

ЭДВАРД БУЛЬВЕР-ЛИТТОН

DEVEREUX — VOLUME 01

Эдвард Бульвер-Литтон

Devereux — Volume 01

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Edward Bulwer-Lytton

Devereux — Volume 01

ADVERTISEMENT TO THE PRESENT EDITION

IN this edition of a work composed in early youth, I have not attempted to remove those faults of construction which may be sufficiently apparent in the plot, but which could not indeed be thoroughly rectified without re-writing the whole work. I can only hope that with the defects of inexperience may be found some of the merits of frank and artless enthusiasm. I have, however, lightened the narrative of certain episodical and irrelevant passages, and relieved the general style of some boyish extravagances of diction. At the time this work was written I was deeply engaged in the study of metaphysics and ethics, and out of that study grew the character of Algernon Mordaunt. He is represented as a type of the Heroism of Christian Philosophy,—a union of love and knowledge placed in the midst of sorrow, and labouring on through the pilgrimage of life, strong in the fortitude that comes from belief in Heaven.

KNEBWORTH, May 3, 1852.

E. B. L.

DEDICATORY EPISTLE

TO

JOHN AULDJO, ESQ., ETC.,

AT NAPLES

LONDON.

MY DEAR AULDJO,—Permit me, as a memento of the pleasant hours we passed together, and the intimacy we formed by the winding shores and the rosy seas of the old Parthenope, to dedicate to you this romance. It was written in perhaps the happiest period of my literary life,—when success began to brighten upon my labours, and it seemed to me a fine thing to make a name. Reputation, like all possessions, fairer in the hope than the reality, shone before me in the gloss of novelty; and I had neither felt the envy it excites, the weariness it occasions, nor (worse than all) that coarse and painful notoriety, that, something between the gossip and the slander, which attends every man whose writings become known,—surrendering the grateful privacies of life to

"The gaudy, babbling, and remorseless day."

In short, yet almost a boy (for, in years at least, I was little more, when "Pelham" and "The Disowned" were conceived and composed), and full of the sanguine arrogance of hope, I pictured to myself far greater triumphs than it will ever be mine to achieve: and never did architect of dreams build his pyramid upon (alas!) a narrower base, or a more crumbling soil! . . . Time cures us effectually of these self-conceits, and brings us, somewhat harshly, from the gay extravagance of confounding the much that we design with the little that we can accomplish.

"The Disowned" and "Devereux" were both completed in retirement, and in the midst of metaphysical studies and investigations, varied and miscellaneous enough, if not very deeply conned. At that time I was indeed engaged in preparing for the press a Philosophical Work which I had afterwards the good sense to postpone to a riper age and a more sobered mind. But the effect of these studies is somewhat prejudicially visible in both the romances I have referred to; and the external and dramatic colourings which belong to fiction are too often forsaken for the inward and subtle analysis of motives, characters, and actions. The workman was not sufficiently master of his art to forbear the vanity of parading the wheels of the mechanism, and was too fond of calling attention to the minute and tedious operations by which the movements were to be performed and the result obtained. I believe that an author is generally pleased with his work less in proportion as it is good, than in proportion as it fulfils the idea with which he commenced it. He is rarely perhaps an accurate judge how far the execution is in itself faulty or meritorious; but he judges with tolerable success how far it accomplishes the end and objects of the conception. He is pleased with his work, in short, according as he can say, "This has expressed what I meant it to convey." But the reader, who is not in the secret of the author's original design, usually views the work through a different medium; and is perhaps in this the wiser critic of the two: for the book that wanders the most from the idea which originated it may often be better than that which is rigidly limited to the unfolding and /denouement/ of a single conception. If we accept this solution, we may be enabled to understand why an author not unfrequently makes favourites of some of his productions most condemned by the public. For my own part, I remember that "Devereux" pleased me better than "Pelham" or "The Disowned," because

the execution more exactly corresponded with the design. It expressed with tolerable fidelity what I meant it to express. That was a happy age, my dear Auldjo, when, on finishing a work, we could feel contented with our labour, and fancy we had done our best! Now, alas I have learned enough of the wonders of the Art to recognize all the deficiencies of the Disciple; and to know that no author worth the reading can ever in one single work do half of which he is capable.

What man ever wrote anything really good who did not feel that he had the ability to write something better? Writing, after all, is a cold and a coarse interpreter of thought. How much of the imagination, how much of the intellect, evaporates and is lost while we seek to embody it in words! Man made language and God the genius. Nothing short of an eternity could enable men who imagine, think, and feel, to express all they have imagined, thought, and felt. Immortality, the spiritual desire, is the intellectual /necessity/.

