ЭДВАРД БУЛЬВЕР-ЛИТТОН

NIGHT AND MORNING, VOLUME 1

Эдвард Джордж Бульвер-Литтон

Night and Morning, Volume 1

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Edward Bulwer-Lytton
Night and Morning, Volume 1

PREFACE TO THE EDITION OF 1845

Much has been written by critics, especially by those in Germany (the native land of criticism), upon the important question, whether to please or to instruct should be the end of Fiction—whether a moral purpose is or is not in harmony with the undidactic spirit perceptible in the higher works of the imagination. And the general result of the discussion has been in favour of those who have contended that Moral Design, rigidly so called, should be excluded from the aims of the Poet; that his Art should regard only the Beautiful, and be contented with the indirect moral tendencies, which can never fail the creation of the Beautiful. Certainly, in fiction, to interest, to please, and sportively to elevate —to take man from the low passions, and the miserable troubles of life, into a higher region, to beguile weary and selfish pain, to excite a genuine sorrow at vicissitudes not his own, to raise the passions into sympathy with heroic struggles—and to admit the soul into that serener atmosphere from which it rarely returns to ordinary existence, without some memory or association which ought to enlarge the domain of thought and exalt the motives of action;—such, without other moral result or object, may satisfy the Poet,[1] and constitute the highest and most universal morality he can effect. But subordinate to this, which is not the duty, but the necessity, of all Fiction that outlasts the hour, the writer of imagination may well permit to himself other purposes and objects, taking care that they be not too sharply defined, and too obviously meant to contract the Poet into the Lecturer—the Fiction into the Homily. The delight in Shylock is not less vivid for the Humanity it latently but profoundly inculcates; the healthful merriment of the Tartufe is not less enjoyed for the exposure of the Hypocrisy it denounces. We need not demand from Shakespeare or from Moliere other morality than that which Genius unconsciously throws around it—the natural light which it reflects; but if some great principle which guides us practically in the daily intercourse with men becomes in the general lustre more clear and more pronounced, we gain doubly, by the general tendency and the particular result.

Long since, in searching for new regions in the Art to which I am a servant, it seemed to me that they might be found lying far, and rarely trodden, beyond that range of conventional morality in which Novelist after Novelist had entrenched himself—amongst those subtle recesses in the ethics of human life in which Truth and Falsehood dwell undisturbed and unseparated. The vast and dark Poetry around us—the Poetry of Modern Civilisation and Daily Existence, is shut out from us in much, by the shadowy giants of Prejudice and Fear. He who would arrive at the Fairy Land must face the Phantoms. Betimes, I set myself to the task of investigating the motley world to which our progress in humanity—has attained, caring little what misrepresentation I incurred, what hostility I provoked, in searching through a devious labyrinth for the foot-tracks of Truth.

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[1] I use the word Poet in its proper sense, as applicable to any writer, whether in verse or prose, who invents or creates.

In the pursuit of this object, I am, not vainly, conscious that I have had my influence on my time—that I have contributed, though humbly and indirectly, to the benefits which Public Opinion has extorted from Governments and Laws. While (to content myself with a single example) the ignorant or malicious were decrying the moral of Paul Clifford, I consoled myself with perceiving that its truths had stricken deep—that many, whom formal essays might not reach, were enlisted by the picture and the popular force of Fiction into the service of that large and Catholic Humanity which frankly examines into the causes of crime, which ameliorates the ills of society by seeking to amend the circumstances by which they are occasioned; and commences the great work of justice to mankind by proportioning the punishment to the offence. That work, I know, had its share in the wise and great relaxation of our Criminal Code—it has had its share in results yet more valuable, because leading to more comprehensive reforms-viz., in the courageous facing of the ills which the mock decorum of timidity would shun to contemplate, but which, till fairly fronted, in the spirit of practical Christianity, sap daily, more and more, the walls in which blind Indolence would protect itself from restless Misery and rampant Hunger. For it is not till Art has told the unthinking that nothing (rightly treated) is too low for its breath to vivify and its wings to raise, that the Herd awaken from their chronic lethargy of contempt, and the Lawgiver is compelled to redress what the Poet has lifted into esteem. In thus enlarging the boundaries of the Novelist, from trite and conventional to untrodden ends, I have seen, not with the jealousy of an author, but with the pride of an Originator, that I have served as a guide to later and abler writers, both in England and abroad. If at times, while imitating, they have mistaken me, I am not. answerable for their errors; or if, more often, they have improved where they borrowed, I am not envious of their laurels. They owe me at least this, that I prepared the way for their reception, and that they would have been less popular and more misrepresented, if the outcry which bursts upon the first researches into new directions had not exhausted its noisy vehemence upon me.

