, and said:--

"Vaudemont, you are bolder in hunting, they tell me, than you are at whist."

"Honours don't tell against one--over a hedge!"

"What do you mean?" said Lilburne, rather haughtily.

Vaudemont was, at that moment, in one of those bitter moods when the sense of his situation, the sight of the usurper in his home, often swept away the gentler thoughts inspired by his fatal passion. And the tone of Lord Lilburne, and his loathing to the man, were too much for his temper.

"Lord Lilburne," he said, and his lip curled, "if you had been born poor, you would have made a great fortune--you play luckily."

"How am I to take this, sir?"

"As you please," answered Vaudemont, calmly, but with an eye of fire. And he turned away.

Lilburne remained on the spot very thoughtful: "Hum! he suspects me. I cannot quarrel on such ground--the suspicion itself dishonours me--I must seek another."

The next day, Lilburne, who was familiar with Mr. Harsden (though the latter gentleman never played at the same table), asked that prudent person after breakfast if he happened to have his pistols with him.

"Yes; I always take them into the country--one may as well practise when one has the opportunity. Besides, sportsmen are often quarrelsome; and if it is known that one shoots well,--it keeps one out of quarrels!"

"Very true," said Lilburne, rather admiringly. "I have made the same remark myself when I was younger. I have not shot with a pistol for since years. I am well enough now to walk out with the help of a stick. Suppose we practise for half-an-hour or so."

"With all my heart," said Mr. Marsden.

The pistols were brought, and they strolled forth;--Lord Lilburne found his hand out.

"As I never hunt now," said the peer, and he gnashed his teeth, and glanced at his maimed limb; "for though lameness would not prevent my keeping my seat, violent exercise hurts my leg; and Brodie says any fresh accident might bring on tic douloureux;--and as my gout does not permit me to join the shooting parties at present, it would be a kindness in you to lend me your pistols--it would while away an hour or so; though, thank Heaven, my duelling days are over!"

"Certainly," said Mr. Marsden; and the pistols were consigned to Lord Lilburne.

Four days from the date, as Mr. Marsden, Vaudemont, and some other gentlemen were making for the covers, they came upon Lord Lilburne, who, in a part of the park not within sight or sound of the house, was amusing himself with Mr. Marsden's pistols, which Dykeman was at hand to load for him.

He turned round, not at all disconcerted by the interruption.

"You have no idea how I've improved, Marsden:--just see!" and he pointed to a glove nailed to a tree. "I've hit that mark twice in five times; and every time I have gone straight enough along the line to have killed my man."

"Ay, the mark itself does not so much signify," said Mr. Marsden, "at least, not in actual duelling--the great thing is to be in the line."

While he spoke, Lord Lilburne's ball went a third time through the glove. His cold bright eye turned on Vaudemont, as he said, with a smile,--

"They tell me you shoot well with a fowling-piece, my dear Vaudemont--are you equally adroit with a pistol?"

"You may see, if you like; but you take aim, Lord Lilburne; that would be of no use in English duelling. Permit me."

He walked to the glove, and tore from it one of the fingers, which he fastened separately to the tree, took the pistol from Dykeman as he walked past him, gained the spot whence to fire, turned at once round, without apparent aim, and the finger fell to the ground.

Lilburne stood aghast.

"That's wonderful!" said Marsden; "quite wonderful. Where the devil did you get such a knack?--for it is only knack after all!"

"I lived for many years in a country where the practice was constant, where all that belongs to rifle-shooting was a necessary accomplishment--a country in which man had often to contend against the wild beast. In civilised states, man himself supplies the place of the wild beast--but we don't hunt him!--Lord Lilburne" (and this was added with a smiling and disdainful whisper), "you must practise a little more."

But, disregarding the advice, from that day Lord Lilburne's morning occupation was gone. He thought no longer of a duel with Vaudemont. As soon as the sportsman had left him, he bade Dykeman take up the pistols, and walked straight home into the library, where Robert Beaufort, who was no sportsman, generally spent his mornings.

He flung himself into an arm-chair, and said, as he stirred the fire with unusual vehemence,--

"Beaufort, I'm very sorry I asked you to invite Vaudemont. He's a very ill-bred, disagreeable fellow!" Beaufort threw down his steward's account-book, on which he was employed, and replied,--

"Lilburne, I have never had an easy moment since that man has been in the house. As he was your guest, I did not like to speak before, but don't you observe--you must observe--how like he is to the old family portraits? The more I have examined him, the more another resemblance grows upon me. In a word," said Robert, pausing and breathing hard, "if his name were not Vaudemont--if his history were not, apparently, so well known, I should say--I should swear, that it is Philip Morton who sleeps under this roof!"

"Ha!" said Lilburne, with an earnestness that surprised Beaufort, who expected to have heard his brother-in-law's sneering sarcasm at his fears; "the likeness you speak of to the old portraits did strike me; it struck Marsden, too, the other day, as we were passing through the picture-gallery; and Marsden remarked it aloud to Vaudemont. I remember now that he changed countenance and made no answer. Hush! hush! hold your tongue, let me think--let me think. This Philip--yes--yes--I and Arthur saw him with--with Gawtreys--in Paris--"

"Gawtreys! was that the name of the rogue he was said to--"

"Yes--yes--yes. Ah! now I guess the meaning of those looks--those words," muttered Lilburne between his teeth. "This pretension to the name of Vaudemont was always apocryphal--the story always but half believed--the invention of a woman in love with him--the claim on your property is made at the very time he appears in England. Ha! Have you a newspaper there? Give it me. No! 'tis not in this paper. Ring the bell for the file!"

"What's the matter? you terrify me!" gasped out Mr. Beaufort, as he rang the bell.

"Why! have you not seen an advertisement repeated several times within the last month?"

"I never read advertisements; except in the county paper, if land is to be sold."

"Nor I often; but this caught my eye. John" (here the servant entered), "bring the file of the newspapers. The name of the witness whom Mrs. Morton appealed to was Smith, the same name as the captain; what was the Christian name?"

"I don't remember."

"Here are the papers--shut the door--and here is the advertisement: 'If Mr. William Smith, son of Jeremiah Smith, who formerly rented the farm of Shipdale-Bury, under the late Right Hon. Charles Leopold Beaufort (that's your uncle), and who emigrated in the year 18-- to Australia, will apply to Mr. Barlow, Solicitor, Essex Street, Strand, he will hear of something to his advantage.'"

"Good Heavens! why did not you mention this to me before?"

"Because I did not think it of any importance. In the first place, there might be some legacy left to the man, quite distinct from your business. Indeed, that was the probable supposition;--or even if connected with the claim, such an advertisement might be but a despicable attempt to frighten you. Never mind--don't look so pale--after all, this is a proof that the witness is not found--that Captain Smith is neither the Smith, nor has discovered where the Smith is!"

"True!" observed Mr. Beaufort: "true--very true!"

"Humph!" said Lord Lilburne, who was still rapidly glancing over the file--"Here is another advertisement which I never saw before: this looks suspicious: 'If the person who called on the -- of September, on Mr. Morton, linendraper, &c., of N---, will renew his application personally or by letter, he may now obtain the information he sought for.'"

"Morton!--the woman's brother! their uncle! it is too clear!"

"But what brings this man, if he be really Philip Morton, what brings him here!--to spy or to threaten?"

"I will get him out of the house this day."

"No--no; turn the watch upon himself. I see now; he is attracted by your daughter; sound her quietly; don't tell her to discourage his confidences; find out if he ever speaks of these Mortons. Ha! I recollect--he has spoken to me of the Mortons, but vaguely--I forget what. Humph! this is a man of spirit and daring--watch him, I say,--watch him! When does Arthur come back?"

"He has been travelling so slowly, for he still complains of his health, and has had relapses; but he ought to be in Paris this week, perhaps he is there now. Good Heavens! he must not meet this man!"

"Do what I tell you! get out all from your daughter. Never fear: he can do nothing against you except by law. But if he really like Camilla--"

"He!--Philip Morton--the adventurer--the--"

"He is the eldest son: remember you thought even of accepting the second. He--nay find the witness--he may win his suit; if he likes Camilla, there may be a compromise."

Mr. Beaufort felt as if turned to ice.

"You think him likely to win this infamous suit, then?" he faltered.

"Did not you guard against the possibility by securing the brother? More worth while to do it with this man. Hark ye! the politics of private are like those of public life,--when the state can't crush a demagogue, it should entice him over. If you can ruin this dog" (and Lilburne stamped his foot fiercely, forgetful of the gout), "ruin him! hang him! If you can't" (and here with a wry face he caressed the injured foot), "if you can't ('sdeath, what a twinge!), and he can ruin you,--bring him into the family, and make his secret ours! I must go and lie down--I have overexcited myself."

In great perplexity Beaufort repaired at once to Camilla. His nervous agitation betrayed itself, though he smiled a ghastly smile, and intended to be exceeding cool and collected. His questions, which confused and alarmed her, soon drew out the fact that the very first time Vaudemont had been introduced to her he had spoken of the Mortons; and that he had often afterwards alluded to the subject, and seemed at first strongly impressed with the notion that the younger brother was under Beaufort's protection; though at last he appeared reluctantly convinced of the contrary. Robert, however agitated, preserved at least enough of his natural slyness not to let out that he suspected Vaudemont to be Philip Morton himself, for he feared lest his daughter should betray that suspicion to its object.

"But," he said, with a look meant to win confidence, "I dare say he knows these young men. I should like myself to know more about them. Learn all you can, and tell me, and, I say--I say, Camilla,--he! he! he!--you have made a conquest, you little flirt, you! Did he, this Vaudemont, ever say how much he admired you?"

"He!--never!" said Camilla, blushing, and then turning pale.

"But he looks it. Ah! you say nothing, then. Well, well, don't discourage him; that is to say,--yes, don't discourage him. Talk to him as much as you can,--ask him about his own early life. I've a particular wish to know--'tis of great importance to me."

"But, my dear father," said Camilla, trembling and thoroughly bewildered, "I fear this man,--I fear--I fear--"

Was she going to add, "I fear myself?" I know not; but she stopped short, and burst into tears.

"Hang these girls!" muttered Mr. Beaufort, "always crying when they ought to be of use to one. Go down, dry your eyes, do as I tell you,-- get all you can from him. Fear him!--yes, I dare say she does!" muttered the poor man, as he closed the door.

From that time what wonder that Camilla's manner to Vaudemont was yet more embarrassed than ever: what wonder that he put his own heart's interpretation on that confusion. Beaufort took care to thrust her more often than before in his way; he suddenly affected a creeping, fawning civility to Vaudemont; he was sure he was fond of music; what did he think of that new air Camilla was so fond of? He must be a judge of scenery, he who had seen so much: there were beautiful landscapes in the neighbourhood, and, if he would forego his sports, Camilla drew prettily, had an eye for that sort of thing, and was so fond of riding.

Vaudemont was astonished at this change, but his delight was greater than the astonishment. He began to perceive that his identity was suspected; perhaps Beaufort, more generous than he had deemed him, meant to repay every early wrong or harshness by one inestimable blessing. The generous interpret motives in extremes--ever too enthusiastic or too severe. Vaudemont felt as if he had wronged the wronger; he began to conquer even his dislike to Robert Beaufort. For some days he was thus thrown much with Camilla; the questions her father forced her to put to him, uttered tremulously and fearfully, seemed to him proof of her interest in his fate. His feelings to Camilla, so sudden in their growth--so ripened and so favoured by the Sub-Ruler of the world--CIRCUMSTANCE--might not, perhaps, have the depth and the calm completeness of that, One True Love, of which there are many counterfeits,--and which in Man, at least, possibly requires the touch and mellowness, if not of time, at least of many memories--of perfect and tried conviction of the faith, the worth, the value and the beauty of the heart to which it clings;--but those feelings were, nevertheless, strong, ardent, and intense. He believed himself beloved--he was in Elysium. But he did not yet declare the passion that beamed in his eyes. No! he would not yet claim the hand of Camilla Beaufort, for he imagined the time would soon come when he could claim it, not as the inferior or the suppliant, but as the lord of her father's fate.

CHAPTER X.

"Here's something got amongst us!"--_Knight of Malta_.

Two or three nights after his memorable conversation with Robert

Beaufort, as Lord Lilburne was undressing, he said to his valet:

"Dykeman, I am getting well."

"Indeed, my lord, I never saw your lordship look better."

"There you lie. I looked better last year--I looked better the year before--and I looked better and better every year back to the age of twenty-one! But I'm not talking of looks, no man with money wants looks. I am talking of feelings. I feel better. The gout is almost gone. I have been quiet now for a month--that's a long time--time wasted when, at my age, I have so little time to waste. Besides, as you know, I am very much in love!"

"In love, my lord? I thought that you told me never to speak of--"

"Blockhead! what the deuce was the good of speaking about it when I was wrapped in flannels! I am never in love when I am ill--who is? I am well now, or nearly so; and I've had things to vex me--things to make this place very disagreeable; I shall go to town, and before this day week, perhaps, that charming face may enliven the solitude of Fernside. I shall look to it myself now. I see you're going to say something. Spare yourself the trouble! nothing ever goes wrong if I myself take it in hand."

The next day Lord Lilburne, who, in truth, felt himself uncomfortable and _gene_ in the presence of Vaudemont; who had won as much as the guests at Beaufort Court seemed inclined to lose; and who made it the rule of his life to consult his own pleasure and amusement before anything else, sent for his post-horses, and informed his brother-in-law of his departure.

"And you leave me alone with this man just when I am convinced that he is the person we suspected! My dear Lilburne, do stay till he goes."

"Impossible! I am between fifty and sixty--every moment is precious at that time of life. Besides, I've said all I can say; rest quiet--act on the defensive--entangle this cursed Vaudemont, or Morton, or whoever he be, in the mesh of your daughter's charms, and then get rid of him, not before. This can do no harm, let the matter turn out how it will. Read the papers; and send for Blackwell if you want advice on any, new advertisements. I don't see that anything more is to be done at present. You can write to me; I shall be at Park Lane or Fernside. Take care of yourself. You're a lucky fellow--you never have the gout! Good-bye."

And in half an hour Lord Lilburne was on the road to London.

The departure of Lilburne was a signal to many others, especially and naturally to those he himself had invited. He had not announced to such visitors his intention of going till his carriage was at the door. This might be delicacy or carelessness, just as people chose to take it: and how they did take it, Lord Lilburne, much too selfish to be well-bred, did not care a rush. The next day half at least of the guests were gone; and even Mr. Marsden, who had been specially invited on Arthur's account,

announced that he should go after dinner! he always travelled by night-- he slept well on the road--a day was not lost by it.

"And it is so long since you saw Arthur," said Mr. Beaufort, in remonstrance, "and I expect him every day."

"Very sorry--best fellow in the world--but the fact is, that I am not very well myself. I want a little sea air; I shall go to Dover or Brighton. But I suppose you will have the house full again about Christmas; in that case I shall be delighted to repeat my visit."

The fact was, that Mr. Marsden, without Lilburne's intellect on the one hand, or vices on the other, was, like that noble sensualist, one of the broken pieces of the great looking-glass "SELF." He was noticed in society as always haunting the places where Lilburne played at cards, carefully choosing some other table, and as carefully betting upon Lilburne's side. The card-tables were now broken up; Vaudemont's superiority in shooting, and the manner in which he engrossed the talk of the sportsmen, displeased him. He was bored--he wanted to be off--and off he went. Vaudemont felt that the time was come for him to depart, too; Robert Beaufort--who felt in his society the painful fascination of the bird with the boa, who hated to see him there, and dreaded to see him depart, who had not yet extracted all the confirmation of his persuasions that he required, for Vaudemont easily enough parried the artless questions of Camilla--pressed him to stay with so eager a hospitality, and made Camilla herself falter out, against her will, and even against her remonstrances--(she never before had dared to remonstrate with either father or mother),--"Could not you stay a few days longer?"--that Vaudemont was too contented to yield to his own inclinations; and so for some little time longer he continued to move before the eyes of Mr. Beaufort--stern, sinister, silent, mysterious--like one of the family pictures stepped down from its frame. Vaudemont wrote, however, to Fanny, to excuse his delay; and anxious to hear from her as to her own and Simon's health, bade her direct her letter to his lodging in London (of which he gave her the address), whence, if he still continued to defer his departure, it would be forwarded to him. He did not do this, however, till he had been at Beaufort Court several days after Lilburne's departure, and till, in fact, two days before the eventful one which closed his visit.

The party, now greatly diminished; were at breakfast, when the servant entered, as usual, with the letter-bag. Mr. Beaufort, who was always important and pompous in the small ceremonials of life, unlocked the precious deposit with slow dignity, drew forth the newspapers, which he threw on the table, and which the gentlemen of the party eagerly seized; then, diving out one by one, jerked first a letter to Camilla, next a letter to Vaudemont, and, thirdly, seized a letter for himself.

"I beg that there may be no ceremony, Monsieur de Vaudemont: pray excuse me and follow my example: I see this letter is from my son;" and he broke the seal.

The letter ran thus:

"MY DEAR FATHER,--Almost as soon as you receive this, I shall be with you. Ill as I am, I can have no peace till I see and consult you. The most startling--the most painful intelligence has just been conveyed to me. It is of a nature not to bear any but personal communication.

"Your affectionate son,

"ARTHUR BEAUFORT.

"Boulogne.

"P.S.--This will go by the same packet-boat that I shall take myself, and can only reach you a few hours before I arrive."

Mr. Beaufort's trembling hand dropped the letter--he grasped the elbow of the chair to save himself from falling. It was clear!--the same visitor who had persecuted himself had now sought his son! He grew sick, his son might have heard the witness--might be convinced. His son himself now appeared to him as a foe--for the father dreaded the son's honour! He glanced furtively round the table, till his eye rested on Vaudemont, and his terror was redoubled, for Vaudemont's face, usually so calm, was animated to an extraordinary degree, as he now lifted it from the letter he had just read. Their eyes met. Robert Beaufort looked on him as a prisoner at the bar looks on the accusing counsel, when he first commences his harangue.

"Mr. Beaufort," said the guest, "the letter you have given me summons me to London on important business, and immediately. Suffer me to send for horses at your earliest convenience."

"What's the matter?" said the feeble and seldom heard voice of Mrs. Beaufort. "What's the matter, Robert?--is Arthur coming?"

"He comes to-day," said the father, with a deep sigh; and Vaudemont, at that moment rising from his half-finished breakfast, with a bow that included the group, and with a glance that lingered on Camilla, as she bent over her own unopened letter (a letter from Winandermere, the seal of which she dared not yet to break), quitted the room. He hastened to his own chamber, and strode to and fro with a stately step--the step of the Master--then, taking forth the letter, he again hurried over its contents. They ran thus:

DEAR, Sir,--At last the missing witness has applied to me. He proves to be, as you conjectured, the same person who had called on Mr. Roger Morton; but as there are some circumstances on which I wish to take your instructions without a moment's delay, I shall leave London by the mail, and wait you at D---- (at the principal inn), which is, I understand, twenty miles on the high road from Beaufort Court.

"I have the honor to be, sir,

"Yours, &c.,

"JOHN BARLOW.

Vaudemont was yet lost in the emotions that this letter aroused, when they came to announce that his chaise was arrived. As he went down the stairs he met Camilla, who was on the way to her own room.

"Miss Beaufort," said he, in a low and tremulous voice, "in wishing you farewell I may not now say more. I leave you, and, strange to say, I do not regret it, for I go upon an errand that may entitle me to return again, and speak those thoughts which are uppermost in my soul even at this moment."

He raised her hand to his lips as he spoke, and at that moment Mr. Beaufort looked from the door of his own room, and cried, "Camilla." She was too glad to escape. Philip gazed after her light form for an instant, and then hurried down the stairs.

CHAPTER XI.

"_Longueville_--What! are you married, Beaufort?

Beaufort--Ay, as fast

As words, and hands, and hearts, and priest,

Could make us."--BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER: _Noble Gentleman_.

In the parlour of the inn at D----- sat Mr. John Barlow. He had just finished his breakfast, and was writing letters and looking over papers connected with his various business--when the door was thrown open, and a gentleman entered abruptly.

"Mr. Beaufort," said the lawyer rising, "Mr. Philip Beaufort--for such I now feel you are by right--though," he added, with his usual formal and quiet smile, "not yet by law; and much--very much, remains to be done to make the law and the right the same;--I congratulate you on having something at last to work on. I had begun to despair of finding our witness, after a month's advertising; and had commenced other investigations, of which I will speak to you presently, when yesterday, on my return to town from an errand on your business, I had the pleasure of a visit from William Smith himself.--My dear sir, do not yet be too sanguine.--It seems that this poor fellow, having known misfortune, was in America when the first fruitless inquiries were made. Long after this he returned to the colony, and there met with a brother, who, as I drew from him, was a convict. He helped the brother to escape. They both came to England. William learned from a distant relation, who lent him some little money, of the inquiry that had been set on foot for him; consulted his brother, who desired him to leave all to his management. The brother afterwards assured him that you and Mr. Sidney were both dead; and it seems (for the witness is simple enough to allow me to extract all) this same brother then went to Mr. Beaufort to hold out the threat of a lawsuit, and to offer the sale of the evidence yet existing--"

"And Mr. Beaufort?"