In "Devereux" I wished to portray a man flourishing in the last century with the train of mind and sentiment peculiar to the present; describing a life, and not its dramatic epitome, the historical characters introduced are not closely woven with the main plot, like those in the fictions of Sir Walter Scott, but are rather, like the narrative romances of an earlier school, designed to relieve the predominant interest, and give a greater air of truth and actuality to the supposed memoir. It is a fiction which deals less with the Picturesque than the Real. Of the principal character thus introduced (the celebrated and graceful, but charlatanic, Bolingbroke) I still think that my sketch, upon the whole, is substantially just. We must not judge of the politicians of one age by the lights of another. Happily we now demand in a statesman a desire for other aims than his own advancement; but at that period ambition was almost universally selfish—the Statesman was yet a Courtier—a man whose very destiny it was to intrigue, to plot, to glitter, to deceive. It is in proportion as politics have ceased to be a secret science, in proportion as courts are less to be flattered and tools to be managed, that politicians have become useful and honest men; and the statesman now directs a people, where once he outwitted an ante-chamber. Compare Bolingbroke—not with the men and by the rules of this day, but with the men and by the rules of the last. He will lose nothing in comparison with a Walpole, with a Marlborough on the one side,—with an Oxford or a Swift upon the other.

And now, my dear Auldjo, you have had enough of my egotisms. As our works grow up,—like old parents, we grow garrulous, and love to recur to the happier days of their childhood; we talk over the pleasant pain they cost us in their rearing, and memory renews the season of dreams and hopes; we speak of their faults as of things past, of their merits as of things enduring: we are proud to see them still living, and, after many a harsh ordeal and rude assault, keeping a certain station in the world; we hoped perhaps something better for them in their cradle, but as it is we have good cause to be contented. You, a fellow-author, and one whose spirited and charming sketches embody so much of personal adventure, and therefore so much connect themselves with associations of real life as well as of the studious closet; /you/ know, and must feel with me, that these our books are a part of us, bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh! They treasure up the thoughts which stirred us, the affections which warmed us, years ago; they are the mirrors of how much of what we were! To the world they are but as a certain number of pages,—good or bad,—tedious or diverting; but to ourselves, the authors, they are as marks in the wild maze of life by which we can retrace our steps, and be with our youth again. What would I not give to feel as I felt, to hope as I hoped, to believe as I believed, when this work was first launched upon the world! But time gives while it takes away; and amongst its recompenses for many losses are the memories I referred to in commencing this letter, and gratefully revert to at its close. From the land of cloud and the life of toil, I turn to that golden clime and the happy indolence that so well accords with it; and hope once more, ere I die, with a companion whose knowledge can recall the past and whose gayety can enliven the present, to visit the Disburied City of Pompeii, and see the moonlight sparkle over the waves of Naples. Adieu, my dear Auldjo,

And believe me,

Your obliged and attached friend,
E. B. LYTTON.

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHER'S INTRODUCTION

MY life has been one of frequent adventure and constant excitement. It has been passed, to this present day, in a stirring age, and not without acquaintance of the most eminent and active spirits of the time. Men of all grades and of every character have been familiar to me. War, love, ambition, the scroll of sages, the festivals of wit, the intrigues of states,—all that agitate mankind, the hope and the fear, the labour and the pleasure, the great drama of vanities, with the little interludes of wisdom; these have been the occupations of my manhood; these will furnish forth the materials of that history which is now open to your survey. Whatever be the faults of the historian, he has no motive to palliate what he has committed nor to conceal what he has felt.

Children of an after century, the very time in which these pages will greet you destroys enough of the connection between you and myself to render me indifferent alike to your censure and your applause. Exactly one hundred years from the day this record is completed will the seal I shall place on it be broken and the secrets it contains be disclosed. I claim that congeniality with you which I have found not among my own coevals. /Their/ thoughts, their feelings, their views, have nothing kindred to my own. I speak their language, but it is not as a native: /they/ know not a syllable of mine! With a future age my heart may have more in common; to a future age my thoughts may be less unfamiliar, and my sentiments less strange. I trust these confessions to the trial!

Children of an after century, between you and the being who has traced the pages ye behold—that busy, versatile, restless being—there is but one step,—but that step is a century! His /now/ is separated from your now by an interval of three generations! While he writes, he is exulting in the vigour of health and manhood; while ye read, the very worms are starving upon his dust. This commune between the living and the dead; this intercourse between that which breathes and moves and /is/, and that which life animates not nor mortality knows,—annihilates falsehood, and chills even self-delusion into awe. Come, then, and look upon the picture of a past day and of a gone being, without apprehension of deceit; and as the shadows and lights of a checkered and wild existence flit before you, watch if in your own hearts there be aught which mirrors the reflection.

MORTON DEVEREUX.

