LEVER CHARLES JAMES

THE FORTUNES OF GLENCORE

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Lever C.

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Содержание

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PREFACE

I am unwilling to suffer this tale to leave my hands without a word of explanation to my reader. If I have never disguised from myself the grounds of any humble success I have attained to as a writer of fiction; if I have always had before me the fact that to movement and action, the stir of incident, and a certain light-heartedness and gayety of temperament, more easy to impart to others than to repress in one's self, I have owed much, if not all, of whatever popularity I have enjoyed, I have yet felt, or fancied that I felt, that it would be in the delineation of very different scenes, and the portraiture of very different emotions, that I should reap what I would reckon as a real success. This conviction, or impression if you will, has become stronger with years and with the knowledge of life; years have imparted, and time has but confirmed me in, the notion that any skill I possess lies in the detection of character, and the unravelment of that tangled skein which makes up human motives.

I am well aware that no error is more common than to mistake one's own powers; nor does anything more contribute to this error than a sense of self-depreciation for what the world has been pleased to deem successful in us. To test my conviction, or to abandon it as a delusion forever, I have written the present story of "Glencore."

I make but little pretension to the claim of interesting; as little do I aspire to the higher credit of instructing. All I have attempted-all I have striven to accomplish-is the faithful portraiture of character, the close analysis of motives, and correct observation as to some of the manners and modes of thought which mark the age we live in.

Opportunities of society as well as natural inclination have alike disposed me to such studies. I have stood over the game of life very patiently for many a year, and though I may have grieved over the narrow fortune which has prevented me from "cutting in," I have consoled myself by the thought of all the anxieties defeat might have cost me, all the chagrin I had suffered were I to have risen a loser. Besides this, I have learned to know and estimate what are the qualities which win success in life, and what the gifts by which men dominate above their fellows.

If in the world of well-bred life the incidents and events be fewer, because the friction is less than in the classes where vicissitudes of fortune are more frequent, the play of passion, the moods of temper, and the changeful varieties of nature are often very strongly developed, shadowed and screened though they be by the polished conventionalities of society. To trace and mark these has long constituted one of the pleasures of my life; if I have been able to impart even a portion of that gratification to my reader, I will not deem the effort in vain, nor the "Fortunes of Glencore" a failure.

Let me add that although certain traits of character in some of the individuals of my story may seem to indicate sketches of real personages, there is but one character in the whole book drawn entirely from life.

This is Billy Traynor. Not only have I had a sitter for this picture, but he is alive and hearty at the hour I am writing. For the others, they are purely, entirely fictitious. Certain details, certain characteristics, I have of course borrowed, – as he who would mould a human face must needs have copied an eye, a nose, or a chin from some existent model; but beyond this I have not gone, nor, indeed, have I found, in all my experience of life, that fiction ever suggests what has not been implanted unconsciously by memory; originality in the delineation of character being little beyond a new combination of old materials derived from that source.

I wish I could as easily apologize for the faults and blemishes of my story as I can detect and deplore them; but, like the failings in one's nature, they are very often difficult to correct, even when

acknowledged. I have, therefore, but to throw myself once more upon the indulgence which, “old offender” that I am, has never forsaken me, and subscribe myself,

Your devoted friend and servant,

C. L.

CHAPTER I. A LONELY LANDSCAPE

Where that singularly beautiful inlet of the sea known in the west of Ireland as the Killeries, after narrowing to a mere strait, expands into a bay, stands the ruin of the ancient Castle of Glencore. With the bold steep sides of Ben Creggan behind, and the broad blue Atlantic in front, the proud keep would seem to have occupied a spot that might have bid defiance to the boldest assailant. The estuary itself here seems entirely landlocked, and resembles, in the wild, fantastic outline of the mountains around, a Norwegian fiord, rather than a scene in our own tamer landscape. The small village of Leenane, which stands on the Galway shore, opposite to Glencore, presents the only trace of habitation in this wild and desolate district, for the country around is poor, and its soil offers little to repay the task of the husbandman. Fishing is then the chief, if not the sole, resource of those who pass their lives in this solitary region; and thus in every little creek or inlet of the shore may be seen the stout craft of some hardy venturer, and nets, and tackle, and such-like gear, lie drying on every rocky eminence. We have said that Glencore was a ruin; but still its vast proportions, yet traceable in massive fragments of masonry, displayed specimens of various eras of architecture, from the rudest tower of the twelfth century to the more ornate style of a later period; while artificial embankments and sloped sides of grass showed the remains of what once had been terrace and “parterre,” the successors, it might be presumed, of fosse and parapet. Many a tale of cruelty and oppression, many a story of suffering and sorrow, clung to those old walls, for they had formed the home of a haughty and a cruel race, the last descendant of which died at the close of the past century. The Castle of Glencore, with the title, had now descended to a distant relation of the house, who had repaired and so far restored the old residence as to make it habitable, – that is to say, four bleak and lofty chambers were rudely furnished, and about as many smaller ones fitted for servant accommodation; but no effort at embellishment, not even the commonest attempt at neatness, was bestowed on the grounds or the garden; and in this state it remained for some five-and-twenty or thirty years, when the tidings reached the little village of Leenane that his lordship was about to return to Glencore, and fix his residence there.

Such an event was of no small moment in such a locality, and many were the speculations as to what might be the consequence of his coming. Little, or indeed nothing, was known of Lord Glencore; his only visit to the neighborhood had occurred many years before, and lasted but for a day. He had arrived suddenly, and, taking a boat at the ferry, as it was called, crossed over to the Castle, whence he returned at nightfall, to depart as hurriedly as he came.

Of those who had seen him in this brief visit the accounts were vague and most contradictory. Some called him handsome and well built; others said he was a dark-looking, downcast man, with a sickly and forbidding aspect. None, however, could record one single word he had spoken, nor could even gossips pretend to say that he gave utterance to any opinion about the place or the people. The mode in which the estate was managed gave as little insight into the character of the proprietor. If no severity was displayed to the few tenants on the property, there was no encouragement given to their efforts at improvement; a kind of cold neglect was the only feature discernible, and many went so far as to say that if any cared to forget the payment of his rent, the chances were it might never be demanded of him; the great security against such a venture, however, lay in the fact that the land was held at a mere nominal rental, and few would have risked his tenure by such an experiment.

It was little to be wondered at that Lord Glencore was not better known in that secluded spot, since even in England his name was scarcely heard of. His fortune was very limited, and he had no political influence whatever, not possessing a seat in the Upper House; so that, as he spent his life abroad, he was almost totally forgotten in his own country.

All that Debrett could tell of him was comprised in a few lines, recording simply that he was sixth Viscount Glencore and Loughdooner; born in the month of February, 180-, and married in

August, 18 – , to Clarissa Isabella, second daughter of Sir Guy Clifford, of Wytchley, Baronet; by whom he had issue, Charles Conyngham Massey, born 6th June, 18 – . There closed the notice.

Strange and quaint things are these short biographies, with little beyond the barren fact that "he had lived" and "he had died;" and yet, with all the changes of this work-a-day world, with its din, and turmoil, and gold-seeking, and "progress," men cannot divest themselves of reverence for birth and blood, and the veneration for high descent remains an instinct of humanity. Sneer as men will at "heaven-born legislators," laugh as you may at the "tenth transmitter of a foolish face," there is something eminently impressive in the fact of a position acquired by deeds that date back to centuries, and preserved inviolate to the successor of him who fought at Agincourt or at Cressy. If ever this religion shall be impaired, the fault be with those who have derogated from their great prerogative, and forgotten to make illustrious by example what they have inherited illustrious by descent.

When the news first reached the neighborhood that a lord was about to take up his residence in the Castle, the most extravagant expectations were conceived of the benefits to arise from such a source. The very humblest already speculated on the advantages his wealth was to diffuse, and the thousand little channels into which his affluence would be directed. The ancient traditions of the place spoke of a time of boundless profusion, when troops of mounted followers used to accompany the old barons, and when the lough itself used to be covered with boats, with the armorial bearings of Glencore floating proudly from their mastheads. There were old men then living who remembered as many as two hundred laborers being daily employed on the grounds and gardens of the Castle; and the most fabulous stories were told of fortunes accumulated by those who were lucky enough to have saved the rich earnings of that golden period.

Colored as such speculations were with all the imaginative warmth of the west, it was a terrible shock to such sanguine fancies when they beheld a middle-aged, sad-looking man arrive in a simple postchaise, accompanied by his son, a child of six or seven years of age, and a single servant, – a grim-looking old dragoon corporal, who neither invited intimacy nor rewarded it. It was not, indeed, for a long time that they could believe that this was "my lord," and that this solitary attendant was the whole of that great retinue they had so long been expecting; nor, indeed, could any evidence less strong than Mrs. Mulcahy's, of the Post-office, completely satisfy them on the subject. The address of certain letters and newspapers to the Lord Viscount Glencore was, however, a testimony beyond dispute; so that nothing remained but to revenge themselves on the unconscious author of their self-deception for the disappointment he gave them. This, it is true, required some ingenuity, for they scarcely ever saw him, nor could they ascertain a single fact of his habits or mode of life.

He never crossed the "Lough," as the inlet of the sea, about three miles in width, was called. He as rigidly excluded the peasantry from the grounds of the Castle; and, save an old fisherman, who carried his letter-bag to and fro, and a few laborers in the spring and autumn, none ever invaded the forbidden precincts.

Of course, such privacy paid its accustomed penalty; and many an explanation, of a kind little flattering, was circulated to account for so ungenial an existence. Some alleged that he had committed some heavy crime against the State, and was permitted to pass his life there, on the condition of perpetual imprisonment; others, that his wife had deserted him, and that in his forlorn condition he had sought out a spot to live and die in, unnoticed and unknown; a few ascribed his solitude to debt; while others were divided in opinion between charges of misanthropy and avarice, – to either of which accusations his lonely and simple life fully exposed him.

In time, however, people grew tired of repeating stories to which no new evidence added any features of interest. They lost the zest for a scandal which ceased to astonish, and "my lord" was as much forgotten, and his existence as unspoken of, as though the old towers had once again become the home of the owl and the jackdaw.

It was now about eight years since "the lord" had taken up his abode at the Castle, when one evening, a raw and gusty night of December, the little skiff of the fisherman was seen standing in for

shore, – a sight somewhat uncommon, since she always crossed the "Lough" in time for the morning's mail.

"There's another man aboard, too," said a bystander from the little group that watched the boat, as she neared the harbor; "I think it's Mr. Craggs."

"You 're right enough, Sam, – it's the Corporal; I know his cap, and the short tail of hair he wears under it. What can bring him at this time of night?"

"He's going to bespeak a quarter of Tim Healey's beef, maybe," said one, with a grin of malicious drollery.

"Mayhap it's askin' us all to spend the Christmas he'd be," said another.

"Whisht! or he 'll hear you," muttered a third; and at the same instant the sail came clattering down, and the boat glided swiftly past, and entered a little natural creek close beneath where they stood.

"Who has got a horse and a jaunting-car?" cried the Corporal, as he jumped on shore. "I want one for Clifden directly."

"It's fifteen miles – devil a less," cried one.

"Fifteen! no, but eighteen! Kiely's bridge is brack down, and you 'll have to go by Gortnamuck."

"Well, and if he has, can't he take the cut?"

"He can't."

"Why not? Did n't I go that way last week?"

"Well, and if you did, did n't you lame your baste?"

"'T was n't the cut did it."

"It was – sure I know better – Billy Moore tould me."

"Billy's a liar!"

Such and such-like comments and contradictions were very rapidly exchanged, and already the debate was waxing warm, when Mr. Craggs's authoritative voice interposed with —

"Billy Moore be blowed! I want to know if I can have a car and horse?"

"To be sure! why not? – who says you can't?" chimed in a chorus.

"If you go to Clifden under five hours my name isn't Terry Lynch," said an old man in rabbitskin breeches.

"I 'll engage, if Barny will give me the blind mare, to drive him there under four."

"Bother!" said the Rabbitskin, in a tone of contempt.

"But where's the horse?" cried the Corporal.

"Ay, that's it," said another; "where's the horse?"

"Is there none to be found in the village?" asked Craggs, eagerly.

"Divil a horse, barrin' an ass. Barny's mare has the staggers the last fortnight, and Mrs. Kyle's pony broke his two knees on Tuesday carrying sea-weed up the rocks."

"But I must go to Clifden; I must be there to-night," said Craggs.

"It's on foot, then, you'll have to do it," said the Rabbitskin.

"Lord Glencore's dangerously ill, and needs a doctor," said the Corporal, bursting out with a piece of most uncommon communicativeness. "Is there none of you will give his horse for such an errand?"

"Arrah, musha! – it's a pity!" and such-like expressions of compassionate import, were muttered on all sides; but no more active movement seemed to flow from the condolence, while in a lower tone were added such expressions as, "Sorra mend him – if he wasn't a naygar, wouldn't he have a horse of his own? It's a droll lord he is, to be begging the loan of a baste!"

Something like a malediction arose to the Corporal's lips; but restraining it, and with a voice thick from passion, he said, —

"I 'm ready to pay you – to pay you ten times over the worth of your – "

"You need n't curse the horse, anyhow," interposed Rabbitskin, while with a significant glance at his friends around him, he slyly intimated that it would be as well to adjourn the debate, – a motion as quickly obeyed as it was mooted; for in less than five minutes Craggs was standing beside the quay, with no other companion than a blind beggar-woman, who, perfectly regardless of his distress, continued energetically to draw attention to her own.

"A little fivepenny bit, my lord – the last trifle your honor's glory has in the corner of your pocket, that you 'll never miss, and that 'll sweeten ould Molly's tay to-night? There, acushla, have pity on 'the dark,' and that you may see glory – "

But Craggs did not wait for the remainder, but, deep in his own thoughts, sauntered down towards the village. Already had the others retreated within their homes; and now all was dark and cheerless along the little straggling street.

"And this is a Christian country! – this a land that people tell you abounds in kindness and good-nature!" said he, in an accent of sarcastic bitterness.

"And who'll say the reverse?" answered a voice from behind, and, turning, he beheld the little hunchbacked fellow who carried the mail on foot from Oughterard, a distance of sixteen miles, over a mountain, and who was popularly known as "Billy the Bag," from the little leather sack which seemed to form part of his attire. "Who 'll stand up and tell me it's not a fine country in every sense, – for natural beauties, for antiquities, for elegant men and lovely females, for quarries of marble and mines of gould?"

Craggs looked contemptuously at the figure who thus declaimed of Ireland's wealth and grandeur, and, in a sneering tone, said, —

"And with such riches on every side, why do you go barefoot – why are you in rags, my old fellow?"

"Is n't there poor everywhere? If the world was all gould and silver, what would be the precious metals – tell me that? Is it because there's a little cripple like myself here, that them mountains yonder is n't of copper and iron and cobalt? Come over with me after I lave the bags at the office, and I 'll show you bits of every one I speak of."

"I'd rather you'd show me a doctor, my worthy fellow," said Craggs, sighing.

"I'm the nearest thing to that same going," replied Billy. "I can breathe a vein against any man in the barony. I can't say, that for any articular congestion of the aortic valves, or for a sero-pulmonic diathesis – d'ye mind? – that there isn't as good as me; but for the ould school of physic, the humoral diagnostic touch, who can beat me?"

"Will you come with me across the lough, and see my lord, then?" said Craggs, who was glad even of such aid in his emergency.

"And why not, when I lave the bags?" said Billy, touching the leather sack as he spoke.

If the Corporal was not without his misgivings as to the skill and competence of his companion, there was something in the fluent volubility of the little fellow that overawed and impressed him, while his words were uttered in a rich mellow voice, that gave them a sort of solemn persuasiveness.

"Were you always on the road?" asked the Corporal, curious to learn some particulars of his history.

"No, sir; I was twenty things before I took to the bags. I was a poor scholar for four years; I kept school in Erris; I was 'on' the ferry in Dublin with my fiddle for eighteen months; and I was a bear in Liverpool for part of a winter."

"A bear!" exclaimed Craggs. "Yes, sir. It was an Italian – one Pipo Chiassi by name – that lost his beast at Manchester, and persuaded me, as I was about the same stature, to don the sable, and perform in his place. After that I took to writin' for the papers – 'The Skibbereen Celt' – and supported myself very well till it broke. But here we are at the office, so I 'll step in, and get my fiddle, too, if you 've no objection."

The Corporal's meditations scarcely were of a kind to reassure him, as he thought over the versatile character of his new friend; but the case offered no alternative – it was Billy or nothing – since to reach Clifden on foot would be the labor of many hours, and in the interval his master should be left utterly alone. While he was thus musing, Billy reappeared, with a violin under one arm and a much-worn quarto under the other.

"This," said he, touching the volume, "is the 'Whole Art and Mystery of Physic,' by one Fabricius, of Aquapendente; and if we don't find a cure for the case down here, take my word for it, it's among the *morba ignota*, as Paracelsus says."

"Well, come along," said Craggs, impatiently, and set off at a speed that, notwithstanding Billy's habits of foot-travel, kept him at a sharp trot. A few minutes more saw them, with canvas spread, skimming across the lough, towards Glencore.

"Glencore – Glencore!" muttered Billy once or twice to himself, as the swift boat bounded through the hissing surf. "Did you ever hear Lady Lucy's Lament?" And he struck a few chords with his fingers as he sang: —

"'I care not for your trellised vine,
I love the dark woods on the shore,
Nor all the towers along the Rhine
Are dear to me as old Glencore.

The ragged cliff, Ben Creggan high,
Re-echoing the Atlantic roar,
Are mingling with the seagull's cry
My welcome back to old Glencore.'

And then there's a chorus."

"That's a signal to us to make haste," said the Corporal, pointing to a bright flame which suddenly shot up on the shore of the lough. "Put out an oar to leeward there, and keep her up to the wind."

And Billy, perceiving his minstrelsy unattended to, consoled himself by humming over, for his own amusement, the remainder of his ballad.

The wind freshened as the night grew darker, and heavy seas repeatedly broke on the bow, and swept over the boat in sprayey showers.

"It's that confounded song of yours has got the wind up," said Craggs, angrily; "stand by the sheet, and stop your croning!"

"That's an *error vulgaris*, attributing to music marine disasters," said Billy, calmly; "it arose out of a mistake about one Orpheus."

"Slack off there!" cried Craggs, as a squall struck the boat, and laid her almost over.

Billy, however, had obeyed the mandate promptly, and she soon righted, and held on her course.

"I wish they'd show the light again on shore," muttered the Corporal; "the night is black as pitch."

"Keep the top of the mountain a little to windward, and you 're all right," said Billy. "I know the lough well; I used to come here all hours, day and night, once, spearing salmon."

"And smuggling, too!" added Craggs.

"Yes, sir; brandy, and tay, and pigtail, for Mister Sheares, in Oughterard."

"What became of him?" asked Craggs.

"He made a fortune and died, and his son married a lady!"

"Here comes another; throw her head up in the wind," cried Craggs.

This time the order came too late; for the squall struck her with the suddenness of a shot, and she canted over till her keel lay out of water, and, when she righted, it was with the white surf boiling over her.

"She's a good boat, then, to stand that," said Billy, as he struck a light for his pipe, with all the coolness of one perfectly at his ease; and Craggs, from that very moment, conceived a favorable opinion of the little hunchback.

"Now we're in the smooth water, Corporal," cried Billy; "let her go a little free."

And, obedient to the advice, he ran the boat swiftly along till she entered a small creek, so sheltered by the highlands that the water within was still as a mountain tarn.

"You never made the passage on a worse night, I 'll be bound," said Craggs, as he sprang on shore.

"Indeed and I did, then," replied Billy. "I remember – it was two days before Christmas – we were blown out to say in a small boat, not more than the half of this, and we only made the west side of Arran Island after thirty-six hours' beating and tacking. I wrote an account of it for the 'Tyrawly Regenerator,' commencing with —

"'The elemential conflict that with tremendious violence raged, ravaged, and ruined the adamantine foundations of our western coast, on Tuesday, the 23rd of December – '"

"Come along, come along," said Craggs; "we've something else to think of."

And with this admonition, very curtly bestowed, he stepped out briskly on the path towards Glencore.

CHAPTER II. GLENCORE CASTLE

When the Corporal, followed by Billy, entered the gloomy hall of the Castle, they found two or three country people conversing in a low but eager voice together, who speedily turned towards them, to learn if the doctor had come.

"Here 's all I could get in the way of a doctor," said Craggs, pushing Billy towards them as he spoke.

"Faix, and ye might have got worse," muttered a very old man; "Billy Traynor has the lucky hand.'"

"How is my lord, now, Nelly?" asked the Corporal of a woman who, with bare feet, and dressed in the humblest fashion of the peasantry, appeared.

"He's getting weaker and weaker, sir; I believe he's sinking. I'm glad it's Billy is come; I'd rather see him than all the doctors in the country."

"Follow me," said Craggs, giving a signal to step lightly; and he led the way up a narrow stone stair, with a wall on either hand. Traversing a long, low corridor, they reached a door, at which having waited for a second or two to listen, Craggs turned the handle and entered. The room was very large and lofty, and, seen in the dim light of a small lamp upon the hearthstone, seemed even more spacious than it was. The oaken floor was uncarpeted, and a very few articles of furniture occupied the walls. In one corner stood a large bed, the heavy curtains of which had been gathered up on the roof, the better to admit air to the sick man.