In this Novel of *Night and Morning* I have had various ends in view— subordinate, I grant, to the higher and more durable morality which belongs to the Ideal, and instructs us playfully while it interests, in the passions, and through the heart. First—to deal fearlessly with that universal unsoundness in social justice which makes distinctions so marked and iniquitous between Vice and Crime—viz., between the corrupting habits and the violent act—which scarce touches the former with the lightest twig in the fasces—which lifts against the latter the edge of the Lictor's axe. Let a child steal an apple in sport, let a starveling steal a roll in despair, and Law conducts them to the Prison, for evil commune to mellow them for the gibbet. But let a man spend one apprenticeship from youth to old age in vice—let him devote a fortune, perhaps colossal, to the wholesale demoralisation of his kind—and he may be surrounded with the adulation of the so-called virtuous, and be served upon its knee, by that Lackey—the Modern World! I say not that Law can, or that Law should, reach the Vice as it does the Crime; but I say, that Opinion may be more than the servile shadow of Law. I impress not here, as in *Paul Clifford*, a material moral to work its effect on the Journals, at the Hastings, through Constituents, and on Legislation;—I direct myself to a channel less active, more tardy, but as sure—to the Conscience—that reigns elder and superior to all Law, in men's hearts and souls;—I utter boldly and loudly a truth, if not all untold, murmured feebly and falteringly before, sooner or later it will find its way into the judgment and the conduct, and shape out a tribunal which requires not robe or ermine.

Secondly—In this work I have sought to lift the mask from the timid selfishness which too often with us bears the name of Respectability. Purposely avoiding all attraction that may savour of extravagance, patiently subduing every tone and every hue to the aspect of those whom we meet daily in our thoroughfares, I have shown in Robert Beaufort the man of decorous phrase and bloodless action—the systematic self-server— in whom the world forgive the lack of all that is generous, warm, and noble, in order to respect the passive acquiescence in methodical conventions and hollow forms. And how common such men are with us in this century, and how inviting and how necessary their delineation, may be seen in this,—that the popular and pre-eminent Observer of the age in which we live has since placed their prototype in vigorous colours upon imperishable canvas.—[Need I say that I allude to the Pecksniff of Mr. Dickens?]

There is yet another object with which I have identified my tale. I trust that I am not insensible to such advantages as arise from the diffusion of education really sound, and knowledge really available;—for these, as the right of my countrymen, I have contended always. But of late years there has been danger that what ought to be an important truth may be perverted into a pestilent fallacy. Whether for rich or for poor, disappointment must ever await the endeavour to give knowledge without labour, and experience without trial. Cheap literature and popular treatises do not in themselves suffice to fit the nerves of man for the strife below, and lift his aspirations, in healthful confidence above. He who seeks to divorce toil from knowledge deprives knowledge of its most valuable property.—the strengthening of the mind by exercise. We learn what really braces and elevates us only in proportion to the effort it costs us. Nor is it in Books alone, nor in Books chiefly, that we are made conscious of our strength as Men; Life is the great Schoolmaster, Experience the mighty Volume. He who has made one stern sacrifice of self has acquired more than he will ever glean from the odds and ends of popular philosophy. And the man the least scholastic may be more robust in the power that is knowledge, and approach nearer to the Arch-Seraphim, than Bacon himself, if he cling fast to two simple maxims—"Be honest in temptation, and in Adversity believe in God." Such moral, attempted before in Eugene Aram, I have enforced more directly here; and out of such convictions I have created hero and heroine, placing them in their primitive and natural characters, with aid more from life than books,– from courage the one, from affection the other—amidst the feeble Hermaphrodites of our sickly civilisation;—examples of resolute Manhood and tender Womanhood.

The opinions I have here put forth are not in fashion at this day. But I have never consulted the popular any more than the sectarian, Prejudice. Alone and unaided I have hewn out my way, from first to last, by the force of my own convictions. The corn springs up in the field centuries after the first sower is forgotten. Works may perish with the workman; but, if truthful, their results are in the works of others, imitating, borrowing, enlarging, and improving, in the everlasting Cycle of Industry and Thought.

Knebworth, 1845.

NOTE TO THE PRESENT EDITION, 1851

I have nothing to add to the preceding pages, written six years ago, as to the objects and aims of this work; except to say, and by no means as a boast, that the work lays claims to one kind of interest which I certainly never desired to effect for it—viz., in exemplifying the glorious uncertainty of the Law. For, humbly aware of the blunders which Novelists not belonging to the legal profession are apt to commit, when they summon to the *denouement* of a plot the aid of a deity so mysterious as Themis, I submitted to an eminent lawyer the whole case of "Beaufort versus Beaufort," as it stands in this Novel. And the pages which refer to that suit were not only written from the opinion annexed to the brief I sent in, but submitted to the eye of my counsel, and revised by his pen.—(N.B. He was feed.) Judge then my dismay when I heard long afterwards that the late Mr. O'Connell disputed the soundness of the law I had thus bought and paid for! "Who shall decide when doctors disagree?" All I can say is, that I took the best opinion that love or money could get me; and I should add, that my lawyer, unawed by the alleged *ipse dixit* of the great Agitator (to be sure, he is dead), still stoutly maintains his own views of the question.

[I have, however, thought it prudent so far to meet

> the objection suggested by Mr. O'Connell, as to make a slight alteration in this edition, which will probably prevent the objection, if correct, being of any material practical effect on the disposition of that visionary El Dorado—the Beaufort Property.]

