VARIOUS

BLACKWOOD'S EDINBURGH MAGAZINE, VOL. 66 NO.406, AUGUST 1849

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Содержание

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CHARLES LAMB. [1]

To Charles Lamb shall be allotted – general assent has already assigned it to him, and we have no wish to dispute his claim – a quiet, quaint niche, apart to himself, in some odd nook or corner in the great temple of English literature. It shall be carved from the solid oak, and decorated with Gothic tracery; but where Madonnas and angels ordinarily appear, there shall be all manner of laughing cherubs – one amongst them disguised as a chimney-*sweep*– with abundance of sly and humorous devices. Some such niches or stalls may occasionally be seen in old cathedrals, sharing the eternity of the structure, and drawing the peculiar regard of the curious and loitering visitor. You are startled to find a merry device, and a wit by no means too reverential, side by side with the ideal forms of Catholic piety. You approach to

[1] *The Works of Charles Lamb. Final Memorials of Charles Lamb.* By Thomas Noon Talfourd.

examine the solemn-looking carving, and find, perhaps, a fox clothed in priestly raiment – teaching, in his own way, divers lessons of morality to the bears and geese. Such venerable and Gothic drollery suspends for a moment, but hardly mars, the serious and sedate feelings which the rest of the structure, and the other sculptured figures of the place, are designed to excite.

Some such peculiar place amongst our literary worthies seems, as we have said, to be assigned by general consent to Charles Lamb, nor are we about to gainsay his right to this position. He has all the genius that could comport with oddity, and all the oddity that could amalgamate with genius. With a range of thought most singularly contracted, considering the times in which he lived, and the men by whom he was surrounded, he has contrived, by a charming subtlety of observation, and a most felicitous humour, to make us in love even with that contractedness itself, which in another would be despised, as evidencing a sluggishness and obtuseness of mind. Perhaps there are few writers who could be named, of these later days, on whose peculiar merits there is so little difference of opinion. As a poet, he was, at all events, inoffensive, and his mediocrity has been pardoned him in favour of that genius he displayed as the humorous and critical essayist. The publication of his letters, too, has materially added to his reputation, and confirmed him as a favourite with all to whom his lambent and playful wit had already made him known and esteemed. We are not aware, therefore, that we have anything to dispute, or

essentially to modify, in the verdict passed by popular opinion on this writer. Yet something may remain to be said to assist in appreciating and discriminating his peculiar merits as a humorist – something to point out where praise is due, and something to draw the limits of that praise. Moreover, his biography, as presented to us by Mr Talfourd, claims some notice; disclosing, as it does, one of the saddest tragedies, and one of the noblest acts of heroism, which ever afflicted and dignified the life of a man of letters. This biography is also written by one who is himself distinguished in the literary world, who was an intimate friend of Lamb, and personally acquainted with those literary characters by whom Lamb had surrounded himself, and who are here grouped around him. Upon the whole, therefore, the *Life and Writings of Elia*, though a subject which no longer wears the gloss of novelty, still invites and may repay attention.

We hardly know whether to regret it as a disadvantage to us, on the present occasion, that we never enjoyed the slightest acquaintance with Charles Lamb, or indeed with any of those literary friends amongst whom he lived. We never saw this bland humorist; we never heard that half-provoking, half-pleasing stutter, which awakened anticipation whilst it delayed enjoyment, and added zest to the witticism which it threatened to mar, and which it had held back, for a moment, only to project with the happier impetus. We never had before us, in bodily presence, that slight, black-coated figure, and those antique and curiously-gaitered legs, which, we have also been assured, contributed

their part to the irresistible effect of his kindly humour. We never even knew those who had seen and talked with him. To us he is a purely historic figure. So, too, of his biographer – which argues ourselves to be sadly unknown – we have no other knowledge than what runs about bruited in the world; even his displays of eloquence, forensic or parliamentary, we have never had an opportunity of hearing; we know him only by his writings, and by that title we have often heard bestowed on him, the amiable author of *Ion*; – to which amiability we refer, because to this we must attribute, we suppose, a large portion of that too laudatory criticism which, in these volumes, he bestows so lavishly and diffusely. We cannot, therefore, bring to our subject any of those vivid reminiscences, anecdotes, or details which personal acquaintance supplies. But, on the other hand, we have no bias whatever to contend against, whether of a friendly or hostile description, in respect of any of the literary characters whom we may have occasion to speak of. Had they all lived in the reign of good Queen Anne, they could not have been more remote from our personal sympathies or antipathies.

It is probably known to most of our readers that when, shortly after the decease of Charles Lamb, his letters were given to the world with some biographical notices, there were circumstances which imposed silence on certain passages of his life, and which obliged the editor to withhold a certain portion of the letters. That sister, in fact, was still alive whose lamentable history was so intimately blended with the career of Lamb, and an allusion

to her unfortunate tragedy would have been cruel in any one, and in an intimate friend utterly impossible. Serjeant Talfourd had no other course than to leave the gap or hiatus in the biography, and cover it up and conceal it as well as might be, from the eyes of such readers as were not better informed from other sources. Upon the decease of that sister, there no longer existed any motive for this silence; and, indeed, shortly after this event, the whole narrative was revealed by a writer in the *British Quarterly Review*, who had himself waited till then before he permitted himself to disclose it, and by its disclosure do an act of justice to the moral character of Lamb. Mr Talfourd was, therefore, called upon to complete his biographical notice, and also the publication of the letters. This he did in the two volumes entitled *Final Memorials*, &c.

As a separate and subsidiary publication became inevitable, and as probably the exigencies of *the trade* required that it should be of a certain bulk and substance, we suppose we must rather commiserate Mr Talfourd than cast any blame upon him for the manifest difficulty he has had to fill these two volumes of *Final Memorials*. One of them would have been sufficient for all that he had to communicate, or that it was wise to add. Many of the letters of Lamb here printed are such as he had very properly laid aside, in the first instance, not because they trenched upon too delicate ground, but because they were wholly uninteresting. He had very correctly said, in what, for distinction's sake, we will call *The Life*– "I have thought it better to omit much of this verbal

criticism, which, not very interesting in itself, is unintelligible without a contemporary reference to the poems which are its subject." – (P. 12.) Now we cannot, of course, undertake to say that the letters given us here are precisely those which he speaks of as being wisely rejected on the former occasion, but we know that there was the same good reason for this rejection, for they are occupied with a verbal criticism utterly uninteresting. Surely, what neither illustrates a man's life, nor adds a tittle to his literary reputation, ought not to be allowed to encumber for ever, as with a dead weight, the collected works of an author. The mischief is, that, if materials of this kind are once published, every succeeding editor finds it incumbent on him to reprint them, lest his edition should be thought less perfect than others, and thus there is no getting rid of the useless and burdensome increment. It is otherwise with another portion of these two volumes, the sketches of the contemporaries and friends of Lamb, which Mr Serjeant Talfourd, or any future editor, can either retrench, omit, or enlarge, at his option.

In the next edition that is published of the works of Lamb, we hope the editor may be persuaded altogether to recast his materials. The biography should be kept apart, and not interspersed piecemeal amongst the letters. This is an arrangement, the most provoking and irritating to the reader that could have been devised. Let us have all the biography at once, and then sit down and enjoy the letters of Lamb. Why be incessantly bandied from the one to the other? Few of the

letters need any explanation; if they do, the briefest note at the head or at the foot would be sufficient. Not to add, that, if it is wished to refer to any event in the biography, one does not know where to look for it. And, *apropos* of this matter of reference, it may be just worth mentioning that the present volume is so divided into *Parts*, and the parts so paged, that any reference to a passage by the number of the page is almost useless. The numbers recommence some half-dozen times in the course of the volume; so that if you are referred to page 50, you may find five of them – you may find page 50 five times over before you come to the right one. For which reason we shall dispense ourselves, in respect to this volume, with our usual punctuality of reference, for the reference must be laboriously minute, and even then will impose a troublesome search. In the mere and humble task of editing, the Serjeant has been by no means fortunate.

Lying about in such confusion as the fractions of the biography do at present, we shall perhaps be rendering a slight service if we bring together from the two different publications the leading events of the life of Lamb.

"Charles Lamb," says the first publication, "was born on the 18th February 1775, in Crown-office Row, in the Inner Temple, where he spent the first seven years of his life." At the age of seven he was presented to the school of Christ's Hospital, and there remained till his fifteenth year. His sweetness of disposition rendered him a general favourite. From one of his schoolfellows we have the following account of him: – "Lamb," says Mr Le

Grice, "was an amiable, gentle boy, very sensible, and keenly observing, indulged by his schoolfellows and by his master, on account of his infirmity of speech. His countenance was mild; his complexion clear brown, with an expression which might lead you to think that he was of Jewish descent. His eyes were not each of the same colour – one was hazel, the other had specks of gray in the iris, mingled as we see red spots in the bloodstone. His step was *plantigrade*, (Mr Le Grice must be a zoologist – Lamb would have smiled to hear himself so scientifically described,) which made his walk slow and peculiar, adding to the staid appearance of his figure. I never heard his name mentioned without the addition of Charles, although, as there was no other boy of the name of Lamb, the addition was unnecessary; but there was an implied kindness in it, and it was a proof that his gentle manner excited that kindness." Mr Le Grice adds that, in the sketch Lamb gave in his *Recollections of Christ's Hospital*, he drew a faithful portrait of himself. "While others were all fire and play, he stole along with all the self-concentration of a young monk." He had, in fact, only passed from cloister to cloister, and, during the holidays, it was in the Temple that he found his home and his only place of recreation. This cloistering-in of his mind was the early and constant peculiarity of his life. He would have made an excellent monk; in those good old times, be it understood, when it was thought no great scandal if there was a well-supplied cellarage underneath the cloister.

After quitting Christ's Hospital, he was employed for some

time in the South Sea House, but on the 5th April 1792 obtained that appointment in the accountant's office in the East India Company which was his stay and support, in more senses than one, through life.

A little anecdote is here introduced, which strikes us as very characteristic. It reveals the humorist, ready to appreciate and promote a jest even at his own expense, and at the easy sacrifice of his own dignity or self-respect: but it reveals something more and sadder; it seems to betray a broken, melancholy spirit, that was no longer disposed to contend for its claim to respect from others. "In the first year of his clerkship," says Mr Le Grice, "Lamb spent the evening of the 5th November with some of his former schoolfellows, who, being amused with the particularly large and flapping brim of his round hat, pinned it up on the sides in the form of a cocked hat. Lamb made no alteration in it, but walked home in his usual sauntering gait towards the Temple. As he was going down Ludgate Hill, some gay young men, who seemed not to have passed the London Tavern without resting, exclaimed, 'The veritable Guy! – no man of straw!' and with this exclamation they took him up, making a chair with their arms, carried him, seated him on a post in St Paul's Churchyard, and there left him. This story Lamb told so seriously, that the truth of it was never doubted. He wore his three-cornered hat many evenings, and retained the name of Guy ever after. Like Nym, he quietly sympathised in the fun, and seemed to say 'that was the humour of it.'" Some one may suggest that probably Lamb

was himself in the same condition, on this 5th of November, as the young men "who had not passed the London Tavern without resting," and that therefore all peculiar significance of the anecdote, as it bears upon his character and disposition, is entirely lost. But Lamb relates the story himself, and afterwards, and when there is no question of sobriety, quietly acquiesces and participates in the absurd joke played upon himself.

At this time his most constant companion was one *Jem* White, who wrote some imaginary "Letters of John Falstaff." These letters Lamb went about all his life praising, and causing others to praise, but seems never to have found any one to share his admiration. As even Mr Talfourd has not a good word to throw away upon the literary merits of Jem White, we may safely conclude that Lamb's friendship had in this instance quite overruled his critical judgment.

But the associate and friend who really exercised a permanent and formative influence upon his mind, was a man of a very different stamp – Samuel Taylor Coleridge. They had been schoolfellows at Christ's Hospital, and, though no particular intimacy existed at that time, the circumstance formed a foundation for a future friendship. "While Coleridge," writes Mr Talfourd, "remained at the university, they met occasionally on his visits to London; and when he quitted it and came to town, full of mantling hopes and glorious schemes, Lamb became his admiring disciple. The scene of these happy meetings was a little public-house, called the *Salutation and Cat*, in the neighbourhood

of Smithfield, where they used to sup, and remain long after they had 'heard the chimes at midnight.'"