As Billy drew nigh with cautious steps, he perceived that, although worn and wasted by long illness, the patient was a man still in the very prime of life. His dark hair and beard, which he wore long, were untinged with gray, and his forehead showed no touch of age. His dark eyes were wide open, and his lips slightly parted, his whole features exhibiting an expression of energetic action, even to wildness. Still he was sleeping; and, as Craggs whispered, he seldom slept otherwise, even when in health. With all the quietness of a trained practitioner, Billy took down the watch that was pinned to the curtain and proceeded to count the pulse.

"A hundred and thirty-eight," muttered he, as he finished; and then, gently displacing the bedclothes, laid his hand upon the heart.

With a long-drawn sigh, like that of utter weariness, the sick man moved his head round and fixed his eyes upon him.

"The doctor!" said he, in a deep-toned but feeble voice. "Leave me, Craggs – leave me alone with him."

And the Corporal slowly retired, turning as he went to look back towards the bed, and evidently going with reluctance.

"Is it fever?" asked the sick man, in a faint but unfaltering accent.

"It's a kind of cerebral congestion, – a matter of them membranes that's over the brain, with, of course, *febrilis generalis*."

The accentuation of these words, marked as it was by the strongest provincialism of the peasant, attracted the sick man's attention, and he bent upon him a look at once searching and severe.

"What are you – who are you?" cried he, angrily.

"What I am is n't so aisy to say; but who I am is clean beyond me."

"Are you a doctor?" asked the sick man, fiercely.

"I'm afear'd I'm not, in the sense of a *gradum Universitatis*, – a diplomia; but sure maybe Paracelsus himself just took to it, like me, having a vocation, as one might say."

"Ring that bell," said the other, peremptorily.

And Billy obeyed without speaking.

"What do you mean by this, Craggs?" said the Viscount, trembling with passion. "Who have you brought me? What beggar have you picked off the highway? Or is he the travelling fool of the district?"

But the anger that supplied strength hitherto now failed to impart energy, and he sank back wasted and exhausted. The Corporal bent over him, and spoke something in a low whisper, but whether the words were heard or not, the sick man now lay still, breathing heavily.

"Can you do nothing for him?" asked Craggs, peevishly – "nothing but anger him?"

"To be sure I can if you let me," said Billy, producing a very ancient lancet-case of boxwood tipped with ivory. "I'll just take a dash of blood from the temporal artery, to relieve the cerebrum, and then we'll put cowld on his head, and keep him quiet."

And with a promptitude that showed at least self-confidence, he proceeded to accomplish the operation, every step of which he effected skilfully and well.

"There, now," said he, feeling the pulse, as the blood continued to flow freely, "the circulation is relieved at once; it's the same as opening a sluice in a mill-dam. He 's better already."

"He looks easier," said Craggs.

"Ay, and he feels it," continued Billy. "Just notice the respiratory organs, and see how easy the intercostials is doing their work now. Bring me a bowl of clean water, some vinegar, and any ould rags you have."

Craggs obeyed, but not without a sneer at the direction.

"All over the head," said Billy; "all over it, – back and front, – and with the blessing of the Virgin, I'll have that hair off of him if he is n't cooler towards evening."

So saying, he covered the sick man with the wetted cloths, and bathed his hands in the cooling fluid.

"Now to exclude the light and save the brain from stimulation and excitation," said Billy, with a pompous enunciation of the last syllables; "and then *quies*– rest – peace!"

And with this direction, imparted with a caution to enforce its benefits, he moved stealthily towards the door and passed out.

"What do you think of him?" asked the Corporal, eagerly.

"He 'll do – he 'll do," said Billy. "He's a sanguineous temperament, and he'll bear the lancet. It's just like weatherin' a point at say. If you have a craft that will carry canvas, there's always a chance for you."

"He perceived that you were not a doctor," said Craggs, when they reached the corridor.

"Did he, faix?" cried Billy, half indignantly. "He might have perceived that I did n't come in a coach; that I had n't my hair powdered, nor gold knee-buckles in my smallcloths; but, for all that, it would be going too far to say that I was n't a doctor! 'T is the same with physic and poetry – you take to it, or you don't take to it! There's chaps, ay, and far from stupid ones either, that could n't compose you ten hexameters if ye'd put them on a hot griddle for it; and there's others that would talk rhyme rather than rayson! And so with the *ars medicatrix*– everybody has n't an eye for a hectic, or an ear for a cough —*non contigit cuique adire Corintheum*. 'T is n't every one can toss pancakes, as Horace says."

"Hush – be still!" muttered Craggs, "here's the young master." And as he spoke, a youth of about fifteen, well grown and handsome, but poorly, even meanly clad, approached them.

"Have you seen my father? What do you think of him?" asked he, eagerly.

"'Tis a critical state he's in, your honor," said Billy, bowing; "but I think he 'll come round —*deplation, deplation, deplation – actio, actio, actio*; relieve the gorged vessels, and don't drown the grand hydraulic machine, the heart – them's my sentiments."

Turning from the speaker with a look of angry impatience, the boy whispered some words in the Corporal's ear.

"What could I do, sir?" was the answer; "it was this fellow or nothing."

"And better, a thousand times better, nothing," said the boy, "than trust his life to the coarse ignorance of this wretched quack." And in his passion the words were uttered loud enough for Billy to overhear them.

"Don't be hasty, your honor," said Billy, submissively, "and don't be unjust. The realms of disaze is like an unknown tract of country, or a country that's only known a little, just round the coast, as it might be; once ye're beyond that, one man is as good a guide as another, *coeteris paribus*, that is, with 'equal lights.'"

"What have you done? Have you given him anything?" broke in the boy, hurriedly.

"I took a bleeding from him, little short of sixteen ounces, from the temporial," said Billy, proudly, "and I'll give him now a concoction of meadow saffron with a pinch of saltpetre in it, to cause diaphoresis, d'ye mind? Meanwhile, we're disgorging the arachnoid membranes with cowld applications, and we're relievin' the cerebellum by repose. I challenge the Hall," added Billy, stoutly, "to say is n't them the grand principles of 'traitment.' Ah! young gentleman," said he, after a few seconds' pause, "don't be hard on me, because I 'm poor and in rags, nor think manely of me because I spake with a brogue, and maybe bad grammar, for, you see, even a crayture of my kind can have a knowledge of disaze, just as he may have a knowledge of nature, by observation. What is sickness, after all, but just one of the phenomenons of all organic and inorganic matter – a regular sort of shindy in a man's inside, like a thunderstorm, or a hurry-cane outside? Watch what's coming, look out and see which way the mischief is brewin', and make your preparations. That's the great study of physic."

The boy listened patiently and even attentively to this speech, and when Billy had concluded, he turned to the Corporal and said, "Look to him, Craggs, and let him have his supper, and when he has eaten it send him to my room."

Billy bowed an acknowledgment, and followed the Corporal to the kitchen.

"That's my lord's son, I suppose," said he, as he seated himself, "and a fine young crayture too —*puer ingenuus*, with a grand frontal development." And with this reflection he addressed himself to the coarse but abundant fare which Craggs placed before him, and with an appetite that showed how much he relished it.

"This is elegant living ye have here, Mr. Craggs," said Billy, as he drained his tankard of beer, and placed it with a sigh on the table; "many happy years of it to ye – I could n't wish ye anything better."

"The life is not so bad," said Craggs, "but it's lonely sometimes."

"Life need never be lonely so long as a man has health and his faculties," said Billy; "give me nature to admire, a bit of baycon for dinner, and my fiddle to amuse me, and I would n't change with the King of Sugar 'Candy.'"

"I was there," said Craggs, "it's a fine island."

"My lord wants to see the doctor," said a woman, entering hastily.

"And the doctor is ready for him," said Billy, rising and leaving the kitchen with all the dignity he could assume.

CHAPTER III. BILLY TRAYNOR – POET, PEDLAR, AND PHYSICIAN

"Didn't I tell you how it would be?" said Billy, as he re-entered the kitchen, now crowded by the workpeople, anxious for tidings of the sick man. "The head is re-leaved, the congestive symptoms is allayed, and when the artarial excitement subsides, he 'll be out of danger."

"Musha, but I 'm glad," muttered one; "he 'd be a great loss to us."

"True for you, Patsey; there's eight or nine of us here would miss him if he was gone."

"Troth, he doesn't give much employment, but we couldn't spare him," croaked out a third, when the entrance of the Corporal cut short further commentary; and the party gathered around the cheerful turf fire with that instinctive sense of comfort impressed by the swooping wind and rain that beat against the windows.

"It's a dreadful night outside; I would n't like to cross the lough in it," said one.

"Then that's just what I'm thinking of this minit," said Billy. "I'll have to be up at the office for the bags at six o'clock."

"Faix, you 'll not see Leenane at six o'clock to-morrow."

"Sorra taste of it," muttered another; "there's a sea runnin' outside now that would swamp a life-boat."

"I'll not lose an illigant situation of six pounds ten a year, and a pair of shoes at Christmas, for want of a bit of courage," said Billy; "I'd have my dismissal if I wasn't there as sure as my name is Billy Traynor."

"And better for you than lose your life, Billy," said one.

"And it's not alone myself I'd be thinking of," said Billy; "but every man in this world, high and low, has his duties. *My* duty," added he, somewhat pretentiously, "is to carry the King's mail; and if anything was to obstruckt, or impade, or delay the correspondience, it's on me the blame would lie."

"The letters wouldn't go the faster because you were drowned," broke in the Corporal.

"No, sir," said Billy, rather staggered by the grin of approval that met this remark – "no, sir, what you ob-sarve is true; but nobody reflects on the sintry that dies at his post."

"If you must and will go, I'll give you the yawl," said Craggs; "and I 'll go with you myself."

"Spoke like a British Grenadier," cried Billy, with enthusiasm.

"Carbineer, if the same to you, master," said the other, quietly; "I never served in the infantry."

"*Tros Tyriusve mihi*," cried Billy; "which is as much as to say, —

> "'To storm the skies, or lay siege to the moon,
> Give me one of the line, or a heavy dragoon,'

it's the same to me, as the poet says."

And a low murmur of the company seemed to accord approval to the sentiment.

"I wish you 'd give us a tune, Billy," said one, coaxingly.

"Or a song would be better," observed another.

"Faix," cried a third, "'tis himself could do it, and in Frinch or Latin if ye wanted it."

"The Germans was the best I ever knew for music," broke in Craggs. "I was brigaded with Arentschild's Hanoverians in Spain; and they used to sit outside the tents every evening, and sing. By Jove! how they did sing – all together, like the swell of a church organ."

"Yes, you're right," said Billy, but evidently yielding an unwilling assent to this doctrine. "The Germans has a fine national music, and they 're great for harmony. But harmony and melody is two different things."

"And which is best, Billy?" asked one of the company.

"Musha, but I pity your ignorance," said Billy, with a degree of confusion that raised a hearty laugh at his expense.

"Well, but where's the song?" exclaimed another.

"Ay," said Craggs, "we are forgetting the song. Now for it, Billy. Since all is going on so well above stairs, I'll draw you a gallon of ale, boys, and we 'll drink to the master's speedy recovery."

It was a rare occasion when the Corporal suffered himself to expand in this fashion, and great was the applause at the unexpected munificence.

Billy at the same moment took out his fiddle and began that process of preparatory screwing and scraping which, no matter how distressing to the surrounders, seems to afford intense delight to performers on this instrument. In the present case, it is but fair to say, there was neither comment nor impatience; on the contrary, they seemed to accept these convulsive throes of sound as an earnest of the grand flood of melody that was coming. That Billy was occupied with other thoughts than those of tuning was, however, apparent, for his lips continued to move rapidly; and at moments he was seen to beat time with his foot, as though measuring out the rhythm of a verse.

"I have it now, ladies and gentlemen," he said, making a low obeisance to the company; and so saying, he struck up a very popular tune, the same to which a reverend divine wrote his words of "The night before Larry was Stretched;" and in a voice of a deep and mellow fulness, managed with considerable taste, sang —

"'A fig for the chansons of France,
Whose meaning is always a riddle;
The music to sing or to dance
Is an Irish tune played on the fiddle.

To your songs of the Rhine and the Rhone
I 'm ready to cry out I am satis;
Just give us something of our own
In praise of our Land of Potatoes.

Tol lol de lol, etc.
"'What care I for sorrows of those
Who speak of their heart as a cuore;
How expect me to feel for the woes
Of him who calls love an amore!

Let me have a few words about home,
With music whose strains I 'd remember,
And I 'll give you all Florence and Rome,
Tho' they have a blue sky in December.

Tol lol de lol, etc.
"'With a pretty face close to your own,
I 'm sore there's no rayson for sighing;
Nor when walkin' beside her alone,
Why the blazes be talking of dying!

That's the way tho', in France and in Spain,
Where love is not real, but acted,

You must always portend you ‘re insane,
Or at laste that you ‘re partly distracted.

Tol lol de lol, etc.’”

It is very unlikely that the reader will estimate Billy’s impromptu as did the company; in fact, it possessed the greatest of all claims to their admiration, for it was partly incomprehensible, and by the artful introduction of a word here and there, of which his hearers knew nothing, the poet was well aware that he was securing their heartiest approval. Nor was Billy insensible to such flatteries. The *irritabile genus* has its soft side, and can enjoy to the uttermost its own successes. It is possible, if Billy had been in another sphere, with much higher gifts, and surrounded by higher associates, that he might have accepted the homage tendered him with more graceful modesty, and seemed at least less confident of his own merits; but under no possible change of places or people could the praise have bestowed more sincere pleasure.

“You’re right, there, Jim Morris,” said he, turning suddenly round towards one of the company; “you never said a truer thing than that. The poetic temperament is riches to a poor man. Wherever I go – in all weathers, wet and dreary, and maybe footsore, with the bags full, and the mountain streams all flowin’ over – I can just go into my own mind, just the way you’d go into an inn, and order whatever you wanted. I don’t need to be a king, to sit on a throne; I don’t want ships, nor coaches, nor horses, to convay me to foreign lands. I can bestow kingdoms. When I haven’t tuppence to buy tobacco, and without a shoe to my foot, and my hair through my hat, I can be dancin’ wid princesses, and handin’ empresses in to tay.”

“Musha, musha!” muttered the surrounders, as though they were listening to a magician, who in a moment of unguarded familiarity condescended to discuss his own miraculous gifts.

“And,” resumed Billy, “it isn’t only what ye are to yourself and your own heart, but what ye are to others, that without that sacret bond between you, wouldn’t think of you at all. I remember, once on a time, I was in the north of England travelling, partly for pleasure, and partly with a view to a small speculation in Sheffield ware – cheap penknives and scissors, pencil-cases, bodkins, and the like – and I wandered about for weeks through what they call the Lake Country, a very handsome place, but nowise grand or sublime, like what we have here in Ireland – more wood, forest timber, and better-off people, but nothing beyond that!

“Well, one evening – it was in August – I came down by a narrow path to the side of a lake, where there was a stone seat, put up to see the view from, and in front was three wooden steps of stairs going down into the water, where a boat might come in. It was a lovely spot, and well chosen, for you could count as many as five promontories running out into the lake; and there was two islands, all wooded to the water’s edge; and behind all, in the distance, was a great mountain, with clouds on the top; and it was just the season when the trees is beginnin’ to change their colors, and there was shades of deep gold, and dark olive, and russet brown, all mingling together with the green, and glowing in the lake below under the setting sun, and all was quiet and still as midnight; and over the water the only ripple was the track of a water-hen, as she scudded past between the islands; and if ever there was peace and tranquillity in the world it was just there! Well, I put down my pack in the leaves, for I did n’t like to see or think of it, and I stretched myself down at the water’s edge, and I fell into a fit of musing. It’s often and often I tried to remember the elegant fancies that came through my head, and the beautiful things that I thought I saw that night out on the lake fornint me! Ye see I was fresh and fastin’; I never tasted a bit the whole day, and my brain, maybe, was all the better; for somehow janius, real janius, thrives best on a little starvation. And from musing I fell off asleep; and it was the sound of voices near that first awoke me! For a minute or two I believed I was dreaming, the words came so softly to my ear, for they were spoken in a low, gentle voice, and blended in with the slight splash of oars that moved through the water carefully, as though not to lose a word of him that was speakin’.

"It's clean beyond *me* to tell you what he said; and, maybe, if I could, ye would n't be able to follow it, for he was discoorsin' about night and the moon, and all that various poets said about them; ye'd think that he had books, and was reading out of them, so glibly came the verses from his lips. I never listened to such a voice before, so soft, so sweet, so musical, and the words came droppin' down, like the clear water filterin' over a rocky ledge, and glitterin' like little spangles over moss and wild-flowers.

"It wasn't only in English but Scotch ballads, too, and once or twice in Italian that he recited, till at last he gave out, in all the fulness of his liquid voice, them elegant lines out of Pope's Homer: —

"'As when the moon, refulgent lamp of night,
O'er heaven's clear azure spreads her sacred light,
When not a breath disturbs the deep serene,
And not a cloud o'ercasts the solemn scene,
Around her throne the vivid planets roll,
And stars unnumbered gild the glowing pole:
O'er the dark trees a yellower verdure shed,
And top with silver every mountain's head;
Then shine the vales; the rocks in prospect rise —
A flood of glory bursts from all the skies;
The conscious swains, rejoicing in the sight,
Eye the blue vault and bless the useful light.'

"The Lord forgive me, but when he came to the last words and said, 'useful light,' I couldn't restrain myself, but broke out, 'That's mighty like a bull, anyhow, and reminds me of the ould song, —

"'Good luck to the moon, she's a fine noble creature,
And gives us the daylight all night in the dark.'

"Before I knew where I was, the boat glided in to the steps, and a tall man, a little stooped in the shoulders, stood before me.

"'Is it you,' said he, with a quiet laugh, 'that accuses Pope of a bull?'

"'It is,' says I; 'and, what's more, there isn't a poet from Horace downwards that I won't show bulls in; there's bulls in Shakspeare and in Milton; there's bulls in the ancients; I 'll point out a bull in Aristophanes.'

"'What have we here?' said he, turning to the others.

"'A poor crayture,' says I, 'like Goldsmith's chest of drawers, —

"'With brains reduced a doable debt to pay, To dream by night, sell Sheffield ware by day.'

"Well, with that he took a fit of laughing, and handing the rest out of the boat, he made me come along at his side, discoorsin' me about my thravels, and all I seen, and all I read, till we reached an elegant little cottage on a bank right over the lake; and then he brought me in and made me take tay with the family; and I spent the night there; and when I started the next morning there was n't a 'screed' of my pack that they did n't buy, penknives, and whistles, and nut-crackers, and all, just, as they said, for keepsakes. Good luck to them, and happy hearts, wherever they are, for they made mine happy that day; ay, and for many an hour afterwards, when I just think over their kind words and pleasant faces."

More than one of the company had dropped off asleep during Billy's narrative, and of the others, their complaisance as listeners appeared taxed to the utmost, while the Corporal snored loudly, like a man who had a right to indulge himself to the fullest extent.

"There's the bell again," muttered one, "that's from the 'lord's room;'" and Craggs, starting up by the instinct of his office, hastened off to his master's chamber.

"My lord says you are to remain here," said he, as he re-entered a few minutes later; "he is satisfied with your skill, and I'm to send off a messenger to the post, to let them know he has detained you."

"I 'm obaydient," said Billy, with a low bow; "and now for a brief repose!" And so saying, he drew a long woollen nightcap from his pocket, and putting it over his eyes, resigned himself to sleep with the practised air of one who needed but very little preparation to secure slumber.

CHAPTER IV. A VISITOR

The old Castle of Glencore contained but one spacious room, and this served all the purposes of drawing-room, dining-room, and library. It was a long and lofty chamber, with a raftered ceiling, from which a heavy chandelier hung by a massive chain of iron. Six windows, all in the same wall, deeply set and narrow, admitted a sparing light. In the opposite wall stood two fireplaces, large, massive, and monumental, the carved supporters of the richly-chased pediment being of colossal size, and the great shield of the house crowning the pyramid of strange and uncouth objects that were grouped below. The walls were partly occupied by bookshelves, partly covered by wainscot, and here and there displayed a worn-out portrait of some bygone warrior or dame, who little dreamed how much the color of their effigies should be indebted to the sad effects of damp and mildew. The furniture consisted of every imaginable type, from the carved oak and ebony console to the white and gold of Versailles taste, and the modern compromise of comfort with ugliness which chintz and soft cushions accomplish. Two great screens, thickly covered with prints and drawings, most of them political caricatures of some fifty years back, flanked each fireplace, making, as it were, in this case two different apartments.

At one of those, on a low sofa, sat, or rather lay, Lord Glencore, pale and wasted by long illness. His thin hand held a letter, to shade his eyes from the blazing wood-fire, and the other hand hung listlessly at his side. The expression of the sick man's face was that of deep melancholy – not the mere gloom of recent suffering, but the deep-cut traces of a long-carried affliction, a sorrow which had eaten into his very heart, and made its home there.