NOTE TO THE PRESENT EDITION (1852)

If this work possess any merit of a Narrative order, it will perhaps be found in its fidelity to the characteristics of an Autobiography. The reader must, indeed, comply with the condition exacted from his imagination and faith; that is to say, he must take the hero of the story upon the terms for which Morton Devereux himself stipulates; and regard the supposed Count as one who lived and wrote in the last century, but who (dimly conscious that the tone of his mind harmonized less with his own age than with that which was to come) left his biography as a legacy to the present. This assumption (which is not an unfair one) liberally conceded, and allowed to account for occasional anachronisms in sentiment, Morton Devereux will be found to write as a man who is not constructing a romance, but narrating a life. He gives to Love, its joy and its sorrow, its due share in an eventful and passionate existence; but it is the share of biography, not of fiction. He selects from the crowd of personages with whom he is brought into contact, not only those who directly influence his personal destinies, but those of whom a sketch or an anecdote would appear to a biographer likely to have interest for posterity. Louis XIV., the Regent Orleans, Peter the Great, Lord Bolingbroke, and others less eminent, but still of mark in their own day, if growing obscure to ours, are introduced not for the purposes and agencies of fiction, but as an autobiographer's natural illustrations of the men and manners of his time.

And here be it pardoned if I add that so minute an attention has been paid to accuracy that even in petty details, and in relation to historical characters but slightly known to the ordinary reader, a critic deeply acquainted with the memoirs of the age will allow that the novelist is always merged in the narrator.

Unless the Author has failed more in his design than, on revising the work of his early youth with the comparatively impartial eye of maturer judgment, he is disposed to concede, Morton Devereux will also be found with that marked individuality of character which distinguishes the man who has lived and laboured from the hero of romance. He admits into his life but few passions; those are tenacious and intense: conscious that none who are around him will sympathize with his deeper feelings, he veils them under the sneer of an irony which is often affected and never mirthful. Wherever we find him, after surviving the brief episode of love, we feel—though he does not tell us so—that he is alone in the world. He is represented as a keen observer and a successful actor in the busy theatre of mankind, precisely in proportion as no cloud from the heart obscures the cold clearness of the mind. In the scenes of pleasure there is no joy in his smile; in the contests of ambition there is no quicker beat of the pulse. Attaining in the prime of manhood such position and honour as would first content and then sate a man of this mould, he has nothing left but to discover the vanities of this world and to ponder on the hopes of the next; and, his last passion dying out in the retribution that falls on his foe, he finally sits down in retirement to rebuild the ruined home of his youth,—unconscious that to that solitude the Destinies have led him to repair the waste and ravages of his own melancholy soul.

But while outward Dramatic harmonies between cause and effect, and the proportionate agencies which characters introduced in the Drama bring to bear upon event and catastrophe, are carefully shunned,—as real life does for the most part shun them,—yet there is a latent coherence in all that, by influencing the mind, do, though indirectly, shape out the fate and guide the actions.

Dialogue and adventures which, considered dramatically, would be episodic,—considered biographically, will be found essential to the formation, change, and development of the narrator's character. The grave conversations with Bolingbroke and Richard Cromwell, the light scenes in London and at Paris, the favour obtained with the Czar of Russia, are all essential to the creation of that mixture of wearied satiety and mournful thought which conducts the Probationer to the lonely

spot in which he is destined to learn at once the mystery of his past life and to clear his reason from the doubts that had obscured the future world.

Viewing the work in this more subtle and contemplative light, the reader will find not only the true test by which to judge of its design and nature, but he may also recognize sources of interest in the story which might otherwise have been lost to him; and if so, the Author will not be without excuse for this criticism upon the scope and intention of his own work. For it is not only the privilege of an artist, but it is also sometimes his duty to the principles of Art, to place the spectator in that point of view wherein the light best falls upon the canvas. "Do not place yourself there," says the painter; "to judge of my composition you must stand where I place you."

BOOK I

CHAPTER I

OF THE HERO'S BIRTH AND PARENTAGE.—NOTHING CAN DIFFER MORE FROM THE END OF THINGS THAN THEIR BEGINNING

MY grandfather, Sir Arthur Devereux (peace be with his ashes!) was a noble old knight and cavalier, possessed of a property sufficiently large to have maintained in full dignity half a dozen peers,—such as peers have been since the days of the first James. Nevertheless, my grandfather loved the equestrian order better than the patrician, rejected all offers of advancement, and left his posterity no titles but those to his estate.