These suppers at the Salutation and Cat, in Smithfield, seem to carry back the imagination far beyond the period here alluded to; they seem to transport us to the times of Oliver Goldsmith, or to take us across the water into Germany, where poetry and philosophy may still occasionally find refuge in the beer-shop. They were always remembered by Lamb as the brightest spots of his life. "I think I hear you again," he says, writing to Coleridge. "I imagine to myself the little smoky room at the Salutation and Cat, where we sat together through the winter nights, beguiling the cares of life with poetry." And in another place he alludes to "those old suppers at our old inn – when life was fresh and topics exhaustless – and you first kindled in me, if not the power, yet the love of poetry, and beauty, and kindliness." It was in these interviews that the project was started, we believe, of publishing a volume of poems, the joint production of the two friends.

But this pleasing project, and all the poetry of life, was for a time to give place, in the history of Lamb, to a domestic tragedy of the most afflicting nature. It is here that the Final Memorials take up the thread of the biography. It was on the 22d September 1796, that the terrible event took place which cast so perpetual a shade, and reflected also so constant an honour, on the life of Lamb. He was living at this time with his father, mother, and sister, in lodgings in Little Queen Street, Holborn. After being engaged in his taskwork at the India House, he returned

in the evening to amuse his father by playing cribbage. The old man had sunk into dotage and the miserable selfishness that so often attends on old age. If his son wished to discontinue for a time the game at cribbage, and turn to some other avocation, or the writing of a letter, he would pettishly exclaim, – "If you don't play cribbage, I don't see the use of your coming home at all." The mother also was an invalid, and Miss Lamb, we are told, was worn down to a state of extreme nervous misery, by attention to needlework by day, and to her mother by night, until the insanity which had been manifested more than once broke out into frenzy. "It appeared," says the account extracted from the *Times*, (an account of the inquest, in which the names of the parties are suppressed,) "that while the family were preparing for dinner, the young lady seized a case-knife lying on the table, and in a menacing manner pursued a little girl, her apprentice, round the room. On the calls of her infirm mother to forbear, she renounced her first object, and with loud shrieks approached her parent. The child by her cries quickly brought up the landlord of the house, but too late. The dreadful scene presented to him the mother lifeless, pierced to the heart, on a chair, her daughter yet wildly standing over her with the fatal knife, and the old man, her father, weeping by her side, himself bleeding at the forehead from the effects of a severe blow he received from one of the forks she had been madly hurling about the room."

The following is the letter which Lamb wrote to Coleridge shortly after the event. From this it appears that it was he, and

not the landlord, who took the knife from the hand of the lunatic.

"My Dearest Friend, – White, or some of my friends, or the public papers, by *this* time may have informed you of the terrible calamities that have fallen on our family. I will only give you the outlines. My poor, dear, dearest sister, in a fit of insanity, has been the death of her own mother. I was at hand only time enough to snatch the knife out of her grasp. She is at present in a madhouse, from whence I fear she must be removed to an hospital. God has preserved to me my senses. I eat, and drink, and sleep, and have my judgment, I believe, very sound. My poor father was slightly wounded, and I am left to take care of him and my aunt. Mr Norris of the Blue-coat School has been very kind to us, and we have no other friend; but, thank God, I am very calm and composed, and able to do the best that remains to do. Write as religious a letter as possible, but no mention of what is gone and done with. With me 'the former things are passed away,' and I have something more to do than to feel.

"God Almighty have us all in his keeping! – C. Lamb.

"Mention nothing of poetry; I have destroyed every vestige of past vanities of that kind. Do as you please; but if you publish, publish mine (I give free leave) without name or initial, and never send me a book, I charge you.

"Your own judgment will convince you not to take any notice of this yet to your dear wife. You look after your family – I have my reason and strength left to take care of mine. I charge you, don't think of coming to see me – write. I will not see you if you

come. God Almighty love you, and all of us." – C. Lamb.

Miss Lamb was of course placed in an asylum, where, however, she was in a short time restored to reason. And now occurred the act of life-long heroism on the part of the brother. As soon as she was recovered, he petitioned the authorities to resign her to his care; he pledged himself to be her guardian, her provider, her *keeper*, for all her days to come. He was at that time paying his addresses to a young lady, with what hopes, or with what degree of ardour, we are not informed. But marriage with her, or with any other, was now to be entirely renounced. He devoted his life, and all his love, to his unhappy sister, and to the last he fulfilled the obligation he had taken upon himself without a murmur, and without the least diminution of affection towards the object of it.

We have called it an act of heroism; we applaud it, and rejoice that it stands upon record a complete and accomplished act. There it stands, not only to relieve the character of Lamb from such littleness as it may have contracted from certain habits of intemperance, (of which perhaps more has been said than was necessary;) but it remains there as an enduring memorial, prompting, to all time, to the like acts of self-denying kindness, and unshaken generosity of purpose. But, admiring the act as we do, we must still be permitted to observe, that there was a degree of imprudence in it which fully justified other members of the family in their endeavours to dissuade Lamb from his resolution, and which would have justified the authorities (whoever they

were – and about this matter there seems a singular obscurity, and a suspicion is created that even in proceedings of this nature much is done carelessly, informally, uncertainly) in refusing to accede to his request. Miss Lamb had several relapses into temporary derangement; and, although she never committed, as far as we are informed, any acts of violence, this calmness of behaviour, in her seasons of mental aberration, could not have been calculated on. We confess we should have shrunk from the responsibility of advising the generous but perilous course which was adopted with so fortunate a result.

How sad and fearful a charge Lamb had entailed upon himself, let the following extract suffice to show. The subject is too painful to be longer dwelt upon than is necessary. "The constant impendency of this great sorrow saddened to 'the Lambs' even their holidays, as the journey which they both regarded as the relief and charm of the year was frequently followed by a seizure; and, *when they ventured to take it, a strait-waistcoat, carefully packed up by Miss Lamb herself, was their constant companion*. Sad experience at last induced the abandonment of the annual excursion, and Lamb was contented with walks in and near London during the interval of labour. Miss Lamb experienced, and full well understood, premonitory symptoms of the attack, in restlessness, low fever, and the inability to sleep; and, as gently as possible, prepared her brother for the duty he must soon perform; and thus, unless he could stave off the terrible separation till Sunday, obliged him to ask leave of absence from the office as

if for a day's pleasure – a bitter mockery! On one occasion Mr Charles Lloyd met them slowly pacing together a little footpath in Haxton Fields, *both weeping bitterly, and found, on joining them, that they were taking their solemn way to the accustomed asylum*!"[2]

It seems that a tendency to lunacy was hereditary in the family, and Charles Lamb himself had been for a short period deprived of his reason.

On this subject Mr Talfourd makes the following excellent remark: – "The wonder is, that, amidst all the difficulties, the sorrows, and the excitements of his succeeding forty years, the malady never recurred. Perhaps the true cause of this remarkable exemption – an exemption the more remarkable when his afflictions are considered in association with one single frailty – will be found in the sudden claim made on his moral and intellectual nature by a terrible exigency, and by his generous answer to that claim; *so that a life of self-sacrifice was rewarded by the preservation of unclouded reason*."

We will not weaken so admirable a remark by repeating it in a worse phraseology of our own. We wish the Serjeant always wrote in the same clear, forcible, and unaffected manner. With respect to this seizure which Lamb, in an early part of his life, had experienced, there is a reference in one of his letters too curious to pass unnoticed. Writing to Coleridge, he says – "At some future time I will amuse you with an account, as full as

[2] *Final Memorials*, vol. ii., p. 212.

my memory will permit, of the strange turns my frenzy took. I look back upon it at times with a gloomy kind of envy, for, while it lasted, I had many, many hours of pure happiness. Dream not, Coleridge, of having tasted all the grandeur and wildness of fancy till you have gone mad! All now seems to me vapid, or comparatively so."

The residue of Lamb's life is uneventful. The publication of a book – a journey into Cumberland – his final liberation from office, are the chief incidents. These it is not necessary to arrange in chronological order: they can be alluded to as occasion requires. But we will pursue a little further our notice of Mr Talfourd's biographical labours, that we may clear our way as we proceed.

We have seen that Lamb, in the first agony of his grief, rudely threw aside his poetry, and his scheme of publishing conjointly with Coleridge. Poetry and schemes of publication are not, however, so easily dismissed. As his mind subsided into a calmer state, they were naturally resumed. The literary partnership was extended, and Lloyd was admitted to associate his labours in the forthcoming volume. "At length," says Mr Talfourd, "the small volume containing the poems of Coleridge, Lloyd, and Lamb, was published by Mr Cottle at Bristol. It excited little attention." We do not wonder at this, if the lucubrations of Mr Lloyd had any conspicuous place in the volume. How the other two poets – how Coleridge especially, could have consented to this literary partnership, with so singularly inept and absurd a writer, would

be past explaining, if it were not for some hint that we receive that Charles Lloyd was the son of a wealthy banker, and might, therefore, be the fittest person to transact that part of the business which occurs between the author and the publisher. Here we have a striking instance of Mr Talfourd's misplaced amiability of criticism. "Lloyd," he says, "wrote *pleasing* verses, and with great facility – a facility fatal to excellence; but his mind was chiefly remarkable for *the fine power of analysis which distinguishes his 'London,'* and other of his later compositions. In this power of discriminating and distinguishing – carried to a pitch almost of painfulness – Lloyd has scarcely been equalled; and his poems, though rugged in point of versification, will be found, by those who will read them with the calm attention they require, replete with critical and moral suggestions of the highest value." Very grateful to Mr Serjeant Talfourd will any reader feel who shall be induced, by his recommendation, to peruse, or attempt to peruse, Mr Lloyd's poem of "London!" We were. "Fine power of analysis!" Why, it is one stream of mud – of theologic mud. "Rugged in point of versification!" There is no trace of verse, and the style is an outlandish garb, such as no man has ever seen elsewhere, either in prose or verse. Poor Lloyd was a lunatic patient! – on him no one would be severe; but why should an intelligent Serjeant, unless prompted by a sly malice against all mankind, persuade us to read his execrable stuff? The following is a fair specimen of the drug, and is, indeed, taken as the book opened. We add the two last lines of the preceding stanza, to

give all possible help to the elucidation of the one we quote. The italics are all Mr Lloyd's: —

"If you affirm *grace irresistible*,
You must deny all liberty of will.

"But you reply, grace irresistible
Our creed admits not. I am sorry for't.
Enough, or not enough, to bind the free will,
Grace must be. Not enough? The dose falls short.
This is of *cause* the prime condition still
That it be *operative*. Yet divines exhort
Us to deem grace *sole source* of all salvation,
And if we're damned, blame *but its application*."

But divinity of this kind, it may be said, though well calculated to display "the power of discriminating and distinguishing, carried to a pitch almost of painfulness," is not exactly favourable to flowing verse. Here is a specimen where a lady is the subject, and the verse should be smooth then, if ever.

"I well remember her years, five-and-twenty,
(Ah! now my muse is got into a gallop,)
Longer perhaps! But time sufficient, plenty
Of treasured offices of love to call up.
She was then, as I recollect, quite dainty,
And delicate, and seemed a fair envelope
Of virgin sweetness and angelic goodness;

That fate should treat her with such reckless rudeness!"

The poor man seems to have had not the least appreciation of the power of language, so as to distinguish between the ludicrous and the pathetic. He must have read "Hudibras" with tears, *not* of laughter, in his eyes, and hence drawn his notion of tenderness of diction as well as harmony of verse. The most surprising thing about Lloyd is, that such a man should have chosen for his literary task to translate – Alfieri! And although he has performed the task very far from well, he has accomplished it in a manner that could not have been anticipated from his original compositions.

After this specimen of Mr Talfourd's laudatory criticism, we need not be astonished at any amount of eulogy he bestows on such names as Hazlitt and others, which really have a certain claim on the respect of all men. And yet, even after this, we felt some slight surprise at hearing Mr Talfourd speak of "the splendid reputation" of Mr Harrison Ainsworth! Would Mr Talfourd *have* such a reputation, if it were offered him? Would he not rather have remained in complete obscurity than be distinguished by such "splendours" as the authorship of *Jack Sheppard* would have invested him with? Why should he throw about this indiscriminate praise, and make his good word of no possible value? Splendid reputation! Can trash be anything but trash, because a multitude of the idle and the ignorant, whom it exactly suits, read and admire? By-and-by they grow ashamed of their idol, when they find they have him all to themselves, and

that sensible people are smiling at their enthusiasm; they then discard him for some new, untried, and *unconvicted* favourite. Such is the natural history of these splendid reputations.