"I am happy to say, seems to have spurned the offer. Meanwhile William, incredulous of his brother's report, proceeded to N---, learned nothing from Mr. Morton, met his brother again--and the brother (confessing that he had deceived him in the assertion that you and Mr. Sidney were dead) told him that he had known you in earlier life, and set out to Paris to seek you--"

"Known me?--To Paris?"

"More of this presently. William returned to town, living hardly and penuriously on the little his brother bestowed on him, too melancholy and too poor for the luxury of a newspaper, and never saw our advertisement, till, as luck would have it, his money was out; he had heard nothing further of his brother, and he went for new assistance to the same relation who had before aided him. This relation, to his surprise, received the poor man very kindly, lent him what he wanted, and then asked him if he had not seen our advertisement. The newspaper shown him. contained both the advertisements--that relating to Mr. Morton's visitor, that containing his own name. He coupled them both together--called on me at once. I was from town on your business. He returned to his own home; the next morning (yesterday morning) came a letter from his brother, which I obtained from him at last, and with promises that no harm should happen to the writer on account of it."

Vaudemont took the letter and read as follows:

"DEAR WILLIAM,--No go about the youngster I went after: all researches in vane. Paris develish expensive. Never mind, I have sene the other--the young B--; different sort of fellow from his father--very ill--frightened out of his wits--will go off to the governor, take me with him as far as Bullone. I think we shall settel it now. Mind as I saide before, don't put your foot in it. I send you a Nap in the Seele--all I can spare.

"Yours,

"JEREMIAH SMITH.

"Direct to me, Monsieur Smith--always a safe name--Ship Inn, Bullone."

"Jeremiah--Smith--Jeremiah!"

"Do you know the name then?" said Mr. Barlow. "Well; the poor man owns that he was frightened at his brother--that he wished to do what is right--that he feared his brother would not let him--that your father was very kind to him--and so he came off at once to me; and I was very luckily at home to assure him that the heir was alive, and prepared to assert his rights. Now then, Mr. Beaufort, we have the witness, but will that suffice us? I fear not. Will the jury believe him with no other testimony at his back? Consider!--When he was gone I put myself in communication with some officers at Bow Street about this brother of his

--a most notorious character, commonly called in the police slang Dashing Jerry--"

"Ah! Well, proceed!"

"Your one witness, then, is a very poor, penniless man, his brother a rogue, a convict: this witness, too, is the most timid, fluctuating, irresolute fellow I ever saw; I should tremble for his testimony against a sharp, bullying lawyer. And that, sir, is all at present we have to look to."

"I see--I see. It is dangerous--it is hazardous. But truth is truth; justice--justice! I will run the risk."

"Pardon me, if I ask, did you ever know this brother?--were you ever absolutely acquainted with him--in the same house?"

"Many years since--years of early hardship and trial--I was acquainted with him--what then?"

"I am sorry to hear it," and the lawyer looked grave. "Do you not see that if this witness is browbeat--is disbelieved, and if it be shown that you, the claimant, was--forgive my saying it--intimate with a brother of such a character, why the whole thing might be made to look like perjury and conspiracy. If we stop here it is an ugly business!"

"And is this all you have to say to me? The witness is found--the only surviving witness--the only proof I ever shall or ever can obtain, and you seek to terrify me--me too--from using the means for redress Providence itself vouchsafes me--Sir, I will not hear you!"

"Mr. Beaufort, you are impatient--it is natural. But if we go to law--that is, should I have anything to do with it, wait--wait till your case is good. And hear me yet. This is not the only proof--this is not the only witness; you forget that there was an examined copy of the register; we may yet find that copy, and the person who copied it may yet be alive to attest it. Occupied with this thought, and weary of waiting the result of our advertisement, I resolved to go into the neighbourhood of Fernside; luckily, there was a gentleman's seat to be sold in the village. I made the survey of this place my apparent business. After going over the house, I appeared anxious to see how far some alterations could be made--alterations to render it more like Lord Lilburne's villa. This led me to request a sight of that villa--a crown to the housekeeper got me admittance. The housekeeper had lived with your father, and been retained by his lordship. I soon, therefore, knew which were the rooms the late Mr. Beaufort had principally occupied; shown into his study, where it was probable he would keep his papers, I inquired if it were the same furniture (which seemed likely enough from its age and fashion) as in your father's time: it was so; Lord Lilburne had bought the house just as it stood, and, save a few additions in the drawing-room, the general equipment of the villa remained unaltered. You look impatient!--I'm coming to the point. My eye fell upon an old-fashioned bureau--"

"But we searched every drawer in that bureau!"

"Any secret drawers?"

"Secret drawers! No! there were no secret drawers that I ever heard of!"

Mr. Barlow rubbed his hands and mused a moment.

"I was struck with that bureau; for any father had had one like it. It is not English--it is of Dutch manufacture."

"Yes, I have heard that my father bought it at a sale, three or four years after his marriage."

"I learned this from the housekeeper, who was flattered by my admiring it. I could not find out from her at what sale it had been purchased, but it was in the neighbourhood she was sure. I had now a date to go upon; I learned, by careless inquiries, what sales near Fernside had taken place in a certain year. A gentleman had died at that date whose furniture was sold by auction. With great difficulty, I found that his widow was still alive, living far up the country: I paid her a visit; and, not to fatigue you with too long an account, I have only to say that she not only assured me that she perfectly remembered the bureau, but that it had secret drawers and wells, very curiously contrived; nay, she showed me the very catalogue in which the said receptacles are noticed in capitals, to arrest the eye of the bidder, and increase the price of the bidding. That your father should never have revealed where he stowed this document is natural enough, during the life of his uncle; his own life was not spared long enough to give him much opportunity to explain afterwards, but I feel perfectly persuaded in my mind--that unless Mr. Robert Beaufort discovered that paper amongst the others he examined--in one of those drawers will be found all we want to substantiate your claims. This is the more likely from your father never mentioning, even to your mother apparently, the secret receptacles in the bureau. Why else such mystery? The probability is that he received the document either just before or at the time he purchased the bureau, or that he bought it for that very purpose: and, having once deposited the paper in a place he deemed secure from curiosity--accident, carelessness, policy, perhaps, rather shame itself (pardon me) for the doubt of your mother's discretion, that his secrecy seemed to imply, kept him from ever alluding to the circumstance, even when the intimacy of after years made him more assured of your mother's self-sacrificing devotion to his interests. At his uncle's death he thought to repair all!"

"And how, if that be true--if that Heaven which has delivered me hitherto from so many dangers, has, in the very secrecy of my poor father, saved my birthright from the gripe of the usurper--how, I say, is---"

"The bureau to pass into our possession? That is the difficulty. But we must contrive it somehow, if all else fail us; meanwhile, as I now feel sure that there has been a copy of that register made, I wish to know whether I should not immediately cross the country into Wales, and see if

I can find any person in the neighbourhood of A----- who did examine the copy taken: for, mark you, the said copy is only of importance as leading to the testimony of the actual witness who took it."

"Sir," said Vaudemont, heartily shaking Mr. Barlow by the hand, "forgive my first petulance. I see in you the very man I desired and wanted--your acuteness surprises and encourages me. Go to Wales, and God speed you!"

"Very well!--in five minutes I shall be off. Meanwhile, see the witness yourself; the sight of his benefactor's son will do more to keep him steady than anything else. There's his address, and take care not to give him money. And now I will order my chaise--the matter begins to look worth expense. Oh! I forgot to say that Monsieur Liancourt called on you yesterday about his own affairs. He wishes much to consult you. I told him you would probably be this evening in town, and he said he would wait you at your lodging."

"Yes--I will lose not a moment in going to London, and visiting our witness. And he saw my mother at the altar! My poor mother--Ah, how could my father have doubted her!" and as he spoke, he blushed for the first time with shame at that father's memory. He could not yet conceive that one so frank, one usually so bold and open, could for years have preserved from the woman who had sacrificed all to him, a secret to her so important! That was, in fact, the only blot on his father's honour--a foul and grave blot it was. Heavily had the punishment fallen on those whom the father loved best! Alas, Philip had not yet learned what terrible corrupters are the Hope and the Fear of immense Wealthy, even to men reputed the most honourable, if they have been reared and pampered in the belief that wealth is the Arch blessing of life. Rightly considered, in Philip Beaufort's solitary meanness lay the vast moral of this world's darkest truth!

Mr. Barlow was gone. Philip was about to enter his own chaise, when a dormeuse-and-four drove up to the inn-door to change horses. A young man was reclining, at his length, in the carriage, wrapped in cloaks, and with a ghastly paleness--the paleness of long and deep disease upon his cheeks. He turned his dim eye with, perhaps, a glance of the sick man's envy on that strong and athletic, form, majestic with health and vigour, as it stood beside the more humble vehicle. Philip did not, however, notice the new arrival; he sprang into the chaise, it rattled on, and thus, unconsciously, Arthur Beaufort and his cousin had again met. To which was now the Night--to which the Morning?

CHAPTER XII.

"_Bakam_. Let my men guard the walls.
Syana. And mine the temple."--_The Island Princess_.

While thus eventfully the days and the weeks had passed for Philip, no less eventfully, so far as the inner life is concerned, had they glided

away for Fanny. She had feasted in quiet and delighted thought on the consciousness that she was improving--that she was growing worthier of him--that he would perceive it on his return. Her manner was more thoughtful, more collected--less childish, in short, than it had been. And yet, with all the stir and flutter of the aroused intellect, the charm of her strange innocence was not scared away. She rejoiced in the ancient liberty she had regained of going out and coming back when she pleased; and as the weather was too cold ever to tempt Simon from his fireside, except, perhaps, for half-an-hour in the forenoon, so the hours of dusk, when he least missed her, were those which she chiefly appropriated for stealing away to the good school-mistress, and growing wiser and wiser every day in the ways of God and the learning of His creatures. The schoolmistress was not a brilliant woman. Nor was it accomplishments of which Fanny stood in need, so much as the opening of her thoughts and mind by profitable books and rational conversation. Beautiful as were all her natural feelings, the schoolmistress had now little difficulty in educating feelings up to the dignity of principles.

At last, hitherto patient under the absence of one never absent from her heart, Fanny received from him the letter he had addressed to her two days before he quitted Beaufort Court;--another letter--a second letter--a letter to excuse himself for not coming before--a letter that gave her an address that asked for a reply. It was a morning of unequalled delight approaching to transport. And then the excitement of answering the letter--the pride of showing how she was improved, what an excellent hand she now wrote! She shut herself up in her room: she did not go out that day. She placed the paper before her, and, to her astonishment, all that she had to say vanished from her mind at once. How was she even to begin? She had always hitherto called him "Brother." Ever since her conversation with Sarah she felt that she could not call him that name again for the world--no, never! But what should she call him--what could she call him? He signed himself "Philip." She knew that was his name. She thought it a musical name to utter, but to write it! No! some instinct she could not account for seemed to whisper that it was improper--presumptuous, to call him "Dear Philip." Had Burns's songs--the songs that unthinkingly he had put into her hand, and told her to read--songs that comprise the most beautiful love-poems in the world--had they helped to teach her some of the secrets of her own heart? And had timidity come with knowledge? Who shall say--who guess what passed within her? Nor did Fanny herself, perhaps, know her own feelings: but write the words "Dear Philip" she could not. And the whole of that day, though she thought of nothing else, she could not even get through the first line to her satisfaction. The next morning she sat down again. It would be so unkind if she did not answer immediately: she must answer. She placed his letter before her--she resolutely began. But copy after copy was made and torn. And Simon wanted her--and Sarah wanted her--and there were bills to be paid; and dinner was over before her task was really begun. But after dinner she began in good earnest.

"How kind in you to write to me" (the difficulty of any name was dispensed with by adopting none), "and to wish to know about my dear grandfather! He is much the same, but hardly ever walks out now, and I have had a good deal of time to myself. I think something will surprise

you, and make you smile, as you used to do at first, when you come back. You must not be angry with me that I have gone out by myself very often --every day, indeed. I have been so safe. Nobody has ever offered to be rude again to Fanny" (the word "Fanny" was carefully scratched out with a penknife, and me substituted). "But you shall know all when you come. And are you sure you are well--quite--quite well? Do you never have the headaches you complained of sometimes? Do say this? Do you walk out every day? Is there any pretty churchyard near you now? Whom do you walk with?

"I have been so happy in putting the flowers on the two graves. But I still give yours the prettiest, though the other is so dear to me. I feel sad when I come to the last, but not when I look at the one I have looked at so long. Oh, how good you were! But you don't like me to thank you."

"This is very stupid!" cried Fanny, suddenly throwing down her pen; "and I don't think I am improved at it;" and she half cried with vexation. Suddenly a bright idea crossed her. In the little parlour where the schoolmistress privately received her, she had seen among the books, and thought at the time how useful it might be to her if ever she had to write to Philip, a little volume entitled, _The Complete Letter Writer_. She knew by the title-page that it contained models for every description of letter--no doubt it would contain the precise thing that would suit the present occasion. She started up at the notion. She would go--she could be back to finish the letter before post-time. She put on her bonnet--left the letter, in her haste, open on the table--and just looking into the parlour in her way to the street door, to convince herself that Simon was asleep, and the wire-guard was on the fire, she hurried to the kind schoolmistress.

One of the fogs that in autumn gather sullenly over London and its suburbs covered the declining day with premature dimness. It grew darker and darker as she proceeded, but she reached the house in safety. She spent a quarter of an hour in timidly consulting her friend about all kinds of letters except the identical one that she intended to write, and having had it strongly impressed on her mind that if the letter was to a gentleman at all genteel, she ought to begin "Dear Sir," and end with "I have the honour to remain;" and that he would be everlastingly offended if she did not in the address affix "Esquire" to his name (_that_ was a great discovery),--she carried off the precious volume, and quitted the house. There was a wall that, bounding the demesnes of the school, ran for some short distance into the main street. The increasing fog, here, faintly struggled against the glimmer of a single lamp at some little distance. Just in this spot, her eye was caught by a dark object in the road, which she could scarcely perceive to be a carriage, when her hand was seized, and a voice said in her ear:--

"Ah! you will not be so cruel to me, I hope, as you were to my messenger! I have come myself for you."

She turned in great alarm, but the darkness prevented her recognising the face of him who thus accosted her. "Let me go!" she cried,--"let me

go!"

"Hush! hush! No--no. Come with me. You shall have a house--carriage--servants! You shall wear silk gowns and jewels! You shall be a great lady!"

As these various temptations succeeded in rapid course each new struggle of Fanny, a voice from the coach-box said in a low tone,--

"Take care, my lord, I see somebody coming--perhaps a policeman!"

Fanny heard the caution, and screamed for rescue.

"Is it so?" muttered the molester. And suddenly Fanny felt her voice checked--her head mantled--her light form lifted from the ground. She clung--she struggled it was in vain. It was the affair of a moment: she felt herself borne into the carriage--the door closed--the stranger was by her side, and his voice said:--

"Drive on, Dykeman. Fast! fast!"

Two or three minutes, which seemed to her terror as ages, elapsed, when the gag and the mantle were gently removed, and the same voice (she still could not see her companion) said in a very mild tone:--

"Do not alarm yourself; there is no cause,--indeed there is not. I would not have adopted this plan had there been any other--any gentler one. But I could not call at your own house--I knew no other where to meet you.

"This was the only course left to me--indeed it was. I made myself acquainted with your movements. Do not blame me, then, for prying into your footsteps. I watched for you all last night--you did not come out. I was in despair. At last I find you. Do not be so terrified: I will not even touch your hand if you do not wish it."

As he spoke, however, he attempted to touch it, and was repulsed with an energy that rather disconcerted him. The poor girl recoiled from him into the farthest corner of that prison in speechless horror--in the darkest confusion of ideas. She did not weep--she did not sob--but her trembling seemed to shake the very carriage. The man continued to address, to expostulate, to pray, to soothe.

His manner was respectful. His protestations that he would not harm her for the world were endless.

"Only just see the home I can give you; for two days--for one day. Only just hear how rich I can make you and your grandfather, and then if you wish to leave me, you shall."

More, much more, to this effect, did he continue to pour forth, without extracting any sound from Fanny but gasps as for breath, and now and then a low murmur:

"Let me go, let me go! My grandfather, my blind grandfather!"

And finally tears came to her relief, and she sobbed with a passion that alarmed, and perhaps even touched her companion, cynical and icy as he was. Meanwhile the carriage seemed to fly. Fast as two horses, thorough-bred, and almost at full speed, could go, they were whirled along, till about an hour, or even less, from the time in which she had been thus captured, the carriage stopped.

"Are we here already?" said the man, putting his head out of the window. "Do then as I told you. Not to the front door; to my study."

In two minutes more the carriage halted again, before a building which looked white and ghostlike through the mist. The driver dismounted, opened with a latch-key a window-door, entered for a moment to light the candles in a solitary room from a fire that blazed on the hearth, reappeared, and opened the carriage-door. It was with a difficulty for which they were scarcely prepared that they were enabled to get Fanny from the carriage. No soft words, no whispered prayers could draw her forth; and it was with no trifling address, for her companion sought to be as gentle as the force necessary to employ would allow, that he disengaged her hands from the window-frame, the lining, the cushions, to which they clung; and at last bore her into the house. The driver closed the window again as he retreated, and they were alone. Fanny then cast a wild, scarce conscious glance over the apartment. It was small and simply furnished. Opposite to her was an old-fashioned bureau, one of those quaint, elaborate monuments of Dutch ingenuity, which, during the present century, the audacious spirit of curiosity-vendors has transplanted from their native receptacles, to contrast, with grotesque strangeness, the neat handiwork of Gillow and Seddon. It had a physiognomy and character of its own--this fantastic foreigner! Inlaid with mosaics, depicting landscapes and animals; graceless in form and fashion, but still picturesque, and winning admiration, when more closely observed, from the patient defiance of all rules of taste which had formed its cumbrous parts into one profusely ornamented and eccentric whole. It was the more noticeable from its total want of harmony with the other appurtenances of the room, which bespoke the tastes of the plain English squire. Prints of horses and hunts, fishing-rods and fowling-pieces, carefully suspended, decorated the walls. Not, however, on this notable stranger from the sluggish land rested the eye of Fanny. That, in her hurried survey, was arrested only by a portrait placed over the bureau--the portrait of a female in the bloom of life; a face so fair, a brow so candid, and eyes so pure, a lip so rich in youth and joy --that as her look lingered on the features Fanny felt comforted, felt as if some living protectress were there. The fire burned bright and merrily; a table, spread as for dinner, was drawn near it. To any other eye but Fanny's the place would have seemed a picture of English comfort. At last her looks rested on her companion. He had thrown himself, with a long sigh, partly of fatigue, partly of satisfaction, on one of the chairs, and was contemplating her as she thus stood and gazed, with an expression of mingled curiosity and admiration; she recognised at once her first, her only persecutor. She recoiled, and covered her face with

her hands. The man approached her:--

"Do not hate me, Fanny,--do not turn away. Believe me, though I have acted thus violently, here all violence will cease. I love you, but I will not be satisfied till you love me in return. I am not young, and I am not handsome, but I am rich and great, and I can make those whom I love happy,--so happy, Fanny!"

But Fanny had turned away, and was now busily employed in trying to re-open the door at which she had entered. Failing in this, she suddenly darted away, opened the inner door, and rushed into the passage with a loud cry. Her persecutor stifled an oath, and sprung after and arrested her. He now spoke sternly, and with a smile and a frown at once:--

"This is folly;--come back, or you will repent it! I have promised you, as a gentleman--as a nobleman, if you know what that is--to respect you. But neither will I myself be trifled with nor insulted. There must be no screams!"

His look and his voice awed Fanny in spite of her bewilderment and her loathing, and she suffered herself passively to be drawn into the room. He closed and bolted the door. She threw herself on the ground in one corner, and moaned low but piteously. He looked at her musingly for some moments, as he stood by the fire, and at last went to the door, opened it, and called "Harriet" in a low voice. Presently a young woman, of about thirty, appeared, neatly but plainly dressed, and of a countenance that, if not very winning, might certainly be called very handsome. He drew her aside for a few moments, and a whispered conference was exchanged. He then walked gravely up to Fanny "My young friend," said he, "I see my presence is too much for you this evening. This young woman will attend you--will get you all you want. She can tell you, too, that I am not the terrible sort of person you seem to suppose. I shall see you to-morrow." So saying, he turned on his heel and walked out.