Sir Arthur had two children by wedlock,—both sons; at his death, my father, the younger, bade adieu to the old hall and his only brother, prayed to the grim portraits of his ancestors to inspire him, and set out—to join as a volunteer the armies of that Louis, afterwards surnamed /le grand/. Of him I shall say but little; the life of a soldier has only two events worth recording,—his first campaign and his last. My uncle did as his ancestors had done before him, and, cheap as the dignity had grown, went up to court to be knighted by Charles II. He was so delighted with what he saw of the metropolis that he forswore all intention of leaving it, took to Sedley and champagne, flirted with Nell Gwynne, lost double the value of his brother's portion at one sitting to the chivalrous Grammont, wrote a comedy corrected by Etherege, and took a wife recommended by Rochester. The wife brought him a child six months after marriage, and the infant was born on the same day the comedy was acted. Luckily for the honour of the house, my uncle shared the fate of Plemneus, king of Sicyon, and all the offspring he ever had (that is to say, the child and the play) "died as soon as they were born." My uncle was now only at a loss what to do with his wife,—that remaining treasure, whose readiness to oblige him had been so miraculously evinced. She saved him the trouble of long cogitation, an exercise of intellect to which he was never too ardently inclined. There was a gentleman of the court, celebrated for his sedateness and solemnity; my aunt was piqued into emulating Orpheus, and, six weeks after her confinement, she put this rock into motion,—they eloped. Poor gentleman! it must have been a severe trial of patience to a man never known before to transgress the very slowest of all possible walks, to have had two events of the most rapid nature happen to him in the same week: scarcely had he recovered the shock of being run away with by my aunt, before, terminating forever his vagrancies, he was run through by my uncle. The wits made an epigram upon the event, and my uncle, who was as bold as a lion at the point of a sword, was, to speak frankly, terribly disconcerted by the point of a jest. He retired to the country in a fit of disgust and gout. Here his natural goodness soon recovered the effects of the artificial atmosphere to which it had been exposed, and he solaced himself by righteously governing domains worthy of a prince, for the mortifications he had experienced in the dishonourable career of a courtier.

Hitherto I have spoken somewhat slightly of my uncle, and in his dissipation he deserved it, for he was both too honest and too simple to shine in that galaxy of prostituted genius of which Charles II. was the centre. But in retirement he was no longer the same person; and I do not think that the elements of human nature could have furnished forth a more amiable character than Sir William Devereux presiding at Christmas over the merriment of his great hall.

Good old man! his very defects were what we loved best in him: vanity was so mingled with good-nature, that it became graceful, and we revered one the most, while we most smiled at the other.

One peculiarity had he which the age he had lived in and his domestic history rendered natural enough; namely, an exceeding distaste to the matrimonial state: early marriages were misery, imprudent marriages idiotism, and marriage, at the best, he was wont to say, with a kindling eye and a heightened colour, marriage at the best was the devil! Yet it must not be supposed that Sir William Devereux was an ungallant man. On the contrary, never did the */beau sexe/* have a humbler or more devoted servant. As nothing in his estimation was less becoming to a wise man than matrimony, so nothing was more ornamental than flirtation.

He had the old man's weakness, garrulity; and he told the wittiest stories in the world, without omitting anything in them but the point. This omission did not arise from the want either of memory or of humour; but solely from a deficiency in the malice natural to all jesters. He could not persuade his lips to repeat a sarcasm hurting even the dead or the ungrateful; and when he came to the drop of gall which should have given zest to the story, the milk of human kindness broke its barrier, despite of himself,—and washed it away. He was a fine wreck, a little prematurely broken by dissipation, but not perhaps the less interesting on that account; tall, and somewhat of the jovial old English girth, with a face where good-nature and good living mingled their smiles and glow. He wore the garb of twenty years back, and was curiously particular in the choice of his silk stockings. Between you and me, he was not a little vain of his leg, and a compliment on that score was always sure of a gracious reception.

The solitude of my uncle's household was broken by an invasion of three boys,—none of the quietest,—and their mother, who, the gentlest and saddest of womankind, seemed to follow them, the emblem of that primeval silence from which all noise was born. These three boys were my two brothers and myself. My father, who had conceived a strong personal attachment for Louis XIV., never quitted his service, and the great King repaid him by orders and favours without number; he died of wounds received in battle,—a Count and a Marshal, full of renown and destitute of money. He had married twice: his first wife, who died without issue, was a daughter of the noble house of La Tremouille; his second, our mother, was of a younger branch of the English race of Howard. Brought up in her native country, and influenced by a primitive and retired education, she never loved that gay land which her husband had adopted as his own. Upon his death she hastened her return to England, and refusing, with somewhat of honourable pride, the magnificent pension which Louis wished to settle upon the widow of his favourite, came to throw herself and her children upon those affections which she knew they were entitled to claim.