The second volume of the "Final Memorials" is in great part occupied with sketches of the literary friends and companions of Lamb. These Mr Talfourd introduces by a somewhat bold parallel between the banquets at the lordly halls of Holland House and the suppers in the dark and elevated chambers in the Inner Temple, whither Lamb had removed. We are by no means scandalised at such a comparison. Wit may flow, and wisdom too, as freely in the garret as in the saloon. To eat off plate, to be served assiduously by liveried attendants, may not give any more real zest to colloquial pleasure, to good hearty talking, than to attack without ceremony "the cold beef flanked with heaps of smoking potatoes, which Becky has just brought in." Nor do we know that claret in the flagon of beautifully cut glass, may be a more potent inspiration of wit than "the foaming pots of porter from the best tap in Fleet Street." We are not at all astonished that such a parallel should be drawn; what surprises us is, that, being in the humour to draw such comparisons, the Sergeant could find only *one* place in all London which could be brought into this species of contrast, and of rivalry, with Holland House. "Two circles of rare social enjoyment, differing as widely as possible in all external circumstances —*but each superior in its kind to all others*, were at the same time generously opened to men of letters." We, who have been admitted to neither, have perhaps

no right to an opinion; but, judging by the bill of fare presented to us, we shrewdly suspect there were very many circles where we should have preferred the intellectual repast to that set out in Inner Temple Lane. We doubt not the Serjeant himself has assembled round his own table a society that we should greatly more have coveted the pleasure of joining. We have the name of Godwin, it is true, but Godwin never opened his mouth; – played whist all the evening. Had he not written his book? why should he talk? We have Hazlitt, – but by all accounts he was rarely in a tolerable humour, perpetually raving, with admirable consistency, in praise of republics and Bonaparte. Coleridge was too rarely a visitor to be counted in the list; and certain we are that we should have no delight in hearing Charles Lloyd "reason of fate, free-will, foreknowledge absolute," to Leigh Hunt. Some actors are named, of whose conversational powers we know nothing, and presume nothing very extraordinary. Lamb's "burly jovial brother, the Ajax Telamon of clerks," and a Captain Burney, of whom we are elsewhere told that he liked Shakspeare "because he was so much of a gentleman," promise little on the score of intellectual conversation; neither should we be particularly anxious to sit opposite a certain M. B., of whom Lamb said, "M., if dirt were trumps, what hands you would hold!"

After this singular parallel, we are shown round a gallery of portraits. First we have George Dyer, who appears to be the counterpart of our old friend Dominie Sampson. But, indeed,

we hold George Dyer to be a sort of myth, a fabulous person, the creation of Charles Lamb's imagination, and imposed as a reality on his friends. Such an absurdity as he is here represented to be could not have been bred, could not have existed, in these times, and in London. If we are to credit the stories told of him, his walking in broad day into the canal at Islington was one of the wisest things he did, or could possibly have done. Lamb tells him, in the strictest confidence, that the "Waverley Novels" are the works of Lord Castlereagh, just returned from the Congress of Sovereigns at Vienna! Off he runs, nor stops till he reaches Maida Hill, where he deposits his news in the ears of Leigh Hunt, who, "as a public man," he thinks ought to be possessed of the great fact. At another time Lamb gravely inquires of him, "Whether it was true, as was commonly reported, that he was to be made a lord?" "Oh dear, no! Mr Lamb," he responds with great earnestness, "I could not think of such a thing: it is not true, I assure you." "I thought not," replies the wit, "and I contradict it wherever I go; but the government will not ask your consent – they may raise you to the peerage without your even knowing it." "I hope not, Mr Lamb; indeed, indeed, I hope not; it would not suit me at all," repeats our modern Dominie, and goes away musing on the possibility of strange honours descending, whether he will or not, upon his brow. It goes to our heart to disturb a good story, but such a man as the George Dyer here represented never could have existed.

We have rather a long account of Godwin, with some remarks

not very satisfactory upon his intellectual character. That Mr Godwin was taciturn, that he conversed, when he did talk, upon trivial subjects, and in a small precise manner, and that he was especially fond of sleeping after dinner – all this we can easily understand. Mr Godwin's mental activity was absorbed in his authorship, and he was a very voluminous author. But we cannot so easily understand Mr Talfourd's explanations, nor why these habits should have any peculiar connexion with the intellectual qualities of the author of *Caleb Williams*, and a host of novels, as well as of the *Political Justice*, of the *Life of Chaucer*, and the *History of the Commonwealth*. Such habits are rather the result of a man's temperament, and the manner of life which circumstances have thrown him into, than of his intellectual powers. Profound metaphysicians have been very vivacious talkers, and light and humorous writers very taciturn men. Mr Talfourd finds that Godwin had no imagination, was all abstract reason, and thus accounts for his having no desire to address his fellowmen but through the press. The passage is too long to quote, and would be very tedious. We must leave him in quiet possession of his own theory of the matter.

It was new to us, and may be to our readers, to hear that Godwin supported himself "by a shop in Skinner Street, where, under the auspices of 'Mr J. Godwin & Co.,' the prettiest and wisest books for children issued, which old-fashioned parents presented to their children, without suspecting that the graceful lessons of piety and goodness which charmed away the

selfishness of infancy, were published, and sometimes revised, and now and then written, by a philosopher whom they would scarcely venture to name!" We admire the good sense which induced him to adhere to so humble an occupation, if he found it needful for his support. But what follows is not quite so admirable. He was a great borrower; or, in the phrase of Mr Talfourd, "he met the exigencies of business with the trusting simplicity which marked his course; he asked his friends for aid without scruple, considering that their means were justly the due of one who toiled in thought for their inward life, and had little time to provide for his own outward existence, and took their excuses when offered without doubt or offence." And then the Serjeant proceeds to relate, in a tone of the most touching simplicity, his own personal experience upon this matter. "The very next day after I had been honoured and delighted by an introduction to him at Lamb's chambers, I was made still more proud and happy by his appearance at my own on such an errand, which my poverty, not my will, rendered abortive. After some pleasant chat on indifferent matters, he carelessly observed that he had a little bill for £150 falling due on the morrow, *which he had forgotten till that morning*, and desired the loan of the necessary amount for a few weeks. At first, in eager hopes of being able thus to oblige one whom I regarded with admiration akin to awe, I began to consider whether it was possible for me to raise such a sum; but, alas! a moment's reflection sufficed to convince me that the hope was vain, and I was obliged,

with much confusion, to assure my distinguished visitor how glad I should have been to serve him, but that I was only just starting as a special pleader, was obliged to write for magazines to help me on, and had not such a sum in the world. 'Oh dear!' said the philosopher, 'I thought you were a young gentleman of fortune – don't mention it, don't mention it – I shall do very well elsewhere!' And then, in the most gracious manner, reverted to our former topics, and sat in my small room for half-an-hour, as if to convince me that my want of fortune made no difference in his esteem." How very gracious! The most shameless borrower coming to raise money from a young gentleman of fortune, to meet "a little bill which he had forgotten till that morning," would hardly, on finding his mistake, have made an abrupt departure. He would have coolly beat a retreat, as the philosopher did. We never hear, by the way, that he returned "to my small room" at any other time, for half-an-hour's chat. But how very interesting it is to see the learned Serjeant, whose briefs have made him acquainted with every trick and turn of commercial craft, retaining this sweet and pristine simplicity!

The Serjeant, however, has a style of narrative which, though on the surface it displays the most good-natured simplicity, slyly insinuates to the more intelligent reader that he sees quite as far as another, and is by no means the dupe of his own amiability. Thus, in his description of Coleridge, (which would be too long a subject to enter into minutely,) he has the following passage, (perhaps the best in the description,) which, while it seems to

echo to the full the unstinted applause so common with the admirers of that singular man, gives a quiet intimation to the reader that he was not altogether so blind as some of those admirers. "If his entranced hearers often were unable to perceive the bearings of his argument – too mighty for any grasp but his own – and sometimes reaching beyond his own – they understood 'a *beauty* in the words, if not the words;' and a wisdom and a piety in the illustrations, even when unable to connect them with the idea which he desired to illustrate." Mr Talfourd reveals here, we suspect, the true secret of the charm which Coleridge exercised in conversation. His hearers never seemed to have carried away anything distinct or serviceable from his long discourses. They understood "a beauty in the words, if not the words;" they felt a charm like that of listening to music, and, when the voice ceased, there was perhaps as little distinct impression left, as if it had really been a beautiful symphony they had heard.

There is only one more in this gallery of portraits before which we shall pause, and that only for a moment, to present a last specimen of the critical manner of Mr Talfourd. We are sorry the last should not be the best; and yet, as this sketch is a reprint, in an abridged form, of an essay affixed to the *Literary Remains of Hazlitt*, it may be considered as having received a more than usual share of the author's attention. It is thus that he analyses the mental constitution of one whom he appears to have studied and greatly admired – William Hazlitt. "He had as unquenchable a desire for truth as others have for wealth, or

power, or fame: he pursued it with sturdy singleness of purpose, and enunciated it without favour or fear. But besides that love of truth, that sincerity in pursuing it, and that boldness in telling it, he had also a fervent aspiration after the beautiful, a vivid sense of pleasure, and an *intense consciousness of his own individual being*, which sometimes produced obstacles to the current of speculation, by which it was broken into dazzling eddies, or urged into devious windings. Acute, fervid, vigorous as his mind was, it wanted *the one great central power of imagination, which brings all the other faculties into harmonious action, multiplies them into each other, makes truth visible in the forms of beauty, and substitutes intellectual vision for proof*. Thus in him truth and beauty held divided empire. In him the spirit was willing but the flesh was *strong*, and when these contend it is not difficult to anticipate the result; 'for the power of beauty shall sooner transform honesty from what it is into a bawd, than the person of honesty shall transform beauty into its likeness.' This 'sometime paradox' was vividly exemplified in Hazlitt's personal history, his conversation, and his writings."[3]

Are we to gather from this most singular combination of words, that Hazlitt had a grain too much of sensuality in his composition, which diverted him from the search after truth? The expression, "the flesh was strong," and the quotation so curiously introduced from Shakspeare, seem to point this way. And then, again, are we to understand that this too much of

[3] Vol. ii., p. 157.

sensuality was owing to a want of imagination? – that central power of imagination which is here described in a manner that no system of metaphysics we have studied enables us in the least to comprehend. We know something of Schelling's "intellectual intuition" transcending the ordinary scope of reason. Is this "intellectual vision, which the imagination substitutes for proof," of the same family? But indeed it would be idle insincerity to ask such questions. Sergeant Talfourd knows no more than we do what it means. The simple truth is, that here, as too frequently elsewhere, he aims at a certain subtlety of thought, and falls unfortunately upon no thought whatever – upon mere confusion of thought, which he attempts to hide by a quantity of somewhat faded phrase and rhetorical diction.

If we refer to the original essay itself, we shall not be aiding ourselves or Mr Talfourd. The statement is fuller, and the confusion greater. In one point it relieves us – it relieves us entirely from the necessity of too deeply pondering the philosophic import of any phraseology our critic may adopt, for the phrase is changed merely to please the ear; and what at first has the air of definition proves to be merely a poetic colouring. He thus commences his essay: "As an author, Mr Hazlitt may be contemplated principally in three aspects – as a moral and political reasoner, as an observer of character and manners, and as a critic in literature and painting. It is in the first character only that he should be followed with caution." In the two others he is, of course, to be followed implicitly. Why he was not equally

perfect as a moral and political reasoner, Mr Talfourd proceeds to explain. Mr Hazlitt had "a passionate desire for truth," and also "earnest aspirations for the beautiful." Now, continues our critic, "the vivid sense of beauty may, indeed, have fit home in the breast of the searcher after truth, but then he must also be endowed with the highest of all human faculties – the great mediatory and interfusing power of imagination, which presides supreme over the mind, brings all its powers and impulses into harmonious action, and becomes itself the single organ of all. At its touch, truth becomes visible in the shape of beauty; the fairest of material things become the living symbols of airy thought, and the mind apprehends *the finest affinities of the world of sense and spirit 'in clear dream and solemn vision.'*" This last expression conveys, we presume, all the meaning, or no-meaning, of the phrase afterwards adopted – the "intellectual vision which it substitutes for truth." Both are mere jingle. The rest of the passage is much the same as it stands in the *Final Memorials*. Somehow or other Mr Hazlitt is proved to have been defective as a reasoner, because he wanted imagination! – and imagination was wanted, not to enlarge his experience of mental phenomena, but to step between his love of truth and his sense of beauty. Did he ever divulge this discovery to his friend Hazlitt? – and how did the metaphysician receive it?