Let me hope that the right heir will live long enough to come under the Statute of Limitations. Possession is nine points of the law, and Time may give the tenth.

Knebworth.

NIGHT AND MORNING.
BOOK I

"Noch in meines Lebens Lenze
War ich and ich wandert' aus,
Und der Jugend frohe Tanze
Liess ich in des Vaters Haus."

SCHILLER, Der Pilgrim.

INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER

"Now rests our vicar. They who knew him best,
Proclaim his life to have been entirely rest;
Not one so old has left this world of sin,
More like the being that he entered in."

—CRABBE.

In one of the Welsh counties is a small village called A–. It is somewhat removed from the high road, and is, therefore, but little known to those luxurious amateurs of the picturesque, who view nature through the windows of a carriage and four. Nor, indeed, is there anything, whether of scenery or association, in the place itself, sufficient to allure the more sturdy enthusiast from the beaten tracks which tourists and guide-books prescribe to those who search the Sublime and Beautiful amidst the mountain homes of the ancient Britons. Still, on the whole, the village is not without its attractions. It is placed in a small valley, through which winds and leaps down many a rocky fall, a clear, babbling, noisy rivulet, that affords excellent sport to the brethren of the angle. Thither, accordingly, in the summer season occasionally resort the Waltons of the neighbourhood—young farmers, retired traders, with now and then a stray artist, or a roving student from one of the universities. Hence the solitary hostelry of A–, being somewhat more frequented, is also more clean and comfortable than could reasonably be anticipated from the insignificance and remoteness of the village.

At a time in which my narrative opens, the village boasted a sociable, agreeable, careless, half-starved parson, who never failed to introduce himself to any of the anglers who, during the summer months, passed a day or two in the little valley. The Rev. Mr. Caleb Price had been educated at the University of Cambridge, where he had contrived, in three years, to run through a little fortune of L3500. It is true, that he acquired in return the art of making milkpunch, the science of pugilism, and the reputation of one of the best-natured, rattling, open-hearted companions whom you could desire by your side in a tandem to Newmarket, or in a row with the bargemen. By the help of these gifts and accomplishments, he had not failed to find favour, while his money lasted, with the young aristocracy of the "Gentle

Mother." And, though the very reverse of an ambitious or calculating man, he had certainly nourished the belief that some one of the "hats" or "tinsel gowns"—i.e., young lords or fellow-commoners, with whom he was on such excellent terms, and who supped with him so often, would do something for him in the way of a living. But it so happened that when Mr. Caleb Price had, with a little difficulty, scrambled through his degree, and found himself a Bachelor of Arts and at the end of his finances, his grand acquaintances parted from him to their various posts in the State Militant of Life. And, with the exception of one, joyous and reckless as himself, Mr. Caleb Price found that when Money makes itself wings it flies away with our friends. As poor Price had earned no academical distinction, so he could expect no advancement from his college; no fellowship; no tutorship leading hereafter to livings, stalls, and deaneries. Poverty began already to stare him in the face, when the only friend who, having shared his prosperity, remained true to his adverse fate, —a friend, fortunately for him, of high connections and brilliant prospects—succeeded in obtaining for him the humble living of A–. To this primitive spot the once jovial roisterer cheerfully retired—contrived to live contented upon an income somewhat less than he had formerly given to his groom—preached very short sermons to a very scanty and ignorant congregation, some of whom only understood Welsh—did good to the poor and sick in his own careless, slovenly way—and, uncheered or unvexed by wife and children, he rose in summer with the lark and in winter went to bed at nine precisely, to save coals and candles. For the rest, he was the most skilful angler in the whole county; and so willing to communicate the results of his experience as to the most taking colour of the flies, and the most favoured haunts of the trout—that he had given especial orders at the inn, that whenever any strange gentleman came to fish, Mr. Caleb Price should be immediately sent for. In this, to be sure, our worthy pastor had his usual recompense. First, if the stranger were tolerably liberal, Mr. Price was asked to dinner at the inn; and, secondly, if this failed, from the poverty or the churlishness of the obliged party, Mr. Price still had an opportunity to hear the last news—to talk about the Great World—in a word, to exchange ideas, and perhaps to get an old newspaper, or an odd number of a magazine.

Now, it so happened that one afternoon in October, when the periodical excursions of the anglers, becoming gradually rarer and more rare, had altogether ceased, Mr. Caleb Price was summoned from his parlour in which he had been employed in the fabrication of a net for his cabbages, by a little white-headed boy, who came to say there was a gentleman at the inn who wished immediately to see him—a strange gentleman, who had never been there before.

Mr. Price threw down his net, seized his hat, and, in less than five minutes, he was in the best room of the little inn.