My uncle was unaffectedly rejoiced to receive us; to say nothing of his love for my father, and his pride at the honours the latter had won to their ancient house, the good gentleman was very well pleased with the idea of obtaining four new listeners, out of whom he might select an heir, and he soon grew as fond of us as we were of him. At the time of our new settlement, I had attained the age of twelve; my second brother (we were twins) was born an hour after me; my third was about fifteen months younger. I had never been the favourite of the three. In the first place, my brothers (my youngest especially) were uncommonly handsome, and, at most, I was but tolerably good-looking: in the second place, my mind was considered as much inferior to theirs as my body; I was idle and dull, sullen and haughty,—the only wit I ever displayed was in sneering at my friends, and the only spirit, in quarrelling with my twin brother; so said or so thought all who saw us in our childhood; and it follows, therefore, that I was either very unamiable or very much misunderstood.

But, to the astonishment of myself and my relations, my fate was now to be reversed; and I was no sooner settled at Devereux Court than I became evidently the object of Sir William's pre-eminent attachment. The fact was, that I really liked both the knight and his stories better than my brothers did; and the very first time I had seen my uncle, I had commented on the beauty of his stocking, and envied the constitution of his leg; from such trifles spring affection! In truth, our attachment to each

other so increased that we grew to be constantly together; and while my childish anticipations of the world made me love to listen to stories of courts and courtiers, my uncle returned the compliment by declaring of my wit, as the angler declared of the River Lea, that one would find enough in it, if one would but angle sufficiently long.

Nor was this all; my uncle and myself were exceedingly like the waters of Alpheus and Arethusa,—nothing was thrown into the one without being seen very shortly afterwards floating upon the other. Every witticism or legend Sir William imparted to me (and some, to say truth, were a little tinged with the licentiousness of the times he had lived in), I took the first opportunity of retailing, whatever might be the audience; and few boys, at the age of thirteen, can boast of having so often as myself excited the laughter of the men and the blushes of the women. This circumstance, while it aggravated my own vanity, delighted my uncle's; and as I was always getting into scrapes on his account, so he was perpetually bound, by duty, to defend me from the charges of which he was the cause. No man defends another long without loving him the better for it; and perhaps Sir William Devereux and his eldest nephew were the only allies in the world who had no jealousy of each other.

CHAPTER II

A FAMILY CONSULTATION.—A PRIEST, AND AN ERA IN LIFE

"YOU are ruining the children, my dear Sir William," said my gentle mother, one day when I had been particularly witty; "and the Abbe Montreuil declares it absolutely necessary that they should go to school."

"To school!" said my uncle, who was caressing his right leg, as it lay over his left knee,— "to school, Madam! you are joking. What for, pray?"

"Instruction, my dear Sir William," replied my mother.

"Ah, ah; I forgot that; true, true!" said my uncle, despondingly, and there was a pause. My mother counted her rosary; my uncle sank into a reverie; my twin brother pinched my leg under the table, to which I replied by a silent kick; and my youngest fixed his large, dark, speaking eyes upon a picture of the Holy Family, which hung opposite to him.

My uncle broke the silence; he did it with a start.

"Od's fish, Madam,"—(my uncle dressed his oaths, like himself, a little after the example of Charles II.)—"od's fish, Madam, I have thought of a better plan than that; they shall have instruction without going to school for it."

"And how, Sir William?"

"I will instruct them myself, Madam," and William slapped the calf of the leg he was caressing. My mother smiled.

"Ay, Madam, you may smile; but I and my Lord Dorset were the best scholars of the age; you shall read my play."

"Do, Mother," said I, "read the play. Shall I tell her some of the jests in it, Uncle?"

My mother shook her head in anticipative horror, and raised her finger reprovably. My uncle said nothing, but winked at me; I understood the signal, and was about to begin, when the door opened, and the Abbe Montreuil entered. My uncle released his right leg, and my jest was cut off. Nobody ever inspired a more dim, religious awe than the Abbe Montreuil. The priest entered with a smile. My mother hailed the entrance of an ally.

"Father," said she, rising, "I have just represented to my good brother the necessity of sending my sons to school; he has proposed an alternative which I will leave you to discuss with him."

"And what is it?" said Montreuil, sliding into a chair, and patting Gerald's head with a benignant air.

"To educate them himself," answered my mother, with a sort of satirical gravity. My uncle moved uneasily in his seat, as if, for the first time, he saw something ridiculous in the proposal.

The smile, immediately fading from the thin lips of the priest, gave way to an expression of respectful approbation. "An admirable plan," said he slowly, "but liable to some little exceptions, which Sir William will allow me to point out."

My mother called to us, and we left the room with her. The next time we saw my uncle, the priest's reasonings had prevailed. The following week we all three went to school. My father had been a Catholic, my mother was of the same creed, and consequently we were brought up in that unpopular faith. But my uncle, whose religion had been sadly undermined at court, was a terrible caviller at the holy mysteries of Catholicism; and while his friends termed him a Protestant, his enemies hinted, falsely enough, that he was a sceptic. When Montreuil first followed us to Devereux Court, many and bitter were the little jests my worthy uncle had provided for his reception; and he would shake his head with a notable archness whenever he heard our reverential description of the expected guest. But, somehow or other, no sooner had he seen the priest than all his proposed railleries deserted him.