To one so generous towards others, it would be ungracious to use hard words. Indeed, to leave before an intelligent reader these specimens of "fine analysis," and "powers of discriminating and

distinguishing," is quite severe enough punishment. We wish we could expunge them, with a host of similar ones, not only from our record, but from the works of the author himself.[4]

It is time that we turn from the biography to the writings of Charles Lamb – to Elia, the gentle humorist. Not that Charles Lamb is exclusively the humorist: far from it. His verse is, at all events, sufficient to demonstrate a poetic sensibility, and his prose writings display a subtlety of analysis and a delicacy of perception which were not always enlisted in the service of mirth, but which were often displayed in some refined criticism, or keen observation upon men and manners. Still it is as a humorist that he has chiefly attracted the attention of the reading public, and obtained his popularity and literary *status*. But the coarser lineaments of the humorist are not to be found in him. His is a gentle, refined, and refining humour, which never trespasses upon delicacy; which does not excite that common and almost brutal laughter, so easily raised at what are called the comic miseries of life – often no comedy to those who have to endure them. It is a humour which generally attains its end by investing what is lowly with an unexpected interest, not by degrading what is noble by allying it with mean and grotesque circumstance, (the miserable art of parody;) it is a humour, in short, which excites our laughter, not by stifling all reflection, but by awakening the mind to new trains of thought, and prompting to odd but

[4] The author of *Ion* ought not to be held in remembrance for any of these prosaic blunders he may have committed.

kindly sympathies. It is a humour which a poet might indulge in, which a very nun might smile at, which a Fenelon would at times prepare himself mildly to admonish, but, on seeing from how clear a spirit it emanated, would, relaxing his brows again, let pass unreproved.

There is a great rage at present for the comic; and, to do justice to our own times, we think it may be said that wit was never more abundant – and certainly the pencil was never used with more genuine humour. But we cannot sympathise with, or much admire, that class of writers who seem to make the comic their exclusive study, who peer into everything merely to find matter of jest in it. Everything is no more comic than everything is solemn, in this mingled world of ours. These men, reversing the puritanical extravagance, would *improve* every incident into the occasion of a laugh. At length one extreme becomes as tedious as the other. We have, if we may trust to advertisements, for we never saw the production itself, a *Comic History of England!* and, amongst other editions of the learned commentator, *A Comic Blackstone!* We shall be threatened some day with a *Comic Encyclopædia*; or we shall have these comic gentry following the track round the whole world which Mrs Sommerville has lately taken, in her charming book on Physical Geography. They will go hopping and grinning after her, peeping down volcanoes, and punning upon coral reefs, and finding laughter in all things in this circumnavigable globe. Well, let them go grinning from pole to pole, and all along the tropics. We can wish them no worse

punishment.

This exclusive cultivation of the comic must sadly depress the organ of veneration, and not at all foster any refined feelings of humanity. To him who is habitually in the mocking vein, it matters little what the subject, or who the sufferer, so that he has his jest. It is marvellous the utter recklessness to human feeling these light laughers attain to. Their seemingly sportive weapon, the "satiric thong" they so gaily use, is in harder hands than could be found anywhere else out of Smithfield. Nor is it quite idle to notice in what a direct barefaced manner these jesters appeal to the coarse untutored malice of our nature. If we were to analyse the jest, we should sometimes find that we had been laughing just as wisely as the little untaught urchin, who cannot hold his sides for "fun," if some infirm old woman, slipping upon the slide he has made, falls down upon the pavement. The jest only lasts while reflection is laid asleep.

In this, as we have already intimated, lies the difference between the crowd of jesters and Charles Lamb. We quit their uproarious laughter for his more quiet and pensive humour with somewhat the same feeling that we leave the noisy, though amusing, highway, for the cool landscape and the soft greensward. We reflect as we smile; the malice of our nature is rather laid to rest than called forth; a kindly and forgiving temper is excited. We rise from his works, if not with any general truth more vividly impressed, yet prepared, by gentle and almost imperceptible touches, to be more social in our companionships,

and warmer in our friendships.

Whether from mental indolence, or from that strong partiality he contracted towards familiar things, he lived, for a man of education and intelligence, in a singularly limited circle of thought. In the stirring times of the first French Revolution, we find him abstracting himself from the great drama before him, to bury himself in the gossip of *Burnet's History*. He writes to Manning – "I am reading *Burnet's own Times*. Quite the prattle of age, and outlived importance… Burnet's good old prattle I can bring present to my mind; I can make the Revolution present to me – the French Revolution, by a converse perversity in my nature, I fling as far *from* me." Science appears never to have interested him, and such topics as political economy may well be supposed to have been quite foreign to his nature. But even as a reader of poetry, his taste, or his partialities in his range of thought, limited him within a narrow circuit. He could make nothing of Goethe's *Faust*; Shelley was an unknown region to him, and the best of his productions never excited his attention. To Byron he was almost equally indifferent. From these he could turn to study George Withers! and find matter for applause in lines which needed, indeed, the recommendation of age to give them the least interest. His personal friendship for Wordsworth and Coleridge led him here out of that circle of old writers he delighted to dwell amongst; otherwise, we verily believe, he would have deserted them for Daniell and Quarles. But perhaps, to one of his mental constitution, it required a

certain concentration to bring his powers into play; and we may owe to this exclusiveness of taste the admirable fragments of criticism he has given us on Shakspeare and the elder dramatists.

In forming our opinion, however, of the tastes and acquirements of Lamb, we must not forget that we are dealing with a humorist, and that his testimony against himself cannot be always taken literally. On some occasions we shall find that he amused himself and his friends by a merry vein of self-disparagement; he would delight to exaggerate some deficiency, or perhaps some Cockney taste, in which, perhaps, he differed from others only in his boldness of avowal. He had not, by all accounts, what is called an ear for music; but we are not to put faith in certain witty descriptions he has given of his own obtuseness to all melodious sounds. We find him, in some of his letters, speaking of Braham with all the enthusiasm of a young haunter of operas. "I follow him about," he says, "like a dog." Nothing has given more scandal to some of the gentle admirers of Lamb, than to find him boldly avowing his preference of Fleet Street to the mountains of Cumberland. He claimed no love for the picturesque. Shops, and the throng of men, were not to be deserted for lakes and waterfalls. It was his to live in London, and, as a place to *live in*, there was no peculiarity of taste in preferring it to Cumberland; but when he really paid his visit to Coleridge at Keswick, he felt the charm fully as much as tourists who are accustomed to dwell, rather too loudly, upon their raptures. The letters he wrote, after this visit, from some

of which we will quote, if our space permits us, describe very naturally, unaffectedly, and vividly, the impressions which are produced on a first acquaintance with mountainous scenery.

Indeed we may remark, that no man can properly enter into the character or the writings of a humorist, who is not prepared both to permit and to understand certain little departures from truth. We mean, that playing with the subject where our *convictions* are not intended to be seriously affected. Those who must see everything as true or false, and immediately approve or reject accordingly, who know nothing of that *punctum indifferens* on which the humorist, for a moment, takes his stand, had better leave him and his writings entirely alone. "I like a smuggler," says Charles Lamb, in one of his essays. Do you, thereupon, gravely object that a smuggler, living in constant violation of the laws of the land, ought by no means to be an object of partiality with any respectable order-loving gentleman? Or do you nod assent and acquiesce in this approbation of the smuggler? You do neither one nor the other. You smile and read on. You know very well that Lamb has no design upon your serious convictions, has no wish whatever that *you* should like a smuggler; he merely gives expression to a partiality of his own, unreasonable if you will, but arising from certain elements in the smuggler's character, which just then are uppermost in his mind. A great deal of the art and tact of the humorist lies in bringing out little truths, and making them stand in the foreground, where greater truths usually take up their position. Thus, in one of Lamb's papers, he

would prove that a convalescent was in a less enviable condition than a man downright ill. This is done by heightening the effect of a subordinate set of circumstances, and losing sight of facts of greater importance. No error of judgment can really be introduced by this sportive ratiocination, this mock logic, while it perhaps may be the means of disclosing many ingenious and subtle observations, to which, afterwards, you may, if you will, assign their just relative importance.

It would be a work of supererogation, even if space allowed us, to go critically over the whole writings of Lamb – his poems, his essays, and his letters. It is the last alone that we shall venture to pause upon, or from which we may hope to make any extract not already familiar to the reader. His poetry, indeed, cannot claim much critical attention. It is possible, here and there, to find an elegant verse, or a beautiful expression; there is a gentle, amiable, pleasing tone throughout it; but, upon the whole, it is without force, has nothing to recommend it of deep thought or strong passion. His tragedy of *John Woodville* is a tame imitation of the manner of the old dramatists – of their manner when engaged in their subordinate and preparatory scenes. For there is no attempt at tragic passion. We read the piece asking ourselves when the play is to begin, and while still asking the question, find ourselves brought to its conclusion. If the poems are read by few, the *Essays of Elia* have been perused by all. Who is not familiar with what is now a historic fact – the discovery of roast pig in China? This, and many other touches of humour, it would be useless here to

repeat. His letters, as being latest published, seem alone to call for any especial observations, and from these we shall cull a few extracts to enliven our own critical labours.

What first strikes a reader, on the perusal of the letters, is their remarkable similarity in style to the essays. Some of them, indeed, were afterwards converted into essays, and that more by adding to them than altering their structure. That style, which at first seems extremely artificial, was, in fact, natural in Lamb. He had formed for himself a manner, chiefly by the study of our classical essayists, and of still older writers, from which it would have been an effort in him to depart. With whatever ease, therefore, or rapidity, he may have written his letters, it was impossible that they should bear the impress of freedom. His style was essentially a lettered style, partaking little of the conversational tone of his own day. They could obtain the case of finished compositions, not of genuine letters. For this, if for no other reason, they can never be brought into comparison with those charming spontaneous effusions of humour which flowed from Cowper, in his letters to his old friend Hill, and his cousin, Lady Hesketh. They are charming productions, however, and the best of his letters will take rank, we think, with the best of his essays, in the public estimation.

We must first quote from a letter to Manning, after his visits to the lakes, to rescue his character in the eyes of the lovers of the picturesque from the imputation of being utterly indifferent to the higher beauties of nature.

"Coleridge received us with all the hospitality in the world. He dwells upon a small hill by the side of Keswick, in a comfortable house, quite enveloped on all sides by a net of mountains: great floundering bears and monsters they seemed, all couchant and asleep. We got in in the evening, travelling in a post-chaise from Penrith, in the midst of a gorgeous sunshine, which transmuted all the mountains into colours, purple, &c., &c. We thought we had got into fairyland. But that went off (and it never came again; while we stayed we had no more fine sunsets), and we entered Coleridge's comfortable study just in the dusk, when the mountains were all dark with clouds on their heads. Such an impression I never received from objects of sight before, nor do I suppose that I can ever again. Glorious creatures, fine old fellows – Skiddaw, &c. – I never shall forget ye, how ye lay about that night like an entrenchment – gone to bed, as it seemed for the night, but promising that ye were to be seen in the morning… We have clambered up to the top of Skiddaw; and I have waded up the bed of Lodore. In fine, I have satisfied myself that there is such a thing as tourists call *romantic*, which I very much suspected before; they make such a sputtering about it… Oh! its fine black head, and the bleak air atop of it, with the prospects of mountains about and about, making you giddy. It was a day that will stand out like a mountain, I am sure, in my life."