At the second fireplace sat his son, and, though a mere boy, the lineaments of his father marked the youth's face with a painful exactness. The same intensity was in the eyes, the same haughty character sat on the brow; and there was in the whole countenance the most extraordinary counterpart of the gloomy seriousness of the older face. He had been reading, but the fast-falling night obliged him to desist, and he sat now contemplating the bright embers of the wood fire in dreamy thought. Once or twice was he disturbed from his revery by the whispered voice of an old serving-man, asking for something with that submissive manner assumed by those who are continually exposed to the outbreaks of another's temper; and at last the boy, who had hitherto scarcely deigned to notice the appeals to him, flung a bunch of keys contemptuously on the ground, with a muttered malediction on his tormentor.

"What's that?" cried out the sick man, startled at the sound.

"'Tis nothing, my lord, but the keys that fell out of my hand," replied the old man, humbly. "Mr. Craggs is away to Leenane, and I was going to get out the wine for dinner."

"Where's Mr. Charles?" asked Lord Glencore.

"He's there beyant," muttered the other, in a low voice, while he pointed towards the distant fireplace; "but he looks tired and weary, and I did n't like to disturb him."

"Tired! weary! – with what? Where has he been; what has he been doing?" cried he, hastily. "Charles, Charles, I say!"

And slowly rising from his seat, and with an air of languid indifference, the boy came towards him.

Lord Glencore's face darkened as he gazed on him.

"Where have you been?" asked he, sternly.

"Yonder," said the boy, in an accent like the echo of his own.

"There's Mr. Craggs, now, my lord," said the old butler, as he looked out of the window, and eagerly seized the opportunity to interrupt the scene; "there he is, and a gentleman with him."

"Ha! go and meet him, Charles, – it's Harcourt. Go and receive him, show him his room, and then bring him here to me."

The boy heard without a word, and left the room with the same slow step and the same look of apathy. Just as he reached the hall the stranger was entering it. He was a tall, well-built man, with the mingled ease and stiffness of a soldier in his bearing; his face was handsome, but somewhat stern, and his voice had that tone which implies the long habit of command.

"You're a Massy, that I'll swear to," said he, frankly, as he shook the boy's hand; "the family face in every lineament. And how is your father?"

"Better; he has had a severe illness."

"So his letter told me. I was up the Rhine when I received it, and started at once for Ireland."

"He has been very impatient for your coming," said the boy; "he has talked of nothing else."

"Ay, we are old friends. Glencore and I have been schoolfellows, chums at college, and messmates in the same regiment," said he, with a slight touch of sorrow in his tone. "Will he be able to see me now? Is he confined to bed?"

"No, he will dine with you. I 'm to show you your room, and then bring you to him."

"That 's better news than I hoped for, boy. By the way, what's your name?"

"Charles Conyngham."

"To be sure, Charles; how could I have forgotten it! So, Charles, this is to be my quarters; and a glorious view there is from this window. What's the mountain yonder?"

"Ben Creggan."

"We must climb that summit some of these days, Charley. I hope you 're a good walker. You shall be my guide through this wild region here, for I have a passion for explorings."

And he talked away rapidly, while he made a brief toilet, and refreshed himself from the fatigues of the road.

"Now, Charley, I am at your orders; let us descend to the drawing-room."

"You 'll find my father there," said the boy, as he stopped short at the door; and Harcourt, staring at him for a second or two in silence, turned the handle and entered.

Lord Glencore never turned his head as the other drew nigh, but sat with his forehead resting on the table, extending his hand only in welcome.

"My poor fellow!" said Harcourt, grasping the thin and wasted fingers, – "my poor fellow, how glad I am to be with you again!" And he seated himself at his side as he spoke. "You had a relapse after you wrote to me?"

Glencore slowly raised his head, and, pushing back a small velvet skull-cap that he wore, said, —

"You 'd not have known me, George. Eh? see how gray I am! I saw myself in the glass to-day for the first time, and I really could n't believe my eyes."

"In another week the change will be just as great the other way. It was some kind of a fever, was it not?"

"I believe so," said the other, sighing.

"And they bled you and blistered you, of course. These fellows are like the farriers – they have but the one system for everything. Who was your torturer; where did you get him from?"

"A practitioner of the neighborhood, the wild growth of the mountain," said Glencore, with a sickly smile; "but I must n't be ungrateful; he saved my life, if that be a cause for gratitude."

"And a right good one, I take it. How like you that boy is, Glencore! I started back when he met me. It was just as if I was transported again to old school-days, and had seen yourself as you used to be long ago. Do you remember the long meadow, Glencore?"

"Harcourt," said he, falteringly, "don't talk to me of long ago, – at least not now;" and then, as if thinking aloud, added, "How strange that a man without a hope should like the future better than the past!"

"How old is Charley?" asked Harcourt, anxious to engage him on some other theme.

"He 'll be fifteen, I think, his next birthday; he seems older, does n't he?"

"Yes, the boy is well grown and athletic. What has he been doing – have you had him at a school?"

"At a school!" said Glencore, starting; "no, he has lived always here with myself. I have been his tutor; I read with him every day, till that illness seized me."

"He looks clever; is he so?"

"Like the rest of us, George, he may learn, but he can't be taught. The old obstinacy of the race is strong in him, and to rouse him to rebel all you have to do is to give him a task; but his faculties are good, his apprehension quick, and his memory, if he would but tax it, excellent. Here 's Craggs come to tell us of dinner; give me your arm, George, we haven't far to go – this one room serves us for everything."

"You're better lodged than I expected – your letters told me to look for a mere barrack; and the place stands so well."

"Yes, the spot was well chosen, although I suppose its founders cared little enough about the picturesque."

The dinner-table was spread behind one of the massive screens, and, under the careful direction of Craggs and old Simon, was well and amply supplied, – fish and game, the delicacies of other localities, being here in abundance. Har-court had a traveller's appetite, and enjoyed himself thoroughly, while Glencore never touched a morsel, and the boy ate sparingly, watching the stranger with that intense curiosity which comes of living estranged from all society.

"Charley will treat you to a bottle of Burgundy, Har-court," said Glencore, as they drew round the fire; "he keeps the cellar key."

"Let us have two, Charley," said Harcourt, as the boy arose to leave the room, "and take care that you carry them steadily."

The boy stood for a second and looked at his father, as if interrogating, and then a sudden flush suffused his face as Glencore made a gesture with his hand for him to go.

"You don't perceive how you touched him to the quick there, Harcourt? You talked to him as to how he should carry the wine; he thought that office menial and beneath him, and he looked at me to know what he should do."

"What a fool you have made of the boy!" said Harcourt, bluntly. "By Jove! it was time I should come here!"

When the boy came back he was followed by the old butler, carefully carrying in a small wicker contrivance, *Hibernicè* called a cooper, three cobwebbed and well-crusted bottles.

"Now, Charley," said Jarcourt, gayly, "if you want to see a man thoroughly happy, just step up to my room and fetch me a small leather sack you 'll find there of tobacco, and on the dressing-table you 'll see my meerschaum pipe; be cautious with it, for it belonged to no less a man than Poniatowski, the poor fellow who died at Leipsic."

The lad stood again irresolute and confused, when a signal from his father motioned him away to acquit the errand.

"Thank you," said Harcourt, as he re-entered; "you see I am not vain of my meerschaum without reason. The carving of that bull is a work of real art; and if you were a connoisseur in such matters, you 'd say the color was perfect. Have you given up smoking, Glencore? – you used to be fond of a weed."

"I care but little for it," said Glencore, sighing.

"Take to it again, my dear fellow, if only that it is a bond 'tween yourself and every one who whiffs his cloud. There are wonderfully few habits – I was going to say enjoyments, and I might say so, but I 'll call them habits – that consort so well with every condition and every circumstance of life, that become the prince and the peasant, suit the garden of the palace and the red watch-fire of the bivouac, relieve the weary hours of a calm at sea, or refresh the tired hunter in the prairies."

"You must tell Charley some of your adventures in the West. – The Colonel has passed two years in the Rocky Mountains," said Glencore to his son.

"Ay, Charley, I have knocked about the world as much as most men, and seen, too, my share of its wonders. If accidents by sea and land can interest you, if you care for stories of Indian life and the wild habits of a prairie hunter, I 'm your man. Your father can tell you more of *salons* and the great world, of what may be termed the high game of life – "

"I have forgotten it, as much as if I had never seen it," said Glencore, interrupting, and with a severity of voice that showed the theme displeased him. And now a pause ensued, painful perhaps to the others, but scarcely felt by Harcourt, as he smoked away peacefully, and seemed lost in the windings of his own fancies.

"Have you shooting here, Glencore?" asked he at length.

"There might be, if I were to preserve the game."

"And you do not. Do you fish?"

"No; never."

"You give yourself up to farming, then?"

"Not even that; the truth is, Harcourt, I literally do nothing. A few newspapers, a stray review or so, reach me in these solitudes, and keep me in a measure informed as to the course of events; but Charley and I con over our classics together, and scrawl sheets of paper with algebraic signs, and puzzle our heads over strange formulas, wonderfully indifferent to what the world is doing at the other side of this little estuary."

"You of all men living to lead such a life as this! a fellow that never could cram occupation enough into his short twenty-four hours," broke in Harcourt.

Glencore's pale cheek flushed slightly, and an impatient movement of his fingers on the table showed how ill he relished any allusion to his own former life.

"Charley will show you to-morrow all the wonders of our erudition. Harcourt," said he, changing the subject; "we have got to think ourselves very learned, and I hope you 'll be polite enough not to undeceive us."

"You 'll have a merciful critic, Charley," said the Colonel, laughing, "for more reasons than one. Had the question been how to track a wolf or wind an antelope, to outmanoeuvre a scout party or harpoon a calf-whale, I'd not yield to many; but if you throw me amongst Greek roots or double equations, I 'm only Samson with his hair *en crop!*"

The solemn clock over the mantelpiece struck ten, and the boy arose as it ceased.

"That's Charley's bedtime," said Glencore, "and we are determined to make no stranger of you, George. He 'll say good-night."

And with a manner of mingled shyness and pride the boy held out his hand, which the soldier shook cordially, saying, —

"To-morrow, then, Charley, I count upon you for my day, and so that it be not to be passed in the library I 'll acquit myself creditably."

"I like your boy, Glencore," said he, as soon as they were alone. "Of course I have seen very little of him; and if I had seen more I should be but a sorry judge of what people would call his abilities. But he is a good stamp: 'Gentleman' is written on him in a hand that any can read; and, by Jove! let them talk as they will, but that's half the battle of life!"

"He is a strange fellow; you'll not understand him in a moment," said Glencore, smiling half sadly to himself.

"Not understand him, Glencore? I read him like print, man. You think that his shy, bashful manner imposes upon me; not a bit of it; I see the fellow is as proud as Lucifer. All your solitude and estrangement from the world have n't driven out of his head that he's to be a Viscount one of these days; and somehow, wherever he has picked it up, he has got a very pretty notion of the importance and rank that same title confers."

"Let us not speak of this now, Harcourt; I'm far too weak to enter upon what it would lead to. It is, however, the great reason for which I entreated you to come here. And to-morrow – at all

events in a day or two – we can speak of it fully. And now I must leave you. You 'll have to rough it here, George; but as there is no man can do so with a better grace, I can spare my apologies; only, I beg, don't let the place be worse than it need be. Give your orders; get what you can; and see if your tact and knowledge of life cannot remedy many a difficulty which our ignorance or apathy have served to perpetuate."

"I 'll take the command of the garrison with pleasure," said Harcourt, filling up his glass, and replenishing the fire. "And now a good night's rest to you, for I half suspect I have already jeopardied some of it."

The old campaigner sat till long past midnight. The generous wine, his pipe, the cheerful wood-fire, were all companionable enough, and well suited thoughts which took no high or heroic range, but were chiefly reveries of the past, – some sad, some pleasant, but all tinged with the one philosophy, which made him regard the world as a campaign, wherein he who grumbles or repines is but a sorry soldier, and unworthy of his cloth.

It was not till the last glass was drained that he arose to seek his bed, and presently humming some old air to himself, he slowly mounted the stairs to his chamber.

CHAPTER V. COLONEL HARCOUUT'S LETTER

As we desire throughout this tale to make the actors themselves, wherever it be possible, the narrators, using their words in preference to our own, we shall now place before the reader a letter written by Colonel Harcourt about a week after his arrival at Glencore, which will at least serve to rescue him and ourselves from the task of repetition.

It was addressed to Sir Horace Upton, Her Majesty's Envoy at Stuttgard, one who had formerly served in the same regiment with Glencore and himself, but who left the army early to follow the career of diplomacy, wherein, still a young man, he had risen to the rank of a minister. It is not important, at this moment, to speak more particularly of his character, than that it was in almost every respect the opposite of his correspondent's. Where the one was frank, open, and unguarded, the other was cold, cautious, and reserved; where one believed, the other doubted; where one was hopeful, the other had nothing but misgivings. Harcourt would have twenty times a day wounded the feelings, or jarred against the susceptibility, of his best friend; Upton could not be brought to trench upon the slightest prejudice of his greatest enemy. We might continue this contrast to every detail of their characters; but enough has now been said, and we proceed to the letter in question:

Glencore Castle. Dear Upton, – True to my promise to give you early tidings of our old friend, I sit down to pen a few lines, which if a rickety table and some infernal lampblack for ink should make illegible, you 'll have to wait for the elucidation till my arrival. I found Glencore terribly altered; I 'd not have known him. He used to be muscular and rather full in habit; he is now a mere skeleton. His hair and mustache were coal black; they are a motley gray.

He was straight as an arrow – pretentiously erect, many thought; he is stooped now, and bent nearly double. His voice, too, the most clear and ringing in the squadron, is become a hoarse whisper. You remember what a passion he had for dress, and how heartily we all deplored the chance of his being colonel, well knowing what precious caprices of costly costume would be the consequence; well, a discharged corporal in a cast-off mufti is stylish compared to him. I don't think he has a hat – I have only seen an oilskin cap; but his coat, his one coat, is a curiosity of industrious patchwork; and his trousers are a pair of our old overalls, the same pattern we wore at Hounslow when the King reviewed us.

Great as these changes are, they are nothing to the alteration in the poor fellow's disposition. He that was generous to munificence is now an absolute miser, descending to the most pitiful economy and moaning over every trifling outlay. He is irritable, too, to a degree. Far from the jolly, light-hearted comrade, ready to join in the laugh against himself, and enjoy a jest of which he was the object, he suspects a slight in every allusion, and bristles up to resent a mere familiarity as though it were an insult.

Of course I put much of this down to the score of illness, and of bad health before he was so ill; but, depend upon it, he's not the man we knew him. Heaven knows if he ever will be so again. The night I arrived here he was more natural, more like himself, in fact, than he has ever been since. His manner was heartier, and in his welcome there was a touch of the old jovial good fellow, who never was so happy as when sharing his quarters with a comrade. Since that he has grown punctilious, anxiously asking me if I am comfortable, and teasing me with apologies for what I don't miss, and excuses about things that I should never have discovered wanting.

I think I see what is passing within him; he wants to be confidential, and he does n't know how to go about it. I suppose he looks on me as rather a rough father to confess to; he is n't quite sure what kind of sympathy, if any, he 'll meet with from me, and he more than half dreads a certain careless, outspoken way in which I have now and then addressed his boy, of whom more anon.

I may be right, or I may be wrong, in this conjecture; but certain it is, that nothing like confidential conversation has yet passed between us, and each day seems to render the prospect of

such only less and less likely. I wish from my heart you were here; you are just the fellow to suit him, – just calculated to nourish the susceptibilities that *I* only shock. I said as much t' other day, in a half-careless way, and he immediately caught it up, and said,

"Ay, George, Upton is a man one wants now and then in life, and when the moment comes, there is no such thing as a substitute for him." In a joking manner, I then remarked, "Why not come over to see him?" "Leave this!" cried he; "venture in the world again; expose myself to its brutal insolence, or still more brutal pity!" In a torrent of passion, he went on in this strain, till I heartily regretted that I had ever touched this unlucky topic.

I date his greatest reserve from that same moment; and I am sure he is disposed to connect me with the casual suggestion to go over to Stuttgard, and deems me, in consequence, one utterly deficient in all true feeling and delicacy.

I need n't tell you that my stay here is the reverse of a pleasure. I 'm never what fine people call bored anywhere; and I could amuse myself gloriously in this queer spot. I have shot some half-dozen seals, hooked the heaviest salmon I ever saw rise to a fly, and have had rare coursing, – not to say that Glencore's table, with certain reforms I have introduced, is very tolerable, and his cellar unimpeachable. I'll back his chambertin against your Excellency's, and I have discovered a bin of red hermitage that would convert a whole vineyard of the smallest Lafitte into Sneyd's claret; but with all these seductions, I can't stand the life of continued restraint I 'm reduced to. Glencore evidently sent for me to make some revelations, which, now that he sees me, he cannot accomplish. For aught I know, there may be as many changes in *me* to *his* eyes as to *mine* there are in *him*. I only can vouch for it, that if I ride three stone heavier, I have n't the worse place, and I don't detect any striking falling off in my appreciation of good fare and good fellows.

I spoke of the boy; he is a fine lad, – somewhat haughty, perhaps; a little spoiled by the country people calling him the young lord; but a generous fellow, and very like Glencore when he first joined us at Canterbury. By way of educating him himself, Glencore has been driving Virgil and decimal fractions into him; and the boy, bred in the country, – never out of it for a day, – can't load a gun or tie a hackle. Not the worst thing about the lad is his inordinate love for Glencore, whom he imagines to be about the greatest and most gifted being that ever lived. I can scarcely help smiling at the implicitness of this honest faith; but I take good care not to smile; on the contrary, I give every possible encouragement to the belief. I conclude the disenchantment will arrive only too early at last.

You 'll not know what to make of such a lengthy epistle from me, and you 'll doubtless torture that fine diplomatic intelligence of yours to detect the secret motive of my long-windedness; but the simple fact is, it has rained incessantly for the last three days, and promises the same cheering weather for as many more. Glencore doesn't fancy that the boy's lessons should be broken in upon, and *hinc istæ litteræ*, – that's classical for you.

I wish I could say when I am likely to beat my retreat. I 'd stay – not very willingly, perhaps, but still I 'd stay – if I thought myself of any use; but I cannot persuade myself that I am such. Glencore is now about again, feeble of course, and much pulled down, but able to go about the house and the garden. I can contribute nothing to his recovery, and I fear as little to his comfort. I even doubt if he desires me to prolong my visit; but such is my fear of offending him, that I actually dread to allude to my departure, till I can sound my way as to how he 'll take it. This fact alone will show you how much he is changed from the Glencore of long ago. Another feature in him, totally unlike his former self, struck me the other evening. We were talking of old messmates – Croydon, Stanhope, Loftus, and yourself – and instead of dwelling, as he once would have done, exclusively on your traits of character and disposition, he discussed nothing but your abilities, and the capacity by which you could win your way to honors and distinction. I need n't say how, in such a valuation, you came off best. Indeed, he professes the highest esteem for your talents, and says, "You'll see Upton either a cabinet minister or ambassador at Paris yet;" and this he repeated in the same words last night, as if to show it was not dropped as a mere random observation.

I have some scruples about venturing to offer anything bordering on a suggestion to a great and wily diplomatist like yourself; but if an illustrious framer of treaties and protocols would condescend to take a hint from an old dragoon colonel, I 'd say that a few lines from your crafty pen might possibly unlock this poor fellow's heart, and lead him to unburthen to *you* what he evidently cannot persuade himself to reveal to me. I can see plainly enough that there is something on his mind; but I know it just as a stupid old hound feels there is a fox in the cover, but cannot for the life of him see how he's to "draw" him.

A letter from you would do him good, at all events; even the little gossip of your gossiping career would cheer and amuse him. He said very plaintively, two nights ago, "They 've all forgotten me. When a man retires from the world he begins to die, and the great event, after all, is only the *coup de grace* to a long agony of torture." Do write to him, then; the address is "Glencore Castle, Leenane, Ireland," where, I suppose, I shall be still a resident for another fortnight to come.

Glencore has just sent for me; but I must close this for the post, or it will be too late.

Yours ever truly,

George Harcourt.

I open this to say that he sent for me to ask your address, – whether through the Foreign Office, or direct to Stuttgard. You 'll probably not hear for some days, for he writes with extreme difficulty, and I leave it to your wise discretion to write to him or not in the interval.

Poor fellow, he looks very ill to-day. He says that he never slept the whole night, and that the laudanum he took to induce drowsiness only excited and maddened him. I counselled a hot jorum of mulled porter before getting into bed; but he deemed me a monster for the recommendation, and seemed quite disgusted besides. Could n't you send him over a despatch? I think such a document from Stuttgard ought to be an unfailing soporific.

CHAPTER VI. QUEER COMPANIONSHIP

When Harcourt repaired to Glencore's bedroom, where he still lay, wearied and feverish after a bad night, he was struck by the signs of suffering in the sick man's face. The cheeks were bloodless and fallen iq, the lips pinched, and in the eyes there shone that unnatural brilliancy which results from an over-wrought and over-excited brain.