Not a single witticism came to his assistance, and the calm, smooth face of the ecclesiastic seemed to operate upon the fierce resolves of the facetious knight in the same manner as the human eye is supposed to awe into impotence the malignant intentions of the ignobler animals. Yet nothing could be blander than the demeanour of the Abbe Montreuil; nothing more worldly, in their urbanity, than his manner and address. His garb was as little clerical as possible, his conversation rather familiar than formal, and he invariably listened to every syllable the good knight uttered with a countenance and mien of the most attentive respect.

What then was the charm by which the singular man never failed to obtain an ascendancy, in some measure allied with fear, over all in whose company he was thrown? This was a secret my uncle never could solve, and which only in later life I myself was able to discover. It was partly by the magic of an extraordinary and powerful mind, partly by an expression of manner, if I may use such a phrase, that seemed to sneer most, when most it affected to respect; and partly by an air like that of a man never exactly at ease; not that he was shy, or ungraceful, or even taciturn,—no! it was an indescribable embarrassment, resembling that of one playing a part, familiar to him, indeed, but somewhat distasteful. This embarrassment, however, was sufficient to be contagious, and to confuse that dignity in others, which, strangely enough, never forsook himself.

He was of low origin, but his address and appearance did not betray his birth. Pride suited his mien better than familiarity; and his countenance, rigid, thoughtful, and cold, even through smiles, in expression was strikingly commanding. In person he was slightly above the middle standard; and had not the texture of his frame been remarkably hard, wiry, and muscular, the total absence of all superfluous flesh would have given the lean gauntness of his figure an appearance of almost spectral emaciation. In reality, his age did not exceed twenty-eight years; but his high broad forehead was already so marked with line and furrow, his air was so staid and quiet, his figure so destitute of the roundness and elasticity of youth, that his appearance always impressed the beholder with the involuntary idea of a man considerably more advanced in life. Abstemious to habitual penance, and regular to mechanical exactness in his frequent and severe devotions, he was as little inwardly addicted to the pleasures and pursuits of youth, as he was externally possessed of its freshness and its bloom.

Nor was gravity with him that unmeaning veil to imbecility which Rochefoucauld has so happily called "the mystery of the body." The variety and depth of his learning fully sustained the respect which his demeanour insensibly created. To say nothing of his lore in the dead tongues, he possessed a knowledge of the principal European languages besides his own, namely, English, Italian, German, and Spanish, not less accurate and little less fluent than that of a native; and he had not only gained the key to these various coffers of intellectual wealth, but he had also possessed himself of their treasures. He had been educated at St. Omer: and, young as he was, he had already acquired no inconsiderable reputation among his brethren of that illustrious and celebrated Order of Jesus which has produced some of the worst and some of the best men that the Christian world has ever known,—which has, in its successful zeal for knowledge, and the circulation of mental light, bequeathed a vast debt of gratitude to posterity; but which, unhappily encouraging certain scholastic doctrines, that by a mind at once subtle and vicious can be easily perverted into the sanction of the most dangerous and systematized immorality, has already drawn upon its professors an almost universal odium.

So highly established was the good name of Montreuil that when, three years prior to the time of which I now speak, he had been elected to the office he held in our family, it was scarcely deemed a less fortunate occurrence for us to gain so learned and so pious a preceptor, than it was for him to acquire a situation of such trust and confidence in the household of a Marshal of France and the especial favourite of Louis XIV.

It was pleasant enough to mark the gradual ascendancy he gained over my uncle; and the timorous dislike which the good knight entertained for him, yet struggled to conceal. Perhaps that was the only time in his life in which Sir William Devereux was a hypocrite.

Enough of the priest at present; I return to his charge. To school we went: our parting with our uncle was quite pathetic; mine in especial. "Hark ye, Sir Count," whispered he (I bore my father's title), "hark ye, don't mind what the old priest tells you; your real man of wit never wants the musty lessons of schools in order to make a figure in the world. Don't cramp your genius, my boy; read over my play, and honest George Etherege's 'Man of Mode;' they'll keep your spirits alive, after dozing over those old pages which Homer (good soul!) dozed over before. God bless you, my child; write to me; no one, not even your mother, shall see your letters; and—and be sure, my fine fellow, that you don't fag too hard. The glass of life is the best book, and one's natural wit the only diamond that can write legibly on it."