The person there awaiting him was a man who, though plainly clad in a velveteen shooting-jacket, had an air and mien greatly above those common to the pedestrian visitors of A–. He was tall, and of one of those athletic forms in which vigour in youth is too often followed by corpulence in age. At this period, however, in the full prime of manhood—the ample chest and sinewy limbs, seen to full advantage in their simple and manly dress—could not fail to excite that popular admiration which is always given to strength in the one sex as to delicacy in the other. The stranger was walking impatiently to and fro the small apartment when Mr. Price entered; and then, turning to the clergyman a countenance handsome and striking, but yet more prepossessing from its expression of frankness than from the regularity of its features,—he stopped short, held out his hand, and said, with a gay laugh, as he glanced over the parson's threadbare and slovenly costume, "My poor Caleb!—what a metamorphosis!—I should not have known you again!"

"What! you! Is it possible, my dear fellow?—how glad I am to see you! What on earth can bring you to such a place? No! not a soul would believe me if I said I had seen you in this miserable hole."

"That is precisely the reason why I am here. Sit down, Caleb, and we'll talk over matters as soon as our landlord has brought up the materials for—"

"The milk-punch," interrupted Mr. Price, rubbing his hands.

"Ah, that will bring us back to old times, indeed!"

In a few minutes the punch was prepared, and after two or three preparatory glasses, the stranger thus commenced: "My dear Caleb, I am in want of your assistance, and above all of your secrecy."

"I promise you both beforehand. It will make me happy the rest of my life to think I have served my patron—my benefactor—the only friend I possess."

"Tush, man! don't talk of that: we shall do better for you one of these days. But now to the point: I have come here to be married—married, old boy! married!"

And the stranger threw himself back in his chair, and chuckled with the glee of a schoolboy.

"Humph!" said the parson, gravely. "It is a serious thing to do, and a very odd place to come to."

"I admit both propositions: this punch is superb. To proceed. You know that my uncle's immense fortune is at his own disposal; if I disobliged him, he would be capable of leaving all to my brother; I should disoblige him irrevocably if he knew that I had married a tradesman's daughter; I am going to marry a tradesman's daughter—a girl in a million! the ceremony must be as secret as possible. And in this church, with you for the priest, I do not see a chance of discovery."

"Do you marry by license?"

"No, my intended is not of age; and we keep the secret even from her father. In this village you will mumble over the bans without one of your congregation ever taking heed of the name. I shall stay here a month for the purpose. She is in London, on a visit to a relation in the city. The bans on her side will be published with equal privacy in a little church near the Tower, where my name will be no less unknown than hers. Oh, I've contrived it famously!"

"But, my dear fellow, consider what you risk."

"I have considered all, and I find every chance in my favour. The bride will arrive here on the day of our wedding: my servant will be one witness; some stupid old Welshman, as antediluvian as possible—I leave it to you to select him—shall be the other. My servant I shall dispose of, and the rest I can depend on."

"But—"

"I detest buts; if I had to make a language, I would not admit such a word in it. And now, before I run on about Catherine, a subject quite inexhaustible, tell me, my dear friend, something about yourself."

....

Somewhat more than a month had elapsed since the arrival of the stranger at the village inn. He had changed his quarters for the Parsonage—went out but little, and then chiefly on foot excursions among the sequestered hills in the neighbourhood. He was therefore but partially known by sight, even in the village; and the visit of some old college friend to the minister, though indeed it had never chanced before, was not, in itself, so remarkable an event as to excite any particular observation. The bans had been duly, and half audibly, hurried over, after the service was concluded, and while the scanty congregation were dispersing down the little aisle of the church,—when one morning a chaise and pair arrived at the Parsonage. A servant out of livery leaped from the box. The stranger opened the door of the chaise, and, uttering a joyous exclamation, gave his arm to a lady, who, trembling and agitated, could scarcely, even with that stalwart support, descend the steps. "Ah!" she said, in a voice choked with tears, when they found themselves alone in the little parlour,—"ah! if you knew how I have suffered!"

How is it that certain words, and those the homeliest, which the hand writes and the eye reads as trite and commonplace expressions—when spoken convey so much,—so many meanings complicated and refined? "Ah! if you knew how I have suffered!"

When the lover heard these words, his gay countenance fell; he drew back —his conscience smote him: in that complaint was the whole history of a clandestine love, not for both the parties, but for the woman—the painful secrecy—the remorseful deceit—the shame—the fear—the sacrifice. She who uttered those words was scarcely sixteen. It is an early age to leave Childhood behind for ever!

"My own love! you have suffered, indeed; but it is over now.

"Over! And what will they say of me—what will they think of me at home?

Over! Ah!"

"It is but for a short time; in the course of nature my uncle cannot live long: all then will be explained. Our marriage once made public, all connected with you will be proud to own you.

You will have wealth, station—a name among the first in the gentry of England. But, above all, you will have the happiness to think that your forbearance for a time has saved me, and, it may be, our children, sweet one!—from poverty and—"

"It is enough," interrupted the girl; and the expression of her countenance became serene and elevated. "It is for you—for your sake. I know what you hazard: how much I must owe you! Forgive me, this is the last murmur you shall ever hear from these lips."

An hour after these words were spoken, the marriage ceremony was concluded.

"Caleb," said the bridegroom, drawing the clergyman aside as they were about to re-enter the house, "you will keep your promise, I know; and you think I may depend implicitly upon the good faith of the witness you have selected?"