Fanny felt something like liberty, something like joy, again. She rose, and looked so pleadingly, so earnestly, so intently into the woman's face, that Harriet turned away her bold eyes abashed; and at this moment Dykeman himself looked into the room.

"You are to bring us in dinner here yourself, uncle; and then go to my lord in the drawing-room."

Dykeman looked pleased, and vanished. Then Harriet came up and took Fanny's hand, and said, kindly,--

"Don't be frightened. I assure you, half the girls in London would give I don't know what to be in your place. My lord never will force you to do anything you don't like--it's not his way; and he's the kindest and best man,--and so rich; he does not know what to do with his money!"

To all this Fanny made but one answer,--she threw herself suddenly upon the woman's breast, and sobbed out: "My grandfather is blind, he cannot do without me--he will die--die. Have you nobody you love, too? Let me

go--let me out! What can they want with me?--I never did harm to any one."

"And no one will harm you;--I swear it!" said Harriet, earnestly. "I see you don't know my lord. But here's the dinner; come, and take a bit of something, and a glass of wine."

Fanny could not touch anything except a glass of water, and that nearly choked her. But at last, as she recovered her senses, the absence of her tormentor--the presence of a woman--the solemn assurances of Harriet that, if she did not like to stay there, after a day or two, she should go back, tranquillised her in some measure. She did not heed the artful and lengthened eulogiums that the she-tempter then proceeded to pour forth upon the virtues, and the love, and the generosity, and, above all, the money of my lord. She only kept repeating to herself, "I shall go back in a day or two." At length, Harriet, having eaten and drunk as much as she could by her single self, and growing wearied with efforts from which so little resulted, proposed to Fanny to retire to rest. She opened a door to the right of the fireplace, and lighted her up a winding staircase to a pretty and comfortable chamber, where she offered to help her to undress. Fanny's complete innocence, and her utter ignorance of the precise nature of the danger that awaited her, though she fancied it must be very great and very awful, prevented her quite comprehending all that Harriet meant to convey by her solemn assurances that she should not be disturbed. But she understood, at least, that she was not to see her hateful gaoler till the next morning; and when Harriet, wishing her "good night," showed her a bolt to her door, she was less terrified at the thought of being alone in that strange place. She listened till Harriet's footsteps had died away, and then, with a beating heart, tried to open the door; it was locked from without. She sighed heavily. The window?--alas! when she had removed the shutter, there was another one barred from without, which precluded all hope there; she had no help for it but to bolt her door, stand forlorn and amazed at her own condition, and, at last, falling on her knees, to pray, in her own simple fashion, which since her recent visits to the schoolmistress had become more intelligent and earnest, to Him from whom no bolts and no bars can exclude the voice of the human heart.

CHAPTER XIII.

"In te omnis domus inclinata recumbit."--VIRGIL.

[On thee the whole house rests confidingly.]

Lord Lilburne, seated before a tray in the drawing-room, was finishing his own solitary dinner, and Dykeman was standing close behind him, nervous and agitated. The confidence of many years between the master and the servant--the peculiar mind of Lilburne, which excluded him from all friendship with his own equals--had established between the two the kind of intimacy so common with the noble and the valet of the old French

regime, and indeed, in much Lilburne more resembled the men of that day and land, than he did the nobler and statelier being which belongs to our own. But to the end of time, whatever is at once vicious, polished, and intellectual, will have a common likeness.

"But, my lord," said Dykeman, "just reflect. This girl is so well known in the place; she will be sure to be missed; and if any violence is done to her, it's a capital crime, my lord--a capital crime. I know they can't hang a great lord like you, but all concerned in it may----"

Lord Lilburne interrupted the speaker by, "Give me some wine and hold your tongue!" Then, when he had emptied his glass, he drew himself nearer to the fire, warmed his hands, mused a moment, and turned round to his confidant:--

"Dykeman," said he, "though you're an ass and a coward, and you don't deserve that I should be so condescending, I will relieve your fears at once. I know the law better than you can, for my whole life has been spent in doing exactly as I please, without ever putting myself in the power of LAW, which interferes with the pleasures of other men. You are right in saying violence would be a capital crime. Now the difference between vice and crime is this: Vice is what parsons write sermons against, Crime is what we make laws against. I never committed a crime in all my life,--at an age between fifty and sixty--I am not going to begin. Vices are safe things; I may have my vices like other men: but crimes are dangerous things--illegal things--things to be carefully avoided. Look you" (and here the speaker, fixing his puzzled listener with his eye, broke into a grin of sublime mockery), "let me suppose you to be the World--that cringing valet of valets, the WORLD! I should say to you this, 'My dear World, you and I understand each other well,--we are made for each other,--I never come in your way, nor you in mine. If I get drunk every day in my own room, that's vice, you can't touch me; if I take an extra glass for the first time in my life, and knock down the watchman, that's a crime which, if I am rich, costs me one pound--perhaps five pounds; if I am poor, sends me to the treadmill. If I break the hearts of five hundred old fathers, by buying with gold or flattery the embraces of five hundred young daughters, that's vice,--your servant, Mr. World! If one termagant wench scratches my face, makes a noise, and goes brazen-faced to the Old Bailey to swear to her shame, why that's crime, and my friend, Mr. World, pulls a hemp-rope out of his pocket.' Now, do you understand? Yes, I repeat," he added, with a change of voice, "I never committed a crime in my life,--I have never even been accused of one,--never had an action of _crim. con._--of seduction against me. I know how to manage such matters better. I was forced to carry off this girl, because I had no other means of courting her. To court her is all I mean to do now. I am perfectly aware that an action for violence, as you call it, would be the more disagreeable, because of the very weakness of intellect which the girl is said to possess, and of which report I don't believe a word. I shall most certainly avoid even the remotest appearance that could be so construed. It is for that reason that no one in the house shall attend the girl except yourself and your niece. Your niece I can depend on, I know; I have been kind to her; I have got her a good husband; I shall get her husband a good place;--I shall be godfather

to her first child. To be sure, the other servants will know there's a lady in the house, but to that they are accustomed; I don't set up for a Joseph. They need know no more, unless you choose to blab it out. Well, then, supposing that at the end of a few days, more or less, without any rudeness on my part, a young woman, after seeing a few jewels, and fine dresses, and a pretty house, and being made very comfortable, and being convinced that her grandfather shall be taken care of without her slaving herself to death, chooses of her own accord to live with me, where's the crime, and who can interfere with it?"

"Certainly, my lord, that alters the case," said Dykeman, considerably relieved. "But still," he added, anxiously, "if the inquiry is made,--if before all this is settled, it is found out where she is?"

"Why then no harm will be done--no violence will be committed. Her grandfather,--drivelling and a miser, you say--can be appeased by a little money, and it will be nobody's business, and no case can be made of it. Tush! man! I always look before I leap! People in this world are not so charitable as you suppose. What more natural than that a poor and pretty girl--not as wise as Queen Elizabeth--should be tempted to pay a visit to a rich lover!

"All they can say of the lover is, that he is a very gay man or a very bad man, and that's saying nothing new of me. But don't think it will be found out. Just get me that stool; this has been a very troublesome piece of business--rather tried me. I am not so young as I was. Yes, Dykeman, something which that Frenchman Vaudemont, or Vautrien, or whatever his name is, said to me once, has a certain degree of truth. I felt it in the last fit of the gout, when my pretty niece was smoothing my pillows. A nurse, as we grow older, may be of use to one. I wish to make this girl like me, or be grateful to me. I am meditating a longer and more serious attachment than usual,--a companion!"

"A companion, my lord, in that poor creature!--so ignorant--so uneducated!"

"So much the better. This world palls upon me," said Lilburne, almost gloomily. "I grow sick of the miserable quackeries--of the piteous conceits that men, women, and children call 'knowledge,' I wish to catch a glimpse of nature before I die. This creature interests me, and that is something in this life. Clear those things away, and leave me."

"Ay!" muttered Lilburne, as he bent over the fire alone, "when I first heard that that girl was the granddaughter of Simon Gawtreay, and, therefore, the child of the man whom I am to thank that I am a cripple, I felt as if love to her were a part of that hate which I owe to him; a segment in the circle of my vengeance. But now, poor child!

"I forget all this. I feel for her, not passion, but what I never felt before, affection. I feel that if I had such a child, I could understand what men mean when they talk of the tenderness of a father. I have not one impure thought for that girl--not one. But I would give thousands if she could love me. Strange! strange! in all this I do not recognise

myself!"

Lord Lilburne retired to rest betimes that night; he slept sound; rose refreshed at an earlier hour than usual; and what he considered a fit of vapours of the previous night was passed away. He looked with eagerness to an interview with Fanny. Proud of his intellect, pleased in any of those sinister exercises of it which the code and habits of his life so long permitted to him, he regarded the conquest of his fair adversary with the interest of a scientific game. Harriet went to Fanny's room to prepare her to receive her host; and Lord Lilburne now resolved to make his own visit the less unwelcome by reserving for his especial gift some showy, if not valuable, trinkets, which for similar purposes never failed the depositories of the villa he had purchased for his pleasures. He, recollected that these gewgaws were placed in the bureau in the study; in which, as having a lock of foreign and intricate workmanship, he usually kept whatever might tempt cupidity in those frequent absences when the house was left guarded but by two women servants. Finding that Fanny had not yet quitted her own chamber, while Harriet went up to attend and reason with her, he himself limped into the study below, unlocked the bureau, and was searching in the drawers, when he heard the voice of Fanny above, raised a little as if in remonstrance or entreaty; and he paused to listen. He could not, however, distinguish what was said; and in the meanwhile, without attending much to what he was about, his hands were still employed in opening and shutting the drawers, passing through the pigeon-holes, and feeling for a topaz brooch, which he thought could not fail of pleasing the unsophisticated eyes of Fanny. One of the recesses was deeper than the rest; he fancied the brooch was there; he stretched his hand into the recess; and, as the room was partially darkened by the lower shutters from without, which were still unclosed to prevent any attempted escape of his captive, he had only the sense of touch to depend on; not finding the brooch, he stretched on till he came to the extremity of the recess, and was suddenly sensible of a sharp pain; the flesh seemed caught as in a trap; he drew back his finger with sudden force and a half-suppressed exclamation, and he perceived the bottom or floor of the pigeon-hole recede, as if sliding back. His curiosity was aroused; he again felt warily and cautiously, and discovered a very slight inequality and roughness at the extremity of the recess. He was aware instantly that there was some secret spring; he pressed with some force on the spot, and he felt the board give way; he pushed it back towards him, and it slid suddenly with a whirring noise, and left a cavity below exposed to his sight. He peered in, and drew forth a paper; he opened it at first carelessly, for he was still trying to listen to Fanny. His eye ran rapidly over a few preliminary lines till it rested on what follows:

"Marriage. The year 18--

"No. 83, page 21.

"Philip Beaufort, of this parish of A-----, and Catherine Morton, of the parish of St. Botolph, Aldgate, London, were married in this church by banns, this 12th day of November, in the year one thousand eight hundred and ----' by me,

"CALEB PRICE, Vicar.

"This marriage was solemnised between us,
"PHILIP BEAUFORT.
"CATHERINE MORTON.

"In the presence of
"DAVID APREECE.
"WILLIAM SMITH.

"The above is a true copy taken from the registry of marriages, in A-----
parish, this 19th day of March, 18--, by me,
"MORGAN JONES, Curate of C-----."

[This is according to the form customary at the date at which the
copy was made. There has since been an alteration.]

Lord Lilburne again cast his eye over the lines prefixed to this
startling document, which, being those written at Caleb's desire, by Mr.
Jones to Philip Beaufort, we need not here transcribe to the reader. At
that instant Harriet descended the stairs, and came into the room; she
crept up on tiptoe to Lilburne, and whispered,--

"She is coming down, I think; she does not know you are here."

"Very well--go!" said Lord Lilburne. And scarce had Harriet left the
room, when a carriage drove furiously to the door, and Robert Beaufort
rushed into the study.

CHAPTER XIV.

"Gone, and none know it.

How now?--What news, what hopes and steps discovered!"

BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER: _The Pilgrim_.

When Philip arrived at his lodgings in town it was very late, but he
still found Liancourt waiting the chance of his arrival. The Frenchman
was full of his own schemes and projects. He was a man of high repute
and connections; negotiations for his recall to Paris had been entered
into; he was divided between a Quixotic loyalty and a rational prudence;
he brought his doubts to Vaudemont. Occupied as he was with thoughts of
so important and personal a nature, Philip could yet listen patiently to
his friend, and weigh with him the pros and cons. And after having
mutually agreed that loyalty and prudence would both be best consulted by
waiting a little, to see if the nation, as the Carlists yet fondly
trusted, would soon, after its first fever, offer once more the throne
and the purple to the descendant of St. Louis, Liancourt, as he lighted

his cigar to walk home, said, "A thousand thanks to you, my dear friend: and how have you enjoyed yourself in your visit? I am not surprised or jealous that Lilburne did not invite me, as I do not play at cards, and as I have said some sharp things to him!"

"I fancy I shall have the same disqualifications for another invitation," said Vaudemont, with a severe smile. "I may have much to disclose to you in a few days. At present my news is still unripe. And have you seen anything of Lilburne? He left us some days since. Is he in London?"

"Yes; I was riding with our friend Henri, who wished to try a new horse off the stones, a little way into the country yesterday. We went through ----- and H----. Pretty places, those. Do you know them?"

"Yes; I know H----."

"And just at dusk, as we were spurring back to town, whom should I see walking on the path of the high-road but Lord Lilburne himself! I could hardly believe my eyes. I stopped, and, after asking him about you, I could not help expressing my surprise to see him on foot at such a place. You know the man's sneer. 'A Frenchman so gallant as Monsieur de Liancourt,' said he, 'need not be surprised at much greater miracles; the iron moves to the magnet: I have a little adventure here. Pardon me if I ask you to ride on.' Of course I wished him good day; and a little farther up the road I saw a dark plain chariot, no coronet, no arms, no footman only the man on the box, but the beauty of the horses assured me it must belong to Lilburne. Can you conceive such absurdity in a man of that age--and a very clever fellow too? Yet, how is it that one does not ridicule it in Lilburne, as one would in another man between fifty and sixty?"

"Because one does not ridicule,--one loathes-him."

"No; that's not it. The fact is that one can't fancy Lilburne old. His manner is young--his eye is young. I never saw any one with so much vitality. 'The bad heart and the good digestion'--the twin secrets for wearing well, eh!"

"Where did you meet him--not near H----?"

"Yes; close by. Why? Have you any adventure there too? Nay, forgive me; it was but a jest. Good night!"

Vaudemont fell into an uneasy reverie: he could not divine exactly why he should be alarmed; but he was alarmed at Lilburne being in the neighbourhood of H----. It was the foot of the profane violating the sanctuary. An undefined thrill shot through him, as his mind coupled together the associations of Lilburne and Fanny; but there was no ground for forebodings. Fanny did not stir out alone. An adventure, too--pooh! Lord Lilburne must be awaiting a willing and voluntary appointment, most probably from some one of the fair but decorous frailties of London. Lord Lilburne's more recent conquests were said to be among those of his own rank; suburbs are useful for such assignations. Any other thought was too horrible to be contemplated. He glanced to the clock; it was

three in the morning. He would go to H---- early, even before he sought out Mr. William Smith. With that resolution, and even his hardy frame worn out by the excitement of the day, he threw himself on his bed and fell asleep.

He did not wake till near nine, and had just dressed, and hurried over his abstemious breakfast, when the servant of the house came to tell him that an old woman, apparently in great agitation, wished to see him. His head was still full of witnesses and lawsuits; and he was vaguely expecting some visitor connected with his primary objects, when Sarah broke into the room. She cast a hurried, suspicious look round her, and then throwing herself on her knees to him, "Oh!" she cried, "if you have taken that poor young thing away, God forgive you. Let her come back again. It shall be all hushed up. Don't ruin her! don't, that's a dear good gentleman!"

"Speak plainly, woman--what do you mean?" cried Philip, turning pale.

A very few words sufficed for an explanation: Fanny's disappearance the previous night; the alarm of Sarah at her non-return; the apathy of old Simon, who did not comprehend what had happened, and quietly went to bed; the search Sarah had made during half the night; the intelligence she had picked up, that the policeman, going his rounds, had heard a female shriek near the school; but that all he could perceive through the mist was a carriage driving rapidly past him; Sarah's suspicions of Vaudemont confirmed in the morning, when, entering Fanny's room, she perceived the poor girl's unfinished letter with his own, the clue to his address that the letter gave her; all this, ere she well understood what she herself was talking about,--Vaudemont's alarm seized, and the reflection of a moment construed: the carriage; Lilburne seen lurking in the neighbourhood the previous day; the former attempt;--all flashed on him with an intolerable glare. While Sarah was yet speaking, he rushed from the house, he flew to Lord Lilburne's in Park Lane; he composed his manner, he inquired calmly. His lordship had slept from home; he was, they believed, at Fernside: Fernside! H---- was on the direct way to that villa. Scarcely ten minutes had elapsed since he heard the story ere he was on the road, with such speed as the promise of a guinea a mile could extract from the spurs of a young post-boy applied to the flanks of London post-horses.

CHAPTER XV.

*"Ex humili magna ad fastigia rerum
Extollit."--JUVENAL.*

[Fortune raises men from low estate to the very
summit of prosperity.]

When Harriet had quitted Fanny, the waiting-woman, craftily wishing to lure her into Lilburne's presence, had told her that the room below was

empty; and the captive's mind naturally and instantly seized on the thought of escape. After a brief breathing pause, she crept noiselessly down the stairs, and gently opened the door; and at the very instant she did so, Robert Beaufort entered from the other door; she drew back in terror, when, what was her astonishment in hearing a name uttered that spell-bound her--the last name she could have expected to hear; for Lilburne, the instant he saw Beaufort, pale, haggard, agitated, rush into the room, and bang the door after him, could only suppose that something of extraordinary moment had occurred with regard to the dreaded guest, and cried:

"You come about Vaudemont! Something has happened about Vaudemont! about Philip! What is it? Calm yourself."

Fanny, as the name was thus abruptly uttered, actually thrust her face through the door; but she again drew back, and, all her senses preternaturally quickened at that name, while she held the door almost closed, listened with her whole soul in her ears.

The faces of both the men were turned from her, and her partial entry had not been perceived.

"Yes," said Robert Beaufort, leaning his weight, as if ready to sink to the ground, upon Lilburne's shoulder, "Yes; Vaudemont, or Philip, for they are one,--yes, it is about that man I have come to consult you. Arthur has arrived."

"Well?"

"And Arthur has seen the wretch who visited us, and the rascal's manner has so imposed on him, so convinced him that Philip is the heir to all our property, that he has come over-ill, ill--I fear" (added Beaufort, in a hollow voice), "dying, to--to--"

"To guard against their machinations?"

"No, no, no--to say that if such be the case, neither honour nor conscience will allow us to resist his rights. He is so obstinate in this matter; his nerves so ill bear reasoning and contradiction, that I know not what to do--"

"Take breath-go on."

"Well, it seems that this man found out Arthur almost as soon as my son arrived at Paris--that he has persuaded Arthur that he has it in his power to prove the marriage--that he pretended to be very impatient for a decision--that Arthur, in order to gain time to see me, affected irresolution--took him to Boulogne, for the rascal does not dare to return to England--left him there; and now comes back, my own son, as my worst enemy, to conspire against me for my property! I could not have kept my temper if I had stayed. But that's not all--that's not the worst: Vaudemont left me suddenly in the morning on the receipt of a letter. In taking leave of Camilla he let fall hints which fill me with

fear. Well, I inquired his movements as I came along; he had stopped at D---, had been closeted for above an hour with a man whose name the landlord of the inn knew, for it was on his carpet-bag--the name was Barlow. You remember the advertisements! Good Heavens! what is to be done? I would not do anything unhandsome or dishonest. But there never was a marriage. I never will believe there was a marriage--never!"

"There was a marriage, Robert Beaufort," said Lord Lilburne, almost enjoying the torture he was about to inflict; "and I hold here a paper that Philip Vaudemont--for so we will yet call him--would give his right hand to clutch for a moment. I have but just found it in a secret cavity in that bureau. Robert, on this paper may depend the fate, the fortune, the prosperity, the greatness of Philip Vaudemont;--or his poverty, his exile, his ruin. See!"

Robert Beaufort glanced over the paper held out to him--dropped it on the floor--and staggered to a seat. Lilburne coolly replaced the document in the bureau, and, limping to his brother-in-law, said with a smile,--

"But the paper is in my possession--I will not destroy it. No; I have no right to destroy it. Besides, it would be a crime; but if I give it to you, you can do with it as you please."