Such were my uncle's parting admonitions; it must be confessed that, coupled with the dramatic gifts alluded to, they were likely to be of infinite service to the /debutant/ for academical honours. In fact, Sir William Devereux was deeply impregnated with the notion of his time,—that ability and inspiration were the same thing, and that, unless you were thoroughly idle, you could not be thoroughly a genius. I verily believe that he thought wisdom got its gems, as Abu Zeid al Hassan¹ declares some Chinese philosophers thought oysters got their pearls, namely, /by gaping/!

¹ In his Commentary on the account of China by two Travellers.

CHAPTER III

A CHANGE IN CONDUCT AND IN CHARACTER: OUR EVIL PASSIONS WILL SOMETIMES PRODUCE GOOD EFFECTS; AND ON THE CONTRARY, AN ALTERATION FOR THE BETTER IN MANNERS WILL, NOT UNFREQUENTLY, HAVE AMONGST ITS CAUSES A LITTLE CORRUPTION OF MIND; FOR THE FEELINGS ARE SO BLENDED THAT, IN SUPPRESSING THOSE DISAGREEABLE TO OTHERS, WE OFTEN SUPPRESS THOSE WHICH ARE AMIABLE IN THEMSELVES

MY twin brother, Gerald, was a tall, strong, handsome boy, blessed with a great love for the orthodox academical studies, and extraordinary quickness of ability. Nevertheless, he was indolent by nature in things which were contrary to his taste; fond of pleasure; and, amidst all his personal courage, ran a certain vein of irresolution, which rendered it easy for a cool and determined mind to awe or to persuade him. I cannot help thinking, too, that, clever as he was, there was something commonplace in the cleverness; and that his talent was of that mechanical yet quick nature which makes wonderful boys but mediocre men. In any other family he would have been considered the beauty; in ours he was thought the genius.

My youngest brother, Aubrey, was of a very different disposition of mind and frame of body; thoughtful, gentle, susceptible, acute; with an uncertain bravery, like a woman's, and a taste for reading, that varied with the caprice of every hour. He was the beauty of the three, and my mother's favourite. Never, indeed, have I seen the countenance of man so perfect, so glowingly yet delicately handsome, as that of Aubrey Devereux. Locks, soft, glossy, and twining into ringlets, fell in dark profusion over a brow whiter than marble; his eyes were black and tender as a Georgian girl's; his lips, his teeth, the contour of his face, were all cast in the same feminine and faultless mould; his hands would have shamed those of Madame de la Tisseur, whose lover offered six thousand marks to any European who could wear her glove; and his figure would have made Titania give up her Henchman, and the King of the Fairies be anything but pleased with the exchange.

Such were my two brothers; or, rather (so far as the internal qualities are concerned), such they seemed to me; for it is a singular fact that we never judge of our near kindred so well as we judge of others; and I appeal to any one, whether, of all people by whom he has been mistaken, he has not been most often mistaken by those with whom he was brought up.

I had always loved Aubrey, but they had not suffered him to love me; and we had been so little together that we had in common none of those childish remembrances which serve, more powerfully than all else in later life, to cement and soften affection. In fact, I was the scapegoat of the family. What I must have been in early childhood I cannot tell; but before I was ten years old I was the object of all the despondency and evil forebodings of my relations. My father said I laughed at */la gloire et le grand monarque/* the very first time he attempted to explain to me the value of the one and the greatness of the other. The countess said I had neither my father's eye nor her own smile,—that I was slow at my letters and quick with my tongue; and throughout the whole house nothing was so favourite a topic as the extent of my rudeness and the venom of my repartee. Montreuil, on his entrance into our family, not only fell in with, but favoured and fostered, the reigning humour against me; whether from that */divide et impera/* system, which was so grateful to his temper, or from the mere love of meddling and intrigue, which in him, as in Alberoni, attached itself equally to petty as to large circles, was not then clearly apparent; it was only certain that he fomented the dissensions and widened the breach between my brothers and myself. Alas! after all, I believe my sole crime was my candour. I

had a spirit of frankness which no fear could tame, and my vengeance for any infantine punishment was in speaking veraciously of my punishers. Never tell me of the pang of falsehood to the slandered: nothing is so agonizing to the fine skin of vanity as the application of a rough truth!

As I grew older, I saw my power and indulged it; and, being scolded for sarcasm, I was flattered into believing I had wit; so I punned and jested, lampooned and satirized, till I was as much a torment to others as I was tormented myself. The secret of all this was that I was unhappy. Nobody loved me: I felt it to my heart of hearts. I was conscious of injustice, and the sense of it made me bitter. Our feelings, especially in youth, resemble that leaf which, in some old traveller, is described as expanding itself to warmth, but when chilled, not only shrinking and closing, but presenting to the spectator thorns which had lain concealed upon the opposite side of it before.