"Upon his good faith?—no," said Caleb, smiling, "but upon his deafness, his ignorance, and his age. My poor old clerk! He will have forgotten all about it before this day three months. Now I have seen your lady, I no longer wonder that you incur so great a risk. I never beheld so lovely a countenance. You will be happy!" And the village priest sighed, and thought of the coming winter and his own lonely hearth.

"My dear friend, you have only seen her beauty—it is her least charm. Heaven knows how often I have made love; and this is the only woman I have ever really loved. Caleb, there is an excellent living that adjoins my uncle's house. The rector is old; when the house is mine, you will not be long without the living.

We shall be neighbours, Caleb, and then you shall try and find a bride for yourself. Smith,"—and the bridegroom turned to the servant who had accompanied his wife, and served as a second witness to the marriage,—tell the post-boy to put to the horses immediately."

"Yes, Sir. May I speak a word with you?"

"Well, what?"

"Your uncle, sir, sent for me to come to him, the day before we left town."

"Aha!—indeed!"

"And I could just pick up among his servants that he had some suspicion— at least, that he had been making inquiries—and seemed very cross, sir."

"You went to him?"

"No, Sir, I was afraid. He has such a way with him;—whenever his eye is fixed on mine, I always feel as if it was impossible to tell a lie; and— and—in short, I thought it was best not to go."

"You did right. Confound this fellow!" muttered the bridegroom, turning away; "he is honest, and loves me: yet, if my uncle sees him, he is clumsy enough to betray all. Well, I always meant to get him out of the way—the sooner the better. Smith!"

"Yes, sir!"

"You have often said that you should like, if you had some capital, to settle in Australia. Your father is an excellent farmer; you are above the situation you hold with me; you are well educated, and have some knowledge of agriculture; you can scarcely fail to make a fortune as a settler; and if you are of the same mind still, why, look you, I have just L1000. at my bankers: you shall have half, if you like to sail by the first packet."

"Oh, sir, you are too generous."

"Nonsense—no thanks—I am more prudent than generous; for I agree with you that it is all up with me if my uncle gets hold of you. I dread my prying brother, too; in fact, the obligation is on my side; only stay abroad till I am a rich man, and my marriage made public, and then you may ask of me what you will. It's agreed, then; order the horses, we'll go round by Liverpool, and learn about the vessels. By the way, my good fellow, I hope you see nothing now of that good-for-nothing brother of yours?"

"No, indeed, sir. It's a thousand pities he has turned out so ill; for he was the cleverest of the family, and could always twist me round his little finger."

"That's the very reason I mentioned him. If he learned our secret, he would take it to an excellent market. Where is he?"

"Hiding, I suspect, sir."

"Well, we shall put the sea between you and him! So now all's safe."

Caleb stood by the porch of his house as the bride and bridegroom entered their humble vehicle. Though then November, the day was exquisitely mild and calm, the sky without a cloud, and even the leafless trees seemed to smile beneath the cheerful sun. And the young bride wept no more;

she was with him she loved—she was his for ever. She forgot the rest. The hope—the heart of sixteen—spoke brightly out through the blushes that mantled over her fair cheeks. The bridegroom's frank and manly countenance was radiant with joy. As he waved his hand to Caleb from the window the post-boy cracked his whip, the servant settled himself on the dickey, the horses started off in a brisk trot,—the clergyman was left alone.

To be married is certainly an event in life; to marry other people is, for a priest, a very ordinary occurrence; and yet, from that day, a great change began to operate in the spirits and the habits of Caleb Price. Have you ever, my gentle reader, buried yourself for some time quietly in the lazy ease of a dull country-life? Have you ever become gradually accustomed to its monotony, and inured to its solitude; and, just at the time when you have half-forgotten the great world—that *mare magnum* that frets and roars in the distance—have you ever received in your calm retreat some visitor, full of the busy and excited life which you imagined yourself contented to relinquish? If so, have you not perceived, that, in proportion as his presence and communication either revived old memories, or brought before you new pictures of "the bright tumult" of that existence of which your guest made a part,—you began to compare him curiously with yourself; you began to feel that what before was to rest is now to rot; that your years are gliding from you unenjoyed and wasted; that the contrast between the animal life of passionate civilisation and the vegetable torpor of motionless seclusion is one that, if you are still young, it tasks your philosophy to bear,—feeling all the while that the torpor may be yours to your grave? And when your guest has left you, when you are again alone, is the solitude the same as it was before?