"Sit down here, George," said he, pointing to a chair beside the bed; "I want to talk to you. I thought every day that I could muster courage for what I wish to say; but somehow, when the time arrived, I felt like a criminal who entreats for a few hours more of life, even though it be a life of misery."

"It strikes me that you were never less equal to the effort than now," said Harcourt, laying his hand on the other's pulse.

"Don't believe my pulse, George," said Glencore, smiling faintly. "The machine may work badly, but it has wonderful holding out. I 've gone through enough," added he, gloomily, "to kill most men, and here I am still, breathing and suffering."

"This place doesn't suit you, Glencore. There are not above two days in the month you can venture to take the air."

"And where would you have me go, sir?" he broke in, fiercely. "Would you advise Paris and the Boulevards, or a palace in the Piazza di Spagna at Rome; or perhaps the Chiaja at Naples would be public enough? Is it that I may parade disgrace and infamy through Europe that I should leave this solitude?"

"I want to see you in a better climate, Glencore, – in a place where the sun shines occasionally."

"This suits me," said the other, bluntly; "and here I have the security that none can invade, – none molest me. But it is not of myself I wish to speak, – it is of my boy."

Harcourt made no reply, but sat patiently to listen to what was coming.

"It is time to think of him," added Glencore, slowly. "The other day, – it seems but the other day, – and he was a mere child; a few years more, – to seem when past like a long dreary night, – and he will be a man."

"Very true," said Harcourt; "and Charley is one of those fellows who only make one plunge from the boy into all the responsibilities of manhood. Throw him into a college at Oxford, or the mess of a regiment to-morrow, and this day week you'll not know him from the rest."

Glencore was silent; if he had heard, he never noticed Harcourt's remark.

"Has he ever spoken to you about himself, Harcourt?" asked he, after a pause.

"Never, except when I led the subject in that direction; and even then reluctantly, as though it were a topic he would avoid."

"Have you discovered any strong inclination in him for a particular kind of life, or any career in preference to another?"

"None; and if I were only to credit what I see of him, I 'd say that this dull monotony and this dreary uneventful existence is what he likes best of all the world."

"You really think so?" cried Glencore, with an eagerness that seemed out of proportion to the remark.

"So far as I see," rejoined Harcourt, guardedly, and not wishing to let his observation carry graver consequences than he might suspect.

"So that you deem him capable of passing a life of a quiet, unambitious tenor, – neither seeking for distinctions nor fretting after honors?"

"How should he know of their existence, Glencore? What has the boy ever heard of life and its struggles? It's not in Homer or Sallust he 'd learn the strife of parties and public men."

"And why need he ever know them?" broke in Glencore, fiercely.

"If he doesn't know them now, he's sure to be taught them hereafter. A young fellow who will succeed to a title and a good fortune – "

"Stop, Harcourt!" cried Glencore, passionately. "Has anything of this kind ever escaped you in intercourse with the boy?"

"Not a word – not a syllable."

"Has he himself ever, by a hint, or by a chance word, implied that he was aware of – "

Glencore faltered and hesitated, for the word he sought for did not present itself. Harcourt, however, released him from all embarrassment by saying, —

"With me the boy is rarely anything but a listener; he hears me talk away of tiger-shooting and buffalo-hunting, scarcely ever interrupting me with a question. But I can see in his manner with the country people, when they salute him, and call him 'my lord' – "

"But he is not 'my lord,'" broke in Glencore.

"Of course he is not; that I am well aware of."

"He never will – never shall be," cried Glencore, in a voice to which a long pent-up passion imparted a terrible energy.

"How! – what do you mean, Glencore?" said Harcourt, eagerly. "Has he any malady; is there any deadly taint?"

"That there is, by Heaven!" cried the sick man, grasping the curtain with one hand, while he held the other firmly clenched upon his forehead, – "a taint, the deadliest that can stain a human heart! Talk of station, rank, title – what are they, if they are to be coupled with shame, ignominy, and sorrow? The loud voice of the herald calls his father Sixth Viscount of Glencore, but a still louder voice proclaims his mother a – "

With a wild burst of hysteric laughter, he threw himself, face downwards, on the bed; and now scream after scream burst from him, till the room was filled by the servants, in the midst of whom appeared Billy, who had only that same day returned from Leenane, whither he had gone to make a formal resignation of his functions as letter-carrier.

"This is nothing but an *accessio nervosa,*" said Billy; "clear the room, ladies and gentlemen, and lave me with the patient." And Harcourt gave the signal for obedience by first taking his departure.

Lord Glencore's attack was more serious than at first it was apprehended, and for three days there was every threat of a relapse of his late fever; but Billy's skill was once more successful, and on the fourth day he declared that the danger was past. During this period, Harcourt's attention was for the first time drawn to the strange creature who officiated as the doctor, and who, in despite of all the detracting influences of his humble garb and mean attire, aspired to be treated with the deference due to a great physician.

"If it's the crown and the sceptre makes the king," said he, "'tis the same with the science that makes the doctor; and no man can be despised when he has a rag of ould Galen's mantle to cover his shoulders."

"So you're going to take blood from him?" asked Harcourt, as he met him on the stairs, where he had awaited his coming one night when it was late.

"No, sir; 'tis more a disturbance of the great nervous centres than any derangement of the heart and arteries," said Billy, pompously; "that's what shows a real doctor, – to distinguish between the effects of excitement and inflammation, which is as different as fireworks is from a bombardment."

"Not a bad simile, Master Billy; come in and drink a glass of brandy-and-water with me," said Harcourt, right glad at the prospect of such companionship.

Billy Traynor, too, was flattered by the invitation, and seated himself at the fire with an air at once proud and submissive.

"You've a difficult patient to treat there," said Harcourt, when he had furnished his companion with a pipe, and twice filled his glass; "he's hard to manage, I take it?"

"Yer' right," said Billy; "every touch is a blow, every breath of air is a hurricane with him. There 's no such thing as traitin' a man of that timperament; it's the same with many of them ould families as with our racehorses, – they breed them too fine."

"Egad! I think you are right," said Harcourt, pleased with an illustration that suited his own modes of thinking.

"Yes, sir," said Billy, gaining confidence by the approval; "a man is a ma-chine, and all the parts ought to be balanced, and, as the ancients say, *in equilibrio*. If preponderance here or there, whether it be brain or spinal marrow, cardiac functions or digestive ones, you disthroy him, and make that dangerous kind of constitution that, like a horse with a hard mouth, or a boat with a weather helm, always runs to one side."

"That's well put, well explained," said Harcourt, who really thought the illustration appropriate.

"Now, my lord there," continued Billy, "is all out of balance, every bit of him. Bleed him, and he sinks; stimulate him, and he goes ragin' mad. 'T is their physical conformation makes their character; and to know how to cure them in sickness, one ought to have some knowledge of them in health."

"How came you to know all this? You are a very remarkable fellow, Billy."

"I am, sir; I'm a phenumenon in a small way. And many people thinks, when they see and convarse with me, what a pity it is I hav' n't the advantages of edication and instruction; and that's just where they 're wrong, – complately wrong."

"Well, I confess I don't perceive that."

"I'll show you, then. There's a kind of janius natural to men like myself, – in Ireland I mean, for I never heerd of it elsewhere, – that's just like our Irish emerald or Irish diamond, – wonderful if one considers where you find it, astonishin' if you only think how azy it is to get, but a regular disappointment, a downright take-in, if you intend to have it cut and polished and set. No, sir; with all the care and culture in life, you 'll never make a precious stone of it!"

"You've not taken the right way to convince me, by using such an illustration, Billy."

"I 'll try another, then," said Billy. "We are like Willy-the-Whisps, showing plenty of light where there's no road to travel, but of no manner of use on the highway, or in the dark streets of a village where one has business."

"Your own services here are the refutation to your argument, Billy," said Harcourt, filling his glass.

"'Tis your kindness to say so, sir," said Billy, with gratified pride; "but the sacrat was, he thrusted me, – that was the whole of it. All the miracles of physic is confidence, just as all the magic of eloquence is conviction."

"You have reflected profoundly, I see," said Harcourt.

"I made a great many observations at one time of my life, – the opportunity was favorable."

"When and how was that?"

"I travelled with a baste caravan for two years, sir; and there's nothing taches one to know mankind like the study of bastes!"

"Not complimentary to humanity, certainly," said Harcourt, laughing.

"Yes, but it is, though; for it is by a consideration of the *fero naturo* that you get at the raal nature of mere animal existence. You see there man in the rough, as a body might say, just as he was turned out of the first workshop, and before he was infiltrated with the *divinus afflatus*, the ethereal essence, that makes him the first of creation. There 's all the qualities, good and bad, – love, hate, vengeance, gratitude, grief, joy, ay, and mirth, – there they are in the brutes; but they 're in no subjection, except by fear. Now, it's out of man's motives his character is moulded, and fear is only one amongst them. D' ye apprehend me?"

"Perfectly; fill your pipe." And he pushed the tobacco towards him.

"I will; and I 'll drink the memory of the great and good man that first intro-duced the weed amongst us – Here's Sir Walter Raleigh! By the same token, I was in his house last week."

"In his house! where?"

"Down at Greyhall. You Englishmen, savin' your presence, always forget that many of your celebrities lived years in Ireland; for it was the same long ago as now, – a place of decent banishment for men of janius, a kind of straw-yard where ye turned out your intellectual hunters till the sayson came on at home."

"I 'm sorry to see, Billy, that, with all your enlightenment, you have the vulgar prejudice against the Saxon."

"And that's the rayson I have it, because it is vulgar," said Billy, eagerly. "Vulgar means popular, common to many; and what's the best test of truth in anything but universal belief, or whatever comes nearest to it? I wish I was in Parliament – I just wish I was there the first night one of the nobs calls out 'That 's vulgar;' and I 'd just say to him, 'Is there anything as vulgar as men and women? Show me one good thing in life that is n't vulgar! Show me an object a painter copies, or a poet describes, that is n't so!' Ayeh," cried he, impatiently, "when they wanted a hard word to fling at us, why didn't they take the right one?"

"But you are unjust, Billy; the ungenerous tone you speak of is fast disappearing. Gentlemen nowadays use no disparaging epithets to men poorer or less happily circumstanced than themselves."

"Faix," said Billy, "it isn't sitting here at the same table with yourself that I ought to gainsay that remark."

And Harcourt was so struck by the air of good breeding in which he spoke, that he grasped his hand, and shook it warmly.

"And what is more," continued Billy, "from this day out I 'll never think so."

He drank off his glass as he spoke, giving to the libation all the ceremony of a solemn vow.

"D' ye hear that? – them's oars; there's a boat coming in."

"You have sharp hearing, master," said Harcourt, laughing.

"I got the gift when I was a smuggler," replied he. "I could put my ear to the ground of a still night, and tell you the tramp of a revenue boot as well as if I seen it. And now I'll lay sixpence it's Pat Morissy is at the bow oar there; he rows with a short jerking stroke there 's no timing. That's himself, and it must be something urgent from the post-office that brings him over the lough to-night."

The words were scarcely spoken when Craggs entered with a letter in his hand.

"This is for you, Colonel," said he; "it was marked 'immediate,' and the post-mistress despatched it by an express."

The letter was a very brief one; but, in honor to the writer, we shall give it a chapter to itself.

CHAPTER VII. A GREAT DIPLOMATIST

My dear Harcourt, – I arrived here yesterday, and by good fortune caught your letter at F. O., where it was awaiting the departure of the messenger for Germany.

Your account of poor Glencore is most distressing. At the same time, my knowledge of the man and his temper in a measure prepared me for it. You say that he wishes to see me, and intends to write. Now, there is a small business matter between us, which his lawyer seems much disposed to push on to a difficulty, if not to worse. To prevent this, if possible, – at all events to see whether a visit from me might not be serviceable, – I shall cross over to Ireland on Tuesday, and be with you by Friday, or at latest Saturday. Tell him that I am coming, but only for a day. My engagements are such that I must be here again early in the following week. On Thursday I go down to Windsor.

There is wonderfully little stirring here, but I keep that little for our meeting. You are aware, my dear friend, what a poor, shattered, broken-down fellow I am; so that I need not ask you to give me a comfortable quarter for my one night, and some shell-fish, if easily procurable, for my one dinner.

Yours, ever and faithfully,

H. U.

We have already told our reader that the note was a brief one, and yet was it not altogether uncharacteristic. Sir Horace Upton – it will spare us both some repetition if we present him at once – was one of a very composite order of human architecture; a kind of being, in fact, of which many would deny the existence, till they met and knew them, so full of contradictions, real and apparent, was his nature. Chivalrous in sentiment and cunning in action, noble in aspiration and utterly sceptical as regards motives, one half of his temperament was the antidote to the other. Fastidious to a painful extent in matters of taste, he was simplicity itself in all the requirements of his life; and with all a courtier's love of great people, not only tolerating, but actually preferring the society of men beneath him. In person he was tall, and with that air of distinction in his manner that belongs only to those who unite natural graces with long habits of high society. His features were finely formed, and would have been strikingly handsome, were the expression not spoiled by a look of astuteness, – a something that implied a tendency to overreach, – which marred their repose and injured their uniformity. Not that his manner ever betrayed this weakness; far from it, – his was a most polished courtesy. It was impossible to conceive an address more bland or more conciliating. His very gestures, his voice, languid by a slight habit of indisposition, seemed as though exerted above their strength in the desire to please, and making the object of his attentions to feel himself the mark of peculiar honor. There ran through all his nature, through everything he did or said or thought, a certain haughty humility, which served, while it assigned an humble place to himself, to mark out one still more humble for those about him. There were not many things he could not do; indeed, he had actually done most of those which win honor and distinction in life. He had achieved a very gallant but brief military career in India, made a most brilliant opening in Parliament, where his abilities at once marked him out for office, was suspected to be the writer of the cleverest political satire, and more than suspected to be the author of "the novel" of the day. With all this, he had great social success. He was deep enough for a ministerial dinner, and "fast" enough for a party of young Guardsmen at Greenwich. With women, too, he was especially a favorite; there was a Machiavelian subtlety which he could throw into small things, a mode of making the veriest trifles little Chinese puzzles of ingenuity, that flattered and amused them. In a word, he had great adaptiveness, and it was a quality he indulged less for the gratification of others than for the pleasure it afforded himself.

He had mixed largely in society, not only of his own, but of every country of Europe. He knew every chord of that complex instrument which people call the world, like a master; and although a certain jaded and wearied look, a tone of exhaustion and fatigue, seemed to say that he was tired of it all, that he had found it barren and worthless, the real truth was, he enjoyed life to the full as much

as on the first day in which he entered it; and for this simple reason, – that he had started with an humble opinion of mankind, their hopes, fears, and ambitions, and so he continued, not disappointed, to the end.

The most governing notion of his own life was an impression that he had a disease of the chest, some subtle and mysterious affection which had defied the doctors, and would go on to defy them to the last. He had been dangerously wounded in the Burmese war, and attributed the origin of his malady to this cause. Others there were who said that the want of recognition to his services in that campaign was the direst of all the injuries he had received. And true it was, a most brilliant career had met with neither honors nor advancement, and Upton left the service in disgust, carrying away with him only the lingering sufferings of his wound. To suggest to him that his malady had any affinity to any known affection was to outrage him, since the mere supposition would reduce him to a species of equality with some one else, – a thought infinitely worse than any mere physical suffering; and, indeed, to avoid this shocking possibility, he vacillated as to the locality of his disorder, making it now in the lung, now in the heart, at one time in the bronchial tubes, at another in the valves of the aorta. It was his pleasure to consult for this complaint every great physician of Europe, and not alone consult, but commit himself to their direction, and this with a credulity which he could scarcely have summoned in any other cause.

It was difficult to say how far he himself believed in this disorder, – the pressure of any momentous event, the necessity of action, never finding him unequal to any effort, no matter how onerous. Give him a difficulty, – a minister to outwit, a secret scheme to unravel, a false move to profit by, – and he rose above all his pulmonary symptoms, and could exert himself with a degree of power and perseverance that very few men could equal, none surpass. Indeed it seemed as though he kept this malady for the pastime of idle hours, as other men do a novel or a newspaper, but would never permit it to interfere with the graver business of life.

We have, perhaps, been prolix in our description; but we have felt it the more requisite to be thus diffuse, since the studious simplicity which marked all his manner might have deceived our reader, and which the impression of his mere words have failed to convey.

“You will be glad to hear Upton is in England, Glen-core,” said Harcourt, as the sick man was assisted to his seat in the library, “and, what is more, intends to pay you a visit.”

“Upton coming here!” exclaimed Glencore, with an expression of mingled astonishment and confusion; “how do you know that?”

“He writes me from Long’s to say that he ‘ll be with us by Friday, or, if not, by Saturday.”

“What a miserable place to receive him!” exclaimed Glencore. “As for you, Harcourt, you know how to rough it, and have bivouacked too often under the stars to care much for satin curtains. But think of Upton here! How is he to eat, where is he to sleep?”

“By Jove! we ‘ll treat him handsomely. Don’t you fret yourself about his comforts; besides, I ‘ve seen a great deal of Upton, and, with all his fastidiousness and refinement, he’s a thorough good fellow at taking things for the best. Invite him to Chatsworth, and the chances are he’ll find fault with twenty things, – with the place, the cookery, and the servants; but take him down to the Highlands, lodge him in a shieling, with bannocks for breakfast and a Fyne herring for supper, and I ‘ll wager my life you ‘ll not see a ruffle in his temper, nor hear a word of impatience out of his mouth.”

“I know that he is a well-bred gentleman,” said Glencore, half pettishly; “but I have no fancy for putting his good manners to a severe test, particularly at the cost of my own feelings.”

“I tell you again he shall be admirably treated; he shall have my room; and, as for his dinner, Master Billy and I are going to make a raid amongst the lobster-pots. And what with turbot, oysters, grouse-pie, and mountain mutton, I ‘ll make the diplomatist sorrow that he is not accredited to some native sovereign in the Arran islands, instead of some ‘mere German Hertzog.’ He can only stay one day.”

“One day!”

"That's all; he is over head and ears in business, and he goes down to Windsor on Thursday, so that there is no help for it."

"I wish I may be strong enough; I hope to Heaven that I may rally – " Glencore stopped suddenly as he got thus far, but the agitation the words cost him seemed most painful.

"I say again, don't distress yourself about Upton, – leave the care of entertaining him to *me*. I 'll vouch for it that he leaves us well satisfied with his welcome."

"It was not of *that* I was thinking," said he, impatiently; "I have much to say to him, – things of great importance. It may be that I shall be unequal to the effort; I cannot answer for my strength for a day, – not for an hour. Could you not write to him, and ask him to defer his coming till such time as he can spare me a week, or at least some days?"

"My dear Glencore, you know the man well, and that we are lucky if we can have him on his *own* terms, not to think of imposing *ours*; he is sure to have a number of engagements while he is in England."

"Well, be it so," said Glencore, sighing, with the air of a man resigning himself to an inevitable necessity.

CHAPTER VIII. THE GREAT MAN'S ARRIVAL

"Not come, Craggs!" said Harcourt, as late on the Saturday evening the Corporal stepped on shore, after crossing the lough.

"No, sir, no sign of him. I sent a boy away to the top of 'the Devil's Mother,' where you have a view of the road for eight miles, but there was nothing to be seen."

"You left orders at the post-office to have a boat in readiness if he arrived?"

"Yes, Colonel," said he, with a military salute; and Harcourt now turned moodily towards the Castle.

Glencore had scarcely ever been a very cheery residence, but latterly it had become far gloomier than before. Since the night of Lord Glencore's sudden illness, there had grown up a degree of constraint between the two friends which to a man of Harcourt's disposition was positive torture. They seldom met, save at dinner, and then their reserve was painfully evident.

The boy, too, in unconscious imitation of his father, grew more and more distant; and poor Harcourt saw himself in that position, of all others the most intolerable, – the unwilling guest of an unwilling host.

"Come or not come," muttered he to himself, "I 'll bear this no longer. There is, besides, no reason why I should bear it. I 'm of no use to the poor fellow; he does not want, he never sees me. If anything, my presence is irksome to him; so that, happen what will, I 'll start to-morrow, or next day at farthest."

He was one of those men to whom deliberation on any subject was no small labor, but who, once that they have come to a decision, feel as if they had acquitted a debt, and need give themselves no further trouble in the matter. In the enjoyment of this newly purchased immunity he entered the room where Glencore sat impatiently awaiting him.

"Another disappointment!" said the Viscount, anxiously.

"Yes; Craggs has just returned, and says there's no sign of a carriage for miles on the Oughterard road."

"I ought to have known it," said the other, in a voice of guttural sternness. "He was ever the same; an appointment with him was an engagement meant only to be binding on those who expected him."

"Who can say what may have detained him? He was in London on business, – public business, too; and even if he had left town, how many chance delays there are in travelling."

"I have said every one of these things over to myself, Harcourt; but they don't satisfy me. This is a habit with Upton. I 've seen him do the same with his Colonel, when he was a subaltern; I 've heard of his arrival late to a Court dinner, and only smiling at the dismay of the horrified courtiers."