Of Mr Manning we are told little or nothing, though he seems to have been one of the very dearest friends of Lamb. His best letters are written to Manning – the drollest, and some of the

most affecting. The following was written to dissuade him from some scheme of oriental travel. Manning was, at the time, at Paris: —

"*Feb. 19, 1803.*

> "My Dear Manning, – The general scope of your letter afforded no indications of insanity; but some particular points raised a scruple. For God's sake, don't think any more of 'Independent Tartary.' What are you to do among such Ethiopians? Read Sir John Mandeville's travels to cure you, or come over to England. There is a Tartar-man now exhibiting at Exeter Change. Come and talk with him, and hear what he says first. Indeed, he is no favourable specimen of his countrymen! Some say they are cannibals; and then conceive a Tartar fellow *eating* my friend, and adding the *cool malignity* of mustard and vinegar! I am afraid 'tis the reading of Chaucer has misled you; his foolish stories about Cambuscan, and the ring and the horse of brass. Believe me, there are no such things. These are all tales – a horse of brass never flew, and a king's daughter never talked with birds. The Tartars really are a cold, insipid, smoutchy set. You'll be sadly moped (if you are not eaten) amongst them. Pray try and cure yourself. Shave yourself oftener. Eat no saffron; for saffron eaters contract a terrible Tartar-like yellow. Shave *the upper lip*. Go about like a European. Read no books of voyages, (they are nothing but lies;) only now and then a romance, to keep the fancy *under*. Above all, don't go to any sights of *wild beasts. That has been your ruin.*"

And when Manning really departed on his voyage to China, he writes to him in the following mingled strains of humour and of feeling. Being obliged to omit a great deal, it would only be unsightly to mark every instance where a sentence has been dropt. The italics, we must remark, are not ours. If Lamb's, they show how naturally, even in writing to his most intimate friend, he fell into the feelings of the author: —

"*May 10, 1806.*

> "… Be sure, if you see any of those people whose heads do grow beneath their shoulders, that you make a draught of them. It will be very curious. Oh! Manning, I am serious to sinking almost, when I think that all those evenings which you have made so pleasant are gone, perhaps for ever. Four years, you talk of, may be ten – and you may come back and find such alterations! Some circumstance may grow up to you or to me, that may be a bar to the return of any such intimacy. I dare say all this is hum! and that all will come back; but, indeed, we die many deaths before we die, and I am almost sick to think that such a hold I had of you is gone."

"*Dec. 5, 1806.*

> "Manning, your letter dated Hottentots, August the – what was it? came to hand. I can scarce hope that mine will have the same luck. China – Canton – bless us! how it strains the imagination, and makes it ache. It will be a point of conscience to send you none but bran-new news (the latest edition), which will but grow the better, like oranges, for

a sea voyage. Oh that you should be so many hemispheres off – if I speak incorrectly you can correct me – why, the simplest death or marriage that takes place here must be important to you as news in the old Bastile."

He then tells him of the acceptance of his farce —*Mr H.*; which farce, by the way, was produced, and failed, Lamb turning against his own production, and joining the audience in hissing it off the stage. It certainly deserved its fate.

"Now, you'd like to know the subject. The title is, 'Mr H.' No more; how simple, how taking! A great H sprawling over the play-bill, and attracting eyes at every corner. The story is, a coxcomb appearing at Bath, vastly rich – all the ladies dying for him – all bursting to know who he is; but he goes by no other name than Mr H. – a curiosity like that of the dames of Strasburg about the man with the great nose. But I won't tell you any more about it. Yes, I will; but I can't give you any idea how I have done it. I'll just tell you that, after much vehement admiration, when his true name comes out, 'Hogsflesh,' all the women shun him, avoid him, and not one can be found to change her name for him; that's the idea – how flat it is here – but how whimsical in the farce! And only think how hard upon me it is, that the ship is despatched to-morrow, and my triumph cannot be ascertained till the Wednesday after. But all China will ring of it by-and-by. Do you find, in all this stuff I have written, anything like those feelings which one should send my old adventuring friend that is gone to wander among Tartars, and may never come again? I don't; but your going away, and all about you, is

a threadbare topic. I have worn it out with thinking. It has come to me when I have been dull with anything, till my sadness has seemed more to have come from it than to have introduced it. I want you, you don't know how much; but if I had you here, in my European garret, we should but talk over such stuff as I have written.

"Good Heavens! what a bit only I've got left! How shall I squeeze all I know into this morsel! Coleridge is come home, and is going to turn lecturer on taste at the Royal Institution. How the paper grows less and less! In less than two minutes I shall cease to talk to you, and you may rave to the great Wall of China. – N.B. Is there such a wall? Is it as big as Old London Wall by Bedlam? Have you met with a friend of mine, named Ball, at Canton? If you are acquainted, remember me kindly to him."

But we should be driven into as hard straits as Lamb, at the close of his epistle, if we, should attempt, in the small space that remains to us, to give any fair idea of the various "humours" and interests, of many kinds, of these letters. We pass at once to those that illustrate the last important incident of his life, his retirement from office. It is thus he describes his manumission, and the sort of troubled delight it brought with it, to Wordsworth: —

"*6th April, 1825.*

"Here am I then, after thirty-three years' slavery, sitting in my own room, at eleven o'clock this finest of all April mornings, a freed man, with £441 a-year for the remainder of my life, live I as long as John Dennis, who outlived his

annuity and starved at ninety.

"I came home FOR EVER on Tuesday of last week. The incomprehensibleness of my condition overwhelmed me. It was like passing from life into eternity. Every year to be as long as three; *i. e.*, to have three times as much real time – time that is my own in it! I wandered about thinking I was happy, but feeling I was not. But that tumultuousness is passing off, and I begin to understand the nature of the gift."

And to Bernard Barton he writes:

"My spirits are so tumultuary with the novelty of my recent emancipation, that I have scarce steadiness of hand, much more of mind, to compose a letter. I am free, Bernard Barton – free as air!

'The little bird, that wings the sky,
Knows no such liberty.'

I was set free on Tuesday in last week at four o'clock. I came home for ever!

"I have been describing my feelings, as well as I can, to Wordsworth, and care not to repeat. Take it briefly, that for a few days I was painfully oppressed by so mighty a change, but it is becoming daily more natural to me. I went and sat among them all, at my old thirty-three years' desk yester morning; and deuce take me, if I had not yearnings at leaving all my old pen-and-ink fellows, merry sociable lads, at leaving them in the lurch – fag, fag, fag! The comparison

of my own superior felicity gave me anything but pleasure.

"B. B., I would not serve another seven years for seven hundred thousand pounds! I have got £440 net for life, with a provision for Mary if she survives me. I will live another fifty years."

But to live without any steady compulsory occupation requires an apprenticeship as much as any other mode of life. An idle man ought to be born and bred to the profession. With Lamb, literature could be nothing but an amusement, and for a mere amusement literature is far too laborious. It cannot, indeed, serve long as an amusement except when it is adopted also as a labour. He was destined, therefore, to make the humiliating discovery, which so many have made before him, that one may have too much time, as well as too little, at one's own disposal. Writing to the same Bernard Barton, a year or two afterwards, he says: —

> "What I can do, and over-do, is to walk; but deadly long are the days, these summer all-day days, with but a half-hour's candle-light and no fire-light. I do not write, tell your kind inquisitive Eliza, and can hardly read. 'Tis cold work authorship, without something to puff one into fashion… I assure you *no work* is worse than *over-work*. The mind preys on itself, the most unwholesome food. I bragged, formerly, that I could not have too much time. I have a surfeit; with few years to come, the days are wearisome. But weariness is not eternal. Something will shine out to take the load off that crushes me, which is at present intolerable. I have killed an hour or two in this poor scrawl. Well; I shall write merrier

anon. 'Tis the present copy of my countenance I send, and to complain is a little to alleviate."

He had taken a house at Enfield, but the cares of housekeeping were found to be burdensome to Miss Lamb, and they took up their abode as boarders in the house of a neighbour. To this circumstance he alludes in the following extract from a letter to Wordsworth, which is the last we shall make, and with which we shall bid farewell to our subject. It will be found to be not the least remarkable amongst the letters of Lamb, and contains one passage, we think, the boldest piece of extravagance that ever humorist ventured upon with success. It just escapes! – and, indeed, it rather takes away our breath at its boldness than prompts to merriment.

"*January 2, 1831.*

"And is it a year since we parted from you at the steps of Edmonton stage? There are not now the years that there used to be. The tale of the dwindled age of men, reported of successional mankind, is true of the same man only. We do not live a year in a year now. 'Tis a *punctum stans*. The seasons pass with indifference. Spring cheers not, nor winter heightens our gloom; autumn hath foregone its moralities. Let the sullen nothing pass. Suffice it, that after sad spirits, prolonged through many of its months, we have cast our skins; have taken a farewell of the pompous, troublesome trifle, called housekeeping, and are settled down into poor boarders and lodgers at next door, the Baucis and Baucida of dull Enfield. Here we

have nothing to do with our victuals but to eat them; with the garden but to see it grow; with the tax-gatherer but to hear him knock; with the maid but to hear her scolded. Scot and lot, butcher, baker, are things unknown to us, save as spectators of the pageant. We are fed we know not how; quieted – confiding ravens. Yet in the self-condemned obliviousness, in the stagnation, some molesting yearnings of life, not quite killed, rise, prompting me that there was a London, and that I was of that old Jerusalem. In dreams I am in Fleet Market, but I wake and cry to sleep again. I die hard, a stubborn Eloisa in this detestable Paraclete. What have I gained by health? Intolerable dulness. What by early hours and moderate meals? A total blank. Oh! let no native Londoner imagine that health, and rest, and innocent occupation, interchange of converse sweet, and recreative study, can make the country anything better than altogether odious and detestable. *A garden was the primitive prison, till man, with Promethean felicity and boldness, luckily sinned himself out of it.*"

Any further summary than what we have already given, of the literary character of Lamb, would be only tedious. He is one who will be generally *liked*, who with a smaller class will be greatly admired, and who will never excite hostile criticism, unless his injudicious friends shall elevate him to a higher pedestal than is due to him, or than he is manifestly fit to occupy. Such is the cold and calm verdict with which criticism must dismiss him. But those who have thoroughly enjoyed the essays of Elia and the letters of Lamb, will feel a warmer, a more partial affection than

Criticism knows well how to express: she becomes somewhat impatient of her own enforced gravity; she would willingly throw away those scales with which, like Justice, we suppose, she is symbolically supplied, and, embracing the man as he is, laugh and be pleased with the rest of the world, without further thought of the matter.

THE CAXTONS. – PART XV

CHAPTER LXXXIV

"Please, sir, be this note for you?" asked the waiter.

"For me – yes; it is my name."

I did not recognise the handwriting, and yet the note was from one whose writing I had often seen. But formerly the writing was cramped, stiff, perpendicular, (a feigned hand, though I guessed not it was feigned;) now it was hasty, irregular, impatient – scarce a letter formed, scarce a word that seemed finished – and yet strangely legible withal, as the handwriting of a bold man almost always is. I opened the note listlessly, and read —

"I have watched for you all the morning. I saw her go. Well! – I did not throw myself under the hoofs of the horses. I write this in a public-house, not far. Will you follow the bearer, and see once again the outcast whom all the rest of the world will shun?"

Though I did not recognise the hand, there could be no doubt who was the writer.

"The boy wants to know if there's an answer," said the waiter.

I nodded, took up my hat, and left the room. A ragged boy was standing in the yard, and scarcely six words passed between us, before I was following him through a narrow lane that faced

the inn, and terminated in a turnstile. Here the boy paused, and, making me a sign to go on, went back his way whistling. I passed the turnstile, and found myself in a green field, with a row of stunted willows hanging over a narrow rill. I looked round, and saw Vivian (as I intend still to call him) half kneeling, and seemingly intent upon some object in the grass.

My eye followed his mechanically. A young unfledged bird, that had left the nest too soon, stood, all still and alone, on the bare short sward – its beak open as for food, its gaze fixed on us with a wistful stare. Methought there was something in the forlorn bird that softened me more to the forlorner youth, of whom it seemed a type.

"Now," said Vivian, speaking half to himself, half to me, "did the bird fall from the nest, or leave the nest at its own wild whim? The parent does not protect it. Mind, I say not it is the parent's fault – perhaps the fault is all with the wanderer. But, look you, though the parent is not here, the foe is! – yonder, see!"

And the young man pointed to a large brindled cat, that, kept back from its prey by our unwelcome neighbourhood, still remained watchful, a few paces off, stirring its tail gently backwards and forwards, and with that stealthy look in its round eyes, dulled by the sun – half fierce, half frightened – which belongs to its tribe, when man comes between the devourer and the victim.

"I do see," said I, "but a passing footstep has saved the bird!"

"Stop!" said Vivian, laying my hand on his own, and with his

old bitter smile on his lip – "stop! do you think it mercy to save the bird? What from? and what for? From a natural enemy – from a short pang and a quick death? Fie! – is not that better than slow starvation? or, if you take more heed of it, than the prison-bars of a cage? You cannot restore the nest, you cannot recall the parent. Be wiser in your mercy: leave the bird to its gentlest fate!"