Our poor Caleb had for years rooted his thoughts to his village. His guest had been like the Bird in the Fairy Tale, settling upon the quiet branches, and singing so loudly and so gladly of the enchanted skies afar, that, when it flew away, the tree pined, nipped and withering in the sober sun in which before it had basked contented. The guest was, indeed, one of those men whose animal spirits exercise upon such as come within their circle the influence and power usually ascribed only to intellectual qualities. During the month he had sojourned with Caleb, he had brought back to the poor parson all the gaiety of the brisk and noisy novitiate that preceded the solemn vow and the dull retreat;—the social parties, the merry suppers, the open-handed, open-hearted fellowship of riotous, delightful, extravagant, thoughtless YOUTH. And Caleb was not a bookman—not a scholar; he had no resources in himself, no occupation but his indolent and ill-paid duties. The emotions, therefore, of the Active Man were easily aroused within him. But if this comparison between his past and present life rendered him restless and disturbed, how much more deeply and lastingly was he affected by a contrast between his own future and that of his friend! Not in those points where he could never hope equality—wealth and station—the conventional distinctions to which, after all, a man of ordinary sense must sooner or later reconcile himself—but in that one respect wherein all, high and low, pretend to the same rights—rights which a man of moderate warmth of feeling can never willingly renounce—viz., a partner in a lot however obscure; a kind face by a hearth, no matter how mean it be! And his happier friend, like all men full of life, was full of himself—full of his love, of his future, of the blessings of home, and wife, and children. Then, too, the young bride seemed so fair, so confiding, and so tender; so formed to grace the noblest or to cheer the humblest home! And both were so happy, so all in all to each other, as they left that barren threshold! And the priest felt all this, as, melancholy and envious, he turned from the door in that November day, to find himself thoroughly alone. He now began seriously to muse upon those fancied blessings which men wearied with celibacy see springing, heavenward, behind the altar. A few weeks afterwards a notable change was visible in the good man's exterior. He became more careful of his dress, he shaved every morning, he purchased a crop-eared Welsh cob; and it was soon known in the neighbourhood that the only journey the cob was ever condemned to take was to the house of a certain squire, who, amidst a family of all ages, boasted two very pretty marriageable daughters. That was the second holy day-time of poor Caleb —the love-romance of his life: it soon closed. On learning the amount of the pastor's stipend the squire refused to receive his addresses; and, shortly after, the girl to whom he had attached himself made what the world calls a happy match: and perhaps it was one, for I never heard that she regretted the forsaken lover. Probably Caleb was not one of those whose place in a woman's heart is never to be supplied. The lady married, the world went round as before, the brook danced as merrily through the village, the poor worked on the week-days, and the urchins gambolled round the gravestones on the Sabbath,—and the pastor's heart was broken. He languished gradually and silently away. The villagers observed that he had lost his old good-humoured smile; that he did not stop every Saturday evening at the carrier's gate, to ask if there were any news stirring in the town which the carrier weekly visited; that he did not come to borrow the stray newspapers that now and then found their way into the village; that, as he sauntered along the brookside, his clothes hung loose on his limbs, and that he no longer "whistled as he went;" alas, he was no longer "in want of thought!" By degrees, the walks themselves were suspended; the parson was no longer visible: a stranger performed his duties.

One day, it might be some three years and more after the fatal visit I have commemorated—one very wild rough day in early March, the postman, who made the round of the district, rang at the parson's bell. The single female servant, her red hair loose on her neck, replied to the call.

"And how is the master?"

"Very bad;" and the girl wiped her eyes.

"He should leave you something handsome," remarked the postman, kindly, as he pocketed the money for the letter.

The pastor was in bed—the boisterous wind rattled clown the chimney and shook the ill-fitting casement in its rotting frame. The clothes he had last worn were thrown carelessly about, unsmoothed, unbrushed; the scanty articles of furniture were out of their proper places; slovenly discomfort marked the death-chamber. And by the bedside stood a neighbouring clergyman, a stout, rustic, homely, thoroughly Welsh priest, who might have sat for the portrait of Parson Adams.

"Here's a letter for you," said the visitor.

"For me!" echoed Caleb, feebly. "Ah—well—is it not very dark, or are my eyes failing?" The clergyman and the servant drew aside the curtains and propped the sick man up: he read as follows, slowly, and with difficulty:

"DEAR, CALEB,—At last I can do something for you. A friend of mine has a living in his gift just vacant, worth, I understand, from three to four hundred a year: pleasant neighbourhood—small parish. And my friend keeps the hounds!—just the thing for you. He is, however, a very particular sort of person—wants a companion, and has a horror of anything evangelical; wishes, therefore, to see you before he decides. If you can meet me in London, some day next month, I'll present you to him, and I have no doubt it will be settled. You must think it strange I never wrote to you since we parted, but you know I never was a very good correspondent; and as I had nothing to communicate advantageous to you I thought it a sort of insult to enlarge on my own happiness, and so forth. All I shall say on that score is, that I've sown my wild oats; and that you may take my word for it, there's nothing that can make a man know how large, the heart is, and how little the world, till he comes home (perhaps after a hard day's hunting) and sees his own fireside, and hears one dear welcome; and—oh, by the way, Caleb, if you could but see my boy, the sturdiest little rogue! But enough of this. All that vexes me is, that I've never yet been able to declare my marriage: my uncle, however, suspects nothing: my wife bears up against all, like an angel as she is; still, in case of any accident, it occurs to me, now I'm writing to you, especially if you leave the place, that it may be as well to send me an examined copy of the register. In those remote places registers are often lost or mislaid; and it may be useful hereafter, when I proclaim the marriage, to clear up all doubt as to the fact. "Good-bye, old fellow, "Yours most truly, &c., &c."