"O Lilburne, spare me--spare me. I meant to be an honest man. I--I--"
And Robert Beaufort sobbed. Lilburne looked at him in scornful surprise.

"Do not fear that I shall ever think worse of you; and who else will know it? Do not fear me. No;--I, too, have reasons to hate and to fear this Philip Vaudemont; for Vaudemont shall be his name, and not Beaufort, in spite of fifty such scraps of paper! He has known a man--my worst foe--he has secrets of mine--of my past--perhaps of my present: but I laugh at his knowledge while he is a wandering adventurer;--I should tremble at that knowledge if he could thunder it out to the world as Philip Beaufort of Beaufort Court! There, I am candid with you. Now hear my plan. Prove to Arthur that his visitor is a convicted felon, by sending the officers of justice after him instantly--off with him again to the Settlements. Defy a single witness--entrap Vaudemont back to France and prove him (I think I will prove him such--I think so--with a little money and a little pains)--prove him the accomplice of William Gawtrety, a coiner and a murderer! Pshaw! take yon paper. Do with it as you will--keep it--give it to Arthur--let Philip Vaudemont have it, and Philip Vaudemont will be rich and great, the happiest man between earth and paradise! On the other hand, come and tell me that you have lost it, or that I never gave you such a paper, or that no such paper ever existed; and Philip Vaudemont may live a pauper, and die, perhaps, a slave at the galleys! Lose it, I say,--lose it,--and advise with me upon the rest."

Horror-struck, bewildered, the weak man gazed upon the calm face of the Master-villain, as the scholar of the old fables might have gazed on the fiend who put before him worldly prosperity here and the loss of his soul hereafter. He had never hitherto regarded Lilburne in his true light. He was appalled by the black heart that lay bare before him.

"I can't destroy it--I can't," he faltered out; "and if I did, out of love for Arthur,--don't talk of galleys,--of vengeance--I--I--"

"The arrears of the rents you have enjoyed will send you to gaol for your life. No, no; _don't_ destroy the paper."

Beaufort rose with a desperate effort; he moved to the bureau. Fanny's heart was on her lips;--of this long conference she had understood only the one broad point on which Lilburne had insisted with an emphasis that could have enlightened an infant; and he looked on Beaufort as an infant then--_On that paper rested Philip Vaudemont's fate--happiness if saved, ruin if destroyed; Philip--her Philip!_ And Philip himself had said to her once--when had she ever forgotten his words? and now how those words flashed across her--Philip himself had said to her once, "Upon a scrap of paper, if I could but find it, may depend my whole fortune, my whole happiness, all that I care for in life."--Robert Beaufort moved to the bureau--he seized the document--he looked over it again, hurriedly, and ere Lilburne, who by no means wished to have it destroyed in his own presence, was aware of his intention--he hastened with tottering steps to the hearth--averted his eyes, and cast it on the fire. At that instant something white--he scarce knew what, it seemed to him as a spirit, as a ghost--darted by him, and snatched the paper, as yet uninjured, from the embers! There was a pause for the hundredth part of a moment:--a gurgling sound of astonishment and horror from Beaufort--an exclamation from Lilburne--a laugh from Fanny, as, her eyes flashing light, with a proud dilation of stature, with the paper clasped tightly to her bosom, she turned her looks of triumph from one to the other. The two men were both too amazed, at the instant, for rapid measures. But Lilburne, recovering himself first, hastened to her; she eluded his grasp--she made towards the door to the passage; when Lilburne, seriously alarmed, seized her arm;--

"Foolish child!--give me that paper!"

"Never but with my life!" And Fanny's cry for help rang through the house.

"Then--" the speech died on his lips, for at that instant a rapid stride was heard without--a momentary scuffle--voices in altercation;--the door gave way as if a battering ram had forced it;--not so much thrown forward as actually hurled into the room, the body of Dykeman fell heavily, like a dead man's, at the very feet of Lord Lilburne--and Philip Vaudemont stood in the doorway!

The grasp of Lilburne on Fanny's arm relaxed, and the girl, with one bound, sprung to Philip's breast. "Here, here!" she cried, "take it--take it!" and she thrust the paper into his hand. "Don't let them have it--read it--see it--never mind me!" But Philip, though his hand unconsciously closed on the precious document, did mind Fanny; and in that moment her cause was the only one in the world to him.

"Foul villain!" he said, as he strode to Lilburne, while Fanny still clung to his breast: "Speak!--speak!--is--she--is she?--man--man, speak!"

--you know what I would say!--She is the child of your own daughter--the grandchild of that Mary whom you dishonoured--the child of the woman whom William Gawtreysaved from pollution! Before he died, Gawtreys commended her to my care!--O God of Heaven!--speak!--I am not too late!"

The manner, the words, the face of Philip left Lilburne terror-stricken with conviction. But the mans crafty ability, debased as it was, triumphed even over remorse for the dread guilt meditated,--over gratitude for the dread guilt spared. He glanced at Beaufort--at Dykeman, who now, slowly recovering, gazed at him with eyes that seemed starting from their sockets; and lastly fixed his look on Philip himself. There were three witnesses--presence of mind was his great attribute.

"And if, Monsieur de Vaudemont, I knew, or, at least, had the firmest persuasion that Fanny was my grandchild, what then? Why else should she be here?--Pooh, sir! I am an old man."

Philip recoiled a step in wonder; his plain sense was baffled by the calm lie. He looked down at Fanny, who, comprehending nothing of what was spoken, for all her faculties, even her very sense of sight and hearing, were absorbed in her impatient anxiety for him, cried out:

"No harm has come to Fanny--none: only frightened. Read!--Read!--Save that paper!--You know what you once said about a mere scrap of paper! Come away! Come!"

He did now cast his eyes on the paper he held. That was an awful moment for Robert Beaufort--even for Lilburne! To snatch the fatal document from that gripe! They would as soon have snatched it from a tiger! He lifted his eyes--they rested on his mothers picture! Her lips smiled on him! He turned to Beaufort in a state of emotion too exulting, too blest for vulgar vengeance--for vulgar triumph--almost for words.

"Look yonder, Robert Beaufort--look!" and he pointed to the picture.

"Her name is spotless! I stand again beneath a roof that was my fathers,--the Heir of Beaufort! We shall meet before the justice of our country. For you, Lord Lilburne, I will believe you: it is too horrible to doubt even your intentions. If wrong had chanced to her, I would have rent you where you stand, limb from limb. And thank her",--(for Lilburne recovered at this language the daring of his youth, before calculation, indolence, and excess had dulled the edge of his nerves; and, unawed by the height, and manhood, and strength of his menacer, stalked haughtily up to him)--"and thank your relationship to her," said Philip, sinking his voice into a whisper, "that I do not brand you as a pilferer and a cheat! Hush, knave!--hush, pupil of George Gawtreys!--there are no duels for me but with men of honour!"

Lilburne now turned white, and the big word stuck in his throat. In another instant Fanny and her guardian had quitted the house.

"Dykeman," said Lord Lilburne after a long silence, "I shall ask you another time how you came to admit that impertinent person. At present, go and order breakfast for Mr. Beaufort."

As soon as Dykeman, more astounded, perhaps, by his lord's coolness than even by the preceding circumstances, had left the study, Lilburne came up to Beaufort,--who seemed absolutely stricken as if by palsy,--and touching him impatiently and rudely, said,--

"Sdeath, man!--rouse yourself! There is not a moment to be lost! I have already decided on what you are to do. This paper is not worth a rush, unless the curate who examined it will depose to that fact. He is a curate--a Welsh curate;--you are yet Mr. Beaufort, a rich and a great man. The curate, properly managed, may depose to the contrary; and then we will indict them all for forgery and conspiracy. At the worst, you can, no doubt, get the parson to forget all about it--to stay away. His address was on the certificate:

"--C----- Go yourself into Wales without an instant's delay-- Then, having arranged with Mr. Jones, hurry back, cross to Boulogne, and buy this convict and his witnesses, buy them! That, now, is the only thing. Quick! quick!--quick! Zounds, man! if it were my affair, my estate, I would not care a pin for that fragment of paper; I should rather rejoice at it. I see how it could be turned against them! Go!"

"No, no; I am not equal to it! Will you manage it? will you? Half my estate!--all! Take it: but save--"

"Tut!" interrupted Lord Lilburne, in great disdain. "I am as rich as I want to be. Money does not bribe me. I manage this! ! Lord Lilburne. ! Why, if found out, it is subornation of witnesses. It is exposure-- it is dishonour--it is ruin. What then? You should take the risk--for you must meet ruin if you do not. I cannot. I have nothing to gain!"

"I dare not!--I dare not!" murmured Beaufort, quite spirit-broken.

"Subornation, dishonour, exposure!--and I, so respectable--my character! --and my son against me, too!--my son, in whom I lived again! No, no; let them take all! Let them take it! Ha! ha! let them take it! Good-day to you."

"Where are you going?"

"I shall consult Mr. Blackwell, and I'll let you know." And Beaufort walked tremulously back to his carriage. "Go to his lawyer!" growled Lilburne. "Yes, if his lawyer can help him to defraud men lawfully, he'll defraud them fast enough. That will be the respectable way of doing it! Um!--This may be an ugly business for me--the paper found here--if the girl can depose to what she heard, and she must have heard something.--No, I think the laws of real property will hardly allow her evidence; and if they do--Um!--My granddaughter--is it possible!--And Gawtreys rescued her mother, my child, from her own mother's vices! I thought my liking to that girl different from any other I have ever felt: it was pure--it _was!_--it was pity--affection. And I must never see her again--must forget the whole thing! And I sin growing old--and I am childless--and alone!" He paused, almost with a groan: and then the expression of his face changing to rage, he cried out, "The man

threatened me, and I was a coward! What to do?--Nothing! The defensive is my line. I shall play no more.--I attack no one. Who will accuse Lord Lilburne? Still, Robert is a fool. I must not leave him to himself. Ho! there! Dykeman!--the carriage! I shall go to London."

Fortunate, no doubt, it was for Philip that Mr. Beaufort was not Lord Lilburne. For all history teaches us--public and private history--conquerors--statesmen--sharp hypocrites and brave designers--yes, they all teach us how mighty one man of great intellect and no scruple is against the justice of millions! The One Man moves--the Mass is inert. Justice sits on a throne. Roguery never rests,--Activity is the lever of Archimedes.

CHAPTER XVI.

"Quam inulta injusta ac prava fiunt moribus."--TULL.

[How many unjust and vicious actions are perpetrated under the name of morals.]

"Volat ambiguus
Mobilis alis Hera."--SENECA.

[The hour flies moving with doubtful wings.]

Mr. Robert Beaufort sought Mr. Blackwell, and long, rambling, and disjointed was his narrative. Mr. Blackwell, after some consideration, proposed to _set about doing_ the very things that Lilburne had proposed at once to do. But the lawyer expressed himself legally and covertly, so that it did not seem to the sober sense of Mr. Beaufort at all the same plan. He was not the least alarmed at what Mr. Blackwell proposed, though so shocked at what Lilburne dictated. Blackwell would go the next day into Wales--he would find out Mr. Jones--he would sound him! Nothing was more common with people of the nicest honour, than just to get a witness out of the way! Done in election petitions, for instance, every day.

"True," said Mr. Beaufort, much relieved.

Then, after having done that, Mr. Blackwell would return to town, and cross over to Boulogne to see this very impudent person whom Arthur (young men were so apt to be taken in!) had actually believed. He had no doubt he could settle it all. Robert Beaufort returned to Berkeley Square actually in spirits. There he found Lilburne, who, on reflection, seeing that Blackwell was at all events more up to the business than his brother, assented to the propriety of the arrangement.

Mr. Blackwell accordingly did set off the next day. _That next_ day, perhaps, made all the difference. Within two hours from his gaining the

document so important, Philip, without any subtler exertion of intellect than the decision of a plain, bold sense, had already forestalled both the peer and the lawyer. He had sent down Mr. Barlow's head clerk to his master in Wales with the document, and a short account of the manner in which it had been discovered. And fortunate, indeed, was it that the copy had been found; for all the inquiries of Mr. Barlow at A---- had failed, and probably would have failed, without such a clue, in fastening upon any one probable person to have officiated as Caleb Price's amanuensis. The sixteen hours' start Mr. Barlow gained over Blackwell enabled the former to see Mr. Jones--to show him his own handwriting--to get a written and witnessed attestation from which the curate, however poor, and however tempted, could never well have escaped (even had he been dishonest, which he was not), of his perfect recollection of the fact of making an extract from the registry at Caleb's desire, though he owned he had quite forgotten the names he extracted till they were again placed before him. Barlow took care to arouse Mr. Jones's interest in the case--quitted Wales--hastened over to Boulogne--saw Captain Smith, and without bribes, without threats, but by plainly proving to that worthy person that he could not return to England nor see his brother without being immediately arrested; that his brother's evidence was already pledged on the side of truth; and that by the acquisition of new testimony there could be no doubt that the suit would be successful--he diverted the captain from all disposition towards perfidy, convinced him on which side his interest lay, and saw him return to Paris, where very shortly afterwards he disappeared for ever from this world, being forced into a duel, much against his will (with a Frenchman whom he had attempted to defraud), and shot through the lungs. Thus verifying a favourite maxim of Lord Lilburne's, viz. that it does not do, in the long run, for little men to play the Great Game!

On the same day that Blackwell returned, frustrated in his half-and-half attempts to corrupt Mr. Jones, and not having been able even to discover Mr. Smith, Mr. Robert Beaufort received a notice of an Action for Ejectment to be brought by Philip Beaufort at the next Assizes. And, to add to his afflictions, Arthur, whom he had hitherto endeavoured to amuse by a sort of ambiguous shilly-shally correspondence, became so alarmingly worse, that his mother brought him up to town for advice. Lord Lilburne was, of course, sent for; and on learning all, his counsel was prompt.

"I told you before that this man loves your daughter. See if you can effect a compromise. The lawsuit will be ugly, and probably ruinous. He has a right to claim six years' arrears--that is above L100,000. Make yourself his father-in-law, and me his uncle-in-law; and, since we can't kill the wasp, we may at least soften the venom of his sting."

Beaufort, still perplexed, irresolute, sought his son; and, for the first time, spoke to him frankly--that is, frankly for Robert Beaufort! He owned that the copy of the register had been found by Lilburne in a secret drawer. He made the best of the story Lilburne himself furnished him with (adhering, of course, to the assertion uttered or insinuated to Philip) in regard to Fanny's abduction and interposition; he said nothing of his attempt to destroy the paper. Why should he? By admitting the

copy in court--if so advised--he could get rid of Fanny's evidence altogether; even without such concession, her evidence might possibly be objected to or eluded. He confessed that he feared the witness who copied the register and the witness to the marriage were alive. And then he talked pathetically of his desire to do what was right, his dread of slander and misinterpretation. He said nothing of Sidney, and his belief that Sidney and Charles Spencer were the same; because, if his daughter were to be the instrument for effecting a compromise, it was clear that her engagement with Spencer must be cancelled and concealed. And luckily Arthur's illness and Camilla's timidity, joined now to her father's injunctions not to excite Arthur in his present state with any additional causes of anxiety, prevented the confidence that might otherwise have ensued between the brother and sister. And Camilla, indeed, had no heart for such a conference. How, when she looked on Arthur's glassy eye, and listened to his hectic cough, could she talk to him of love and marriage? As to the automaton, Mrs. Beaufort, Robert made sure of her discretion.

Arthur listened attentively to his father's communication; and the result of that interview was the following letter from Arthur to his cousin:

"I write to you without fear of misconstruction; for I write to you unknown to all my family, and I am the only one of them who can have no personal interest in the struggle about to take place between my father and yourself. Before the law can decide between you, I shall be in my grave. I write this from the Bed of Death. Philip, I write this--I, who stood beside a deathbed more sacred to you than mine--I, who received your mother's last sigh. And with that sigh there was a smile that lasted when the sigh was gone: for I promised to befriend her children. Heaven knows how anxiously I sought to fulfil that solemn vow! Feeble and sick myself, I followed you and your brother with no aim, no prayer, but this,--to embrace you and say, 'Accept a new brother in me.' I spare you the humiliation, for it is yours, not mine, of recalling what passed between us when at last we met. Yet, I still sought to save, at least, Sidney,--more especially confided to my care by his dying mother. He mysteriously eluded our search; but we had reason, by a letter received from some unknown hand, to believe him saved and provided for. Again I met you at Paris. I saw you were poor. Judging from your associate, I might with justice think you depraved. Mindful of your declaration never to accept bounty from a Beaufort, and remembering with natural resentment the outrage I had before received from you, I judged it vain to seek and remonstrate with you, but I did not judge it vain to aid. I sent you, anonymously, what at least would suffice, if absolute poverty had subjected you to evil courses, to rescue you from them if your heart were so disposed. Perhaps that sum, trifling as it was, may have smoothed your path and assisted your career. And why tell you all this now? To dissuade from asserting rights you conceive to be just?--Heaven forbid! If justice is with you, so also is the duty due to your mother's name. But simply for this: that in asserting such rights, you content yourself with justice, not revenge--that in righting yourself, you do not wrong others. If the law should decide for you, the arrears you could demand would leave my father and sister beggars. This may be law--it would not be justice; for my father solemnly believed himself, and had every apparent probability in his favour, the true heir of the wealth that

devolved upon him. This is not all. There may be circumstances connected with the discovery of a certain document that, if authentic, and I do not presume to question it, may decide the contest so far as it rests on truth; circumstances which might seem to bear hard upon my father's good name and faith. I do not know sufficiently of law to say how far these could be publicly urged, or, if urged, exaggerated and tortured by an advocate's calumnious ingenuity. But again, I say justice, and not revenge! And with this I conclude, inclosing to you these lines, written in your own hand, and leaving you the arbiter of their value.

"ARTHUR BEAUFORT."

The lines inclosed were these, a second time placed before the reader

"I cannot guess who you are. They say that you call yourself a relation; that must be some mistake. I knew not that my poor mother had relations so kind. But, whoever you be, you soothed her last hours--she died in your arms; and if ever-years, long years, hence--we should chance to meet, and I can do anything to aid another, my blood, and my life, and my heart, and my soul, all are slaves to your will! If you be really of her kindred I commend to you my brother; he is at ---- with Mr. Morton. If you can serve him, my mother's soul will watch over you as a guardian angel. As for me, I ask no help from any one; I go into the world, and will carve out my own way. So much do I shrink from the thought of charity from others, that I do not believe I could bless you as I do now, if your kindness to me did not close with the stone upon my mother's grave.

PHILIP."

This letter was sent to the only address of Monsieur de Vaudemont which the Beauforts knew, viz., his apartments in town, and he did not receive it the day it was sent.

Meanwhile Arthur Beaufort's malady continued to gain ground rapidly. His father, absorbed in his own more selfish fears (though, at the first sight of Arthur, overcome by the alteration of his appearance), had ceased to consider his illness fatal. In fact, his affection for Arthur was rather one of pride than love: long absence had weakened the ties of early custom. He prized him as an heir rather than treasured him as a son. It almost seemed that as the Heritage was in danger, so the Heir became less dear: this was only because he was less thought of. Poor Mrs. Beaufort, yet but partially acquainted with the terrors of her husband, still clung to hope for Arthur. Her affection for him brought out from the depths of her cold and insignificant character qualities that had never before been apparent. She watched--she nursed--she tended him. The fine lady was gone; nothing but the mother was left behind.

With a delicate constitution, and with an easy temper, which yielded to the influence of companions inferior to himself, except in bodily vigour and more sturdy will, Arthur Beaufort had been ruined by prosperity. His talents and acquirements, if not first-rate, at least far above mediocrity, had only served to refine his tastes, not to strengthen his

mind. His amiable impulses, his charming disposition and sweet temper, had only served to make him the dupe of the parasites that feasted on the lavish heir. His heart, frittered away in the usual round of light intrigues and hollow pleasures, had become too sated and exhausted for the redeeming blessings of a deep and a noble love. He had so lived for Pleasure that he had never known Happiness. His frame broke by excesses in which his better nature never took delight, he came home--to hear of ruin and to die!

It was evening in the sick-room. Arthur had risen from the bed to which, for some days, he had voluntarily taken, and was stretched on the sofa before the fire. Camilla was leaning over him, keeping in the shade, that he might not see the tears which she could not suppress. His mother had been endeavouring to amuse him, as she would have amused herself, by reading aloud one of the light novels of the hour; novels that paint the life of the higher classes as one gorgeous holiday.