I looked hard on Vivian; the lip had lost the bitter smile. He rose and turned away. I sought to take up the poor bird, but it did not know its friends, and ran from me, chirping piteously – ran towards the very jaws of the grim enemy. I was only just in time to scare away the beast, which sprang up a tree, and glared down through the hanging boughs. Then I followed the bird, and, as I followed, I heard, not knowing, at first whence the sound came, a short, quick, tremulous note. Was it near? was it far? – from the earth? in the sky? Poor parent-bird! – like parent-love, it seemed now far and now near; now on earth, now in sky!

And at last, quick and sudden, as if born of the space, lo! the little wings hovered over me!

The young bird halted, and I also. "Come," said I, "ye have found each other at last – settle it between you!"

I went back to the outcast.

CHAPTER LXXXV

Pisistratus. – How came you to know we had stayed in the town?

Vivian. – Do you think I could remain where you left me? I wandered out – wandered hither. Passing at dawn through yon streets, I saw the ostlers loitering by the gates of the yard, overheard them talk, and so knew you were all at the inn – all! (*He sighed heavily.*)

Pisistratus. – Your poor father is very ill! O cousin, how could you fling from you so much love!

Vivian. – Love! – his! – my father's!

Pisistratus. – Do you really not believe, then, that your father loved you?

Vivian. – If I had believed it, I had never left him! All the gold of the Indies had never bribed me to leave my mother!

Pisistratus. – This is indeed a strange misconception of yours. If we can remove it, all may be well yet. Need there now be any secrets between us? (*persuasively.*) Sit down, and tell me all, cousin.

After some hesitation, Vivian complied; and by the clearing of his brow, and the very tone of his voice, I felt sure that he was no longer seeking to disguise the truth. But, as I afterwards learned the father's tale as well as now the son's, so, instead of repeating Vivian's words, which – not by design, but by the twist of a mind habitually wrong – distorted the facts, I will state what appears to me the real case, as between the parties so unhappily opposed. Reader, pardon me if the recital be tedious. And if thou thinkest that I bear not hard enough on the erring hero of the story, remember that he who recites judges as Austin's son must

judge of Roland's.

CHAPTER LXXXVI

Vivian.

AT THE ENTRANCE OF LIFE SITS – THE MOTHER.

It was during the war in Spain that a severe wound, and the fever which ensued, detained Roland at the house of a Spanish widow. His hostess had once been rich; but her fortune had been ruined in the general calamities of the country. She had an only daughter, who assisted to nurse and tend the wounded Englishman; and when the time approached for Roland's departure, the frank grief of the young Ramouna betrayed the impression that the guest had made upon her affections. Much of gratitude, and something, it might be, of an exquisite sense of honour, aided, in Roland's breast, the charm naturally produced by the beauty of his young nurse, and the knightly compassion he felt for her ruined fortunes and desolate condition.

In one of those hasty impulses common to a generous nature – and which too often fatally vindicate the rank of Prudence amidst the tutelary Powers of Life – Roland committed the error of marriage with a girl of whose connexions he knew nothing, and of whose nature little more than its warm spontaneous susceptibility. In a few days subsequent to these rash nuptials, Roland rejoined the march of the army; nor was he able to return

to Spain till after the crowning victory of Waterloo.

Maimed by the loss of a limb, and with the scars of many a noble wound still fresh, Roland then hastened to a home the dreams of which had soothed the bed of pain, and now replaced the earlier visions of renown. During his absence a son had been born to him – a son whom he might rear to take the place he had left in his country's service; to renew, in some future fields, a career that had failed the romance of his own antique and chivalrous ambition. As soon as that news had reached him, his care had been to provide an English nurse for the infant – so that, with the first sounds of the mother's endearments, the child might yet hear a voice from the father's land. A female relation of Bolt's had settled in Spain, and was induced to undertake this duty. Natural as this appointment was to a man so devotedly English, it displeased his wild and passionate Ramouna. She had that mother's jealousy, strongest in minds uneducated; she had also that peculiar pride which belongs to her country-people, of every rank and condition; the jealousy and the pride were both wounded by the sight of the English nurse at the child's cradle.

That Roland, on regaining his Spanish hearth, should be disappointed in his expectations of the happiness awaiting him there, was the inevitable condition of such a marriage; since, not the less for his military bluntness, Roland had that refinement of feeling, perhaps over-fastidious, which belongs to all natures essentially poetic; and as the first illusions of love died away, there could have been little indeed congenial to his stately temper

in one divided from him by an utter absence of education, and by the strong but nameless distinctions of national views and manners. The disappointment probably, however, went deeper than that which usually attends an ill-assorted union; for, instead of bringing his wife to his old tower, (an expatriation which she would doubtless have resisted to the utmost,) he accepted, maimed as he was, not very long after his return to Spain, the offer of a military post under Ferdinand. The Cavalier doctrines and intense loyalty of Roland attached him, without reflection, to the service of a throne which the English arms had contributed to establish; while the extreme unpopularity of the Constitutional Party in Spain, and the stigma of irreligion fixed to it by the priests, aided to foster Roland's belief that he was supporting a beloved king against the professors of those revolutionary and Jacobinical doctrines, which to him were the very atheism of politics. The experience of a few years in the service of a bigot so contemptible as Ferdinand, whose highest object of patriotism was the restoration of the Inquisition, added another disappointment to those which had already embittered the life of a man who had seen in the grand hero of Cervantes no follies to satirise, but high virtues to imitate. Poor Quixote himself – he came mournfully back to his La Mancha, with no other reward for his knight-errantry than a decoration which he disdained to place beside his simple Waterloo medal, and a grade for which he would have blushed to resign his more modest, but more honourable English dignity.

But, still weaving hopes, the sanguine man returned to his Penates. His child now had grown from infancy into boyhood – the child would pass naturally into his care. Delightful occupation! – At the thought, Home smiled again.

Now, behold the most pernicious circumstance in this ill-omened connexion.

The father of Ramouna had been one of that strange and mysterious race which presents in Spain so many features distinct from the characteristics of its kindred tribes in more civilised lands. The Gitáno, or gipsy of Spain, is not the mere vagrant we see on our commons and roadsides. Retaining, indeed, much of his lawless principles and predatory inclinations, he lives often in towns, exercises various callings, and not unfrequently becomes rich. A wealthy Gitáno had married a Spanish woman;[5] Roland's wife had been the offspring of this marriage. The Gitáno had died while Ramouna was yet extremely young, and her childhood had been free from the influences of her paternal kindred. But, though her mother, retaining her own religion, had brought up Ramouna in the same faith, pure from the godless creed of the Gitáno – and, at her husband's death, had separated herself wholly from his tribe – still she had lost caste with her own kin and people. And while struggling to regain it, the fortune, which made her sole chance of success in that attempt, was swept away, so that she had remained apart and solitary, and

[5] A Spaniard very rarely indeed marries a Gitána or female gipsy. But occasionally (observes Mr Borrow) a wealthy Gitáno marries a Spanish female.

could bring no friends to cheer the solitude of Ramouna during Roland's absence. But, while my uncle was still in the service of Ferdinand, the widow died; and then the only relatives who came round Ramouna were her father's kindred. They had not ventured to claim affinity while her mother lived; and they did so now, by attentions and caresses to her son. This opened to them at once Ramouna's heart and doors. Meanwhile, the English nurse – who, in spite of all that could render her abode odious to her, had, from strong love to her charge, stoutly maintained her post – died, a few weeks after Ramouna's mother, and no healthful influence remained to counteract those baneful ones to which the heir of the honest old Caxtons was subjected. But Roland returned home in a humour to be pleased with all things. Joyously he clasped his wife to his breast, and thought, with self-reproach, that he had forborne too little, and exacted too much – he would be wiser now. Delightedly he acknowledged the beauty, the intelligence, and manly bearing of the boy, who played with his sword-knot, and ran off with his pistols as a prize.

The news of the Englishman's arrival at first kept the lawless kinsfolk from the house; but they were fond of the boy, and the boy of them, and interviews between him and these wild comrades, if stolen, were not less frequent. Gradually Roland's eyes became opened. As, in habitual intercourse, the boy abandoned the reserve which awe and cunning at first imposed, Roland was inexpressibly shocked at the bold principles his son affected, and at his utter incapacity even to

comprehend that plain honesty and that frank honour which, to the English soldier, seemed ideas innate and heaven-planted. Soon afterwards, Roland found that a system of plunder was carried on in his household, and tracked it to the connivance of the wife and the agency of the son, for the benefit of lazy bravos and dissolute vagrants. A more patient man than Roland might well have been exasperated – a more wary man confounded, by this discovery. He took the natural step – perhaps insisting on it too summarily – perhaps not allowing enough for the uncultured mind and lively passions of his wife: he ordered her instantly to prepare to accompany him from the place, and to give up all communication with her kindred.

A vehement refusal ensued; but Roland was not a man to give up such a point, and at length a false submission, and a feigned repentance soothed his resentment and obtained his pardon. They moved several miles from the place; but where they moved, there, some at least, and those the worst, of the baleful brood, stealthily followed. Whatever Ramouna's earlier love for Roland had been, it had evidently long ceased in the thorough want of sympathy between them, and in that absence which, if it renews a strong affection, destroys an affection already weakened. But the mother and son adored each other with all the strength of their strong, wild natures. Even under ordinary circumstances, the father's influence over a boy yet in childhood is exerted in vain, if the mother lend herself to baffle it. And in this miserable position, what chance had the blunt, stern, honest

Roland (separated from his son during the most ductile years of infancy) against the ascendency of a mother who humoured all the faults, and gratified all the wishes, of her darling?

In his despair, Roland let fall the threat that, if thus thwarted, it would become his duty to withdraw his son from the mother. This threat instantly hardened both hearts against him. The wife represented Roland to the boy as a tyrant, as an enemy – as one who had destroyed all the happiness they had before enjoyed in each other – as one whose severity showed that he hated his own child; and the boy believed her. In his own house a firm union was formed against Roland, and protected by the cunning which is the force of the weak against the strong.

In spite of all, Roland could never forget the tenderness with which the young nurse had watched over the wounded man, nor the love – genuine for the hour, though not drawn from the feelings which withstand the wear and tear of life – that lips so beautiful had pledged him in the bygone days. These thoughts must have come perpetually between his feelings and his judgment, to embitter still more his position – to harass still more his heart. And if, by the strength of that sense of duty which made the force of his character, he could have strung himself to the fulfilment of the threat, humanity, at all events, compelled him to delay it – his wife promised to be again a mother. Blanche was born. How could he take the infant from the mother's breast, or abandon the daughter to the fatal influences from which only, by so violent an effort, he could free the son?

No wonder, poor Roland! that those deep furrows contracted thy bold front, and thy hair grew gray before its time!

Fortunately, perhaps, for all parties, Roland's wife died while Blanche was still an infant. She was taken ill of a fever – she died delirious, clasping her boy to her breast, and praying the saints to protect him from his cruel father. How often that deathbed haunted the son, and justified his belief that there was no parent's love in the heart which was now his sole shelter from the world, and the "pelting of its pitiless rain." Again I say, poor Roland! – for I know that, in that harsh, unloving disrupture of such solemn ties, thy large generous heart forgot its wrongs; again didst thou see tender eyes bending over the wounded stranger – again hear low murmurs breathe the warm weakness which the women of the south deem it no shame to own. And now did it all end in those ravings of hate, and in that glazing gaze of terror!

CHAPTER LXXXVII

THE PRECEPTOR.

Roland removed to France, and fixed his abode in the environs of Paris. He placed Blanche at a convent in the immediate neighbourhood, going to see her daily, and gave himself up to the education of his son. The boy was apt to learn; but to unlearn was here the arduous task – and for that task it would have needed either the passionless experience, the exquisite forbearance of a practised teacher, or the love, and confidence, and yielding

heart of a believing pupil. Roland felt that he was not the man to be the teacher, and that his son's heart remained obstinately closed to him. He looked round, and found at the other side of Paris what seemed a suitable preceptor – a young Frenchman of some distinction in letters, more especially in science, with all a Frenchman's eloquence of talk, full of high-sounding sentiments, that pleased the romantic enthusiasm of the Captain; so Roland, with sanguine hopes, confided his son to this man's care. The boy's natural quickness mastered readily all that pleased his taste; he learned to speak and write French with rare felicity and precision. His tenacious memory, and those flexile organs in which the talent for languages is placed, served, with the help of an English master, to revive his earlier knowledge of his father's tongue, and to enable him to speak it with fluent correctness – though there was always in his accent something which had struck me as strange; but, not suspecting it to be foreign, I had thought it a theatrical affectation. He did not go far into science – little farther, perhaps, than a smattering of French mathematics; but he acquired a remarkable facility and promptitude in calculation. He devoured eagerly the light reading thrown in his way, and picked up thence that kind of knowledge which novels and plays afford, for good or evil, according as the novel or the play elevates the understanding and ennobles the passions, or merely corrupts the fancy, and lowers the standard of human nature. But of all that Roland desired him to be taught, the son remained as ignorant as before. Among the other misfortunes

of this ominous marriage, Roland's wife had possessed all the superstitions of a Roman Catholic Spaniard, and with these the boy had unconsciously intermingled doctrines far more dreary, imbibed from the dark paganism of the Gitános.