"Egad," said Harcourt, bluntly, "I don't see the advantage of the practice. One is so certain of doing fifty things in this daily life to annoy one's friends, through mere inadvertence or forgetfulness, that I think it is but sorry fun to incur their ill-will by malice prepense."

"That is precisely why he does it."

"Come, come, Glencore; old Rixson was right when he said, 'Heaven help the man whose merits are canvassed while they wait dinner for him.' I 'll order up the soup, for if we wait any longer we 'll discover Upton to be the most graceless vagabond that ever walked."

"I know his qualities, good and bad," said Glencore, rising, and pacing the room with slow, uncertain steps; "few men know him better. None need tell me of his abilities; none need instruct me as to his faults. What others do by accident, *he* does by design. He started in life by examining how much the world would bear from him; he has gone on, profiting by the experience, and improving on the practice."

"Well, if I don't mistake me much, he 'll soon appear to plead his own cause. I hear oars coming speedily in this direction."

And so saying, Harcourt hurried away to resolve his doubts at once. As he reached the little jetty, over which a large signal-fire threw a strong red light, he perceived that he was correct, and was just in time to grasp Upton's hand as he stepped on shore.

"How picturesque all this, Harcourt," said he, in his soft, low voice; "a leaf out of 'Rob Roy.' Well, am I not the mirror of punctuality, eh?"

"We looked for you yesterday, and Glencore has been so impatient."

"Of course he has; it is the vice of your men who do nothing. How is he? Does he dine with us? Fritz, take care those leather pillows are properly aired, and see that my bath is ready by ten o 'clock. Give me your arm, Harcourt; what a blessing it is to be such a strong fellow!"

"So it is, by Jove! I am always thankful for it. And you – how do you get on? You look well."

"Do I?" said he, faintly, and pushing back his hair with an almost fine-ladylike affectation. "I 'm glad you say so. It always rallies me a little to hear I 'm better. You had my letter about the fish?"

"Ay, and I'll give you such a treat."

"No, no, my dear Harcourt; a fried mackerel, or a whiting and a few crumbs of bread, – nothing more."

"If you insist, it shall be so; but I promise you I'll not be of your mess, that's all. This is a glorious spot for turbot – and such oysters!"

"Oysters are forbidden me, and don't let me have the torture of temptation. What a charming place this seems to be! – very wild, very rugged."

"Wild – rugged! I should think it is," muttered Harcourt.

"This pathway, though, does not bespeak much care. I wish our friend yonder would hold his lantern a little lower. How I envy you the kind of life you lead here, – so tranquil, so removed from all bores! By the way, you get the newspapers tolerably regularly?"

"Yes, every day."

"That's all right. If there be a luxury left to any man after the age of forty, it is to be let alone. It's the best thing I know of. What a terrible bit of road! They might have made a pathway."

"Come, don't grow faint-hearted. Here we are; this is Glencore."

"Wait a moment. Just let him raise that lantern. Really this is very striking – a very striking scene altogether. The doorway excellent, and that little watch-tower, with its lone-star light, a perfect picture."

"You 'll have time enough to admire all this; and we are keeping poor Glencore waiting," said Harcourt, impatiently.

"Very true; so we are."

"Glencore's son, Upton," said Harcourt, presenting the boy, who stood, half pride, half bashfulness, in the porch.

"My dear boy, you see one of your father's oldest friends in the world," said Upton, throwing one arm on the boy's shoulder, apparently caressing, but as much to aid himself in ascending the stair. "I'm charmed with your old Schloss here, my dear," said he, as they moved along. "Modern architects cannot attain the massive simplicity of these structures. They have a kind of confectionery style with false ornament, and inappropriate decoration, that bears about the same relation to the original that a suit of Drury Lane tinfoil does to a coat of Milanese mail armor. This gallery is in excellent taste."

And as he spoke, the door in front of him opened, and the pale, sorrow-struck, and sickly figure of Glencore stood before him. Upton, with all his self-command, could scarcely repress an exclamation at the sight of one whom he had seen last in all the pride of youth and great personal powers; while Glencore, with the instinctive acuteness of his morbid temperament, as quickly saw the impression he had produced, and said, with a deep sigh, —

"Ay, Horace, a sad wreck."

"Not so, my dear fellow," said the other, taking the thin, cold hand within both his own; "as seaworthy as ever, after a little dry-docking and refitting. It is only a craft like that yonder," and he pointed to Harcourt, "that can keep the sea in all weathers, and never care for the carpenter. You and I are of another build."

"And you – how are you?" asked Glencore, relieved to turn attention away from himself, while he drew his arm within the other's.

"The same poor ailing mortal you always knew me," said Upton, languidly; "doomed to a life of uncongenial labor, condemned to climates totally unstated to me, I drag along existence, only astonished at the trouble I take to live, knowing pretty well as I do what life is worth."

"'Jolly companions every one!' By Jove!" said Har-court, "for a pair of fellows who were born on the sunny side of the road, I must say you are marvellous instances of gratitude."

"That excellent hippopotamus," said Upton, "has no-thought for any calamity if it does not derange his digestion! How glad I am to see the soup! Now, Glencore, you shall witness no invalid's appetite."

As the dinner proceeded, the tone of the conversation grew gradually lighter and pleasanter. Upton had only to permit his powers to take their free course to be agreeable, and now talked away on whatever came uppermost, with a charming union of reflectiveness and repartee. If a very rigid purist might take occasional Gallicisms in expression, and a constant leaning to French modes of thought, none could fail to be delighted with the graceful ease with which he wandered from theme to theme, adorning each with some trait of that originality which was his chief characteristic. Harcourt was pleased without well knowing how or why, while to Glencore it brought back the memory of the days of happy intercourse with the world, and all the brilliant hours of that polished circle in which he had lived. To the pleasure, then, which his powers conferred, there succeeded an impression of deep melancholy, so deep as to attract the notice of Harcourt, who hastily asked, —

"If he felt ill?"

"Not worse," said he, faintly, "but weak – weary; and I know Upton will forgive me if I say good-night."

"What a wreck indeed!" exclaimed Upton, as Glencore left the room with his son. "I'd not have known him."

"And yet until the last half-hour I have not seen him so well for weeks past. I 'm afraid something you said about Alicia Villars affected him," said Harcourt.

"My dear Harcourt, how young you are in all these things," said Upton, as he lighted his cigarette. "A poor heart-stricken fellow, like Glencore, no more cares for what *you* would think a painful allusion, than an old weather-beaten sailor would for a breezy morning on the Downs at Brighton. His own sorrows lie too deeply moored to be disturbed by the light winds that ruffle the surface. And to think that all this is a woman's doing! Is n't that what's passing in your mind, eh, most gallant Colonel?"

"By Jove, and so it was! They were the very words I was on the point of uttering," said Harcourt, half nettled at the ease with which the other read him.

"And of course you understand the source of the sorrow?"

"I'm not quite so sure of that," said Harcourt, more and more piqued at the tone of bantering superiority with which the other spoke.

"Yes, you do, Harcourt; I know you better than you know yourself. Your thoughts were these: Here's a fellow with a title, a good name, good looks, and a fine fortune, going out of the world of a broken heart, and all for a woman!"

"You knew her," said Harcourt, anxious to divert the discussion from himself.

"Intimately. Ninetta della Torre was the belle of Florence – what am I saying? of all Italy – when Glencore met her, about eighteen years ago. The Palazzo della Torre was the best house in Florence. The old Prince, her grandfather, – her father was killed in the Russian campaign, – was

spending the last remnant of an immense fortune in every species of extravagance. Entertainments that surpassed those of the Pitti Palace in splendor, fêtes that cost fabulous sums, banquets voluptuous as those of ancient Rome, were things of weekly occurrence. Of course every foreigner, with any pretension to distinction, sought to be presented there, and we English happened just at that moment to stand tolerably high in Italian estimation. I am speaking of some eighteen or twenty years back, before we sent out that swarm of domestic economists who, under the somewhat erroneous notion of foreign cheapness, by a system of incessant higgle and bargain, cutting down every one's demand to the measure of their own pockets, end by making the word 'Englishman' a synonym for all that is mean, shabby, and contemptible. The English of that day were of another class; and assuredly their characteristics, as regards munificence and high dealing, must have been strongly impressed upon the minds of foreigners, seeing how their successors, very different people, have contrived to trade upon the mere memory of these qualities ever since."

"Which all means that 'my lord' stood cheating better than those who came after him," said Harcourt, bluntly.

"He did so; and precisely for that very reason he conveyed the notion of a people who do not place money in the first rank of all their speculations, and who aspire to no luxury that they have not a just right to enjoy. But to come back to Glencore. He soon became a favored guest at the Palazzo della Torre. His rank, name, and station, combined with very remarkable personal qualities, obtained for him a high place in the old Prince's favor, and Ninetta deigned to accord him a little more notice than she bestowed on any one else. I have, in the course of my career, had occasion to obtain a near view of royal personages and their habits, and I can say with certainty that never in any station, no matter how exalted, have I seen as haughty a spirit as in that girl. To the pride of her birth, rank, and splendid mode of life were added the consciousness of her surpassing beauty, and the graceful charm of a manner quite unequalled. She was incomparably superior to all around her, and, strangely enough, she did not offend by the bold assertion of this superiority. It seemed her due, and no more. Nor was it the assumption of mere flattered beauty. Her house was the resort of persons of the very highest station, and in the midst of them – some even of royal blood – she exacted all the deference and all the homage that she required from others."

"And they accorded it?" asked Harcourt, half contemptuously.

"They did; and so had you also if you had been in their place! Believe me, most gallant Colonel, there is a wide difference between the empty pretension of mere vanity and the daring assumption of conscious power. This girl saw the influence she wielded. As she moved amongst us she beheld the homage, not always willing, that awaited her. She felt that she had but to distinguish any one man there, and he became for the time as illustrious as though touched by the sword or ennobled by the star of his sovereign. The courtier-like attitude of men, in the presence of a very beautiful woman, is a spectacle full of interest. In the homage vouchsafed to mere rank there enters always a sense of humiliation, and in the observances of respect men tender to royalty, the idea of vassalage presents itself most prominently; whereas in the other case, the chivalrous devotion is not alloyed by this meaner servitude, and men never lift their heads more haughtily than after they have bowed them in lowly deference to loveliness."

A thick, short snort from Harcourt here startled the speaker, who, inspired by the sounds of his own voice and the flowing periods he uttered, had fallen into one of those paroxysms of loquacity which now and then befell him. That his audience should have thought him tiresome or prosy, would, indeed, have seemed to him something strange; but that his hearer should have gone off asleep, was almost incredible.

"It is quite true," said Upton to himself; "he snores 'like a warrior taking his rest.' What wonderful gifts some fellows are endowed with! and, to enjoy life, there is none of them all like dulness. Can you show me to my room?" said he, as Craggs answered his ring at the bell.

The Corporal bowed an assent.

"The Colonel usually retires early, I suppose?" said Upton.

"Yes, sir; at ten to a minute."

"Ah! it is one – nearly half-past one – now, I perceive," said he, looking at his watch. "That accounts for his drowsiness," muttered he, between his teeth. "Curious vegetables are these old campaigners. Wish him good night for me when he awakes, will you?"

And so saying, he proceeded on his way, with all that lassitude and exhaustion which it was his custom to throw into every act which demanded the slightest exertion.

"Any more stairs to mount, Mr. Craggs?" said he, with a bland but sickly smile.

"Yes, sir; two flights more."

"Oh, dear! couldn't you have disposed of me on the lower floor? – I don't care where or how, but something that requires no climbing. It matters little, however, for I'm only here for a day."

"We could fit up a small room, sir, off the library."

"Do so, then. A most humane thought; for if I *should* remain another night – Not at it yet?" cried he, peevishly, at the aspect of an almost perpendicular stair before him.

"This is the last flight, sir; and you'll have a splendid view for your trouble, when you awake in the morning."

"There is no view ever repaid the toil of an ascent, Mr. Craggs, whether it be to an attic or the Righi. Would you kindly tell my servant, Mr. Schöfer, where to find me, and let him fetch the pillows, and put a little rosemary in a glass of water in the room, – it corrects the odor of the night-lamp. And I should like my coffee early, – say at seven, though I don't wish to be disturbed afterwards. Thank you, Mr. Craggs, – good-night. Oh! one thing more. You have a doctor here: would you just mention to him that I should like to see him to-morrow about nine or half-past? Good night, good night."

And with a smile worthy of bestowal upon a court beauty, and a gentle inclination of the head, the very ideal of gracefulness, Sir Horace dismissed Mr. Craggs, and closed the door.

CHAPTER IX. A MEDICAL VISIT

Mr. Schöfer moved through the dimly lighted chamber with all the cat-like stealthiness of an accomplished valet, arranging the various articles of his master's wardrobe, and giving, so far as he was able, the semblance of an accustomed spot to this new and strange locality. Already, indeed, it was very unlike what it had been during Harcourt's occupation. Guns, whips, fishing-tackle, dog-leashes, and landing-nets had all disappeared, as well as uncouth specimens of costume for boating or the chase; and in their place were displayed all the accessories of an elaborate toilet, laid out with a degree of pomp and ostentation somewhat in contrast to the place. A richly embroidered dressing-gown lay on the back of a chair, before which stood a pair of velvet slippers worked in gold. On the table in front of these, a whole regiment of bottles, of varied shape and color, were ranged, the contents being curious essences and delicate odors, every one of which entered into some peculiar stage of that elaborate process Sir Horace Upton went through, each morning of his life, as a preparation for the toils of the day.

Adjoining the bed stood a smaller table, covered with various medicaments, tinctures, essences, infusions, and extracts, whose subtle qualities he was well skilled in, and but for whose timely assistance he would not have believed himself capable of surviving throughout the day. Beside these was a bulky file of prescriptions, the learned documents of doctors of every country of Europe, all of whom had enjoyed their little sunshine of favor, and all of whom had ended by "mistaking his case." These had now been placed in readiness for the approaching consultation with "Glencore's doctor;" and Mr. Schöfer still glided noiselessly from place to place, preparing for that event.

"I 'm not asleep, Fritz," said a weak, plaintive voice from the bed. "Let me have my aconite, – eighteen drops; a full dose to-day, for this journey has brought back the pains."

"Yes, Excellenz," said Fritz, in a voice of broken accentuation.

"I slept badly," continued his master, in the same complaining tone. "The sea beat so heavily against the rocks, and the eternal plash, plash, all night irritated and worried me. Are you giving me the right tincture?"

"Yes, Excellenz," was the brief reply.

"You have seen the doctor, – what is he like, Fritz?"

A strange grimace and a shrug of the shoulders were Mr. Schöfer's only answer.

"I thought as much," said Upton, with a heavy sigh. "They called him the wild growth of the mountains last night, and I fancied what that was like to prove. Is he young?"

A shake of the head implied not.

"Nor old?"

Another similar movement answered the question.

"Give me a comb, Fritz, and fetch the glass here." And now Sir Horace arranged his silky hair more becomingly, and having exchanged one or two smiles with his image in the mirror, lay back on the pillow, saying, "Tell him I am ready to see him."

Mr. Schöfer proceeded to the door, and at once presented the obsequious figure of Billy Traynor, who, having heard some details of the rank and quality of his new patient, made his approaches with a most deferential humility. It was true, Billy knew that my Lord Glencore's rank was above that of Sir Horace, but to his eyes there was the far higher distinction of a man of undoubted ability, – a great speaker, a great writer, a great diplomatist; and Billy Traynor, for the first time in his life, found himself in the presence of one whose claims to distinction stood upon the lofty basis of personal superiority. Now, though bashful-ness was not the chief characteristic of his nature, he really felt abashed and timid as he drew near the bed, and shrank under the quick but searching glance of the sick man's cold gray eyes.

"Place a chair, and leave us, Fritz," said Sir Horace; and then, turning slowly round, smiled as he said, "I'm happy to make your acquaintance, sir. My friend, Lord Glencore, has told me with what skill you treated him, and I embrace the fortunate occasion to profit by your professional ability."

"I'm your humble slave, sir," said Billy, with a deep, rich brogue; and the manner of the speaker, and his accent, seemed so to surprise Upton that he continued to stare at him fixedly for some seconds without speaking.

"You studied in Scotland, I believe?" said he, with one of the most engaging smiles, while he hazarded the question.

"Indeed, then, I did not, sir," said Billy, with a heavy sigh; "all I know of the *ars medicâtrix* I picked up, —*currendo per campos*, – as one may say, vagabondizing through life, and watching my opportunities. Nature gave me the Hippocratic turn, and I did my best to improve it."

"So that you never took out a regular diploma?" said Sir Horace, with another and still blander smile.

"Sorra one, sir! I 'm a doctor just as a man is a poet, – by sheer janius! 'T is the study of nature makes both one and the other; that is, when there's the raal stuff, – the *divinus afflatus*, – inside. Without you have that, you 're only a rhymester or a quack."

"You would, then, trace a parallel between them?" said Upton, graciously.

"To be sure, sir! Ould Heyric says that the poet and the physician is one: —

"'For he who reads the clouded skies,
And knows the utterings of the deep,
Can surely see in human eyes
The sorrows that so heart-locked sleep.'

The human system is just a kind of universe of its own; and the very same faculties that investigate the laws of nature in one case is good in the other."

"I don't think the author of 'King Arthur' supports your theory," said Upton, gently.

"Blackmoor was an ass; but maybe he was as great a bosthoon in physic as in poetry," rejoined Billy, promptly.

"Well, Doctor," said Sir Horace, with one of those plaintive sighs in which he habitually opened the narrative of his own suffering, "let us descend to meaner things, and talk of myself. You see before you one who, in some degree, is the reproach of medicine. That file of prescriptions beside you will show that I have consulted almost every celebrity in Europe; and that I have done so unsuccessfully, it is only necessary that you should look on these worn looks – these wasted fingers – this sickly, feeble frame. Vouchsafe me a patient hearing for a few moments, while I give you some insight into one of the most intricate cases, perhaps, that has ever engaged the faculty."

It is not our intention to follow Sir Horace through his statement, which in reality comprised a sketch of half the ills that the flesh is heir to. Maladies of heart, brain, liver, lungs, the nerves, the arteries, even the bones, contributed their aid to swell the dreary catalogue, which, indeed, contained the usual contradictions and exaggerations incidental to such histories. We could not assuredly expect from our reader the patient attention with which Billy listened to this narrative. Never by a word did he interrupt the description; not even a syllable escaped him as he sat; and even when Sir Horace had finished speaking, he remained with slightly drooped head and clasped hands in deep meditation.

"It's a strange thing," said he, at last; "but the more I see of the aristocracy, the more I 'm convinced that they ought to have doctors for themselves alone, just as they have their own tailors and coachmakers, – chaps that could devote themselves to the study of physic for the peerage, and never think of any other disorders but them that befall people of rank. Your mistake, Sir Horace, was in consulting the regular middle-class practitioner, who invariably imagined there must be a disease to treat."

"And you set me down as a hypochondriac, then," said Upton, smiling.

"Nothing of the kind! You have a malady, sure enough, but nothing organic. 'Tis the oceans of tinctures, the sieves full of pills, the quarter-casks of bitters you 're takin', has played the divil with you. The human machine is like a clock, and it depends on the proportion the parts bear to each other, whether it keeps time. You may make the spring too strong, or the chain too thick, or the balance too heavy for the rest of the works, and spoil everything just by over security. That's what your doctors was doing with their tonics and cordials. They didn't see, here's a poor washy frame, with a wake circulation and no vigor. If we nourish him, his heart will go quicker, to be sure; but what will his brain be at? There's the rub! His brain will begin to go fast too, and already it's going the pace. 'T is soothin' and calmin' you want; allaying the irritability of an irrascible, fretful nature, always on the watch for self-torment. Say-bathin', early hours, a quiet mopin' kind of life, that would, maybe, tend to torpor and sleepiness, – them's the first things you need; and for exercise, a little work in the garden that you 'd take interest in."

"And no physic?" asked Sir Horace.

"Sorra screed! not as much as a powder or a draught, – barrin'," said he, suddenly catching the altered expression of the sick man's face, "a little mixture of hyoscyamus I' ll compound for you myself. This, and friction over the region of the heart, with a mild embrocation, is all my tratement!"

"And you have hopes of my recovery?" asked Sir Horace, faintly.

"My name isn't Billy Traynor if I'd not send you out of this hale and hearty before two months. I read you like a printed book."

"You really give me great confidence, for I perceive you understand the tone of my temperament. Let us try this same embrocation at once; I'll most implicitly obey you in everything."

"My head on a block, then, but I'll cure you," said Billy, who determined that no scruples on his side should mar the trust reposed in him by the patient. "But you must give yourself entirely up to me; not only as to your eatin' and drinkin', but your hours of recreation and study, exercise, amusement, and all, must be at my biddin'. It is the principle of harmony between the moral and physical nature constitutes the whole sacret of my system. To be stimulatin' the nerves, and lavin' the arteries dormant, is like playing a jig to minuet time, – all must move in simultaneous action; and the cerebellum, the great flywheel of the whole, must be made to keep orderly time. D'ye mind?"

"I follow you with great interest," said Sir Horace, to whose subtle nature there was an intense pleasure in the thought of having discovered what he deemed a man of original genius under this unpromising exterior. "There is but one bar to these arrangements: I must leave this at once; I ought to go to-day. I must be off to-morrow."