"My dear mother," said the patient querulously, "I have no interest in these false descriptions of the life I have led. I know that life's worth. Ah! had I been trained to some employment, some profession! had I--well--it is weak to repine. Mother, tell me, you have seen Mons. de Vaudemont: is he strong and healthy?"

"Yes; too much so. He has not your elegance, dear Arthur."

"And do you admire him, Camilla? Has no other caught your heart or your fancy?"

"My dear Arthur," interrupted Mrs. Beaufort, "you forget that Camilla is scarcely out; and of course a young girl's affections, if she's well brought up, are regulated by the experience of her parents. It is time to take the medicine: it certainly agrees with you; you have more colour to-day, my dear, dear son."

While Mrs. Beaufort was pouring out the medicine, the door gently opened, and Mr. Robert Beaufort appeared; behind him there rose a taller and a stouter form, but one which seemed more bent, more humbled, more agitated. Beaufort advanced. Camilla looked up and turned pale. The visitor escaped from Mr. Beaufort's grasp on his arm; he came forward, trembling, he fell on his knees beside Arthur, and seizing his hand, bent over, it in silence. But silence so stormy! silence more impressive than all words his breast heaved, his whole frame shook. Arthur guessed at once whom he saw, and bent down gently as if to raise his visitor.

"Oh! Arthur! Arthur!" then cried Philip; "forgive me! My mother's comforter--my cousin--my brother! Oh! brother, forgive me!"

And as he half rose, Arthur stretched out his arms, and Philip clasped him to his breast.

It is in vain to describe the different feelings that agitated those who beheld; the selfish congratulations of Robert, mingled with a better and purer feeling; the stupor of the mother; the emotions that she herself

could not unravel, which rooted Camilla to the spot.

"You own me, then,--you own me!" cried Philip. "You accept the brotherhood that my mad passions once rejected! And you, too--you, Camilla--you who once knelt by my side, under this very roof--do you remember me now? Oh, Arthur! that letter--that letter!--yes, indeed, that aid which I ascribed to any one--rather than to you--made the date of a fairer fortune. I may have owed to that aid the very fate that has preserved me till now; the very name which I have not discredited. No, no; do not think you can ask me a favour; you can but claim your due. Brother! my dear brother!"

CHAPTER XVII.

"_Warwick_--Exceeding well! his cares are now all over."
--_Henry IV_.

The excitement of this interview soon overpowering Arthur, Philip, in quitting the room with Mr. Beaufort, asked a conference with that gentleman; and they went into the very parlour from which the rich man had once threatened to expel the haggard suppliant. Philip glanced round the room, and the whole scene came again before him. After a pause, he thus began,--

"Mr. Beaufort, let the Past be forgotten. We may have need of mutual forgiveness, and I, who have so wronged your noble son, am willing to suppose that I misjudged you. I cannot, it is true, forego this lawsuit."

Mr. Beaufort's face fell.

"I have no right to do so. I am the trustee of my father's honour and my mother's name: I must vindicate both: I cannot forego this lawsuit. But when I once bowed myself to enter your house--then only with a hope, where now I have the certainty of obtaining my heritage--it was with the resolve to bury in oblivion every sentiment that would transgress the most temperate justice. Now, I will do more. If the law decide against me, we are as we were; if with me--listen: I will leave you the lands of Beaufort, for your life and your son's. I ask but for me and for mine such a deduction from your wealth as will enable me, should my brother be yet living, to provide for him; and (if you approve the choice, which out of all earth I would desire to make) to give whatever belongs to more refined or graceful existence than I myself care for,--to her whom I would call my wife. Robert Beaufort, in this room I once asked you to restore to me the only being I then loved: I am now again your suppliant; and this time you have it in your power to grant my prayer. Let Arthur be, in truth, my brother: give me, if I prove myself, as I feel assured, entitled to hold the name my father bore, give me your daughter as my wife; give me Camilla, and I will not envy you the lands I am willing for myself to resign; and if they pass to any children, those children will

be your daughter's!"

The first impulse of Mr. Beaufort was to grasp the hand held out to him; to pour forth an incoherent torrent of praise and protestation, of assurances that he could not hear of such generosity, that what was right was right, that he should be proud of such a son-in-law, and much more in the same key. And in the midst of this, it suddenly occurred to Mr. Beaufort, that if Philip's case were really as good as he said it was, he could not talk so coolly of resigning the property it would secure him for the term of a life (Mr. Beaufort thought of his own) so uncommonly good, to say nothing of Arthur's. At this notion, he thought it best not to commit himself too far; drew in as artfully as he could, until he could consult Lord Lilburne and his lawyer; and recollecting also that he had a great deal to manage with respect to Camilla and her prior attachment, he began to talk of his distress for Arthur, of the necessity of waiting a little before Camilla was spoken to, while so agitated about her brother, of the exceedingly strong case which his lawyer advised him he possessed--not but what he would rather rest the matter on justice than law--and that if the law should be with him, he would not the less (provided he did not force his daughter's inclinations, of which, indeed, he had no fear) be most happy to bestow her hand on his brother's nephew, with such a portion as would be most handsome to all parties.

It often happens to us in this world, that when we come with our heart in our hands to some person or other,--when we pour out some generous burst of feeling so enthusiastic and self-sacrificing, that a bystander would call us fool and Quixote;--it often, I say, happens to us, to find our warm self suddenly thrown back upon our cold self; to discover that we are utterly uncomprehended, and that the swine who would have munched up the acorn does not know what to make of the pearl. That sudden ice which then freezes over us, that supreme disgust and despair almost of the whole world, which for the moment we confound with the one worldling--they who have felt, may reasonably ascribe to Philip. He listened to Mr. Beaufort in utter and contemptuous silence, and then replied only,--

"Sir, at all events this is a question for law to decide. If it decide as you think, it is for you to act; if as I think, it is for me. Till then I will speak to you no more of your daughter, or my intentions. Meanwhile, all I ask is the liberty to visit your son. I would not be banished from his sick-room!"

"My dear nephew!" cried Mr. Beaufort, again alarmed, "consider this house as your home."

Philip bowed and retreated to the door, followed obsequiously by his uncle.

It chanced that both Lord Lilburne and Mr. Blackwell were of the same mind as to the course advisable for Mr. Beaufort now to pursue. Lord Lilburne was not only anxious to exchange a hostile litigation for an amicable lawsuit, but he was really eager to put the seal of relationship upon any secret with regard to himself that a man who might inherit £20,000. a year--a dead shot, and a bold tongue--might think fit to

disclose. This made him more earnest than he otherwise might have been in advice as to other people's affairs. He spoke to Beaufort as a man of the world--to Blackwell as a lawyer.

"Pin the man down to his generosity," said Lilburne, "before he gets the property. Possession makes a great change in a man's value of money. After all, you can't enjoy the property when you're dead: he gives it next to Arthur, who is not married; and if anything happen to Arthur, poor fellow, why, in devolving on your daughter's husband and children, it goes in the right line. Pin him down at once: get credit with the world for the most noble and disinterested conduct, by letting your counsel state that the instant you discovered the lost document you wished to throw no obstacle in the way of proving the marriage, and that the only thing to consider is, if the marriage be proved; if so, you will be the first to rejoice, &c. &c. You know all that sort of humbug as well as any man!"

Mr. Blackwell suggested the same advice, though in different words--after taking the opinions of three eminent members of the bar; those opinions, indeed, were not all alike--one was adverse to Mr. Robert Beaufort's chance of success, one was doubtful of it, the third maintained that he had nothing to fear from the action--except, possibly, the ill-natured construction of the world. Mr. Robert Beaufort disliked the idea of the world's ill-nature, almost as much as he did that of losing his property. And when even this last and more encouraging authority, learning privately from Mr. Blackwell that Arthur's illness was of a nature to terminate fatally, observed, "that a compromise with a claimant, who was at all events Mr. Beaufort's nephew, by which Mr. Beaufort could secure the enjoyment of the estates to himself for life, and to his son for life also, should not (whatever his probabilities of legal success) be hastily rejected--unless he had a peculiar affection for a very distant relation--who, failing Mr. Beaufort's male issue and Philip's claim, would be heir-at-law, but whose rights would cease if Arthur liked to cut off the entail,"

Mr. Beaufort at once decided. He had a personal dislike to that distant heir-at-law; he had a strong desire to retain the esteem of the world; he had an innate conviction of the justice of Philip's claim; he had a remorseful recollection of his brother's generous kindness to himself; he preferred to have for his heir, in case of Arthur's decease, a nephew who would marry his daughter, than a remote kinsman. And should, after all, the lawsuit fail to prove Philip's right, he was not sorry to have the estate in his own power by Arthur's act in cutting off the entail. Brief; all these reasons decided him. He saw Philip--he spoke to Arthur --and all the preliminaries, as suggested above, were arranged between the parties. The entail was cut off, and Arthur secretly prevailed upon his father, to whom, for the present, the fee-simple thus belonged, to make a will, by which he bequeathed the estates to Philip, without reference to the question of his legitimacy. Mr. Beaufort felt his conscience greatly eased after this action--which, too, he could always retract if he pleased; and henceforth the lawsuit became but a matter of form, so far as the property it involved was concerned.

While these negotiations went on, Arthur continued gradually to decline. Philip was with him always. The sufferer took a strange liking to this long-dreaded relation, this man of iron frame and thews. In Philip there was so much of life, that Arthur almost felt as if in his presence itself there was an antagonism to death. And Camilla saw thus her cousin, day by day, hour by hour, in that sick chamber, lending himself, with the gentle tenderness of a woman, to soften the pang, to arouse the weariness, to cheer the dejection. Philip never spoke to her of love: in such a scene that had been impossible. She overcame in their mutual cares the embarrassment she had before felt in his presence; whatever her other feelings, she could not, at least, but be grateful to one so tender to her brother. Three letters of Charles Spencer's had been, in the afflictions of the house, only answered by a brief line. She now took the occasion of a momentary and delusive amelioration in Arthur's disease to write to him more at length. She was carrying, as usual, the letter to her mother, when Mr. Beaufort met her, and took the letter from her hand. He looked embarrassed for a moment, and bade her follow him into his study. It was then that Camilla learned, for the first time, distinctly, the claims and rights of her cousin; then she learned also at what price those rights were to be enforced with the least possible injury to her father. Mr. Beaufort naturally put the case before her in the strongest point of the dilemma. He was to be ruined--utterly ruined; a pauper, a beggar, if Camilla did not save him. The master of his fate demanded his daughter's hand. Habitually subservient to even a whim of her parents, this intelligence, the entreaty, the command with which it was accompanied, overwhelmed her. She answered but by tears; and Mr. Beaufort, assured of her submission, left her, to consider of the tone of the letter he himself should write to Mr. Spencer. He had sat down to this very task when he was summoned to Arthur's room. His son was suddenly taken worse: spasms that threatened immediate danger convulsed and exhausted him, and when these were allayed, he continued for three days so feeble that Mr. Beaufort, his eyes now thoroughly opened to the loss that awaited him, had no thoughts even for worldly interests.

On the night of the third day, Philip, Robert Beaufort, his wife, his daughter, were grouped round the death-bed of Arthur. The sufferer had just wakened from sleep, and he motioned to Philip to raise him. Mr. Beaufort started, as by the dim light he saw his son in the arms of Catherine's! and another Chamber of Death seemed, shadow-like, to replace the one before him. Words, long since uttered, knelled in his ear: "There shall be a death-bed yet beside which you shall see the spectre of her, now so calm, rising for retribution from the grave!" His blood froze, his hair stood erect; he cast a hurried, shrinking glance round the twilight of the darkened room: and with a feeble cry covered his white face with his trembling hands! But on Arthur's lips there was a serene smile; he turned his eyes from Philip to Camilla, and murmured, "She will repay you!" A pause, and the mother's shriek rang through the room! Robert Beaufort raised his face from his hands. His son was dead!

"_Jul_. And what reward do you propose?"

It must be my love."--_The Double Marriage_.

While these events, dark, hurried, and stormy, had befallen the family of his betrothed, Sidney lead continued his calm life by the banks of the lovely lake. After a few weeks, his confidence in Camilla's fidelity overbore all his apprehensions and forebodings. Her letters, though constrained by the inspection to which they were submitted, gave him inexpressible consolation and delight. He began, however, early to fancy that there was a change in their tone. The letters seemed to shun the one subject to which all others were as nought; they turned rather upon the guests assembled at Beaufort Court; and why I know not,--for there was nothing in them to authorise jealousy--the brief words devoted to Monsieur de Vaudemont filled him with uneasy and terrible suspicion. He gave vent to these feelings, as fully as he dared do, under the knowledge that his letter would be seen; and Camilla never again even mentioned the name of Vaudemont. Then there was a long pause; then her brother's arrival and illness were announced; then, at intervals, but a few hurried lines; then a complete, long, dreadful silence, and lastly, with a deep black border and a solemn black seal, came the following letter from Mr. Beaufort:

"MY DEAR SIR,--I have the unutterable grief to announce to you and your worthy uncle the irreparable loss I have sustained in the death of my only son. It is a month to day since he departed this life. He died, sir, as a Christian should die--humbly, penitently--exaggerating the few faults of his short life, but--(and here the writer's hypocrisy, though so natural to him--was it, that he knew not that he was hypocritical?--fairly gave way before the real and human anguish, for which there is no dictionary!) but I cannot pursue this theme!

"Slowly now awakening to the duties yet left me to discharge, I cannot but be sensible of the material difference in the prospects of my remaining child. Miss Beaufort is now the heiress to an ancient name and a large fortune. She subscribes with me to the necessity of consulting those new considerations which so melancholy an event forces upon her mind. The little fancy--or liking--(the acquaintance was too short for more) that might naturally spring up between two amiable young persons thrown together in the country, must be banished from our thoughts. As a friend, I shall be always happy to hear of your welfare; and should you ever think of a profession in which I can serve you, you may command my utmost interest and exertions. I know, my young friend, what you will feel at first, and how disposed you will be to call me mercenary and selfish. Heaven knows if that be really my character! But at your age, impressions are easily effaced; and any experienced friend of the world will assure you that, in the altered circumstances of the case, I have no option. All intercourse and correspondence, of course, cease with this letter,--until, at least, we may all meet, with no sentiments but those of friendship and esteem. I desire my compliments to your worthy uncle, in which Mrs. and Miss Beaufort join; and I am sure you will be happy to hear that my wife and daughter, though still in great affliction, have

suffered less in health than I could have ventured to anticipate.

"Believe me, dear Sir,
"Yours sincerely,
"ROBERT BEAUFORT.

"To C. SPENCER, Esq., Jun."

When Sidney received this letter, he was with Mr. Spencer, and the latter read it over the young man's shoulder, on which he leant affectionately. When they came to the concluding words, Sidney turned round with a vacant look and a hollow smile. "You see, sir," he said, "you see---"

"My boy--my son--you bear this as you ought. Contempt will soon efface--"

Sidney started to his feet, and his whole countenance was changed.

"Contempt--yes, for him! But for her--she knows it not--she is no party to this--I cannot believe it--I will not! I--I----" and he rushed out of the room. He was absent till nightfall, and when he returned, he endeavoured to appear calm--but it was in vain.

The next day brought him a letter from Camilla, written unknown to her parents,--short, it is true (confirming the sentence of separation contained in her father's), and imploring him not to reply to it,--but still so full of gentle and of sorrowful feeling, so evidently worded in the wish to soften the anguish she inflicted, that it did more than soothe--it even administered hope.

Now when Mr. Robert Beaufort had recovered the ordinary tone of his mind sufficiently to indite the letter Sidney had just read, he had become fully sensible of the necessity of concluding the marriage between Philip and Camilla before the publicity of the lawsuit. The action for the ejectment could not take place before the ensuing March or April. He would waive the ordinary etiquette of time and mourning to arrange all before. Indeed, he lived in hourly fear lest Philip should discover that he had a rival in his brother, and break off the marriage, with its contingent advantages. The first announcement of such a suit in the newspapers might reach the Spencers; and if the young man were, as he doubted not, Sidney Beaufort, would necessarily bring him forward, and ensure the dreaded explanation. Thus apprehensive and ever scheming, Robert Beaufort spoke to Philip so much, and with such apparent feeling, of his wish to gratify, at the earliest possible period, the last wish of his son, in the union now arranged--he spoke, with such seeming consideration and good sense, of the avoidance of all scandal and misinterpretation in the suit itself, which suit a previous marriage between the claimant and his daughter would show at once to be of so amicable a nature,--that Philip, ardently in love as he was, could not but assent to any hastening of his expected happiness compatible with decorum. As to any previous publicity by way of newspaper comment, he agreed with Mr. Beaufort in deprecating it. But then came the question,

What name was he to bear in the interval?

"As to that," said Philip, somewhat proudly, "when, after my mother's suit in her own behalf, I persuaded her not to bear the name of Beaufort, though her due--and for my own part, I prized her own modest name, which under such dark appearances was in reality spotless--as much as the loftier one which you bear and my father bore;--so I shall not resume the name the law denies me till the law restores it to me. Law alone can efface the wrong which law has done me."

Mr. Beaufort was pleased with this reasoning (erroneous though it was), and he now hoped that all would be safely arranged.

That a girl so situated as Camilla, and of a character not energetic or profound, but submissive, dutiful, and timid, should yield to the arguments of her father, the desire of her dying brother--that she should not dare to refuse to become the instrument of peace to a divided family, the saving sacrifice to her father's endangered fortunes--that, in fine, when, nearly a month after Arthur's death, her father, leading her into the room, where Philip waited her footstep with a beating heart, placed her hand in his--and Philip falling on his knees said, "May I hope to retain this hand for life?"--she should falter out such words as he might construe into not reluctant acquiescence; that all this should happen is so natural that the reader is already prepared for it. But still she thought with bitter and remorseful feelings of him thus deliberately and faithlessly renounced. She felt how deeply he had loved her--she knew how fearful would be his grief. She looked sad and thoughtful; but her brother's death was sufficient in Philip's eyes to account for that.

The praises and gratitude of her father, to whom she suddenly seemed to become an object of even greater pride and affection than ever Arthur had been--the comfort of a generous heart, that takes pleasure in the very sacrifice it makes--the acquittal of her conscience as to the motives of her conduct--began, however, to produce their effect. Nor, as she had lately seen more of Philip, could she be insensible of his attachment--of his many noble qualities--of the pride which most women might have felt in his addresses, when his rank was once made clear; and as she had ever been of a character more regulated by duty than passion, so one who could have seen what was passing in her mind would have had little fear for Philip's future happiness in her keeping--little fear but that, when once married to him, her affections would have gone along with her duties; and that if the first love were yet recalled, it would be with a sigh due rather to some romantic recollection than some continued regret. Few of either sex are ever united to their first love; yet married people jog on, and call each other "my dear" and "my darling" all the same. It might be, it is true, that Philip would be scarcely loved with the intenseness with which he loved; but if Camilla's feelings were capable of corresponding to the ardent and impassioned ones of that strong and vehement nature--such feelings were not yet developed in her. The heart of the woman might still be half concealed in the vale of the virgin innocence. Philip himself was satisfied--he believed that he was beloved: for it is the property of love, in a large and noble heart, to reflect itself, and to see its own image in the eyes on which it looks. As the Poet gives ideal beauty and excellence to some ordinary child of

Eve, worshipping less the being that is than the being he imagines and conceives--so Love, which makes us all poets for a while, throws its own divine light over a heart perhaps really cold; and becomes dazzled into the joy of a false belief by the very lustre with which it surrounds its object.

The more, however, Camilla saw of Philip, the more (gradually overcoming her former mysterious and superstitious awe of him) she grew familiarised to his peculiar cast of character and thought, so the more she began to distrust her father's assertion, that he had insisted on her hand as a price--a bargain--an equivalent for the sacrifice of a dire revenge. And with this thought came another. Was she worthy of this man?--was she not deceiving him? Ought she not to say, at least, that she had known a previous attachment, however determined she might be to subdue it? Often the desire for this just and honourable confession trembled on her lips, and as often was it checked by some chance circumstance or some maiden fear. Despite their connection, there was not yet between them that delicious intimacy which ought to accompany the affiancing of two hearts and souls. The gloom of the house; the restraint on the very language of love imposed by a death so recent and so deplored, accounted in much for this reserve. And for the rest, Robert Beaufort prudently left them very few and very brief opportunities to be alone.

In the meantime, Philip (now persuaded that the Beauforts were ignorant of his brother's fate) had set Mr. Barlow's activity in search of Sidney; and his painful anxiety to discover one so dear and so mysteriously lost was the only cause of uneasiness apparent in the brightening Future. While these researches, hitherto fruitless, were being made, it so happened, as London began now to refill, and gossip began now to revive, that a report got abroad, no one knew how (probably from the servants) that Monsieur de Vaudemont, a distinguished French officer, was shortly to lead the daughter and sole heiress of Robert Beaufort, Esq., M.P., to the hymeneal altar; and that report very quickly found its way into the London papers: from the London papers it spread to the provincial--it reached the eyes of Sidney in his now gloomy and despairing solitude. The day that he read it he disappeared.