"It comes too late," sighed Caleb, heavily; and the letter fell from his hands. There was a long pause. "Close the shutters," said the sick man, at last; "I think I could sleep: and—and—pick up that letter."

With a trembling, but eager gripe, he seized the paper, as a miser would seize the deeds of an estate on which he has a mortgage. He smoothed the folds, looked complacently at the well-known hand, smiled—a ghastly smile! and then placed the letter under his pillow, and sank down; they left him alone. He did not wake for some hours, and that good clergyman, poor as himself, was again at his post. The only friendships that are really with us in the hour of need are those which are cemented by equality of circumstance. In the depth of home, in the hour of tribulation, by the bed of death, the rich and the poor are seldom found side by side. Caleb was evidently much feebler; but his sense seemed clearer than it had been, and the instincts of his native kindness were the last that left him. "There is something he wants me do for him," he muttered.

"Ah! I remember: Jones, will you send for the parish register? It is somewhere in the vestry-room, I think—but nothing's kept properly. Better go yourself—'tis important."

Mr. Jones nodded, and sallied forth. The register was not in the vestry; the church-wardens knew nothing about it; the clerk—a new clerk, who was also the sexton, and rather a wild fellow—had gone ten miles off to a wedding: every place was searched; till, at last, the book was found, amidst a heap of old magazines and dusty papers, in the parlour of Caleb himself. By the time it was brought to him, the sufferer was fast declining; with some difficulty his dim eye discovered the place where, amidst the clumsy pothooks of the parishioners, the large clear hand of the old friend, and the trembling characters of the bride, looked forth, distinguished.

"Extract this for me, will you?" said Caleb. Mr. Jones obeyed.

"Now, just write above the extract:

"'Sir,—By Mr. Price's desire I send you the inclosed. He is too ill to write himself. But he bids me say that he has never been quite the same man since you left him; and that, if he should not get well again, still your kind letter has made him easier in his mind."

Caleb stopped.

"Go on."

"That is all I have to say: sign your name, and put the address—here it is. Ah, the letter," he muttered, "must not lie about! If anything happens to me, it may get him into trouble."

And as Mr. Jones sealed his communication, Caleb feebly stretched his wan hand, held the letter which had "come too late" over the flame of the candle. As the blazing paper dropped on the carpetless floor, Mr. Jones prudently set thereon the broad sole of his top-boot, and the maidservant brushed the tinder into the grate.

"Ah, trample it out:—hurry it amongst the ashes. The last as the rest," said Caleb, hoarsely. "Friendship, fortune, hope, love, life—a little flame, and then—and then—"

"Don't be uneasy—it's quite out!" said Mr. Jones. Caleb turned his face to the wall. He lingered till the next day, when he passed insensibly from sleep to death. As soon as the breath was out of his body, Mr. Jones felt that his duty was discharged, that other duties called him home. He promised to return to read the burial-service over the deceased, gave some hasty orders about the plain funeral, and was turning from the room, when he saw the letter he had written by Caleb's wish, still on the table. "I pass the post-office—I'll put it in," said he to the weeping servant; "and just give me that scrap of paper." So he wrote on the scrap, "P. S. He died this morning at half-past twelve, without pain.—M. J.;" and not taking the trouble to break the seal, thrust the final bulletin into the folds of the letter, which he then carefully placed in his vast pocket, and safely transferred to the post. And that was all that the jovial and happy man, to whom the letter was addressed, ever heard of the last days of his college friend.

The living, vacant by the death of Caleb Price, was not so valuable as to plague the patron with many applications. It continued vacant nearly the whole of the six months prescribed by law. And the desolate parsonage was committed to the charge of one of the villagers, who had occasionally assisted Caleb in the care of his little garden. The villager, his wife, and half-a-dozen noisy, ragged children, took possession of the quiet bachelor's abode. The furniture had been sold to pay the expenses of the funeral, and a few trifling bills; and, save the kitchen and the two attics, the empty house, uninhabited, was surrendered to the sportive mischief of the idle urchins, who prowled about the silent chambers in fear of the silence, and in ecstasy at the space. The bedroom in which Caleb had died was, indeed, long held sacred by infantine superstition. But one day the eldest boy having ventured across the threshold, two cupboards, the doors standing ajar, attracted the child's curiosity. He opened one, and his exclamation soon brought the rest of the children round him. Have you ever, reader, when a boy, suddenly stumbled on that El Dorado, called by the grown-up folks a lumber room? Lumber, indeed! what *Virtu* double-locks in cabinets is the real lumber to the boy! Lumber, reader! to thee it was a treasury! Now this cupboard had been the lumber-room in Caleb's household. In an instant the whole troop had thrown themselves on the motley contents. Stray joints of clumsy fishing-rods; artificial baits; a pair of worn-out top-boots, in which one of the urchins, whooping and shouting, buried himself up to the middle; moth-eaten, stained, and ragged, the collegian's gown-relic of the dead man's palmy time; a bag of carpenter's tools, chiefly broken; a cricket-bat; an odd boxing-glove; a fencing-foil, snapped in the middle; and, more than all, some half-finished attempts at rude toys: a boat, a cart, a doll's house, in which the good-natured Caleb had busied himself for the younger ones of that family in which he had found the fatal ideal of his trite life. One by one were these lugged forth from their dusty slumber-profane hands struggling for the first right of appropriation. And now, revealed against the wall, glared upon the startled violators of the sanctuary, with glassy eyes and horrent visage, a grim monster. They huddled back one upon the other, pale and breathless, till the eldest, seeing that the creature moved not, took heart, approached on tip-toe- twice receded, and twice again advanced, and finally drew out, daubed, painted, and tricked forth in the semblance of a griffin, a gigantic kite.