"Then I'll not take the helm when I can't pilot you through the shoals," said Billy. "To begin my system, and see you go away before I developed my grand invigoratin' arcanum, would be only to destroy your confidence in an elegant discovery."

"Were I only as certain as you seem to be – " began

Sir Horace, and then stopped.

"You 'd stay and be cured, you were goin' to say. Well, if you did n't feel that same trust in me, you 'd be right to go; for it is that very confidence that turns the balance. Ould Babbington used to say that between a good physician and a bad one there was just the difference between a pound and a guinea. But between the one you trust and the one you don't, there's all the way between Billy Traynor and the Bank of Ireland!"

"On that score every advantage is with you," said Upton, with all the winning grace of his incomparable manner; "and I must now bethink me how I can manage to prolong my stay here." And with this he fell into a musing fit, letting drop occasionally some stray word or two, to mark the current of his thoughts: "The Duke of Headwater's on the thirteenth; Ardroath Castle the Tuesday after; More-hampton for the Derby day. These easily disposed of. Prince Boratinsky, about that Warsaw affair, must be attended to; a letter, yes, a letter, will keep that question open. Lady Grencliffe *is* a

difficulty; if I plead illness, she 'll say I 'm not strong enough to go to Russia. I 'll think it over." And with this he rested his head on his hands, and sank into profound reflection. "Yes, Doctor," said he, at length, as though summing up his secret calculations, "health is the first requisite. If you can but restore me, you will be – I am above the mere personal consideration – you will be the means of conferring an important service on the King's Government. A variety of questions, some of them deep and intricate, are now pending, of which I alone understand the secret meaning. A new hand would infallibly spoil the game; and yet, in my present condition, how could I hear the fatigues of long interviews, ministerial deliberations, incessant note-writing, and evasive conversations?"

"Utterly unpossible!" exclaimed the doctor.

"As you observe, it is utterly impossible," rejoined Sir Horace, with one of his own dubious smiles; and then, in a manner more natural, resumed: "We public men have the sad necessity of concealing the sufferings on which others trade for sympathy. We must never confess to an ache or a pain, lest it be rumored that we are unequal to the fatigues of office; and so is it that we are condemned to run the race with broken health and shattered frame, alleging all the while that no exertion is too much, no effort too great for us."

"And maybe, after all, it's that very struggle that makes you more than common men," said Billy. "There's a kind of irritability that keeps the brain at stretch, and renders it equal to higher efforts than ever accompany good everyday health. Dyspepsia is the soul of a prose-writer, and a slight ossification of the aortic valves is a great help to the imagination."

"Do you really say so?" asked Sir Horace, with all the implicit confidence with which he accepted any marvel that had its origin in medicine.

"Don't you feel it yourself, sir?" asked Billy. "Do you ever pen a reply to a knotty state-paper as nately as when you've the heartburn? – are you ever as epigrammatic as when you're driven to a listen slipper? – and when do you give a minister a jobation as purtily as when you are laborin' under a slight indigestion? Not that it would sarve a man to be permanently in gout or the colic; but for a spurt like a cavalry charge, there's nothing like eatin' something that disagrees with you."

"An ingenious notion," said the diplomatist, smiling.

"And now I 'll take my lave," said Billy, rising. "I'm going out to gather some mountain-colchicum and sorrel, to make a diaphoretic infusion; and I've to give Master Charles his Greek lesson; and blister the colt, – he's thrown out a bone spavin; and, after that, Handy Care's daughter has the shakin' ague, and the smith at the forge is to be bled, – all before two o 'dock, when 'the lord' sends for me. But the rest of the day, and the night too, I'm your honor's obaydient."

And with a low bow, repeated in a more reverential man-ner at the door, Billy took his leave and retired.

CHAPTER X. A DISCLOSURE

"Have you seen Upton?" asked Glencore eagerly of Harcourt as he entered his bedroom.

"Yes; he vouchsafed me an audience during his toilet, just as the old kings of France were accustomed to honor a favorite with one."

"And is he full of miseries at the dreary place, the rough fare and deplorable resources of this wild spot?"

"Quite the reverse; he is charmed with everything and everybody. The view from his window is glorious; the air has already invigorated him. For years he has not breakfasted with the same appetite; and he finds that of all the places he has ever chanced upon, this is the one veritable exact spot which suits him."

"This is very kind on his part," said Glencore, with a faint smile. "Will the humor last, Harcourt? That is the question."

"I trust it will, – at least it may well endure for the short period he means to stay; although already he has extended that, and intends remaining till next week."

"Better still," said Glencore, with more animation of voice and manner. "I was already growing nervous about the brief space in which I was to crowd in all that I want to say to him; but if he will consent to wait a day or two, I hope I shall be equal to it."

"In his present mood there is no impatience to be off; on the contrary, he has been inquiring as to all the available means of locomotion, and by what convenience he is to make various sea and land excursions."

"We have no carriage, – we have no roads, even," said Glencore, peevishly.

"He knows all that; but he is concerting measures about a certain turf-kish, I think they call it, which, by the aid of pillows to lie on, and donkeys to drag, can be made a most useful vehicle; while, for longer excursions, he has suggested a 'conveniency' of wheels and axles to the punt, rendering it equally eligible on land or water. Then he has been designing great improvements in horticulture, and giving orders about a rake, a spade, and a hoe for himself. I 'm quite serious," said Harcourt, as Glencore smiled with a kind of droll incredulity. "It is perfectly true; and as he hears that the messenger occasionally crosses the lough to the post, when there are no letters there, he hints at a little simple telegraph for Leenane, which should announce what the mail contains, and which might be made useful to convey other intelligence. In fact, all *my* changes here will be as for nothing to *his* reforms, and between us you 'll not know your own house again, if you even be able to live in it."

"You have already done much to make it more habitable, Harcourt," said Glencore, feelingly; "and if I had not the grace to thank you for it, I 'm not the less grateful. To say truth, my old friend, I half doubted whether it was an act of friendship to attach me ever so lightly to a life of which I am well weary. Ceasing as I have done for years back to feel interest in anything, I dread whatever may again recall me to the world of hopes and fears, – that agitated sea of passion wherein I have no longer vigor to contend. To speak to me, then, of plans to carry out, schemes to accomplish, was to point to a future of activity and exertion; and!" – here he dropped his voice to a deep and mournful tone – "can have but one future, – the dark and dreary one before the grave!"

Harcourt was too deeply impressed by the solemnity of these words to venture on a reply, and he sat silently contemplating the sorrow-struck but placid features of the sick man.

"There is nothing to prevent a man struggling, and successfully too, against mere adverse fortune," continued Glencore. "I feel at times that if I had been suddenly reduced to actual beggary, – left without a shilling in the world, – there are many ways in which I could eke out subsistence. A great defeat to my personal ambition I could resist. The casualty that should exclude me from a proud position and public life, I could bear up against with patience, and I hope with dignity. Loss of fortune, loss of influence, loss of station, loss of health even, dearer than them all, can be borne.

There is but one intolerable ill, one that no time alleviates, no casuistry diminishes, – loss of honor! Ay, Harcourt, rank and riches do little for him who feels himself the inferior of the meanest that elbows him in a crowd; and the man whose name is a scoff and a jibe has but one part to fill, – to make himself forgotten."

"I hope I 'm not deficient in a sense of personal honor, Glencore," said Harcourt; "but I must say that I think your reasoning on this point is untenable and wrong."

"Let us not speak more of it," said Glencore, faintly. "I know not how I have been led to allude to what it is better to bear in secret than to confide even to friendship;" and he pressed the strong fingers of the other as he spoke, in his own feeble grasp. "Leave me now, Harcourt, and send Upton here. It may be that the time is come when I shall be able to speak to him."

"You are too weak to-day, Glencore, – too much agitated. Pray defer this interview."

"No, Harcourt; these are my moments of strength. The little energy now left to me is the fruit of strong excitement. Heaven knows how I shall be to-morrow."

Harcourt made no further opposition, but left the room in search of Upton.

It was full an hour later when Sir Horace Upton made his appearance in Glencore's chamber, attired in a purple dressing-gown, profusely braided with gold, loose trousers as richly brocaded, and a pair of real Turkish slippers, resplendent with costly embroidery; a small fez of blue velvet, with a deep gold tassel, covered the top of his head, at either side of which his soft silky hair descended in long massy waves, apparently negligently, but in reality arranged with all the artistic regard to effect of a consummate master. From the gold girdle at his waist depended a watch, a bunch of keys, a Turkish purse, an embroidered tobacco-bag, a gorgeously chased smelling-bottle, and a small stiletto, with a topaz handle. In one hand he carried a meerschaum, the other leaned upon a cane, and with all the dependence of one who could not walk without its aid. The greeting was cordial and affectionate on both sides; and when Sir Horace, after a variety of preparations to ensure his comfort, at length seated himself beside the bed, his features beamed with all their wonted gentleness and kindness.

"I'm charmed at what Harcourt has been telling me, Upton," said Glencore; "and that you really can exist in all the savagery of this wild spot."

"I'm in ecstasy with the place, Glencore. My memory cannot recall the same sensations of health and vigor I have experienced since I came here. Your cook is first-rate; your fare is exquisite; the quiet is a positive blessing; and that queer creature, your doctor, is a very remarkable genius."

"So he is," said Glencore, gravely.

"One of those men of original mould who leave cultivation leagues behind, and arrive at truth by a bound."

"He certainly treated me with considerable skill."

"I'm satisfied of it; his conversation is replete with shrewd and intelligent observation, and he seems to have studied his art more like a philosopher than a mere physician of the schools. And depend upon it, Glencore, the curative art must mainly depend upon the secret instinct which divines the malady, less by the rigid rules of acquired skill than by that prerogative of genius, which, however exerted, arrives at its goal at once. Our conversation had scarcely lasted a quarter of an hour, when he revealed to me the exact seat of all my sufferings, and the most perfect picture of my temperament. And then his suggestions as to treatment were all so reasonable, so well argued."

"A clever fellow, no doubt of it," said Glencore.

"But he is far more than that, Glencore. Cleverness is only a manufacturing quality, – that man supplies the raw article also. It has often struck me as very singular that such heads are not found in *our* class, – they belong to another order altogether. It is possible that the stimulus of necessity engenders the greatest of all efforts, calling to the operations of the mind the continued strain for contrivance; and thus do we find the most remarkable men are those, every step of whose knowledge has been gained with a struggle."

"I suspect you are right," said Glencore, "and that our old system of school education, wherein all was rough, rugged, and difficult, turned out better men than the present-day habit of everything-made-easy and everybody-made-any-thing. Flippancy is the characteristic of our age, and we owe it to our teaching."

"By the way, what do you mean to do with Charley?" said Upton. "Do you intend him for Eton?"

"I scarcely know, – I make plans only to abandon them," said Glencore, gloomily.

"I'm greatly struck with him. He is one of those fellows, however, who require the nicest management, and who either rise superior to all around them, or drop down into an indolent, dreamy existence, conscious of power, but too bashful or too lazy to exert it."

"You have hit him off, Upton, with all your own subtlety; and it was to speak of that boy I have been so eager to see you."

Glencore paused as he said these words, and passed his hand over his brow, as though to prepare himself for the task before him.

"Upton," said he, at last, in a voice of deep and solemn meaning, "the resolution I am about to impart to you is not unlikely to meet your strenuous opposition; you will be disposed to show me strong reasons against it on every ground; you may refuse me that amount of assistance I shall ask of you to carry out my purpose; but if your arguments were all unanswerable, and if your denial to aid me was to sever the old friendship between us, I 'd still persist in my determination. For more than two years the project has been before my mind. The long hours of the day, the longer ones of the night, have found me deep in the consideration of it. I have repeated over to myself everything that my ingenuity could suggest against it; I have said to my own heart all that my worst enemy could utter, were he to read the scheme and detect my plan; I have done more, – I have struggled with myself to abandon it; but in vain. My heart is linked to it; it forms the one sole tie that attaches me to life. Without it, the apathy that I feel stealing over me would be complete, and my existence become a mournful dream. In a word, Upton, all is passionless within me, save one sentiment; and I drag on life merely for a '*Vendetta*.'"

Upton shook his head mournfully, as the other paused here, and said, —

"This is disease, Glencore!"

"Be it so; the malady is beyond cure," said he, sternly.

"Trust me it is not so," said Upton, gently; "you listened to my persuasions on a more – "

"Ay, that I did!" cried Glencore, interrupting; "and have I ever ceased to rue the day I did so? But for *your* arguments, and I had not lived this life of bitter, self-reproaching misery; but for you, and my vengeance had been sated ere this!"

"Remember, Glencore," said the other, "that you had obtained all the world has decreed as satisfaction. He met you and received your fire; you shot him through the chest, – not mortally, it is true, but to carry to his grave a painful, lingering disease. To have insisted on his again meeting you would have been little less than murder. No man could have stood your friend in such a quarrel. I told you so then, I repeat it now, *he* could not fire at you; what, then, was it possible for you to do?"

"Shoot him, – shoot him like a dog!" cried Glencore, while his eyes gleamed like the glittering eyes of an enraged beast. "You talk of his lingering life of pain: think of *mine*; have some sympathy for what *I* suffer! Would all the agony of *his* whole existence equal one hour of the torment he has bequeathed to me, its shame and ignominy?"

"These are things which passion can never treat of, my dear Glencore."

"Passion alone can feel them," said the other, sternly. "Keep subtleties for those who use like weapons. As for me, no casuistry is needed to tell me I am dishonored, and just as little to tell me I must be avenged! If *you* think differently, it were better not to discuss this question further between us; but I did think I could have reckoned upon you, for I felt you had barred my first chance of a vengeance."

"Now, then, for your plan, Glencore," said Upton, who, with all the dexterity of his calling, preferred opening a new channel in the discussion, to aggravating difficulties by a further opposition.

"I must rid myself of her! There's my plan!" cried Glencore, savagely. "You have it all in that resolution. Of no avail is it that I have separated my fortune from hers, so long as she bears my name, and renders it infamous in every city of Europe. Is it to *you*, who live in the world, – who mix with men of every country, – that I need tell this? If a man cannot throw off such a shame, he must sink under it."

"But you told me you had an unconquerable aversion to the notion of seeking a divorce."

"So I had; so I have! The indelicate, the ignominious course of a trial at law, with all its shocking exposure, would be worse than a thousand deaths! To survive the suffering of all the licensed ribaldry of some gowned coward aspersing one's honor, calumniating, inventing, and, when invention failed, suggesting motives, the very thought of which in secret had driven a man to madness! To endure this – to read it – to know it went published over the wide globe, till one's shame became the gossip of millions – and then – with a verdict extorted from pity, damages awarded to repair a broken heart and a sullied name – to carry this disgrace before one's equals, to be again discussed, sifted, and cavilled at! No, Upton; this poor shattered brain would give way under such a trial; to compass it in mere fancy is already nigh to madness! It must be by other means than these that I attain my object!"

The terrible energy with which he spoke actually frightened Upton, who fancied that his reason had already begun to show signs of decline.

"The world has decreed," resumed Glencore, "that in these conflicts all the shame shall be the husband's; but it shall not be so here! *She* shall have her share, ay, and, by Heaven, not the smaller share either!"

"Why, what would you do?" asked Upton, eagerly.

"Deny my marriage; call her my mistress!" cried Glencore, in a voice shaken with passion and excitement.

"But your boy, – your son, Glencore!"

"He shall be a bastard! You may hold up your hands in horror, and look with all your best got-up disgust at such a scheme; but if you wish to see me swear to accomplish it, I'll do so now before you, ay, on my knees before you! When we eloped from her father's house at Castellamare, we were married by a priest at Capri; of the marriage no trace exists. The more legal ceremony was performed before you, as Chargé d'Affaires at Naples, – of that I have the registry here; nor, except my courier, Sanson, is there a living witness. If you determine to assert it, you will do so without a fragment of proof, since every document that could substantiate it is in my keeping. You shall see them for yourself. She is, therefore, in my power; and will any man dare to tell me how I should temper that power?"

"But your boy, Glencore, your boy!"

"Is my boy's station in the world a prouder one by being the son of the notorious Lady Glencore, or as the offspring of a nameless mistress? What avail to him that he should have a title stained by *her* shame? Where is he to go? In what land is he to live, where her infamy has not reached? Is it not a thousand times better that he enter life ignoble and unknown, – to start in the world's race with what he may of strength and power, – than drag on an unhonored existence, shunned by his equals, and only welcome where it is disgrace to find companionship?"

"But you surely have never contemplated all the consequences of this rash resolve. It is the extinction of an ancient title, the alienation of a great estate, when once you have declared your boy illegitimate."

"He is a beggar: I know it; the penalty he must pay is a heavy one. But think of *her*, Upton, – think of the haughty Viscountess, revelling in splendor, and, even in all her shame, the flattered, welcomed guest of that rotten, corrupt society she lives in. Imagine her in all the pride of wealth and beauty, sought after, adulated, worshipped as she is, suddenly struck down by the brand of this

disgrace, and left upon the world without fortune, without rank, without even a name. To be shunned like a leper by the very meanest of those it had once been an honor when she recognized them. Picture to yourself this woman, degraded to the position of all that is most vile and contemptible. She, that scarcely condescended to acknowledge as her equals the best-born and the highest, sunk down to the hopeless infamy of a mistress. They tell me she laughed on the day I fainted at seeing her entering the San Carlos at Naples, – laughed as they carried me down the steps into the fresh air! Will she laugh now, think you? Shall I be called 'Le Pauvre Sire' when she hears this? Was there ever a vengeance more terrible, more complete?"

"Again, I say, Glencore, you have no right to involve others in the penalty of her fault. Laying aside every higher motive, you can have no more right to deny your boy's claim to his rank and fortune than I or any one else. It cannot be alienated nor extinguished; by his birth he became the heir to your title and estates."

"He has no birth, sir, he is a bastard: who shall deny it? *You* may," added he, after a second's pause; "but where's your proof? Is not every probability as much against you as all documentary evidence, since none will ever believe that I could rob myself of the succession, and make over my fortune to Heaven knows what remote relation?"

"And do you expect me to become a party to this crime?" asked Upton, gravely.

"You balked me in one attempt at vengeance, and I think you owe me a reparation!"

"Glencore," said Upton, solemnly, "we are both of us men of the world, – men who have seen life in all its varied aspects sufficiently to know the hollowness of more than half the pretension men trade upon as principle; we have witnessed mean actions and the very lowest motives amongst the highest in station; and it is not for either of us to affect any overstrained estimate of men's honor and good faith; but I say to you, in all sincerity, that not alone do I refuse you all concurrence in the act you meditate, but I hold myself open to denounce and frustrate it."

"You do!" cried Glencore, wildly, while with a bound he sat up in his bed, grasping the curtain convulsively for support.

"Be calm, Glencore, and listen to me patiently."

"You declare that you will use the confidence of this morning against me!" cried Glencore, while the lines in his face became indented more deeply, and his bloodless lips quivered with passion. "You take your part with *her!*"

"I only ask that you would hear me."

"You owe me four thousand five hundred pounds, Sir Horace Upton," said Glencore, in a voice barely above a whisper, but every accent of which was audible.

"I know it, Glencore," said Upton, calmly. "You helped me by a loan of that sum in a moment of great difficulty. Your generosity went farther, for you took, what nobody else would, my personal security."

Glencore made no reply, but, throwing back the bedclothes, slowly and painfully arose, and with tottering and uncertain steps approached a table. With a trembling hand he unlocked a drawer, and taking out a paper, opened and scanned it over.

"There's your bond, sir," said he, with a hollow, cavernous voice, as he threw it into the fire, and crushed it down into the flames with a poker. "There is now nothing between us. You are free to do your worst!" And as he spoke, a few drops of dark blood trickled from his nostril, and he fell senseless upon the floor.

CHAPTER XI. SOME LIGHTS AND SHADOWS OF DIPLOMATIC LIFE

There is a trait in the lives of great diplomatists of which it is just possible some one or other of my readers may not have heard, which is, that none of them have ever attained to any great eminence without an attachment – we can find no better word for it – to some woman of superior understanding who has united within herself great talents for society with a high and soaring ambition.

They who only recognize in the world of politics the dry details of ordinary parliamentary business, poor-law questions, sanitary rules, railroad bills, and colonial grants can form but a scanty notion of the excitement derived from the high interests of party, and the great game played by about twenty mighty gamblers, with the whole world for the table, and kingdoms for counters. In this "grand rôle" women perform no ignoble part; nay, it were not too much to say that theirs is the very motive-power of the whole vast machinery.

Had we any right to step beyond the limits of our story for illustration, it would not be difficult to quote names enough to show that we are speaking not at hazard, but "from book," and that great events derive far less of their impulse from "the lords" than from "the ladies of creation." Whatever be the part they take in these contests, their chief attention is ever directed, not to the smaller battle-field of home questions, but to the greater and wider campaign of international politics. Men may wrangle and hair-split, and divide about a harbor bill or a road cession; but women occupy themselves in devising how thrones may be shaken and dynasties disturbed, – how frontiers may be changed, and nationalities trafficked; for, strange as it may seem, the stupendous incidents which mould human destinies are more under the influence of passion and intrigue than the commonest events of every-day life.