CHAPTER XIX.

"_Jul_. . . . Good lady, love him!
You have a noble and an honest gentleman.
I ever found him so.
Love him no less than I have done, and serve him,
And Heaven shall bless you--you shall bless my ashes."
BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER: The Double Marriage.

We have been too long absent from Fanny; it is time to return to her. The delight she experienced when Philip made her understand all the benefits, the blessings, that her courage, nay, her intellect, had bestowed upon him, the blushing ecstasy with which she heard (as they

returned to H----, the eventful morning of her deliverance, side by side, her hand clasped in his, and often pressed to his grateful lips) his praises, his thanks, his fear for her safety, his joy at regaining her-- all this amounted to a bliss, which, till then, she could not have conceived that life was capable of bestowing. And when he left her at H----, to hurry to his lawyer's with the recovered document, it was but for an hour. He returned, and did not quit her for several days. And in that time he became sensible of her astonishing, and, to him, it seemed miraculous, improvement in all that renders Mind the equal to Mind; miraculous, for he guessed not the Influence that makes miracles its commonplace. And now he listened attentively to her when she conversed; he read with her (though reading was never much in his vocation), his unfastidious ear was charmed with her voice, when it sang those simple songs; and his manner (impressed alike by gratitude for the signal service rendered to him, and by the discovery that Fanny was no longer a child, whether in mind or years), though not less gentle than before, was less familiar, less superior, more respectful, and more earnest. It was a change which raised her in her own self-esteem. Ah, those were rosy days for Fanny!

A less sagacious judge of character than Lilburne would have formed doubts perhaps of the nature of Philip's interest in Fanny. But he comprehended at once the fraternal interest which a man like Philip might well take in a creature like Fanny, if commended to his care by a protector whose doom was so awful as that which had engulfed the life of William Gawtreay. Lilburne had some thoughts at first of claiming her, but as he had no power to compel her residence with him, he did not wish, on consideration, to come again in contact with Philip upon ground so full of humbling recollections as that still overshadowed by the images of Gawtreay and Mary. He contented himself with writing an artful letter to Simon, stating that from Fanny's residence with Mr. Gawtreay, and from her likeness to her mother, whom he had only seen as a child, he had conjectured the relationship she bore to himself; and having obtained other evidence of that fact (he did not say what or where), he had not scrupled to remove her to his roof, meaning to explain all to Mr. Simon Gawtreay the next day. This letter was accompanied by one from a lawyer, informing Simon Gawtreay that Lord Lilburne would pay L200. a year, in quarterly payments, to his order; and that he was requested to add, that when the young lady he had so benevolently reared came of age, or married, an adequate provision would be made for her. Simon's mind blazed up at this last intelligence, when read to him, though he neither comprehended nor sought to know why Lord Lilburne should be so generous, or what that noble person's letter to himself was intended to convey. For two days, he seemed restored to vigorous sense; but when he had once clutched the first payment made in advance, the touch of the money seemed to numb him back to his lethargy: the excitement of desire died in the dull sense of possession.

And just at that time Fanny's happiness came to a close. Philip received Arthur Beaufort's letter; and now ensued long and frequent absences; and on his return, for about an hour or so at a time, he spoke of sorrow and death; and the books were closed and the songs silenced. All fear for Fanny's safety was, of course, over; all necessity for her work; their

little establishment was increased. She never stirred out without Sarah; yet she would rather that there had been some danger on her account for him to guard against, or some trial that his smile might soothe. His prolonged absences began to prey upon her--the books ceased to interest--no study filled up the dreary gap--her step grew listless--her cheek pale--she was sensible at last that his presence had become necessary to her very life. One day, he came to the house earlier than usual, and with a much happier and serener expression of countenance than he had worn of late.

Simon was dozing in his chair, with his old dog, now scarce vigorous enough to bark, curled up at his feet. Neither man nor dog was more as a witness to what was spoken than the leathern chair, or the hearth-rug, on which they severally reposed.

There was something which, in actual life, greatly contributed to the interest of Fanny's strange lot, but which, in narration, I feel I cannot make sufficiently clear to the reader. And this was her connection and residence with that old man. Her character forming, as his was completely gone; here, the blank becoming filled--there, the page fading to a blank. It was the tatter, total Deathliness-in-Life of Simon, that, while so impressive to see, renders it impossible to bring him before the reader in his full force of contrast to the young Psyche. He seldom spoke--often, not from morning till night; he now seldom stirred. It is in vain to describe the indescribable: let the reader draw the picture for himself. And whenever (as I sometimes think he will, after he has closed this book) he conjures up the idea he attaches to the name of its heroine, let him see before her, as she glides through the humble room--as she listens to the voice of him she loves--as she sits musing by the window, with the church spire just visible--as day by day the soul brightens and expands within her--still let the reader see within the same walls, greyhaired, blind, dull to all feeling, frozen to all life, that stony image of Time and Death! Perhaps then he may understand why they who beheld the real and living Fanny blooming under that chill and mass of shadow, felt that her grace, her simplicity, her charming beauty, were raised by the contrast, till they grew associated with thoughts and images, mysterious and profound, belonging not more to the lovely than to the sublime.

So there sat the old man; and Philip, though aware of his presence, speaking as if he were alone with Fanny, after touching on more casual topics, thus addressed her:

"My true and my dear friend, it is to you that I shall owe, not only my rights and fortune, but the vindication of my mother's memory. You have not only placed flowers upon that gravestone, but it is owing to you, under Providence, that it will be inscribed at last with the Name which refutes all calumny. Young and innocent as you now are, my gentle and beloved benefactress, you cannot as yet know what a blessing it will be to me to engrave that Name upon that simple stone. Hereafter, when you yourself are a wife, a mother, you will comprehend the service you have rendered to the living and the dead!"

He stopped--struggling with the rush of emotions that overflowed his heart. Alas, THE DEAD! what service can we render to them?--what availed it now, either to the dust below, or to the immortality above, that the fools and knaves of this world should mention the Catherine whose life was gone, whose ears were deaf, with more or less respect? There is in calumny that poison that, even when the character throws off the slander, the heart remains diseased beneath the effect. They say that truth comes sooner or later; but it seldom comes before the soul, passing from agony to contempt, has grown callous to men's judgments. Calumniate a human being in youth--adulate that being in age;--what has been the interval? Will the adulation atone either for the torture, or the hardness which the torture leaves at last? And if, as in Catherine's case (a case, how common!), the truth come too late--if the tomb is closed--if the heart you have wrung can be wrung no more--why the truth is as valueless as the epitaph on a forgotten Name! Some such conviction of the hollowness of his own words, when he spoke of service to the dead, smote upon Philip's heart, and stopped the flow of his words.

Fanny, conscious only of his praise, his thanks, and the tender affection of his voice, stood still silent--her eyes downcast, her breast heaving.

Philip resumed:

"And now, Fanny, my honoured sister, I would thank you for more, were it possible, even than this. I shall owe to you not only name and fortune, but happiness. It is from the rights to which you have assisted me, and which will shortly be made clear, that I am able to demand a hand I have so long coveted--the hand of one as dear to me as you are. In a word, the time has, this day, been fixed, when I shall have a home to offer to you and to this old man--when I can present to you a sister who will prize you as I do: for I love you so dearly--I owe you so much--that even that home would lose half its smiles if you were not there. Do you understand me, Fanny? The sister I speak of will be my wife!"

The poor girl who heard this speech of most cruel tenderness did not fall, or faint, or evince any outward emotion, except in a deadly paleness. She seemed like one turned to stone. Her very breath forsook her for some moments, and then came back with a long deep sigh. She laid her hand lightly on his arm, and said calmly:

"Yes--I understand. We once saw a wedding. You are to be married--I shall see yours!"

"You shall; and, later, perhaps, I may see your own."

"I have a brother. Ah! if I could but find him--younger than I am--beautiful almost as you!"

"You will be happy," said Fanny, still calmly.

"I have long placed my hopes of happiness in such a union! Stay, where are you going?"

"To pray for you," said Fanny, with a smile, in which there was something of the old vacancy, as she walked gently from the room. Philip followed her with moistened eyes. Her manner might have deceived one more vain. He soon after quitted the house, and returned to town.

Three hours after, Sarah found Fanny stretched on the floor of her own room--so still--so white--that, for some moments, the old woman thought life was gone. She recovered, however, by degrees; and, after putting her hands to her eyes, and muttering some moments, seemed much as usual, except that she was more silent, and that her lips remained colourless, and her hands cold like stone.

CHAPTER XX.

"_Vec_. Ye see what follows.

Duke. O gentle sir! this shape again!"--_The Chances_.

That evening Sidney Beaufort arrived in London. It is the nature of solitude to make passions calm on the surface--agitated in the deeps. Sidney had placed his whole existence in one object. When the letter arrived that told him to hope no more, he was at first rather sensible of the terrible and dismal blank--the "void abyss"--to which all his future was suddenly changed, than roused to vehement and turbulent emotion. But Camilla's letter had, as we have seen, raised his courage and animated his heart. To the idea of her faith he still clung with the instinct of hope in the midst of despair. The tidings that she was absolutely betrothed to another, and in so short a time since her rejection of him, let loose from all restraint his darker and more tempestuous passions. In a state of mind bordering upon frenzy, he hurried to London--to seek her--to see her; with what intent--what hope, if hope there were--he himself could scarcely tell. But what man who has loved with fervour and trust will be contented to receive the sentence of eternal separation except from the very lips of the one thus worshipped and thus foresworn?

The day had been intensely cold. Towards evening the snow fell fast and heavily. Sidney had not, since a child, been before in London; and the immense City, covered with a wintry and icy mist, through which the hurrying passengers and the slow-moving vehicles passed, spectre-like, along the dismal and slippery streets--opened to the stranger no hospitable arms. He knew not a step of the way--he was pushed to and fro--his scarce intelligible questions impatiently answered--the snow covered him--the frost pierced to his veins. At length a man, more kindly than the rest, seeing that he was a stranger to London, procured him a hackney-coach, and directed the driver to the distant quarter of Berkeley Square. The snow balled under the hoofs of the horses--the groaning vehicle proceeded at the pace of a hearse. At length, and after a period of such suspense, and such emotion, as Sidney never in after-life could recall without a shudder, the coach stopped--the benumbed driver heavily descended--the sound of the knocker knelled loud through the muffled air--and the light from Mr. Beaufort's hall glared full upon

the dizzy eyes of the visitor. He pushed aside the porter, and sprang into the hall. Luckily, one of the footmen who had attended Mrs. Beaufort to the Lakes recognised him; and, in answer to his breathless inquiry, said,--

"Why, indeed, Mr. Spencer, Miss Beaufort is at home--up-stairs in the drawing-room, with master and mistress, and Monsieur de Vaudemont; but--"

Sidney waited no more. He bounded up the stairs--he opened the first door that presented itself to him, and burst, unannounced and unlooked-for, upon the eyes of the group seated within. He saw not the terrified start of Mr. Robert Beaufort--he heeded not the faint, nervous exclamation of the mother--he caught not the dark and wondering glance of the stranger seated beside Camilla--he saw but Camilla herself, and in a moment he was at her feet.

"Camilla, I am here!--I, who love you so--I, who have nothing in the world but you! I am here--to learn from you, and you alone, if I am indeed abandoned--if you are indeed to be another's!"

He had dashed his hat from his brow as he sprang forward; his long fair hair, damp with the snows, fell disordered over his forehead; his eyes were fixed, as for life and death, upon the pale face and trembling lips of Camilla. Robert Beaufort, in great alarm, and well aware of the fierce temper of Philip, anticipative of some rash and violent impulse, turned his glance upon his destined son-in-law. But there was no angry pride in the countenance he there beheld. Philip had risen, but his frame was bent--his knees knocked together--his lips were parted--his eyes were staring full upon the face of the kneeling man.

Suddenly Camilla, sharing her father's fear, herself half rose, and with an unconscious pathos, stretched one hand, as if to shelter, over Sidney's head, and looked to Philip. Sidney's eyes followed hers. He sprang to his feet.

"What, then, it is true! And this is the man for whom I am abandoned! But unless you--you, with your own lips, tell me that you love me no more--that you love another--I will not yield you but with life."

He stalked sternly and impetuously up to Philip, who recoiled as his rival advanced. The characters of the two men seemed suddenly changed. The timid dreamer seemed dilated into the fearless soldier. The soldier seemed shrinking--quailing--into nameless terror. Sidney grasped that strong arm, as Philip still retreated, with his slight and delicate fingers, grasped it with violence and menace; and frowning into the face from which the swarthy blood was scared away, said, in a hollow whisper:

"Do you hear me? Do you comprehend me? I say that she shall not be forced into a marriage at which I yet believe her heart rebels. My claim is holier than yours. Renounce her, or win her but with my blood."

Philip did not apparently hear the words thus addressed to him. His whole senses seemed absorbed in the one sense of sight. He continued to

gaze upon the speaker, till his eye dropped on the hand that yet griped his arm. And as he thus looked, he uttered an inarticulate cry. He caught the hand in his own, and pointed to a ring on the finger, but remained speechless. Mr. Beaufort approached, and began some stammered words of soothing to Sidney, but Philip motioned him to be silent, and, at last, as if by a violent effort, gasped forth, not to Sidney, but to Beaufort,--

"His name?--his name?"

"It is Mr. Spencer--Mr. Charles Spencer," cried Beaufort. "Listen to me, I will explain all--I--"

"Hush, hush! cried Philip; and turning to Sidney, he put his hand on his shoulder, and looking him full in the face, said,--

"Have you not known another name? Are you not--yes, it is so--it is--it is! Follow me--follow!"

And still retaining his grasp, and leading Sidney, who was now subdued, awed, and a prey to new and wild suspicions, he moved on gently, stride by stride--his eyes fixed on that fair face--his lips muttering--till the closing door shut both forms from the eyes of the three there left.

It was the adjoining room into which Philip led his rival. It was lit but by a small reading-lamp, and the bright, steady blaze of the fire; and by this light they both continued to gaze on each other, as if spellbound, in complete silence. At last Philip, by an irresistible impulse, fell upon Sidney's bosom, and, clasping him with convulsive energy, gasped out:

"Sidney!--Sidney!--my mother's son!"

"What!" exclaimed Sidney, struggling from the embrace, and at last freeing himself; "it is you, then!--you, my own brother! You, who have been hitherto the thorn in my path, the cloud in my fate! You, who are now come to make me a wretch for life! I love that woman, and you tear her from me! You, who subjected my infancy to hardship, and, but for Providence, might have degraded my youth, by your example, into shame and guilt!"

"Forbear!--forbear!" cried Philip, with a voice so shrill in its agony, that it smote the hearts of those in the adjoining chamber like the shriek of some despairing soul. They looked at each other, but not one had the courage to break upon the interview.

Sidney himself was appalled by the sound. He threw himself on a seat, and, overcome by passions so new to him, by excitement so strange, hid his face, and sobbed as a child.

Philip walked rapidly to and fro the room for some moments; at length he paused opposite to Sidney, and said, with the deep calmness of a wronged and goaded spirit:

"Sidney Beaufort, hear me! When my mother died she confided you to my care, my love, and my protection. In the last lines that her hand traced, she bade me think less of myself than of you; to be to you as a father as well as brother. The hour that I read that letter I fell on my knees, and vowed that I would fulfil that injunction--that I would sacrifice my very self, if I could give fortune or happiness to you. And this not for your sake alone, Sidney; no! but as my mother--our wronged, our belied, our broken-hearted mother!--O Sidney, Sidney! have you no tears for her, too?" He passed his hand over his own eyes for a moment, and resumed: "But as our mother, in that last letter, said to me, 'let my love pass into your breast for him,' so, Sidney, so, in all that I could do for you, I fancied that my mother's smile looked down upon me, and that in serving you it was my mother whom I obeyed. Perhaps, hereafter, Sidney, when we talk over that period of my earlier life when I worked for you, when the degradation you speak of (there was no crime in it)--was borne cheerfully for your sake, and yours the holiday though mine the task--perhaps, hereafter, you will do me more justice. You left me, or were reft from me, and I gave all the little fortune that my mother had bequeathed us, to get some tidings from you. I received your letter--that bitter letter--and I cared not then that I was a beggar, since I was alone. You talk of what I have cost you--you talk! and you now ask me to--to--Merciful Heaven! let me understand you--do you love Camilla? Does she love you? Speak--speak--explain--what, new agony awaits me?"

It was then that Sidney, affected and humbled, amidst all his more selfish sorrows, by his brother's language and manner, related, as succinctly as he could, the history of his affection for Camilla, the circumstances of their engagement, and ended by placing before him the letter he had received from Mr. Beaufort.

In spite of all his efforts for self-control, Philip's anguish was so great, so visible, that Sidney, after looking at his working features, his trembling hands, for a moment, felt all the earlier parts of his nature melt in a flow of generous sympathy and remorse. He flung himself on the breast from which he had shrunk before, and cried,--

"Brother, brother! forgive me; I see how I have wronged you. If she has forgotten me, if she love you, take her and be happy!"

Philip returned his embrace, but without warmth, and then moved away; and, again, in great disorder, paced the room. His brother only heard disjointed exclamations that seemed to escape him unawares: "They said she loved me! Heaven give me strength! Mother--mother! let me fulfil my vow! Oh, that I had died ere this!" He stopped at last, and the large dewdrops rolled down his forehead. "Sidney!" said he, "there is a mystery here that I comprehend not. But my mind now is very confused. If she loves you--if!--is it possible for a woman to love two? Well, well, I go to solve the riddle: wait here!"

He vanished into the next room, and for nearly half an hour Sidney was alone. He heard through the partition murmured voices; he caught more clearly the sound of Camilla's sobs. The particulars of that interview

between Philip and Camilla, alone at first (afterwards Mr. Robert Beaufort was re-admitted), Philip never disclosed, nor could Sidney himself ever obtain a clear account from Camilla, who could not recall it, even years after, without great emotion. But at last the door was opened, and Philip entered, leading Camilla by the hand. His face was calm, and there was a smile on his lips; a greater dignity than even that habitual to him was diffused over his whole person. Camilla was holding her handkerchief to her eyes and weeping passionately. Mr. Beaufort followed them with a mortified and slinking air.

"Sidney," said Philip, "it is past. All is arranged. I yield to your earlier, and therefore better, claim. Mr. Beaufort consents to your union. He will tell you, at some fitter time, that our birthright is at last made clear, and that there is no blot on the name we shall hereafter bear. Sidney, embrace your bride!"

Amazed, delighted, and still half incredulous, Sidney seized and kissed the hand of Camilla; and as he then drew her to his breast, she said, as she pointed to Philip:--

"Oh! if you do love me as you say, see in him the generous, the noble--" Fresh sobs broke off her speech; but as Sidney sought again to take her hand, she whispered, with a touching and womanly sentiment, "Ah! respect him: see!--" and Sidney, looking then at his brother, saw, that though he still attempted to smile, his lip writhed, and his features were drawn together, as one whose frame is wrung by torture, but who struggles not to groan.

He flew to Philip, who, grasping his hand, held him back, and said,--

"I have fulfilled my vow! I have given you up the only blessing my life has known. Enough, you are happy, and I shall be so too, when God pleases to soften this blow. And now you must not wonder or blame me, if, though so lately found, I leave you for a while. Do me one kindness, --you, Sidney--you, Mr. Beaufort. Let the marriage take place at H---, in the village church by which my mother sleeps; let it be delayed till the suit is terminated: by that time I shall hope to meet you all--to meet you, Camilla, as I ought to meet my brother's wife; till then, my presence will not sadden your happiness. Do not seek to see me; do not expect to hear from me. Hist! be silent, all of you; my heart is yet bruised and sore. O THOU," and here, deepening his voice, he raised his arms, "Thou who hast preserved my youth from such snares and such peril, who hast guided my steps from the abyss to which they wandered, and beneath whose hand I now bow, grateful if chastened, receive this offering, and bless that union! Fare ye well."

CHAPTER XXI.

"Heaven's airs amid the harpstrings dwell;
And we wish they ne'er may fade;

They cease; and the soul is a silent cell,
Where music never played.
Dream follows dream through the long night-hours."
WILSON: _The Past, a poem_.