Roland had sought a Protestant for his son's tutor. The preceptor was nominally a Protestant – a biting derider of all superstitions indeed! He was such a Protestant as some defender of Voltaire's religion says the Great Wit would have been had he lived in a Protestant country. The Frenchman laughed the boy out of his superstitions, to leave behind them the sneering scepticism of the *Encyclopédie*, without those redeeming ethics on which all sects of philosophy are agreed, but which, unhappily, it requires a philosopher to comprehend.

This preceptor was doubtless not aware of the mischief he was doing; and for the rest, he taught his pupil after his own system – a mild and plausible one, very much like the system we at home are recommended to adopt – "Teach the understanding, all else will follow;" "Learn to read *something*, and it will all come right;" "Follow the bias of the pupil's mind; thus you develop genius, not thwart it." Mind, Understanding, Genius – fine things! But, to educate the whole man, you must educate something more than these. Not for want of mind, understanding, genius, have Borgias and Neros left their names as monuments of horror to mankind. Where, in all this teaching, was one lesson to warm the heart and guide the soul?

O mother mine! that the boy had stood by thy knee, and heard

from thy lips, why life was given us, in what life shall end, and how heaven stands open to us night and day! O father mine! that thou hadst been his preceptor, not in book-learning, but the heart's simple wisdom! Oh! that he had learned from thee, in parables closed with practice, the happiness of self-sacrifice, and how "good deeds should repair the bad!"

It was the misfortune of this boy, with his daring and his beauty, that there was in his exterior and his manner that which attracted indulgent interest, and a sort of compassionate admiration. The Frenchman liked him – believed his story – thought him ill-treated by that hard-visaged English soldier. All English people were so disagreeable, particularly English soldiers; and the Captain once mortally offended the Frenchman, by calling Vilainton *un grand homme*, and denying, with brutal indignation, that the English had poisoned Napoleon! So, instead of teaching the son to love and revere his father, the Frenchman shrugged his shoulders when the boy broke into some unfilial complaint, and at most said, "*Mais, cher enfant, ton père est Anglais – c'est tout dire*." Meanwhile, as the child sprang rapidly into precocious youth, he was permitted a liberty in his hours of leisure, of which he availed himself with all the zest of his early habits and adventurous temper. He formed acquaintances among the loose young haunters of cafés, and spendthrifts of that capital – the wits! He became an excellent swordsman and pistol-shot – adroit in all games in which skill helps fortune. He learned betimes to furnish himself with money, by the cards and

the billiard-balls.

But, delighted with the easy home he had obtained, he took care to school his features, and smooth his manner, in his father's visits – to make the most of what he had learned of less ignoble knowledge, and, with his characteristic imitativeness, to cite the finest sentiments he had found in his plays and novels. What father is not credulous? Roland believed, and wept tears of joy. And now he thought the time was come to take back the boy – to return with a worthy heir to the old Tower. He thanked and blest the tutor – he took the son. But, under pretence that he had yet some things to master, whether in book knowledge or manly accomplishments, the youth begged his father, at all events, not yet to return to England – to let him attend his tutor daily for some months. Roland consented, moved from his old quarters, and took a lodging for both in the same suburb as that in which the teacher resided. But soon, when they were under one roof, the boy's habitual tastes, and his repugnance to all paternal authority, were betrayed. To do my unhappy cousin justice, (such as that justice is,) though he had the cunning for a short disguise, he had not the hypocrisy to maintain systematic deceit. He could play a part for a while, from an exulting joy in his own address; but he could not wear a mask with the patience of cold-blooded dissimulation. Why enter into painful details, so easily divined by the intelligent reader? The faults of the son were precisely those to which Roland would be least indulgent. To the ordinary scrapes of high-spirited boyhood, no father, I

am sure, would have been more lenient; but to anything that seemed low, petty – that grated on him as gentleman and soldier – there, not for worlds would I have braved the darkness of his frown, and the woe that spoke like scorn in his voice. And when, after all warning and prohibition were in vain, Roland found his son, in the middle of the night, in a resort of gamblers and sharpers, carrying all before him with his cue, in the full flush of triumph, and a great heap of five-franc pieces before him – you may conceive with what wrath the proud, hasty, passionate man, drove out, cane in hand, the obscene associates, flinging after them the son's ill-gotten gains; and with what resentful humiliation the son was compelled to follow the father home. Then Roland took the boy to England, but not to the old Tower; that hearth of his ancestors was still too sacred for the footsteps of the vagrant heir!

CHAPTER LXXXVIII

THE HEARTH WITHOUT TRUST, AND THE WORLD WITHOUT A GUIDE

And then, vainly grasping at every argument his blunt sense could suggest – then talked Roland much and grandly of the duties men owed – even if they threw off all love to their father

– still to their father's name; and then his pride, always so lively, grew irritable and harsh, and seemed, no doubt, to the perverted ears of the son, unlovely and unloving. And that pride, without serving one purpose of good, did yet more mischief; for the youth caught the disease, but in a wrong way. And he said to himself, —

"Ho! then my father is a great man, with all these ancestors and big words! And he has lands and a castle – and yet how miserably we live, and how he stints me! But if he has cause for pride in all these dead men, why, so have I. And are these lodgings, these appurtenances, fit for the 'gentleman' he says I am?"

Even in England, the gipsy blood broke out as before; and the youth found vagrant associates, heaven knows how or where; and strange-looking forms, gaudily shabby, and disreputably smart, were seen lurking in the corner of the street, or peering in at the window, slinking off if they saw Roland – and Roland could not stoop to be a spy. And the son's heart grew harder and harder against his father, and his father's face now never smiled on him. Then bills came in, and duns knocked at the door. Bills and duns to a man who shrunk from the thought of a debt, as an ermine from a spot on its hide! And the son's short answer to remonstrance was, – "Am I not a gentleman? – these are the things gentlemen require." Then perhaps Roland remembered the experiment of his French friend, and left his bureau unlocked, and said, "Ruin me if you will, but no debts. There is money in those drawers – they are unlocked." That trust would for ever have cured of extravagance a youth with a high and delicate sense

of honour: the pupil of the Gitános did not understand the trust; he thought it conveyed a natural though ungracious permission to take out what he wanted – and he took! To Roland this seemed a theft, and a theft of the coarsest kind: but when he so said, the son started indignant, and saw in that which had been so touching an appeal to his honour, but a trap to decoy him into disgrace. In short, neither could understand the other. Roland forbade his son to stir from the house; and the young man the same night let himself out, and stole forth into the wide world, to enjoy or defy it in his own wild way.

It would be tedious to follow him through his various adventures and experiments on fortune, (even if I knew them all, which I do not.) And now, putting altogether aside his right name, which he had voluntarily abandoned, and not embarrassing the reader with the earlier aliases assumed, I shall give to my unfortunate kinsman the name by which I first knew him, and continue to do so, until – heaven grant the time may come! – having first redeemed, he may reclaim, his own. It was in joining a set of strolling players that Vivian became acquainted with Peacock; and that worthy, who had many strings to his bow, soon grew aware of Vivian's extraordinary skill with the cue, and saw therein a better mode of making their joint fortunes than the boards of an itinerant Thespis furnished to either. Vivian listened to him, and it was while their intimacy was most fresh that I met them on the highroad. That chance meeting produced (if I may be allowed to believe his assurance) a strong, and,

for the moment, a salutary effect upon Vivian. The comparative innocence and freshness of a boy's mind were new to him; the elastic healthful spirits with which those gifts were accompanied startled him, by the contrast to his own forced gaiety and secret gloom. And this boy was his own cousin!

Coming afterwards to London, he adventured inquiry at the hotel in the Strand at which I had given my address; learned where we were; and, passing one night in the street, saw my uncle at the window – to recognise and to fly from him. Having then some money at his disposal, he broke off abruptly from the set into which he had been thrown. He resolved to return to France – he would try for a more respectable mode of existence. He had not found happiness in that liberty he had won, nor room for the ambition that began to gnaw him, in those pursuits from which his father had vainly warned him. His most reputable friend was his old tutor; he would go to him. He went; but the tutor was now married, and was himself a father, and that made a wonderful alteration in his practical ethics. It was no longer moral to aid the son in rebellion to his father. Vivian evinced his usual sarcastic haughtiness at the reception he met, and was requested civilly to leave the house. Then again he flung himself on his wits at Paris. But there were plenty of wits there sharper than his own. He got into some quarrel with the police – not indeed for any dishonest practices of his own, but from an unwary acquaintance with others less scrupulous, and deemed it prudent to quit France. Thus had I met him again, forlorn and ragged, in the streets of

London.

Meanwhile Roland, after the first vain search, had yielded to the indignation and disgust that had long rankled within him. His son had thrown off his authority, because it preserved him from dishonour. His ideas of discipline were stern, and patience had been wellnigh crushed out of his heart. He thought he could bear to resign his son to his fate – to disown him, and to say, "I have no more a son." It was in this mood that he had first visited our house. But when, on that memorable night in which he had narrated to his thrilling listeners the dark tale of a fellow-sufferer's woe and crime – betraying in the tale, to my father's quick sympathy, his own sorrow and passion – it did not need much of his gentler brother's subtle art to learn or guess the whole, nor much of Austin's mild persuasion to convince Roland that he had not yet exhausted all efforts to track the wanderer and reclaim the erring child. Then he had gone to London – then he had sought every spot which the outcast would probably haunt – then had he saved and pinched from his own necessities, to have wherewithal to enter theatres and gaming-houses, and fee the agencies of police; then had he seen the form for which he had watched and pined, in the street below his window, and cried in a joyous delusion, "He repents!" One day a letter reached my uncle, through his banker's, from the French tutor, (who knew of no other means of tracing Roland but through the house by which his salary had been paid,) informing him of his son's visit. Roland started instantly for Paris. Arriving there, he could

only learn of his son through the police, and from them only learn that he had been seen in the company of accomplished swindlers, who were already in the hands of justice; but that the youth himself, whom there was nothing to criminate, had been suffered to quit Paris, and had taken, it was supposed, the road to England. Then at last the poor Captain's stout heart gave way. His son the companion of swindlers! – could he be sure that he was not their accomplice? If not yet, how small the step between companionship and participation! He took the child left him still from the convent, returned to England, and arrived there to be seized with fever and delirium – apparently on the same day (or a day before that on which) the son had dropped shelterless and penniless on the stones of London.

CHAPTER LXXXIX

THE ATTEMPT TO BUILD A TEMPLE TO FORTUNE OUT OF THE RUINS OF HOME

"But," said Vivian, pursuing his tale, "but when you came to my aid, not knowing me – when you relieved me – when from your own lips, for the first time, I heard words that praised me, and for qualities that implied I might yet be 'worth much.' – Ah! (he added mournfully,) I remember the very words – a new light

broke upon me – struggling and dim, but light still. The ambition with which I had sought the truckling Frenchman revived, and took worthier and more definite form. I would lift myself above the mire, make a name, rise in life!"

Vivian's head drooped, but he raised it quickly, and laughed – his low mocking laugh. What follows of his tale may be told succinctly. Retaining his bitter feelings towards his father, he resolved to continue his incognito – he gave himself a name likely to mislead conjecture, if I conversed of him to my family, since he knew that Roland was aware that a Colonel Vivian had been afflicted by a runaway son – and, indeed, the talk upon that subject had first put the notion of flight into his own head. He caught at the idea of becoming known to Trevanion; but he saw reasons to forbid his being indebted to me for the introduction – to forbid my knowing where he was: sooner or later, that knowledge could scarcely fail to end in the discovery of his real name. Fortunately, as he deemed, for the plans he began to meditate, we were all leaving London – he should have the stage to himself. And then boldly he resolved upon what he regarded as the master scheme of life – viz., to obtain a small pecuniary independence, and to emancipate himself formally and entirely from his father's control. Aware of poor Roland's chivalrous reverence for his name, firmly persuaded that Roland had no love for the son, but only the dread that the son might disgrace him, he determined to avail himself of his father's prejudices in order to effect his purpose.