Our readers may, and not very unreasonably, begin to suspect that it was in some moment of abstraction we wrote "Glencore" at the head of these pages, and that these speculations are but the preface to some very abstruse reflections upon the political condition of Europe. But no; they are simply intended as a prelude to the fact that Sir Horace Upton was not exempt from the weakness of his order, and that he, too, reposed his trust upon a woman's judgment.

The name of his illustrious guide was the Princess Sabloukoff, by birth a Pole, but married to a Russian of vast wealth and high family, from whom she separated early in life, to mingle in the world with all the "prestige" of position, riches, and – greater than either – extreme beauty, and a manner of such fascination as made her name of European celebrity.

When Sir Horace first met her, he was the junior member of our Embassy at Naples, and she the distinguished leader of fashion in that city. We are not about to busy ourselves with the various narratives which professed to explain her influence at Court, or the secret means to which she owed her ascendency over royal highnesses, and her sway over cardinals. Enough that she possessed such, and that the world knew it. The same success attended her at Vienna and at Paris. She was courted and sought after everywhere; and if her arrival was not fêted with the public demonstrations that await royalty, it was assuredly an event recognized with all that could flatter her vanity or minister to her self-esteem.

When Sir Horace was presented to her as an Attaché, she simply bowed and smiled. He renewed his acquaintance some ten years later as a Secretary, when she vouchsafed to say she remembered him. A third time, after a lapse of years, he came before her as a Chargé d'Affaires, when she conversed with him; and lastly, when time had made him a Minister, and with less generosity had laid its impress upon herself, she gave him her hand, and said, —

"My dear Horace, how charming to see an old friend, if you will be good enough to let me call you so."

And he was so; he accepted the friendship as frankly as it was proffered. He knew that time was when he could have no pretension to this distinction: but the beautiful Princess was no longer young; the fascinations she had wielded were already a kind of Court tradition; archdukes and ambassadors were no more her slaves; nor was she the terror of jealous queens and Court favorites. Sir Horace knew all this; but he also knew that, she being such, his ambition had never dared to aspire to her friendship, and it was only in her days of declining fortune that he could hope for such distinction.

All this may seem very strange and very odd, dear reader; but we live in very strange and very odd times, and more than one-half the world is only living on "second-hand," – second-hand shawls and second-hand speeches, second-hand books, and Court suits and opinions are all rife; and why not second-hand friendships?

Now, the friendship between a bygone beauty of forty – and we will not say how many more years – and a hackneyed, half-disgusted man of the world, of the same age, is a very curious contract. There is no love in it; as little is there any strong tie of esteem: but there is a wonderful bond of self-interest and mutual convenience. Each seems to have at last found "one that understands him;" similarity of pursuit has engendered similarity of taste. They have each seen the world from exactly the same point of view, and they have come out of it equally heart-wearied and tired, stored with vast resources of social knowledge, and with a keen insight into every phase of that complex machinery by which one-half the world cheats the other.

Madame de Sabloukoff was still handsome; she had far more than what is ill-naturedly called the remains of good looks. She had a brilliant complexion, lustrous dark eyes, and a profusion of the most beautiful hair. She was, besides, a most splendid dresser. Her toilet was the very perfection of taste, and if a little inclining to over-magnificence, not the less becoming to one whose whole air and bearing assumed something of queenly dignity.

In the world of society there is a very great prestige attends those who have at some one time played a great part in life. The deposed king, the ex-minister, the banished general, and even the bygone beauty, receive a species of respectful homage, which the wider world without-doors is not always ready to accord them. Good breeding, in fact, concedes what mere justice might deny; and they who have to fall back upon "souvenirs" for their greatness, always find their advantage in associating with the class whose prerogative is good manners.

The Princess Sabloukoff was not, however, one of those who can live upon the interest of a bygone fame. She saw that, when the time of coquetry and its fascinations has passed, still, with faculties like hers, there was yet a great game to be played. Hitherto she had only studied characters; now she began to reflect upon events. The transition was an easy one, to which her former knowledge contributed largely its assistance. There was scarcely a royalty, hardly a leading personage, in Europe she did not know personally and well. She had lived in intimacy with ministers, and statesmen, and great politicians. She knew them in all that "life of the *salon*" where men alternately expand into frankness, and practise the wily devices of their crafty callings. She had seen them in all the weaknesses, too, of inferior minds, eager after small objects, tormented by insignificant cares. They who habitually dealt with these mighty personages only beheld them in their dignity of station, or surrounded by the imposing accessories of office. What an advantage, then, to regard them closer and nearer, – to be aware of their shortcomings, and acquainted with the secret springs of their ambitions!

The Princess and Sir Horace very soon saw that each needed the other. When Robert Macaire accidentally met an accomplished gamester who "turned the king" as often as he did, and could reciprocate every trick and artifice with him, he threw down the cards, saying, "Embrassons-nous, nous sommes frères!" Now, the illustration is a very ignoble one, but it conveys no very inexact idea of the bond which united these two distinguished individuals.

Sir Horace was one of those fine, acute intelligences which may be gapped and blunted if applied to rough work, but are splendid instruments where you would cut cleanly and cut deep. She saw this at once. He, too, recognized in her a wonderful knowledge of life, joined to vast powers of

employing it with profit. No more was wanting to establish a friendship between them. Dispositions must be, to a certain degree, different between those who are to live together as friends, but tastes must be alike. Theirs were so. They had the same veneration for the same things, the same regard for the same celebrities, and the same contempt for the small successes which were engaging the minds of many around them. If the Princess had a real appreciation of the fine abilities of Sir Horace, he estimated at their full value all the resources of her wondrous tact and skill, and the fascinations which even yet surrounded her.

Have we said enough to explain the terms of this alliance, or must we make one more confession, and own that her insidious praise – a flattery too delicate and fine ever to be committed to absolute eulogy – convinced Sir Horace that she alone, of all the world, was able to comprehend the vast stores of his knowledge, and the wide measure of his capacity as a statesman?

In the great game of statecraft, diplomatists are not above looking into each other's hands; but this must always be accomplished by means of a confederate. How terribly alike are all human rogueries, whether the scene be a conference at Vienna, or the tent of a thimblerig at Ascot! La Sabloukoff was unrivalled in the art. She knew how to push raillery and *persiflage* to the very frontiers of truth, and even peep over and see what lay beyond. Sir Horace traded on the material with which she supplied him, and acquired the reputation of being all that was crafty and subtle in diplomacy.

How did Upton know this? Whence came he by that? What mysterious source of information is he possessed of? Who could have revealed such a secret to him? were questions often asked in that dreary old drawing-room of Downing Street, where men's destinies are shaped, and the fate of millions decided, from four o'clock to six of an afternoon.

Often and often were the measures of the Cabinet shaped by the tidings which arrived with all the speed of a foreign courier; over and over again were the speeches in Parliament based upon information received from him. It has even happened that the news from his hand has caused the telegraph of the Admiralty to signalize the "Thunderer" to put to sea with all haste. In a word, he was the trusted agent of our Government, whether ruled by a Whig or a Tory, and his despatches were ever regarded as a sure warranty for action.

The English Minister at a Foreign Court labors under one great disadvantage, which is, that his policy, and all the consequences that are to follow it, are rarely, if ever, shaped with any reference to the state of matters then existing in his own country. Absorbed as he is in great European questions, how can he follow with sufficient attention the course of events at home, or recognize, in the signs and tokens of the division list, the changeful fortunes of party? He may be advising energy when the cry is all for temporizing; counselling patience and submission, when the nation is eager for a row; recommend religious concessions in the very week that Exeter Hall is denouncing toleration; or actually suggesting aid to a Government that a popular orator has proclaimed to be everything that is unjust and ignominious.

It was Sir Horace Upton's fortune to have fallen into one of these embarrassments. He had advised the Home Government to take some measures, or at least look with favor on certain movements of the Poles in Russia, in order the better to obtain some concessions then required from the Cabinet of the Czar. The Premier did not approve of the suggestion, nor was it like to meet acceptance at home. We were in a pro-Russian fever at the moment. Some mob disturbances at Norwich, a Chartist meeting at Stockport, and something else in Wales, had frightened the nation into a hot stage of conservatism; and never was there such an ill-chosen moment to succor Poles or awaken dormant nationalities.

Upton's proposal was rejected. He was even visited with one of those disagreeable acknowledgments by which the Foreign Office reminds a speculative minister that he is going *ultra crepidam*. When an envoy is snubbed, he always asks for leave of absence. If the castigation be severe, he invariably, on his return to England, goes to visit the Leader of the Opposition. This is the ritual. Sir Horace, however, only observed it in half. He came home; but after his first morning's attendance at

the Foreign Office, he disappeared; none saw or heard of him. He knew well all the value of mystery, and he accordingly disappeared from public view altogether.

When, therefore, Harcourt's letter reached him, proposing that he should visit Glencore, the project came most opportunely; and that he only accepted it for a day, was in the spirit of his habitual diplomacy, since he then gave himself all the power of an immediate departure, or permitted the option of remaining gracefully, in defiance of all pre-engage-ments, and all plans to be elsewhere. We have been driven, for the sake of this small fact, to go a great way round in our history; but we promise our readers that Sir Horace was one of those people whose motives are never tracked without a considerable *détour*. The reader knows now why he was at Glencore, – he already knew how.

The terrible interview with Glencore brought back a second relapse of greater violence than the first, and it was nigh a fortnight ere he was pronounced out of danger. It was a strange life that Harcourt and Upton led in that dreary interval. Guests of one whose life was in utmost peril, they met in that old gallery each day to talk, in half-whispered sentences, over the sick man's case, and his chances of recovery.

Harcourt frankly told Upton that the first relapse was the consequence of a scene between Glencore and himself. Upton made no similar confession. He reflected deeply, however, over all that had passed, and came to the conclusion that, in Glencore's present condition, opposition might prejudice his chance of recovery, but never avail to turn him from his project. He also set himself to study the boy's character, and found it, in all respects, the very type of his father's. Great bashfulness, united to great boldness, timidity, and distrust, were there side by side with a rash, impetuous nature that would hesitate at nothing in pursuit of an object. Pride, however, was the great principle of his being, – the good and evil motive of all that was in him. He had pride on every subject. His name, his rank, his station, a consciousness of natural quickness, a sense of aptitude to learn whatever came before him, – all gave him the same feeling of pride.

"There's a deal of good in that lad," said Harcourt to Upton, one evening, as the boy had left the room; "I like his strong affection for his father, and that unbounded faith he seems to have in Glencore's being better than every one else in the world."

"It is an excellent religion, my dear Harcourt, if it could only last!" said the diplomat, smiling amiably.

"And why should n't it last?" asked the other, impatiently.

"Just because nothing lasts that has its origin in ignorance. The boy has seen nothing of life, has had no opportunity for forming a judgment or instituting a comparison between any two objects. The first shot that breaches that same fortress of belief, down will come the whole edifice!"

"You 'd give a lad to the Jesuits, then, to be trained up in every artifice and distrust?"

"Far from it, Harcourt. I think their system a mistake all through. The science of life must be self-learned, and it is a slow acquisition. All that education can do is to prepare the mind to receive it. Now, to employ the first years of a boy's life by storing him with prejudices, is just to encumber a vessel with a rotten cargo that she must throw overboard before she can load with a profitable freight."

"And is it in that category you'd class his love for his father?" asked the Colonel.

"Of course not; but any unnatural or exaggerated estimate of him is a great error, to lead to an equally unfair depreciation when the time of deception is past. To be plain, Harcourt, is that boy fitted to enter one of our great public schools, stand the hard, rough usage of his own equals, and buffet it as you or I have done?"

"Why not? or, at least, why should n't he become so after a month or two?"

"Just because in that same month or two he'd either die broken-hearted, or plunge his knife into the heart of some comrade who insulted him."

"Not a bit of it. You don't know him at all. Charley is a fine give-and-take fellow; a little proud, perhaps, because he lives apart from all that are his equals. Let Glencore just take courage to send him to Harrow or Rugby, and my life on it, but he 'll be the manliest fellow in the school."

"I 'll undertake, without Harrow or Rugby, that the boy should become something even greater than that," said Upton, smiling.

"Oh, I know you sneer at my ideas of what a young fellow ought to be," said Harcourt; "but, somehow, you did not neglect these same pursuits yourself. You can shoot as well as most men, and you ride better than any I know of."

"One likes to do a little of everything, Harcourt," said Upton, not at all displeased at this flattery; "and somehow it never suits a fellow, who really feels that he has fair abilities, to do anything badly; so that it comes to this: one does it well, or not at all. Now, you never heard me touch the piano?"

"Never."

"Just because I'm only an inferior performer, and so I only play when perfectly alone."

"Egad, if I could only master a waltz, or one of the melodies, I'd be at it whenever any one would listen to me."

"You're a good soul, and full of amiability, Harcourt," said Upton; but the words sounded very much as though he said, "You're a dear, good, sensible creature, without an atom of self-respect or esteem."

Indeed, so conscious was Harcourt that the expression meant no compliment that he actually reddened and looked away. At last he took courage to renew the conversation, and said, —

"And what would you advise for the boy, then?"

"I 'd scarcely lay down a system; but I 'll tell you what I would not do. I 'd not bore him with mathematics; I 'd not put his mind on the stretch in any direction; I 'd not stifle the development of any taste that may be struggling within him, but rather encourage and foster it, since it is precisely by such an indication you 'll get some clew to his nature. Do you understand me?"

"I 'm not quite sure I do; but I believe you'd leave him to something like utter idleness."

"What to *you*, my dear Harcourt, would be utter idleness, I've no doubt; but not to him, perhaps."

Again the Colonel looked mortified, but evidently knew not how to resent this new sneer.

"Well," said he, after a pause, "the lad will not require to be a genius."

"So much the better for him, probably; at all events, so much the better for his friends, and all who are to associate with him."

Here he looked fixedly at Upton, who smiled a most courteous acquiescence in the opinion, – a politeness that made poor Harcourt perfectly ashamed of his own rudeness, and he continued hurriedly, —

"He'll have abundance of money. The life Glencore leads here will be like a long minority to him. A fine old name and title, and the deuce is in it if he can't rub through life pleasantly enough with such odds."

"I believe you are right, after all, Harcourt," said Upton, sighing, and now speaking in a far more natural tone; "it *is* 'rubbing through' with the best of us, and no more!"

"If you mean that the process is a very irksome one, I enter my dissent at once," broke in Harcourt. "I 'm not ashamed to own that I like life prodigiously; and if I be spared to say so, I 'm sure I 'll have the same story to tell fifteen or twenty years hence; and yet I 'm not a genius!"

"No," said Upton, smiling a bland assent.

"Nor a philosopher either," said Harcourt, irritated at the acknowledgment.

"Certainly not," chimed in Upton, with another smile.

"Nor have I any wish to be one or the other," rejoined Harcourt, now really provoked. "I know right well that if I were in trouble or difficulty to-morrow, – if I wanted a friend to help me with a loan of some thousand pounds, – it is not to a genius or a philosopher I 'd look for the assistance."

It is ever a chance shot that explodes a magazine, and so is it that a random speech is sure to hit the mark that has escaped all the efforts of skilful direction.

Upton winced and grew pale at these last words, and he fixed his penetrating gray eyes upon the speaker with a keenness all his own. Harcourt, however, bore the look without the slightest touch of uneasiness. The honest Colonel had spoken without any hidden meaning, nor had he the slightest intention of a personal application in his words. Of this fact Upton appeared soon to be convinced, for his features gradually recovered their wonted calmness.

"How perfectly right you are, my dear Harcourt," said he, mildly. "The man who expects to be happier by the possession of genius is like one who would like to warm himself through a burning-glass."

"Egad, that is a great consolation for us slow fellows," said Harcourt, laughing; "and now what say you to a game at *écarté*; for I believe it is just the one solitary thing I am more than your match in?"

"I accept inferiority in a great many others," said Upton, blandly; "but I must decline the challenge, for I have a letter to write, and our post here starts at daybreak."

"Well, I'd rather carry the whole bag than indite one of its contents," said the Colonel, rising; and, with a hearty shake of the hand, he left the room.

A letter was fortunately not so great an infliction to Upton, who opened his desk at once, and with a rapid hand traced the following lines: —

Mv dear Princess, – My last will have told you how and when I came here; I wish I but knew in what way to explain why I still remain! Imagine the dreariest desolation of Calabria in a climate of fog and sea-drift: sunless skies, leafless trees, impassable roads, the out-door comforts; the joys within depending on a gloomy old house, with a few gloomier inmates, and a host on a sick bed. Yet, with all this, I believe I am better; the doctor, a strange, unsophisticated creature, a cross between Galen and Caliban, seems to have hit off what the great dons of science never could detect, – the true seat of my malady. He says – and he really reasons out his case ingeniously – that the brain has been working for the inferior nerves, not limiting itself to cerebral functions, but actually performing the humbler office of muscular direction, and so forth; in fact, a field-marshal doing duty for a common soldier! I almost fancy I can corroborate his view, from internal sensations; I have a kind of secret instinct that he is right. Poor brain! why it should do the work of another department, with abundance of occupation of its own, I cannot make out. But to turn to something else. This is not a bad refuge just now. They cannot make out where I am, and all the inquiries at my club are answered by a vague impression that I have gone back to Germany, which the people at F. O. are aware is not the case. I have already told you that my suggestion has been negatived in the Cabinet: it was ill-timed, Allington says; but I ventured to remind his Lordship that a policy requiring years to develop, and more years still to push to a profitable conclusion, is not to be reduced to the category of mere *à propos* measures. He was vexed, and replied weakly and angrily. I rejoined, and left him. Next day he sent for me, but my reply was, "I was leaving town;" and I left. I don't want the Bath, because it would be "ill-timed;" so that they must give me Vienna, or be satisfied to see me in the House and the Opposition!

Your tidings of Brekenoff came exactly in the nick. Allington said pompously that they were sure of him; so I just said, "Ask him if they would like our sending a Consular Agent to Cracow?" It seems that he was so flurried by a fancied detection that he made a full acknowledgment of all. But even at this, Allington takes no alarm. The malady of the Treasury benches is deafness, with a touch of blindness. What a cumbrous piece of bungling machinery is this boasted "representative government" of ours! No promptitude, no secrecy! Everything debated, and discussed, and discouraged, before begun; every blot-hit for an antagonist to profit by! Even the characters of our public men exposed, and their weaknesses displayed to view, so that every state of Europe may see where to wound us, and through whom! There is no use in the Countess remaining here any longer; the King never noticed her at the last ball; she is angry at it, and if she shows her irritation she 'll spoil all. I always thought Josephine would fail in England. It is, indeed, a widely different thing to succeed in the small Courts of Germany, and our great whirlpool of St. James. *You* could do it, my dear friend; but where is the other dare attempt it?

Until I hear from you again I can come to no resolution. One thing is clear, – they do not, or they will not, see the danger I have pointed out to them. All the home policy of our country is drifting, day by day, towards a democracy: how, in the name of common sense, then, is our foreign policy to be maintained at the standard of the Holy Alliance? What an absurd juxtaposition is there between popular rights and an alliance with the Czar! This peril will overtake them one day or another, and then, to escape from national indignation, the minister, whoever he may be, will be driven to make war. But I can't wait for this; and yet, were I to resign, my resignation would not embarrass them, – it would irritate and annoy, but not disconcert. Brekenoff will surely go home on leave. You ought to meet him; he is certain to be at Ems. It is the refuge of disgraced diplomacy. Try if something cannot be done with him. He used to say formerly yours were the only dinners now in Europe. He hates Allington. This feeling, and his love for white truffles, are, I believe, the only clews to the man. Be sure, however, that the truffles are Piedmontese; they have a slight flavor of garlic, rather agreeable than otherwise. Like Josephine's lisp, it is a defect that serves for a distinction. The article in the "Beau Monde" was clever, prettily written, and even well worked out; but state affairs are never really well treated save by those who conduct them. One must have played the game himself to understand all the nice subtleties of the contest. These, your mere reviewer or newspaper scribe never attains to; and then he has no reserves, – none of those mysterious concealments that are to negotiations like the eloquent pauses of conversation: the moment when dialogue ceases, and the real interchange of ideas begins.

The fine touch, the keen *aperçu*, belongs alone to those who have had to exercise these same qualities in the treatment of great questions; and hence it is that though the Public be often much struck, and even enlightened, by the powerful "article" or the able "leader," the Statesman is rarely taught anything by the journalist, save the force and direction of public opinion.

I had a deal to say to you about poor Glencore, whom you tell me you remember; but, how to say it? He is broken-hearted – literally broken-hearted – by her desertion of him. It was one of those ill-assorted leagues which cannot hold together. Why they did not see this, and make the best of it, – sensibly, dispassionately, even amicably, – it is difficult to say. An Englishman, it would seem, must always hate his wife if she cannot love him; and, after all, how involuntary are all affections, and what a severe penalty is this for an unwitting offence!

He ponders over this calamity just as if it were the crushing stroke by which a man's whole career was to be finished forever.