The self-command which Philip had obtained for a while deserted him when he was without the house. His mind felt broken up into chaos; he hurried on, mechanically, on foot; he passed street upon street, now solitary and deserted, as the lamps gleamed upon the thick snow. The city was left behind him. He paused not, till, breathless, and exhausted in spirit if not in frame, he reached the churchyard where Catherine's dust reposed. The snow had ceased to fall, but it lay deep over the graves; the yew-trees, clad in their white shrouds, gleamed ghost-like through the dimness. Upon the rail that fenced the tomb yet hung a wreath that Fanny's hand had placed there. But the flowers were hid; it was a wreath of snow! Through the intervals of the huge and still clouds, there gleamed a few melancholy stars. The very calm of the holy spot seemed unutterably sad. The Death of the year overhung the Death of man. And as Philip bent over the tomb, within and without all was ICE and NIGHT!

For hours he remained on that spot, alone with his grief and absorbed in his prayer. Long past midnight Fanny heard his step on the stairs, and the door of his chamber close with unwonted violence. She heard, too, for some time, his heavy tread on the floor, till suddenly all was silent. The next morning, when, at the usual hour, Sarah entered to unclosethe shutters and light the fire, she was startled by wild exclamations and wilder laughter. The fever had mounted to the brain-- he was delirious.

For several weeks Philip Beaufort was in imminent danger; for a considerable part of that time he was unconscious; and when the peril was past, his recovery was slow and gradual. It was the only illness to which his vigorous frame had ever been subjected: and the fever had perhaps exhausted him more than it might have done one in whose constitution the disease had encountered less resistance. His brother; imagining he had gone abroad, was unacquainted with his danger. None tended his sick-bed save the hireling nurse, the feeble physician, and the unpurchasable heart of the only being to whom the wealth and rank of the Heir of Beaufort Court were as nothing. Here was reserved for him Fate's crowning lesson, in the vanity of those human wishes which anchor in gold and power. For how many years had the exile and the outcast pined indignantly for his birthright?--Lo! it was won: and with it came the crushed heart and the smitten frame. As he slowly recovered sense and reasoning, these thoughts struck him forcibly. He felt as if he were rightly punished in having disdained, during his earlier youth, the enjoyments within his reach. Was there nothing in the glorious health --the unconquerable hope--the heart, if wrung, and chafed, and sorely tried, free at least from the direst anguish of the passions, disappointed and jealous love? Though now certain, if spared to the future, to be rich, powerful, righted in name and honour, might he not from that sick-bed envy his earlier past? even when with his brother orphan he wandered through the solitary fields, and felt with what energies we are gifted when we have something to protect; or when, loving

and beloved, he saw life smile out to him in the eyes of Eugenie; or when, after that melancholy loss, he wrestled boldly, and breast to breast with Fortune, in a far land, for honour and independence? There is something in severe illness, especially if it be in violent contrast to the usual strength of the body, which has often the most salutary effect upon the mind; which often, by the affliction of the frame, roughly wins us from the too morbid pains of the heart! which makes us feel that, in mere LIFE, enjoyed as the robust enjoy it, God's Great Principle of Good breathes and moves. We rise thus from the sick-bed softened and humbled, and more disposed to look around us for such blessings as we may yet command.

The return of Philip, his danger, the necessity of exertion, of tending him, had roused Fanny from a state which might otherwise have been permanently dangerous to the intellect so lately ripened within her. With what patience, with what fortitude, with what unutterable thought and devotion, she fulfilled that best and holiest woman's duty--let the man whose struggle with life and death has been blessed with the vigil that wakes and saves, imagine to himself. And in all her anxiety and terror, she had glimpses of a happiness which it seemed to her almost criminal to acknowledge. For, even in his delirium, her voice seemed to have some soothing influence over him, and he was calmer while she was by. And when at last he was conscious, her face was the first he saw, and her name the first which his lips uttered. As then he grew gradually stronger, and the bed was deserted for the sofa, he took more than the old pleasure in hearing her read to him; which she did with a feeling that lecturers cannot teach. And once, in a pause from this occupation, he spoke to her frankly,--he sketched his past history--his last sacrifice. And Fanny, as she wept, learned that he was no more another's!

It has been said that this man, naturally of an active and impatient temperament, had been little accustomed to seek those resources which are found in books. But somehow in that sick chamber--it was Fanny's voice--the voice of her over whose mind he had once so haughtily lamented, that taught him how much of aid and solace the Herd of Men derive from the Everlasting Genius of the Few.

Gradually, and interval by interval, moment by moment, thus drawn together, all thought beyond shut out (for, however crushing for the time the blow that had stricken Philip from health and reason, he was not that slave to a guilty fancy, that he could voluntarily indulge--that he would not earnestly seek to shun--all sentiments 'chat yet turned with unholy yearning towards the betrothed of his brother);--gradually, I say, and slowly, came those progressive and delicious epochs which mark a revolution in the affections:--unspeakable gratitude, brotherly tenderness, the united strength of compassion and respect that he had felt for Fanny seemed, as he gained health, to mellow into feelings yet more exquisite and deep. He could no longer delude himself with a vain and imperious belief that it was a defective mind that his heart protected; he began again to be sensible to the rare beauty of that tender face--more lovely, perhaps, for the paleness that had replaced its bloom. The fancy that he had so imperiously checked before--before he

saw Camilla, returned to him, and neither pride nor honour had now the right to chase the soft wings away. One evening, fancying himself alone, he fell into a profound reverie; he awoke with a start, and the exclamation, "was it true love that I ever felt for Camilla, or a passion, a frenzy, a delusion?"

His exclamation was answered by a sound that seemed both of joy and grief. He looked up, and saw Fanny before him; the light of the moon, just risen, fell full on her form, but her hands were clasped before her face; he heard her sob.

"Fanny, dear Fanny!" he cried, and sought to throw himself from the sofa to her feet. But she drew herself away, and fled from the chamber silent as a dream.

Philip rose, and, for the first time since his illness, walked, but with feeble steps, to and fro the room. With what different emotions from those in which last, in fierce and intolerable agony, he had paced that narrow boundary! Returning health crept through his veins--a serene, a kindly, a celestial joy circumfused his heart. Had the time yet come when the old Florimel had melted into snow; when the new and the true one, with its warm life, its tender beauty, its maiden wealth of love, had risen before his hopes? He paused before the window; the spot within seemed so confined, the night without so calm and lovely, that he forgot his still-clinging malady, and unclosed the casement: the air came soft and fresh upon his temples, and the church-tower and spire, for the first time, did not seem to him to rise in gloom against the heavens. Even the gravestone of Catherine, half in moonlight, half in shadow, appeared to him to wear a smile. His mother's memory was become linked with the living Fanny.

"Thou art vindicated--thy Sidney is happy," he murmured: "to her the thanks!"

Fair hopes, and soft thoughts busy within him, he remained at the casement till the increasing chill warned him of the danger he incurred.

The next day, when the physician visited him, he found the fever had returned. For many days, Philip was again in danger--dull, unconscious even of the step and voice of Fanny.

He woke at last as from a long and profound sleep; woke so refreshed, so revived, that he felt at once that some great crisis had been passed, and that at length he had struggled back to the sunny shores of Life.

By his bedside sat Liancourt, who, long alarmed at his disappearance, had at last contrived, with the help of Mr. Barlow, to trace him to Gawtreys house, and had for several days taken share in the vigils of poor Fanny.

While he was yet explaining all this to Philip, and congratulating him on his evident recovery, the physician entered to confirm the congratulation. In a few days the invalid was able to quit his room, and nothing but change of air seemed necessary for his convalescence. It was

then that Liancourt, who had for two days seemed impatient to unburden himself of some communication, thus addressed him:--

"My--My dear friend, I have learned now your story from Barlow, who called several times during your relapse; and who is the more anxious about you, as the time for the decision of your case now draws near. The sooner you quit this house the better."

"Quit this house! and why? Is there not one in this house to whom I owe my fortune and my life?"

"Yes; and for that reason I say, 'Go hence:' it is the only return you can make her."

"Pshaw!--speak intelligibly."

"I will," said Liancourt, gravely. "I have been a watcher with her by your sick-bed, and I know what you must feel already:--nay, I must confess that even the old servant has ventured to speak to me. You have inspired that poor girl with feelings dangerous to her peace."

"Ha!" cried Philip, with such joy that Liancourt frowned, and said, "Hitherto I have believed you too honourable to--"

"So you think she loves me?" interrupted Philip. "Yes; what then? You, the heir of Beaufort Court, of a rental of L20,000. a year,--of an historical name,--you cannot marry this poor girl?"

"Well!--I will consider what you say, and, at all events, I will leave the house to attend the result of the trial. Let us talk no more on the subject now."

Philip had the penetration to perceive that Liancourt, who was greatly moved by the beauty, the innocence, and the unprotected position of Fanny, had not confined caution to himself; that with his characteristic well-meaning bluntness, and with the license of a man somewhat advanced in years, he had spoken to Fanny herself: for Fanny now seemed to shun Philip,--her eyes were heavy, her manner was embarrassed. He saw the change, but it did not grieve him; he hailed the omens which he drew from it.

And at last he and Liancourt went. He was absent three weeks, during which time the formality of the friendly lawsuit was decided in the plaintiff's favour; and the public were in ecstasies at the noble and sublime conduct of Mr. Robert Beaufort: who, the moment he had discovered a document which he might so easily have buried for ever in oblivion, voluntarily agreed to dispossess himself of estates he had so long enjoyed, preferring conscience to lucre. Some persons observed that it was reported that Mr. Philip Beaufort had also been generous--that he had agreed to give up the estates for his uncle's life, and was only in the meanwhile to receive a fourth of the revenues. But the universal comment was, "He could not have done less!" Mr. Robert Beaufort was, as Lord Lilburne had once observed, a man who was born, made, and reared to be

spoken well of by the world; and it was a comfort to him now, poor man, to feel that his character was so highly estimated. If Philip should live to the age of one hundred, he will never become so respectable and popular a man with the crowd as his worthy uncle. But does it much matter? Philip returned to H---- the eve before the day fixed for the marriage of his brother and Camilla.

CHAPTER XII.

From Night, Sunshine and Day arose--HES

The sun of early May shone cheerfully over the quiet suburb of H----. In the thoroughfares life was astir. It was the hour of noon--the hour at which commerce is busy, and streets are full. The old retired trader, eying wistfully the rolling coach or the oft-pausing omnibus, was breathing the fresh and scented air in the broadest and most crowded road, from which, afar in the distance, rose the spires of the metropolis. The boy let loose from the day-school was hurrying home to dinner, his satchel on his back: the ballad-singer was sending her cracked wine through the obscurer alleys, where the baker's boy, with puddings on his tray, and the smart maid-servant, despatched for porter, paused to listen. And round the shops where cheap shawls and cottons tempted the female eye, many a loitering girl detained her impatient mother, and eyed the tickets and calculated her hard-gained savings for the Sunday gear. And in the corners of the streets steamed the itinerant kitchens of the piemen, and rose the sharp cry, "All hot! all hot!" in the ear of infant and ragged hunger. And amidst them all rolled on some lazy coach of ancient merchant or withered maiden, unconscious of any life but that creeping through their own languid veins. And before the house in which Catherine died, there loitered many stragglers, gossips, of the hamlet, subscribers to the news-room hard by, to guess, and speculate, and wonder why, from the church behind, there rose the merry peal of the marriage-bell!

At length along the broad road leading from the great city, there were seen rapidly advancing three carriages of a very different fashion from those familiar to the suburb. On they came; swiftly they whirled round the angle that conducted to the church; the hoofs of the gay steeds ringing cheerily on the ground; the white favours of the servants gleaming in the sun. Happy is the bride the sun shines on! And when the carriages had thus vanished, the scattered groups melted into one crowd, and took their way to the church. They stood idling without in the burial-ground; many of them round the fence that guarded from their footsteps Catherine's lonely grave. All in nature was glad, exhilarating, and yet serene; a genial freshness breathed through the soft air; not a cloud was to be seen in the smiling azure; even the old dark yews seemed happy in their everlasting verdure. The bell ceased, and then even the crowd grew silent; and not a sound was heard in that solemn spot to whose demesnes are consecrated alike the Birth, the Marriage, and the Death.

At length there came forth from the church door the goodly form of a rosy beadle. Approaching the groups, he whispered the better-dressed and commanded the ragged, remonstrated with the old and lifted his cane against the young; and the result of all was, that the churchyard, not without many a murmur and expostulation, was cleared, and the crowd fell back in the space behind the gates of the principal entrance, where they swayed and gaped and chattered round the carriages, which were to bear away the bridal party.

Within the church, as the ceremony was now concluded, Philip Beaufort conducted, hand-in-hand, silently along the aisle, his brother's wife.

Leaning on his stick, his cold sneer upon his thin lip, Lord Lilburne limped, step by step, with the pair, though a little apart from them, glancing from moment to moment at the face of Philip Beaufort, where he had hoped to read a grief that he could not detect. Lord Lilburne had carefully refrained from an interview with Philip till that day, and he now only came to the wedding as a surgeon goes to an hospital, to examine a disease he had been told would be great and sore: he was disappointed. Close behind followed Sidney, radiant with joy, and bloom, and beauty; and his kind guardian, the tears rolling down his eyes, murmured blessings as he looked upon him. Mrs. Beaufort had declined attending the ceremony--her nerves were too weak--but, behind, at a longer interval, came Robert Beaufort, sober, staid, collected as ever to outward seeming; but a close observer might have seen that his eye had lost its habitual complacent cunning, that his step was more heavy, his stoop more joyless. About his air there was a something crestfallen. The consciousness of acres had passed away from his portly presence. He was no longer a possessor, but a pensioner. The rich man, who had decided as he pleased on the happiness of others, was a cipher; he had ceased to have any interest in anything. What to him the marriage of his daughter now? Her children would not be the heirs of Beaufort. As Camilla kindly turned round, and through happy tears waited for his approach, to clasp his hand, he forced a smile, but it was sickly and piteous. He longed to creep away, and be alone.

"My father!" said Camilla, in her sweet low voice; and she extricated herself from Philip, and threw herself on his breast.

"She is a good child," said Robert Beaufort vacantly, and, turning his dry eyes to the group, he caught instinctively at his customary commonplaces;--"and a good child, Mr. Sidney, makes a good wife!"

The clergyman bowed as if the compliment were addressed to himself: he was the only man there whom Robert Beaufort could now deceive.

"My sister," said Philip Beaufort, as once more leaning on his arm, they paused before the church door, "may Sidney love and prize you as--as I would have done; and believe me, both of you, I have no regret, no memory, that wounds me now."

He dropped the hand, and motioned to her father to lead her to the

carriage. Then winding his arm into Sidney's, he said,--

"Wait till they are gone: I have one word yet with you. Go on, gentlemen."

The clergyman bowed, and walked through the churchyard. But Lilburne, pausing and surveying Philip Beaufort, said to him, whisperingly,--

"And so much for feeling--the folly! So much for generosity--the delusion! Happy man!"

"I am thoroughly happy, Lord Lilburne."

"Are you?--Then, it was neither feeling nor generosity; and we were taken in! Good day." With that he limped slowly to the gate.

Philip answered not the sarcasm even by a look. For at that moment a loud shout was set up by the mob without--they had caught a glimpse of the bride.

"Come, Sidney, this way." he said; "I must not detain you long."

Arm in arm they passed out of the church, and turned to the spot hard by, where the flowers smiled up to them from the stone on their mother's grave.

The old inscription had been effaced, and the name of CATHERINE BEAUFORT was placed upon the stone. "Brother," said Philip, "do not forget this grave: years hence, when children play around your own hearth. Observe, the name of Catherine Beaufort is fresher on the stone than the dates of birth and death--the name was only inscribed there to-day--your wedding-day. Brother, by this grave we are now indeed united."

"Oh, Philip!" cried Sidney, in deep emotion, clasping the hand stretched out to him; "I feel, I feel how noble, how great you are--that you have sacrificed more than I dreamed of--"

"Hush!" said Philip, with a smile. "No talk of this. I am happier than you deem me. Go back now--she waits you."

"And you?--leave you!--alone!"

"Not alone," said Philip, pointing to the grave.

Scarce had he spoken when, from the gate, came the shrill, clear voice of Lord Lilburne,--

"We wait for Mr. Sidney Beaufort."

Sidney passed his hand over his eyes, wrung the hand of his brother once more, and in a moment was by Camilla's side.

Another shout--the whirl of the wheels--the trampling of feet--the

distant hum and murmur--and all was still. The clerk returned to lock up the church--he did not observe where Philip stood in the shadow of the wall--and went home to talk of the gay wedding, and inquire at what hour the funeral of the young woman; his next-door neighbour, would take place the next day.

It might be a quarter of an hour after Philip was thus left--nor had he moved from the spot--when he felt his sleeve pulled gently. He turned round and saw before him the wistful face of Fanny!

"So you would not come to the wedding?" said he.

"No. But I fancied you might be here alone--and sad."

"And you will not even wear the dress I gave you?"

"Another time. Tell me, are you unhappy?"

"Unhappy, Fanny! No; look around. The very burial-ground has a smile. See the laburnums clustering over the wall, listen to the birds on the dark yews above, and yonder see even the butterfly has settled upon her grave!

"I am not unhappy." As he thus spoke he looked at her earnestly, and taking both her hands in his, drew her gently towards him, and continued:

"Fanny, do you remember, that, leaning over that gate, I once spoke to you of the happiness of marriage where two hearts are united? Nay, Fanny, nay, I must go on. It was here in this spot,--it was here that I first saw you on my return to England. I came to seek the dead, and I have thought since, it was my mother's guardian spirit that drew me hither to find you--the living! And often afterwards, Fanny, you would come with me here, when, blinded and dull as I was, I came to brood and to repine, insensible of the treasures even then perhaps within my reach. But, best as it was: the ordeal through which I have passed has made me more grateful for the prize I now dare to hope for. On this grave your hand daily renewed the flowers. By this grave, the link between the Time and the Eternity, whose lessons we have read together, will you consent to record our vows? Fanny, dearest, fairest, tenderest, best, I love you, and at last as alone you should be loved!--I woo you as my wife! Mine, not for a season, but for ever--for ever, even when these graves are open, and the World shrivels like a scroll. Do you understand me?--do you heed me?--or have I dreamed that that--"

He stopped short--a dismay seized him at her silence. Had he been mistaken in his divine belief!--the fear was momentary: for Fanny, who had recoiled as he spoke, now placing her hands to her temples, gazing on him, breathlessly and with lips apart, as if, indeed, with great effort and struggle her modest spirit conceived the possibility of the happiness that broke upon it, advanced timidly, her face suffused in blushes; and, looking into his eyes, as if she would read into his very soul, said, with an accent, the intensesness of which showed that her whole fate hung on his answer,--

"But this is pity?--they have told you that I--in short, you are generous--you--you--Oh, deceive me not! Do you love her still?--Can you--do you love the humble, foolish Fanny?"

"As God shall judge me, sweet one, I am sincere! I have survived a passion--never so deep, so tender, so entire as that I now feel for you! And, oh, Fanny, hear this true confession. It was you--you to whom my heart turned before I saw Camilla!--against that impulse I struggled in the blindness of a haughty error!"

Fanny uttered a low and suppressed cry of delight and rapture. Philip passionately continued,--

"Fanny, make blessed the life you have saved. Fate destined us for each other. Fate for me has ripened your sweet mind. Fate for you has softened this rugged heart. We may have yet much to bear and much to learn. We will console and teach each other!"

He drew her to his breast as he spoke--drew her trembling, blushing, confused, but no more reluctant; and there, by the GRAVE that had been so memorable a scene in their common history, were murmured those vows in which all this world knows of human happiness is treasured and recorded--love that takes the sting from grief, and faith that gives eternity to love. All silent, yet all serene around them! Above, the heaven,--at their feet, the grave:--For the love, the grave!--for the faith, the heaven!

CHAPTER THE LAST.

"A labore reclinat otium."--HORAT.

[Leisure unbends itself from labour.]

I feel that there is some justice in the affection the general reader entertains for the old-fashioned and now somewhat obsolete custom, of giving to him, at the close of a work, the latest news of those who sought his acquaintance through its progress.

The weak but well-meaning Smith, no more oppressed by the evil influence of his brother, has continued to pass his days in comfort and respectability on the income settled on him by Philip Beaufort. Mr. and Mrs. Roger Morton still live, and have just resigned their business to their eldest son; retiring themselves to a small villa adjoining the town in which they had made their fortune. Mrs. Morton is very apt, when she goes out to tea, to talk of her dear deceased sister-in-law, the late Mrs. Beaufort, and of her own remarkable kindness to her nephew when a little boy. She observes that, in fact, the young men owe everything to Mr. Roger and herself; and, indeed, though Sidney was never of a grateful disposition, and has not been near her since, yet the elder brother, the Mr. Beaufort, always evinces his respect to them by the yearly present of

a fat buck. She then comments on the ups and downs of life; and observes that it is a pity her son Tom preferred the medical profession to the church. Their cousin, Mr. Beaufort, has two livings. To all this Mr. Roger says nothing, except an occasional "Thank Heaven, I want no man's help! I am as well to do as my neighbours. But that's neither here nor there."