With my brother Gerald, I had a deadly and irreconcilable feud. He was much stouter, taller, and stronger than myself; and, far from conceding to me that respect which I imagined my priority of birth entitled me to claim, he took every opportunity to deride my pretensions, and to vindicate the cause of the superior strength and vigour which constituted his own. It would have done your heart good to have seen us cuff one another, we did it with such zeal. There is nothing in human passion like a good brotherly hatred! My mother said, with the most feeling earnestness, that she used to feel us fighting even before our birth: we certainly lost no time directly after it. Both my parents were secretly vexed that I had come into the world an hour sooner than my brother; and Gerald himself looked upon it as a sort of juggle,—a kind of jockeyship by which he had lost the prerogative of birthright. This very early rankled in his heart, and he was so much a greater favourite than myself that, instead of rooting out so unfortunate a feeling on his part, my good parents made no scruple of openly lamenting my seniority. I believe the real cause of our being taken from the domestic instructions of the Abbe (who was an admirable teacher) and sent to school, was solely to prevent my uncle deciding everything in my favour. Montreuil, however, accompanied us to our academy, and remained with us during the three years in which we were perfecting ourselves in the blessings of education.

At the end of the second year, a prize was instituted for the best proficient at a very severe examination; two months before it took place we went home for a few days. After dinner my uncle asked me to walk with him in the park. I did so: we strolled along to the margin of a rivulet which ornamented the grounds. There my uncle, for the first time, broke silence.

"Morton," said he, looking down at his left leg, "Morton, let me see; thou art now of a reasonable age,—fourteen at the least."

"Fifteen, if it please you, sir," said I, elevating my stature as much as I was able.

"Humph! my boy; and a pretty time of life it is, too. Your brother Gerald is taller than you by two inches."

"But I can beat him for all that, uncle," said I, colouring, and clenching my fist.

My uncle pulled down his right ruffle. "'Gad so, Morton, you're a brave fellow," said he; "but I wish you were less of a hero and more of a scholar. I wish you could beat him in Greek as well as in boxing. I will tell you what Old Rowley said," and my uncle occupied the next quarter of an hour with a story. The story opened the good old gentleman's heart; my laughter opened it still more. "Hark ye, sirrah!" said he, pausing abruptly, and grasping my hand with a vigorous effort of love and muscle, "hark ye, sirrah,—I love you,—'Sdeath, I do. I love you better than both your brothers, and that crab of a priest into the bargain; but I am grieved to the heart to hear what I do of you. They tell me you are the idlest boy in the school; that you are always beating your brother Gerald, and making a scurrilous jest of your mother or myself."

"Who says so? who dares say so?" said I, with an emphasis that would have startled a less hearty man than Sir William Devereux. "They lie, Uncle; by my soul they do. Idle I am; quarrelsome with my brother I confess myself; but jesting at you or my mother—never—never. No, no; /you/, too,

who have been so kind to me,—the only one who ever was. No, no; do not think I could be such a wretch:" and as I said this the tears gushed from my eyes.

My good uncle was exceedingly affected. "Look ye, child," said he, "I do not believe them. 'Sdeath, not a word; I would repeat to you a good jest now of Sedley's, 'Gad, I would, but I am really too much moved just at present. I tell you what, my boy, I tell you what you shall do: there is a trial coming on at school—eh?—well, the Abbe tells me Gerald is certain of being first, and you of being last. Now, Morton, you shall beat your brother, and shame the Jesuit. There; my mind's spoken; dry your tears, my boy, and I'll tell you the jest Sedley made: it was in the Mulberry Garden one day—" And the knight told his story.

I dried my tears, pressed my uncle's hand, escaped from him as soon as I was able, hastened to my room, and surrendered myself to reflection.

When my uncle so good-naturedly proposed that I should conquer Gerald at the examination, nothing appeared to him more easy; he was pleased to think I had more talent than my brother, and talent, according to his creed, was the only master-key to unlock every science. A problem in Euclid or a phrase in Pindar, a secret in astronomy or a knotty passage in the Fathers, were all riddles, with the solution of which application had nothing to do. One's mother-wit was a precious sort of necromancy, which could pierce every mystery at first sight; and all the gifts of knowledge, in his opinion, like reading and writing in that of the sage Dogberry, "came by nature." Alas! I was not under the same pleasurable delusion; I rather exaggerated than diminished the difficulty of my task, and thought, at the first glance, that nothing short of a miracle would enable me to excel my brother. Gerald, a boy of natural talent, and, as I said before, of great assiduity in the orthodox studies,—especially favoured too by the instruction of Montreuil,—had long been esteemed the first scholar of our little world; and though I knew that with some branches of learning I was more conversant than himself, yet, as my emulation had been hitherto solely directed to bodily contention, I had never thought of contesting with him a reputation for which I cared little, and on a point in which I had been early taught that I could never hope to enter into any advantageous comparison with the "genius" of the Devereuxs.

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