The stupidity of all stupidities is in these cases to fly from the world and avoid society. By doing this a man rears a barrier he never can repass; he proclaims aloud his sentiment of the injury, quite forgetting all the offence he is giving to the hundred and fifty others who, in the same predicament as himself, are by no means disposed to turn hermits on account of it. Men make revolutionary governments, smash dynasties, transgress laws, but they cannot oppose *convenances!*

I need scarcely say that there is nothing to be gained by reason-ing with him. He has worked himself up to a chronic fury, and talks of vengeance all day long, like a Corsican. For company here I have an old brother officer of my days of tinsel and pipe-clay, – an excellent creature, whom I amuse myself by tormenting. There is also Glencore's boy, – a strange, dreamy kind of haughty fellow, an exaggeration of his father in disposition, but with good abilities. These are not the elements of much social agreeability; but you know, dear friend, how little I stand in need of what is called company. Your last letter, charming as it was, has afforded me all the companionship I could desire. I have re-read it till I know it by heart. I could almost chide you for that delightful little party in my absence, but of course it was, as all you ever do is, perfectly right; and, after all, I am, perhaps, not sorry that you had those people when I was away, so that we shall be more *chez nous* when we meet. But when is that to be? Who can tell? My medico insists upon five full weeks for my cure. Allington is very likely, in his present temper, to order me back to my post. You seem to think that you must be in Berlin when Seckendorf arrives, so that – But I will not darken the future by gloomy forebodings.

I *could* leave this – that is, if any urgency required it – at once; but, if possible, it is better I should remain at least a little longer. My last meeting with Glencore was unpleasant. Poor fellow! his temper is not what it used to be, and he is forgetful of what is due to one whose nerves are in the sad state of mine. You shall hear all my complainings when we meet, dear Princess; and with this I kiss your hand, begging you to accept all "*mes hommages" et mon estime*,

H. U.

Your letter must be addressed "Leenane, Ireland." Your last had only "Glencore" on it, and not very legible either, so that it made what I wished *I* could do, "the tour of Scotland," before reaching me.

Sir Horace read over his letter carefully, as though it had been a despatch, and, when he had done, folded it up with an air of satisfaction. He had said nothing that he wished unsaid, and he had mentioned a little about everything he desired to touch upon. He then took his "drops" from a queer-looking little phial he carried about with him, and having looked at his face in a pocket-glass, he half closed his eyes in revery.

Strange, confused visions were they that flitted through his brain. Thoughts of ambition the most daring, fancies about health, speculations in politics, finance, religion, literature, the arts, society, – all came and went. Plans and projects jostled each other at every instant. Now his brow would darken, and his thin lips close tightly, as some painful impression crossed him; now again a smile, a slight laugh even, betrayed the passing of some amusing conception. It was easy to see how such a nature could suffice to itself, and how little he needed of that give-and-take which companionship supplies. He could – to steal a figure from our steam language – he could "bank his fires," and await any emergency, and, while scarcely consuming any fuel, prepare for the most trying demand upon his powers. A hasty movement of feet overhead, and the sound of voices talking loudly, aroused him from his reflections, while a servant entered abruptly to say that Lord Glencore wished to see him immediately.

"Is his Lordship worse?" asked Upton.

"No, sir; but he was very angry with the young lord this evening about something, and they say that with the passion he opened the bandage on his head, and set the vein a-bleed-ing again. Billy Traynor is there now trying to stop it."

"I'll go upstairs," said Sir Horace, rising, and beginning to fortify himself with caps, and capes, and comforters, – precautions that he never omitted when moving from one room to the other.

CHAPTER XII. A NIGHT AT SEA

Glencore's chamber presented a scene of confusion and dismay as Upton entered. The sick man had torn off the bandage from his temples, and so roughly as to reopen the half-closed artery, and renew the bleeding. Not alone the bedclothes and the curtains, but the faces of the attendants around him, were stained with blood, which seemed the more ghastly from contrast with their pallid cheeks. They moved hurriedly to and fro, scarcely remembering what they were in search of, and evidently deeming his state of the greatest peril. Traynor, the only one whose faculties were unshaken by the shock, sat quietly beside the bed, his fingers firmly compressed upon the orifice of the vessel, while with the other hand he motioned to them to keep silence.

Glencore lay with closed eyes, breathing long and labored inspirations, and at times convulsed by a slight shivering. His face, and even his lips, were bloodless, and his eyelids of a pale, livid hue. So terribly like the approach of death was his whole appearance that Upton whispered in the doctor's ear, —

"Is it over? Is he dying?"

"No, Upton," said Glencore; for, with the acute hearing of intense nervousness, he had caught the words. "It is not so easy to die."

"There, now, – no more talkin', – no discoorsin' – azy and quiet is now the word."

"Bind it up and leave me, – leave me with *him*;" and Glencore pointed to Upton.

"I dar' n't move out of this spot," said Billy, addressing Upton. "You'd have the blood coming out, *per saltim*, if I took away my finger."

"You must be patient, Glencore," said Upton, gently; "you know I'm always ready when you want me."

"And you'll not leave this, – you'll not desert me?" cried the other, eagerly.

"Certainly not; I have no thought of going away."

"There, now, hould your prate, both of ye, or, by my conscience, I 'll not take the responsibility upon me, – I will not!" said Billy, angrily. "'Tis just a disgrace and a shame that ye haven't more discretion."

Glencore's lips moved with a feeble attempt at a smile, and in his faint voice he said, —

"We must obey the doctor, Upton; but don't leave me."

Upton moved a chair to the bedside, and sat down without a word.

"Ye think an artery is like a canal, with a lock-gate to it, I believe," said Billy, in a low, grumbling voice, to Upton, "and you forget all its vermicular motion, as ould Fabricius called it, and that it is only by a coagalum, a kind of barrier, like a mud breakwater, that it can be plugged. Be off out of that, ye spalpeens! be off, every one of yez, and leave us tranquil and paceable!"

This summary command was directed to the various servants, who were still moving about the room in imaginary occupation. The room was at last cleared of all save Upton and Billy, who sat by the bedside, his hand still resting on the sick man's forehead. Soothed by the stillness, and reduced by the loss of blood, Glencore sank into a quiet sleep, breathing softly and gently as a child.

"Look at him now," whispered Billy to Upton, "and you 'll see what philosophy there is in ascribin' to the heart the source of all our emotions. He lies there azy and comfortable just because the great bellows is working smoothly and quietly. They talk about the brain, and the spinal nerves, and the soliar plexus; but give a man a wake, washy circulation, and what is he? He's just like a chap with the finest intentions in the world, but not a sixpence in his pocket to carry them out! A fine well-regulated, steady-batin' heart is like a credit on the bank, – you draw on it, and your draft is n't dishonored!"

"What was it brought on this attack?" asked Upton, in a whisper.

"A shindy he had with the boy. I was n't here; there was nobody by. But when I met Master Charles on the stairs, he flew past me like lightning, and I just saw by a glimpse that something was wrong. He rushed out with his head bare, and his coat all open, and it sleetin' terribly! Down he went towards the lough, at full speed, and never minded all my callin' after him."

"Has he returned?" asked Upton.

"Not as I know, sir. We were too much taken up with the lord to ask for him."

"I 'll just step down and see," said Sir Horace, who arose, and left the room on tiptoe.

To Upton's inquiry all made the same answer. None had seen the young lord, – none could give any clew as to whither he had gone. Sir Horace at once hastened to Harcourt's room, and, after some vigorous shakes, succeeded in awakening the Colonel, and by dint of various repetitions at last put him in possession of all that had occurred.

"We must look after the lad," cried Harcourt, springing from his bed, and dressing with all haste. "He is a rash, hot-headed fellow; but even if it were nothing else, he might get his death in such a night as this."

The wind dashed wildly against the window-panes as he spoke, and the old timbers of the frame rattled fearfully.

"Do you remain here, Upton. I'll go in search of the boy. Take care Glencore hears nothing of his absence." And with a promptitude that bespoke the man of action, Harcourt descended the stairs and set out.

The night was pitch dark; sweeping gusts of wind bore the rain along in torrents, and the thunder rolled incessantly, its clamor increased by the loud beating of the waves as they broke upon the rocks. Upton had repeated to Harcourt that Billy saw the boy going towards the sea-shore, and in this direction he now followed. His frequent excursions had familiarized him with the place, so that even at night Harcourt found no difficulty in detecting the path and keeping it. About half an hour's brisk walking brought him to the side of the lough, and the narrow flight of steps cut in the rock, which descended to the little boat-quay. Here he halted, and called out the boy's name several times. The sea, however, was running mountains high, and an immense drift, sweeping over the rocks, fell in sheets of scattered foam beyond them; so that Harcourt's voice was drowned by the uproar. A small shealing under the shelter of the rock formed the home of a boatman; and at the crazy door of this humble cot Harcourt now knocked violently.

The man answered the summons at once, assuring him that he had not heard or seen any one since the night closed in; adding, at the same time, that in such a tempest a boat's crew might have landed without his knowing it.

"To be sure," continued he, after a pause, "I heard a chain rattlin' on the rock soon after I went to bed, and I 'll Just step down and see if the yawl is all right."

Scarcely had he left the spot, when his voice was heard calling out from below, —

"She's gonel the yawl is gone! the lock is broke with a stone, and she's away!"

"How could this be? No boat could live in such a sea," cried Harcourt, eagerly.

"She could go out fast enough, sir. The wind is northeast, due; but how long she'll keep the say is another matter."

"Then he 'll be lost!" cried Harcourt, wildly.

"Who, sir, – who is it?" asked the man.

"Your master's son!" cried he, wringing his hands in anguish.

"Oh, murther! murther!" screamed the boatman; "we 'll never see him again. 'T is out to say, into the wild ocean, he'll be blown!"

"Is there no shelter, – no spot he could make for?"

"Barrin' the islands, there's not a spot between this and America."

"But he could make the islands, – you are sure of that?"

"If the boat was able to live through the say. But sure I know him well; he 'll never take in a reef or sail, but sit there, with the helm hard up, just never carin' what came of him! Oh, musha! musha! what druv him out such a night as this!"

"Come, it's no time for lamenting, my man; get the launch ready, and let us follow him. Are you afraid?"

"Afraid!" replied the man, with a touch of scorn in his voice; "faix, it's little fear troubles me. But, may be, you won't like to be in her yourself when she's once out. I 've none belongin' to me, – father, mother, chick or child; but you may have many a one that's near to you."

"My ties, are, perhaps, as light as your own," said Harcourt. "Come, now, be alive. I'll put ten gold guineas in your hand if you can overtake him."

"I'd rather see his face than have two hundred," said the man, as, springing into the boat, he began to haul out the tackle from under the low half-deck, and prepare for sea.

"Is your honor used to a boat, or ought I to get another man with me?" asked the sailor.

"Trust me, my good fellow; I have had more sailing than yourself, and in more treacherous seas too," said Harcourt, who, throwing off his cloak, proceeded to help the other, with an address that bespoke a practised hand.

The wind blew strongly off the shore, so that scarcely was the foresail spread than the boat began to move rapidly through the water, dashing the sea over her bows, and plunging wildly through the waves.

"Give me a hand now with the halyard," said the boatman; "and when the mainsail is set, you 'll see how she 'll dance over the top of the waves, and never wet us."

"She 's too light in the water, if anything," said Harcourt, as the boat bounded buoyantly under the increased press of canvas.

"Your honor's right; she'd do better with half a ton of iron in her. Stand by, sir, always, with the peak halyards; get the sail aloft in, when I give you the word."

"Leave the tiller to me, my man," said Harcourt, taking it as he spoke. "You 'll soon see that I 'm no new hand at the work."

"She's doing it well," said the man. "Keep her up! keep her up! there's a spit of land runs out here; in a few minutes more we'll have say room enough."

The heavier roll of the waves, and the increased force of the wind, soon showed that they had gained the open sea; while the atmosphere, relieved of the dark shadows of the mountain, seemed lighter and thinner than in shore.

"We 're to make for the islands, you say, sir?"

"Yes. What distance are they off?"

"About eighteen miles. Two hours, if the wind lasts, and we can bear it."

"And could the yawl stand this?" said Harcourt, as a heavy sea struck the bow, and came in a cataract over them.

"Better than ourselves, if she was manned. Luff! luff! – that's it!" And as the boat turned up to wind, sheets of spray and foam flew over her. "Master Charles hasn't his equal for steerin', if he wasn't alone. Keep her there! – now! steady, sir!"

"Here's a squall coming," cried Harcourt; "I hear it hissing."

Down went the peak, but scarcely in time, for the wind, catching the sail, laid the boat gunwale under. After a struggle, she righted, but with nearly one-third of her filled with water.

"I'd take in a reef, or two reefs," said the man; "but if she could n't rise to the say, she 'll fill and go down. We must carry on, at all events."

"So say I. It's no time to shorten sail, with such a sea running."

The boat now flew through the water, the sea itself impelling her, as with every sudden gust the waves struck the stern.

"She's a brave craft," said Harcourt, as she rose lightly over the great waves, and plunged down again into the trough of the sea; "but if we ever get to land again, I'll have combings round her to keep her dryer."

"Here it comes! – here it comes, sir!"

Nor were the words well out, when, like a thunder-clap, the wind struck the sail, and bent the mast over like a whip. For an instant it seemed as if she were going down by the prow; but she righted again, and, shivering in every plank, held on her way.

"That 's as much as she could do," said the sailor; "and I would not like to ax her to do more."

"I agree with you," said Harcourt, secretly stealing his feet back again into his shoes, which he had just kicked off.

"It's freshening it is every minute," said the man; "and I'm not sure that we could make the islands if it lasts."

"Well, – what then?"

"There's nothing for it but to be blown out to say," said he, calmly, as, having filled his tobacco-pipe, he struck a light and began to smoke.

"The very thing I was wishing for," said Harcourt, touching his cigar to the bright ashes. "How she labors! Do you think she can stand this?"

"She can, if it's no worse, sir." "But it looks heavier weather outside."

"As well as I can see, it's only beginnin'."

Harcourt listened with a species of admiration to the calm and measured sentiment of the sailor, who, fully conscious of all the danger, yet never, by a word or gesture, showed that he was flurried or excited.

"You have been out on nights as bad as this, I suppose?" said Harcourt.

"Maybe not quite, sir, for it's a great say is runnin'; and, with the wind off shore, we could n't have this, if there was n't a storm blowing farther out."

"From the westward, you mean?"

"Yes, sir, – a wind coming over the whole ocean, that will soon meet the land wind."

"And does that often happen?"

The words were but out, when, with a loud report like a cannon-shot, the wind reversed the sail, snapping the strong sprit in two, and bringing down the whole canvas clattering into the boat. With the aid of a hatchet, the sailor struck off the broken portion of the spar, and soon cleared the wreck, while the boat, now reduced to a mere foresail, labored heavily, sinking her prow in the sea at every bound. Her course, too, was now altered, and she flew along parallel to the shore, the great cliffs looming through the darkness, and seeming as if close to them.

"The boy! – the boy!" cried Harcourt; "what has become of him? He never could have lived through that squall."

"If the spar stood, there was an end of us, too," said the sailor; "she'd have gone down by the stern, as sure as my name is Peter."

"It is all over by this time," muttered Harcourt, sorrowfully.

"Pace to him now!" said the sailor, as he crossed himself, and went over a prayer.

The wind now raged fearfully; claps, like the report of cannon, struck the frail boat at intervals, and laid her nearly keel uppermost; while the mast bent like a whip, and every rope creaked and strained to its last endurance. The deafening noise close at hand told where the waves were beating on the rock-bound coast, or surging with the deep growl of thunder through many a cavern. They rarely spoke, save when some emergency called for a word. Each sat wrapped up in his own dark reveries, and unwilling to break them. Hours passed thus, – long, dreary hours of darkness, that seemed like years of suffering, so often in this interval did life hang in the balance.

As morning began to break with a grayish blue light to the westward, the wind slightly abated, blowing more steadily, too, and less in sudden gusts; while the sea rolled in large round waves, unbroken above, and showing no crest of foam.

"Do you know where we are?" asked Harcourt.

"Yes, sir; we 're off the Rooks' Point, and if we hold on well, we 'll soon be in slacker water."

"Could the boy have reached this, think you?"

The man shook his head mournfully, without speaking.

"How far are we from Glencore?"

"About eighteen miles, sir; but more by land."

"You can put me ashore, then, somewhere hereabouts."

"Yes, sir, in the next bay; there's a creek we can easily run into."

"You are quite sure he couldn't have been blown out to sea?"

"How could he, sir? There's only one way the wind could dhrive him. If he isn't in the Clough Bay, he's in glory."

All the anxiety of that dreary night was nothing to what Harcourt now suffered, in his eagerness to round the Rooks' Point, and look in the bay beyond it. Controlling it as he would, still would it break out in words of impatience and even anger.

"Don't curse the boat, yer honor," said Peter, respectfully, but calmly; "she's behaved well to us this night, or we 'd not be here now."

"But are we to beat about here forever?" asked the other, angrily.

"She's doin' well, and we ought to be thankful," said the man; and his tone, even more than his words, served to reprove the other's impatience. "I'll try and set the mainsail on her with the remains of the sprit."

Harcourt watched him, as he labored away to repair the damaged rigging; but though he looked at him, his thoughts were far away with poor Glencore upon his sick bed, in sorrow and in suffering, and perhaps soon to hear that he was childless. From these he went on to other thoughts. What could have occurred to have driven the boy to such an act of desperation? Harcourt invented a hundred imaginary causes, to reject them as rapidly again. The affection the boy bore to his father seemed the strongest principle of his nature. There appeared to be no event possible in which that feeling would not sway and control him. As he thus ruminated, he was aroused by the sudden cry of the boatman.

"There's a boat, sir, dismasted, ahead of us, and drifting out to say."

"I see her! – I see her!" cried Harcourt; "out with the oars, and let's pull for her."

Heavily as the sea was rolling, they now began to pull through the immense waves, Harcourt turning his head at every instant to watch the boat, which now was scarcely half a mile ahead of them.

"She's empty! – there's no one in her!" said Peter, mournfully, as, steadying himself by the mast, he cast a look seaward.

"Row on, – let us get beside her," said Harcourt.

"She's the yawl! – I know her now," cried the man.

"And empty?"

"Washed out of her with a say, belike," said Peter, resuming his oar, and tugging with all his strength.

A quarter of an hour's hard rowing brought them close to the dismasted boat, which, drifting broadside on the sea, seemed at every instant ready to capsize.

"There's something in the bottom, – in the stern-sheets!" screamed Peter. "It's himself! O blessed Virgin, it's himself!" And, with a bound, he sprang from his own boat into the other.

The next instant he had lifted the helpless body of the boy from the bottom of the boat, and, with a shout of joy, screamed out, —

"He's alive! – he's well! – it's only fatigue!"

Harcourt pressed his hands to his face, and sank upon his knees in prayer.

CHAPTER XIII. A “VOW” ACCOMPLISHED

Just as Upton had seated himself at that fragal meal of weak tea and dry toast he called his breakfast, Harcourt suddenly entered the room, splashed and road-stained from head to foot, and in his whole demeanor indicating the work of a fatiguing journey.

“Why, I thought to have had my breakfast with you,” cried he, impatiently, “and this is like the diet of a convalescent from fever. Where is the salmon – where the grouse pie – where are the cutlets – and the chocolate – and the poached eggs – and the hot rolls, and the cherry bounce?”

“Say, rather, where are the disordered livers, worn-out stomachs, fevered brains, and impatient tempers, my worthy Colonel?” said Upton, blandly. “Talleyrand himself once told me that he always treated great questions starving.”

“And he made a nice mess of the world in consequence,” blustered out Harcourt. “A fellow with an honest appetite and a sound digestion would never have played false to so many masters.”

“It is quite right that men like you should read history in this wise,” said Upton, smiling, as he dipped a crust in his tea and ate it.

“Men like me are very inferior creatures, no doubt,” broke in Harcourt, angrily; “but I very much doubt if men like you had come eighteen miles on foot over a mountain this morning, after a night passed in an open boat at sea, – ay, in a gale, by Jove, such as I sha’ n’t forget in a hurry.”

“You have hit it perfectly, Harcourt; *suum caique*; and if only we could get the world to see that each of us has his speciality, we should all of us do much better.”

By the vigorous tug he gave the bell, and the tone in which he ordered up something to eat, it was plain to see that he scarcely relished the moral Upton had applied to his speech. With the appearance of the good cheer, however, he speedily threw off his momentary displeasure, and as he ate and drank, his honest, manly face lost every trace of annoyance. Once only did a passing shade of anger cross his countenance. It was when, suddenly looking up, he saw Upton’s eyes settled on him, and his whole features expressing a most palpable sensation of wonderment and compassion.

“Ay,” cried he, “I know well what’s passing in your mind this minute. You are lost in your pitying estimate of such a mere animal as I am; but, hang it all, old fellow, why not be satisfied with the flattering thought that *you* are of another stamp, – a creature of a different order?”

“It does not make one a whit happier,” sighed Upton, who never shrunk from accepting the sentiment as his own.

“I should have thought otherwise,” said Harcourt, with a malicious twinkle of the eye; for he fancied that he had at last touched the weak point of his adversary.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.