There are some readers--they who do not thoroughly consider the truths of this life--who will yet ask, "But how is Lord Lilburne punished?" Punished?--ay, and indeed, how? The world, and not the poet, must answer that question. Crime is punished from without. If Vice is punished, it must be from within. The Lilburnes of this hollow world are not to be pelted with the soft roses of poetical justice. They who ask why he is not punished may be the first to doff the hat to the equipage in which my lord lolls through the streets! The only offence he habitually committed of a nature to bring the penalties of detection, he renounced the moment he perceived there was clanger of discovery! he gambled no more after Philip's hint. He was one of those, some years after, most bitter upon a certain nobleman charged with unfair play--one of those who took the accusation as proved; and whose authority settled all disputes thereon.

But, if no thunderbolt falls on Lord Lilburne's head--if he is fated still to eat, and drink, and to die on his bed, he may yet taste the ashes of the Dead Sea fruit which his hands have culled. He is grown old. His infirmities increase upon him; his sole resources of pleasure--the senses--are dried up. For him there is no longer savour in the viands, or sparkle in the wine,--man delights him not, nor woman neither. He is alone with Old Age, and in the sight of Death.

With the exception of Simon, who died in his chair not many days after Sidney's marriage, Robert Beaufort is the only one among the more important agents left at the last scene of this history who has passed from our mortal stage.

After the marriage of his daughter he for some time moped and drooped. But Philip learned from Mr. Blackwell of the will that Robert had made previously to the lawsuit; and by which, had the lawsuit failed, his rights would yet have been preserved to him. Deeply moved by a generosity he could not have expected from his uncle, and not pausing to inquire too closely how far it was to be traced to the influence of Arthur, Philip so warmly expressed his gratitude, and so surrounded Mr. Beaufort with affectionate attentions, that the poor man began to recover his self-respect,--began even to regard the nephew he had so long dreaded, as a son,--to forgive him for not marrying Camilla. And, perhaps, to his astonishment, an act in his life for which the customs of the world (that never favour natural ties not previously sanctioned by the legal) would have rather censured than praised, became his consolation; and the memory he was most proud to recall. He gradually recovered his spirits; he was very fond of looking over that will: he carefully preserved it: he even flattered himself that it was necessary to preserve Philip from all possible litigation hereafter; for if the estates were not legally Philip's, why, then, they were his to dispose of as he pleased. He was never more happy than when his successor was by

his side; and was certainly a more cheerful and, I doubt not, a better man--during the few years in which he survived the law-suit--than ever he had been before. He died--still member for the county, and still quoted as a pattern to county members--in Philip's arms; and on his lips there was a smile that even Lilburne would have called sincere.

Mrs. Beaufort, after her husband's death, established herself in London; and could never be persuaded to visit Beaufort Court. She took a companion, who more than replaced, in her eyes, the absence of Camilla.

And Camilla-Spencer-Sidney. They live still by the gentle Lake, happy in their own serene joys and graceful leisure; shunning alike ambition and its trials, action and its sharp vicissitudes; envying no one, covetous of nothing; making around them, in the working world, something of the old pastoral and golden holiday. If Camilla had at one time wavered in her allegiance to Sidney, her good and simple heart has long since been entirely regained by his devotion; and, as might be expected from her disposition, she loved him better after marriage than before.

Philip had gone through severer trials than Sidney. But, had their earlier fates been reversed, and that spirit, in youth so haughty and self-willed, been lapped in ease and luxury, would Philip now be a better or a happier man? Perhaps, too, for a less tranquil existence than his brother, Philip yet may be reserved; but, in proportion to the uses of our destiny, do we repose or toil: he who never knows pain knows but the half of pleasure. The lot of whatever is most noble on the earth below falls not amidst the rosy Gardens of the Epicurean. We may envy the man who enjoys and rests; but the smile of Heaven settles rather on the front of him who labours and aspires.

And did Philip ever regret the circumstances that had given him Fanny for the partner of his life? To some who take their notions of the Ideal from the conventional rules of romance, rather than from their own perceptions of what is true, this narrative would have been more pleasing had Philip never loved but Fanny. But all that had led to that love had only served to render it more enduring and concentrated. Man's strongest and worthiest affection is his last--is the one that unites and embodies all his past dreams of what is excellent--the one from which Hope springs out the brighter from former disappointments--the one in which the MEMORIES are the most tender and the most abundant--the one which, replacing all others, nothing hereafter can replace.

.

And now ere the scene closes, and the audience, whom perhaps the actors may have interested for a while, disperse, to forget amidst the pursuits of actual life the Shadows that have amused an hour, or beguiled a care, let the curtain fall on one happy picture:--

It is some years after the marriage of Philip and Fanny. It is a summer morning. In a small old-fashioned room at Beaufort Court, with its casements open to the gardens, stood Philip, having just entered; and near the window sat Fanny, his boy by her side. She was at the mother's

hardest task--the first lessons to the first-born child; and as the boy looked up at her sweet earnest face with a smile of intelligence on his own, you might have seen at a glance how well understood were the teacher and the pupil. Yes: whatever might have been wanting in the Virgin to the full development of mind, the cares of the mother had supplied. When a being was born to lean on her alone--dependent on her providence for life--then hour after hour, step after step, in the progress of infant destinies, had the reason of the mother grown in the child's growth, adapting itself to each want that it must foresee, and taking its perfectness and completion from the breath of the New Love!

The child caught sight of Philip and rushed to embrace him.

"See!" whispered Fanny, as she also hung upon him, and strange recollections of her own mysterious childhood crowded upon her,--"See," whispered she, with a blush half of shame and half of pride, "the poor idiot girl is the teacher of your child!"

"And," answered Philip, "whether for child or mother, what teacher is like Love?"

Thus saying, he took the boy into his arms; and, as he bent over those rosy cheeks, Fanny saw, from the movement of his lips and the moisture in his eyes, that he blessed God. He looked upon the mother's face, he glanced round on the flowers and foliage of the luxurious summer, and again he blessed God: And without and within, it was Light and MORNING!

THE END.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK, NIGHT AND MORNING, V5 ***
By Edward Bulwer Lytton

***** This file should be named b194w10.txt or b194w10.zip *****

Corrected EDITIONS of our etexts get a new NUMBER, b194w11.txt
VERSIONS based on separate sources get new LETTER, b194w10a.txt

This eBook was produced by David Widger [widger@cecomet.net]

Project Gutenberg eBooks are often created from several printed editions, all of which are confirmed as Public Domain in the US unless a copyright notice is included. Thus, we usually do not keep eBooks in compliance with any particular paper edition.

We are now trying to release all our eBooks one year in advance of the official release dates, leaving time for better editing. Please be encouraged to tell us about any error or corrections, even years after the official publication date.

Please note neither this listing nor its contents are final til midnight of the last day of the month of any such announcement. The official release date of all Project Gutenberg eBooks is at Midnight, Central Time, of the last day of the stated month. A preliminary version may often be posted for suggestion, comment and editing by those who wish to do so.

Most people start at our Web sites at:

<http://gutenberg.net> or

<http://promo.net/pg>

These Web sites include award-winning information about Project Gutenberg, including how to donate, how to help produce our new eBooks, and how to subscribe to our email newsletter (free!).

Those of you who want to download any eBook before announcement can get to them as follows, and just download by date. This is also a good way to get them instantly upon announcement, as the indexes our cataloguers produce obviously take a while after an announcement goes out in the Project Gutenberg Newsletter.

<http://www.ibiblio.org/gutenberg/etext03> or

<ftp://ftp.ibiblio.org/pub/docs/books/gutenberg/etext03>

Or /etext02, 01, 00, 99, 98, 97, 96, 95, 94, 93, 92, 91 or 90

Just search by the first five letters of the filename you want, as it appears in our Newsletters.

Information about Project Gutenberg (one page)

We produce about two million dollars for each hour we work. The time it takes us, a rather conservative estimate, is fifty hours to get any eBook selected, entered, proofread, edited, copyright searched and analyzed, the copyright letters written, etc. Our projected audience is one hundred million readers. If the value per text is nominally estimated at one dollar then we produce \$2 million dollars per hour in 2002 as we release over 100 new text files per month: 1240 more eBooks in 2001 for a total of 4000+ We are already on our way to trying for 2000 more eBooks in 2002 If they reach just 1-2% of the world's population then the total will reach over half a trillion eBooks given away by year's end.

The Goal of Project Gutenberg is to Give Away 1 Trillion eBooks! This is ten thousand titles each to one hundred million readers, which is only about 4% of the present number of computer users.

Here is the briefest record of our progress (* means estimated):

eBooks Year Month

1 1971 July
10 1991 January
100 1994 January
1000 1997 August
1500 1998 October
2000 1999 December
2500 2000 December
3000 2001 November
4000 2001 October/November
6000 2002 December*
9000 2003 November*
10000 2004 January*

The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation has been created to secure a future for Project Gutenberg into the next millennium.

We need your donations more than ever!

As of February, 2002, contributions are being solicited from people and organizations in: Alabama, Alaska, Arkansas, Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia, Wisconsin, and Wyoming.

We have filed in all 50 states now, but these are the only ones that have responded.

As the requirements for other states are met, additions to this list will be made and fund raising will begin in the additional states. Please feel free to ask to check the status of your state.

In answer to various questions we have received on this:

We are constantly working on finishing the paperwork to legally request donations in all 50 states. If your state is not listed and you would like to know if we have added it since the list you have, just ask.

While we cannot solicit donations from people in states where we are not yet registered, we know of no prohibition against accepting donations from donors in these states who approach us with an offer to donate.

International donations are accepted, but we don't know ANYTHING about how to make them tax-deductible, or even if they CAN be made deductible, and don't have the staff to handle it even if there are ways.

Donations by check or money order may be sent to:

Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation
PMB 113
1739 University Ave.
Oxford, MS 38655-4109

Contact us if you want to arrange for a wire transfer or payment method other than by check or money order.

The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation has been approved by the US Internal Revenue Service as a 501(c)(3) organization with EIN [Employee Identification Number] 64-622154. Donations are tax-deductible to the maximum extent permitted by law. As fund-raising requirements for other states are met, additions to this list will be made and fund-raising will begin in the additional states.

We need your donations more than ever!

You can get up to date donation information online at:

<http://www.gutenberg.net/donation.html>

If you can't reach Project Gutenberg,
you can always email directly to:

Michael S. Hart <hart@pobox.com>

Prof. Hart will answer or forward your message.

We would prefer to send you information by email.

****The Legal Small Print****

(Three Pages)

*****START**THE SMALL PRINT!**FOR PUBLIC DOMAIN EBOOKS**START*****

Why is this "Small Print!" statement here? You know: lawyers. They tell us you might sue us if there is something wrong with your copy of this eBook, even if you got it for free from someone other than us, and even if what's wrong is not our fault. So, among other things, this "Small Print!" statement disclaims most of our liability to you. It also tells you how you may distribute copies of this eBook if you want to.

***BEFORE!* YOU USE OR READ THIS EBOOK**

By using or reading any part of this PROJECT GUTENBERG-tm eBook, you indicate that you understand, agree to and accept

this "Small Print!" statement. If you do not, you can receive a refund of the money (if any) you paid for this eBook by sending a request within 30 days of receiving it to the person you got it from. If you received this eBook on a physical medium (such as a disk), you must return it with your request.

ABOUT PROJECT GUTENBERG-TM EBOOKS

This PROJECT GUTENBERG-tm eBook, like most PROJECT GUTENBERG-tm eBooks, is a "public domain" work distributed by Professor Michael S. Hart through the Project Gutenberg Association (the "Project").

Among other things, this means that no one owns a United States copyright on or for this work, so the Project (and you!) can copy and distribute it in the United States without permission and without paying copyright royalties. Special rules, set forth below, apply if you wish to copy and distribute this eBook under the "PROJECT GUTENBERG" trademark.

Please do not use the "PROJECT GUTENBERG" trademark to market any commercial products without permission.

To create these eBooks, the Project expends considerable efforts to identify, transcribe and proofread public domain works. Despite these efforts, the Project's eBooks and any medium they may be on may contain "Defects". Among other things, Defects may take the form of incomplete, inaccurate or corrupt data, transcription errors, a copyright or other intellectual property infringement, a defective or damaged disk or other eBook medium, a computer virus, or computer codes that damage or cannot be read by your equipment.

LIMITED WARRANTY; DISCLAIMER OF DAMAGES

But for the "Right of Replacement or Refund" described below, [1] Michael Hart and the Foundation (and any other party you may receive this eBook from as a PROJECT GUTENBERG-tm eBook) disclaims all liability to you for damages, costs and expenses, including legal fees, and [2] YOU HAVE NO REMEDIES FOR NEGLIGENCE OR UNDER STRICT LIABILITY, OR FOR BREACH OF WARRANTY OR CONTRACT, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO INDIRECT, CONSEQUENTIAL, PUNITIVE OR INCIDENTAL DAMAGES, EVEN IF YOU GIVE NOTICE OF THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH DAMAGES.

If you discover a Defect in this eBook within 90 days of receiving it, you can receive a refund of the money (if any) you paid for it by sending an explanatory note within that time to the person you received it from. If you received it on a physical medium, you must return it with your note, and such person may choose to alternatively give you a replacement copy. If you received it electronically, such person may choose to alternatively give you a second opportunity to receive it electronically.

THIS EBOOK IS OTHERWISE PROVIDED TO YOU "AS-IS". NO OTHER WARRANTIES OF ANY KIND, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, ARE MADE TO YOU AS

TO THE EBOOK OR ANY MEDIUM IT MAY BE ON, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR A PARTICULAR PURPOSE.

Some states do not allow disclaimers of implied warranties or the exclusion or limitation of consequential damages, so the above disclaimers and exclusions may not apply to you, and you may have other legal rights.

INDEMNITY

You will indemnify and hold Michael Hart, the Foundation, and its trustees and agents, and any volunteers associated with the production and distribution of Project Gutenberg-tm texts harmless, from all liability, cost and expense, including legal fees, that arise directly or indirectly from any of the following that you do or cause: [1] distribution of this eBook, [2] alteration, modification, or addition to the eBook, or [3] any Defect.

DISTRIBUTION UNDER "PROJECT GUTENBERG-tm"

You may distribute copies of this eBook electronically, or by disk, book or any other medium if you either delete this "Small Print!" and all other references to Project Gutenberg, or:

[1] Only give exact copies of it. Among other things, this requires that you do not remove, alter or modify the eBook or this "small print!" statement. You may however, if you wish, distribute this eBook in machine readable binary, compressed, mark-up, or proprietary form, including any form resulting from conversion by word processing or hypertext software, but only so long as *EITHER*:

[*] The eBook, when displayed, is clearly readable, and does *not* contain characters other than those intended by the author of the work, although tilde (~), asterisk (*) and underline (_) characters may be used to convey punctuation intended by the author, and additional characters may be used to indicate hypertext links; OR

[*] The eBook may be readily converted by the reader at no expense into plain ASCII, EBCDIC or equivalent form by the program that displays the eBook (as is the case, for instance, with most word processors); OR

[*] You provide, or agree to also provide on request at no additional cost, fee or expense, a copy of the eBook in its original plain ASCII form (or in EBCDIC or other equivalent proprietary form).

[2] Honor the eBook refund and replacement provisions of this "Small Print!" statement.

[3] Pay a trademark license fee to the Foundation of 20% of the gross profits you derive calculated using the method you already use to calculate your applicable taxes. If you don't derive profits, no royalty is due. Royalties are payable to "Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation" the 60 days following each date you prepare (or were legally required to prepare) your annual (or equivalent periodic) tax return. Please contact us beforehand to let us know your plans and to work out the details.

WHAT IF YOU *WANT* TO SEND MONEY EVEN IF YOU DON'T HAVE TO?

Project Gutenberg is dedicated to increasing the number of public domain and licensed works that can be freely distributed in machine readable form.

The Project gratefully accepts contributions of money, time, public domain materials, or royalty free copyright licenses. Money should be paid to the:
"Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation."

If you are interested in contributing scanning equipment or software or other items, please contact Michael Hart at:
hart@pobox.com

[Portions of this eBook's header and trailer may be reprinted only when distributed free of all fees. Copyright (C) 2001, 2002 by Michael S. Hart. Project Gutenberg is a TradeMark and may not be used in any sales of Project Gutenberg eBooks or other materials be they hardware or software or any other related product without express permission.]

*END THE SMALL PRINT! FOR PUBLIC DOMAIN EBOOKS*Ver.02/11/02*END*
r.02/11/02*END*

eBooks and any

medium they may be on may contain "Defects". Among other

things, Defects may take the form of incomplete, inaccurate or

corrupt data, transcription errors, a copyright or other

intellectual property infringement, a defective or damaged

disk or other eBook medium, a computer virus, or computer

codes that damage or cannot be read by your equipment.

LIMITED WARRANTY; DISCLAIMER OF DAMAGES

But for the "Right of Replacement or Refund" described below,

[1] Michael Hart and the Foundation (and any other party you may

receive this eBook from as a PROJECT GUTENBERG-tm eBook) disclaims

all liability to you for damages, costs and expenses, including

legal fees, and [2] YOU HAVE NO REMEDIES FOR NEGLIGENCE OR

UNDER STRICT LIABILITY, OR FOR BREACH OF WARRANTY OR CONTRACT,

INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO INDIRECT, CONSEQUENTIAL, PUNITIVE

OR INCIDENTAL DAMAGES, EVEN IF YOU GIVE NOTICE OF THE

POSSIBILITY OF SUCH DAMAGES.

If you discover a Defect in this eBook within 90 days of

receiving it, you can receive a refund of the money (if any)

you paid for it by sending an explanatory note within that

time to the person you received it from. If you received it

on a physical medium, you must return it with your note, and

such person may choose to alternatively give you a replacement

copy. If you received it electronically, such person may

choose to alternatively give you a second opportunity to

receive it electronically.

THIS EBOOK IS OTHERWISE PROVIDED TO YOU "AS-IS". NO OTHER

WARRANTIES OF ANY KIND, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, ARE MADE TO YOU AS

TO THE EBOOK OR ANY MEDIUM IT MAY BE ON, INCLUDING BUT NOT

LIMITED TO WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR A

PARTICULAR PURPOSE.

Some states do not allow disclaimers of implied warranties or the exclusion or limitation of consequential damages, so the above disclaimers and exclusions may not apply to you, and you may have other legal rights.

INDEMNITY

You will indemnify and hold Michael Hart, the Foundation, and its trustees and agents, and any volunteers associated with the production and distribution of Project Gutenberg-tm texts harmless, from all liability, cost and expense, including legal fees, that arise directly or indirectly from any of the following that you do or cause: [1] distribution of this eBook, [2] alteration, modification, or addition to the eBook, or [3] any Defect.

DISTRIBUTION UNDER "PROJECT GUTENBERG-tm"

You may distribute copies of this eBook electronically, or by disk, book or any other medium if you either delete this "Small Print!" and all other references to Project Gutenberg, or:

[1] Only give exact copies of it. Among other things, this requires that you do not remove, alter or modify the eBook or this "small print!" statement. You may however, if you wish, distribute this eBook in machine readable binary, compressed, mark-up, or proprietary form,

including any form resulting from conversion by word processing or hypertext software, but only so long as

***EITHER*:**

[*] The eBook, when displayed, is clearly readable, and

does ***not*** contain characters other than those

intended by the author of the work, although tilde

(~), asterisk (*) and underline (_) characters may

be used to convey punctuation intended by the

author, and additional characters may be used to

indicate hypertext links; OR

[*] The eBook may be readily converted by the reader at

no expense into plain ASCII, EBCDIC or equivalent

form by the program that displays the eBook (as is

the case, for instance, with most word processors);

OR

[*] You provide, or agree to also provide on request at

no additional cost, fee or expense, a copy of the

eBook in its original plain ASCII form (or in EBCDIC

or other equivalent proprietary form).

[2] Honor the eBook refund and replacement provisions of this

"Small Print!" statement.

[3] Pay a trademark license fee to the Foundation of 20% of the

gross profits you derive calculated using the method you already use to calculate your applicable taxes. If you don't derive profits, no royalty is due. Royalties are payable to "Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation" the 60 days following each date you prepare (or were legally required to prepare) your annual (or equivalent periodic) tax return. Please contact us beforehand to let us know your plans and to work out the details.

WHAT IF YOU *WANT* TO SEND MONEY EVEN IF YOU DON'T HAVE TO?

Project Gutenberg is dedicated to increasing the number of public domain and licensed works that can be freely distributed in machine readable form.

The Project gratefully acce