He wrote a short letter to Roland, (that letter which had given the poor man so sanguine a joy – that letter after reading which he had said to Blanche, "Pray for me,") stating simply, that he wished to see his father; and naming a tavern in the city for the meeting.

The interview took place. And when Roland, love and forgiveness in his heart – but (who shall blame him?) dignity on his brow, and rebuke in his eye – approached, ready at a word to fling himself on the boy's breast, Vivian, seeing only the outer signs, and interpreting them by his own sentiments – recoiled; folded his arms on his bosom, and said coldly, "Spare me reproach, sir – it is unavailing. I seek you only to propose that you shall save your name, and resign your son."

Then, intent perhaps but to gain his object, the unhappy youth declared his fixed determination never to live with his father, never to acquiesce in his authority, resolutely to pursue his own career, whatever that career might be, explaining none of the circumstances that appeared most in his disfavour – rather, perhaps, thinking that, the worse his father judged of him, the more chance he had to achieve his purpose. "All I ask of you," he said, "is this: Give me the least you can afford to preserve me from the temptation to rob, or the necessity to starve; and I, in my turn, promise never to molest you in life – never to degrade you in my death; whatever my misdeeds, they will never reflect on yourself, for you shall never recognise the misdoer! The name you prize so highly shall be spared." Sickened and

revolted, Roland attempted no argument – there was that in the son's cold manner which shut out hope, and against which his pride rose indignant. A meeker man might have remonstrated, implored, and wept – that was not in Roland's nature. He had but the choice of three evils, to say to his son: "Fool, I command thee to follow me;" or say, "Wretch, since thou wouldst cast me off as a stranger, as a stranger I say to thee – Go, starve or rob, as thou wilt!" or lastly, to bow his proud head, stunned by the blow, and say, "Thou refusest me the obedience of the son, thou demandest to be as the dead to me. I can control thee not from vice, I can guide thee not to virtue. Thou wouldst sell me the name I have inherited stainless, and have as stainless borne. Be it so! – Name thy price!"

And something like this last was the father's choice.

He listened, and was long silent; and then he said slowly, "Pause before you decide."

"I have paused long – my decision is made! this is the last time we meet. I see before me now the way to fortune, fairly, honourably; you can aid me in it only in the way I have said. Reject me now, and the option may never come again to either!"

And then Roland said to himself, "I have spared and saved for this son; what care I for aught else than enough to live without debt, creep into a corner, and await the grave! And the more I can give, why the better chance that he will abjure the vile associate and the desperate course." And so, out of that small income, Roland surrendered to the rebel child more than the half.

Vivian was not aware of his father's fortune – he did not suppose the sum of two hundred pounds a-year was an allowance so disproportioned to Roland's means – yet when it was named, even he was struck by the generosity of one to whom he himself had given the right to say, "I take thee at thy word; 'just enough not to starve!'"

But then that hateful cynicism which, caught from bad men and evil books, he called "knowledge of the world," made him think, "it is not for me, it is only for his name;" and he said aloud, "I accept these terms, sir; here is the address of a solicitor with whom yours can settle them. Farewell for ever."

At those last words Roland started, and stretched out his arms vaguely like a blind man. But Vivian had already thrown open the window, (the room was on the ground floor) and sprang upon the sill. "Farewell," he repeated: "tell the world I am dead."

He leapt into the street, and the father drew in the outstretched arms, smote his heart, and said – "Well, then, my task in the world of man is over! I will back to the old ruin – the wreck to the wrecks – and the sight of tombs I have at least rescued from dishonour shall comfort me for all!"

CHAPTER XC

THE RESULTS – PERVERTED AMBITION – SELFISH PASSION – THE INTELLECT DISTORTED BY THE CROOKEDNESS OF THE HEART

Vivian's schemes thus prospered. He had an income that permitted him the outward appearances of a gentleman – an independence modest indeed, but independence still. We were all gone from London. One letter to me, with the postmark of the town near which Colonel Vivian lived, sufficed to confirm my belief in his parentage, and in his return to his friends. He then presented himself to Trevanion as the young man whose pen I had employed in the member's service; and knowing that I had never mentioned his name to Trevanion – for without Vivian's permission I should not, considering his apparent trust in me, have deemed myself authorised to do so – he took that of Gower, which he selected haphazard from an old Court Guide, as having the advantage in common with most names borne by the higher nobility of England, viz., of not being confined, as the ancient names of untitled gentlemen usually are, to the members of a single family. And when, with his usual

adaptability and suppleness, he had contrived to lay aside, or smooth over, whatever in his manners would be calculated to displease Trevanion, and had succeeded in exciting the interest which that generous statesman always conceived for ability, he owned candidly, one day, in the presence of Lady Ellinor – for his experience had taught him the comparative ease with which the sympathy of woman is enlisted in anything that appeals to the imagination, or seems out of the ordinary beat of life – that he had reasons for concealing his connexions for the present – that he had cause to believe I suspected what they were, and, from mistaken regard for his welfare, might acquaint his relations with his whereabouts. He therefore begged Trevanion, if the latter had occasion to write to me, not to mention him. This promise Trevanion gave, though reluctantly; for the confidence volunteered to him seemed to exact the promise; but as he detested mystery of all kinds, the avowal might have been fatal to any farther acquaintance; and under auspices so doubtful, there would have been no chance of his obtaining that intimacy in Trevanion's house which he desired to establish, but for an accident which at once opened that house to him almost as a home.

Vivian had always treasured a lock of his mother's hair, cut off on her deathbed; and when he was at his French tutor's, his first pocket-money had been devoted to the purchase of a locket, on which he had caused to be inscribed his own name and his mother's. Through all his wanderings he had worn this relic; and

in the direst pangs of want, no hunger had been keen enough to induce him to part with it. Now, one morning the ribbon that suspended the locket gave way, and his eye resting on the names inscribed on the gold, he thought, in his own vague sense of right, imperfect as it was, that his compact with his father obliged him to have the names erased. He took it to a jeweller in Piccadilly for that purpose, and gave the requisite order, not taking notice of a lady in the further part of the shop. The locket was still on the counter after Vivian had left, when the lady coming forward observed it, and saw the names on the surface. She had been struck by the peculiar tone of the voice, which she had heard before; and that very day Mr Gower received a note from Lady Ellinor Trevanion, requesting to see him. Much wondering, he went. Presenting him with the locket, she said smiling, "There is only one gentleman in the world who calls himself *De* Caxton, unless it be his son. Ah! I see now why you wished to conceal yourself from my friend Pisistratus. But how is this? can you have any difference with your father? Confide in me, or it is my duty to write to him."

Even Vivian's powers of dissimulation abandoned him, thus taken by surprise. He saw no alternative but to trust Lady Ellinor with his secret, and implore her to respect it. And then he spoke bitterly of his father's dislike to him, and his own resolution to prove the injustice of that dislike by the position he would himself establish in the world. At present, his father believed him dead, and perhaps was not ill-pleased to think so. He would not

dispel that belief till he could redeem any boyish errors, and force his family to be proud to acknowledge him.

Though Lady Ellinor was slow to believe that Roland could dislike his son, she could yet readily believe that he was harsh and choleric, with a soldier's high notions of discipline; the young man's story moved her, his determination pleased her own high spirit; – always with a touch of romance in her, and always sympathising with each desire of ambition – she entered into Vivian's aspirations with an alacrity that surprised himself. She was charmed with the idea of ministering to the son's fortunes, and ultimately reconciling him to the father, – through her own agency; – it would atone for any fault of which Roland could accuse herself in the old time.

She undertook to impart the secret to Trevanion, for she would have no secrets from him, and to secure his acquiescence in its concealment from all others.

And here I must a little digress from the chronological course of my explanatory narrative, to inform the reader that, when Lady Ellinor had her interview with Roland, she had been repelled by the sternness of his manner from divulging Vivian's secret. But on her first attempt to sound or conciliate him, she had begun with some eulogies on Trevanion's new friend and assistant, Mr Gower, and had awakened Roland's suspicions of that person's identity with his son – suspicions which had given him a terrible interest in our joint deliverance of Miss Trevanion. But so heroically had the poor soldier sought to resist his own

fears, that on the way he shrank to put to me the questions that might paralyse the energies which, whatever the answer, were then so much needed. "For," said he to my father, "I felt the blood surging to my temples; and if I had said to Pisistratus, 'Describe this man,' and by his description I had recognised my son, and dreaded lest I might be too late to arrest him from so treacherous a crime, my brain would have given way; – and so I did not dare!"

I return to the thread of my story. From the time that Vivian confided in Lady Ellinor, the way was cleared to his most ambitious hopes; and though his acquisitions were not sufficiently scholastic and various to permit Trevanion to select him as a secretary, yet, short of sleeping at the house, he was little less intimate there than I had been.

Among Vivian's schemes of advancement, that of winning the hand and heart of the great heiress had not been one of the least sanguine. This hope was annulled when, not long after his intimacy at her father's house, she became engaged to young Lord Castleton. But he could not see Miss Trevanion with impunity – (alas! who, with a heart yet free, could be insensible to attractions so winning?) He permitted the love – such love as his wild, half-educated, half-savage nature acknowledged – to creep into his soul – to master it; but he felt no hope, cherished no scheme while the young lord lived. With the death of her betrothed, Fanny was free; *then* he began to hope – not yet to scheme. Accidentally he encountered Peacock. Partly from the levity that accompanied a false good-nature that was

constitutional with him, partly from a vague idea that the man might be useful, Vivian established his quondam associate in the service of Trevanion. Peacock soon gained the secret of Vivian's love for Fanny, and, dazzled by the advantages that a marriage with Miss Trevanion would confer on his patron, and might reflect on himself, and delighted at an occasion to exercise his dramatic accomplishments on the stage of real life, he soon practised the lesson that the theatres had taught him – viz: to make a sub-intrigue between maid and valet serve the schemes and insure the success of the lover. If Vivian had some opportunities to imply his admiration, Miss Trevanion gave him none to plead his cause. But the softness of her nature, and that graceful kindness which surrounded her like an atmosphere, emanating unconsciously from a girl's harmless desire to please, tended to deceive him. His own personal gifts were so rare, and, in his wandering life, the effect they had produced had so increased his reliance on them, that he thought he wanted but the fair opportunity to woo in order to win. In this state of mental intoxication, Trevanion, having provided for his Scotch secretary, took him to Lord N – 's. His hostess was one of those middle-aged ladies of fashion, who like to patronise and bring forward young men, accepting gratitude for condescension, as a homage to beauty. She was struck by Vivian's exterior, and that 'picturesque' in look and in manner which belonged to him. Naturally garrulous and indiscreet, she was unreserved to a pupil whom she conceived the whim to

make '*au fait* to society.' Thus she talked to him, among other topics in fashion, of Miss Trevanion, and expressed her belief that the present Lord Castleton had always admired her; but it was only on his accession to the marquisate that he had made up his mind to marry, or, from his knowledge of Lady Ellinor's ambition, thought that the Marquis of Castleton might achieve the prize which would have been refused to Sir Sedley Beaudesert. Then, to corroborate the predictions she hazarded, she repeated, perhaps with exaggeration, some passages from Lord Castleton's replies to her own suggestions on the subject. Vivian's alarm became fatally excited; unregulated passions easily obscured a reason so long perverted, and a conscience so habitually dulled. There is an instinct in all intense affection, (whether it be corrupt or pure,) that usually makes its jealousy prophetic. Thus, from the first, out of all the brilliant idlers round Fanny Trevanion, my jealousy had pre-eminently fastened on Sir Sedley Beaudesert, though, to all seeming, without a cause. From the same instinct, Vivian had conceived the same vague jealousy – a jealousy, in his instance, coupled with a deep dislike to his supposed rival, who had wounded his self-love. For the marquis, though to be haughty or ill-bred was impossible to the blandness of his nature, had never shown to Vivian the genial courtesies he had lavished upon me, and kept politely aloof from his acquaintance – while Vivian's personal vanity had been wounded by that drawing-room effect, which the proverbial winner of all hearts produced without an effort – an effect that

threw into the shade the youth, and the beauty (more striking, but infinitely less prepossessing) of the adventurous rival. Thus animosity to Lord Castleton conspired with Vivian's passion for Fanny, to rouse all that was worst by nature and by rearing, in this audacious and turbulent spirit.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.