The children, alas! were not old and wise enough to knew all the dormant value of that imprisoned aeronaut, which had cost Caleb many a dull evening's labour—the intended gift to the false one's favourite brother. But they guessed that it was a thing or spirit appertaining of right to them; and they resolved, after mature consultation, to impart the secret of their discovery to an old wooden-legged villager, who had served in the army, who was the idol of all the children of the place, and who, they firmly believed, knew everything under the sun, except the mystical arts of reading and writing. Accordingly, having seen that the coast was clear—for they considered their parents (as the children of the hard- working often do) the natural foes to amusement—they carried the monster into an old outhouse, and ran to the veteran to beg him to come up slyly and inspect its properties.

Three months after this memorable event, arrived the new pastor—a slim, prim, orderly, and starch young man, framed by nature and trained by practice to bear a great deal of solitude and starving. Two loving couples had waited to be married till his Reverence should arrive. The ceremony performed, where was the registry-book? The vestry was searched-the church-wardens interrogated; the gay clerk, who, on the demise of his deaf predecessor, had come into office a little before Caleb's last illness, had a dim recollection of having taken the registry up to Mr. Price at the time the vestry-room was whitewashed. The house was searched—the cupboard, the mysterious cupboard, was explored. "Here it is, sir!" cried the clerk; and he pounced upon a pale parchment volume. The thin clergyman opened it, and recoiled in dismay—more than three-fourths of the leaves had been torn out.

"It is the moths, sir," said the gardener's wife, who had not yet removed from the house.

The clergyman looked round; one of the children was trembling. "What have you done to this book, little one?"

"That book?—the—hi!—hi!—"

"Speak the truth, and you sha'n't be punished."

"I did not know it was any harm—hi!—hi!—"

"Well, and—"

"And old Ben helped us."

"Well?"

"And—and—and—hi!—hi!—The tail of the kite, sir!—"

"Where is the kite?"

Alas! the kite and its tail were long ago gone to that undiscovered limbo where all things lost, broken, vanished, and destroyed; things that lose themselves—for servants are too honest to steal; things that break themselves—for servants are too careful to break; find an everlasting and impenetrable refuge.

"It does not signify a pin's head," said the clerk; "the parish must find a new 'un!"

"It is no fault of mine," said the Pastor. "Are my chops ready?"

CHAPTER II

> *"And soothed with idle dreams the frowning fate."*
> ***—CRABBE.***

"Why does not my father come back? what a time he has been away!"

"My dear Philip, business detains him; but he will be here in a few days —perhaps to-day!"

"I should like him to see how much I am improved."

"Improved in what, Philip?" said the mother, with a smile. "Not Latin, I am sure; for I have not seen you open a book since you insisted on poor Todd's dismissal."

"Todd! Oh, he was such a scrub, and spoke through his nose: what could he know of Latin?"

"More than you ever will, I fear, unless—" and here there was a certain hesitation in the mother's voice, "unless your father consents to your going to school."

"Well, I should like to go to Eton! That's the only school for a gentleman. I've heard my father say so."

"Philip, you are too proud."—"Proud! you often call me proud; but, then, you kiss me when you do so. Kiss me now, mother."

The lady drew her son to her breast, put aside the clustering hair from his forehead, and kissed him; but the kiss was sad, and the moment after she pushed him away gently and muttered, unconscious that she was overheard:

"If, after all, my devotion to the father should wrong the children!"

The boy started, and a cloud passed over his brow; but he said nothing. A light step entered the room through the French casements that opened on the lawn, and the mother turned to her youngest-born, and her eye brightened.

"Mamma! mamma! here is a letter for you. I snatched it from John: it is papa's handwriting."

The lady uttered a joyous exclamation, and seized the letter. The younger child nestled himself on a stool at her feet, looking up while she read it; the elder stood apart, leaning on his gun, and with something of thought, even of gloom, upon his countenance.

There was a strong contrast in the two boys. The elder, who was about fifteen, seemed older than he was, not only from his height, but from the darkness of his complexion, and a certain proud, nay, imperious, expression upon features that, without having the soft and fluent graces of childhood, were yet regular and striking. His dark-green shooting- dress, with the belt and pouch, the cap, with its gold tassel set upon his luxuriant curls, which had the purple gloss of the raven's plume, blended perhaps something prematurely manly in his own tastes, with the love of the fantastic and the picturesque which bespeaks the presiding genius of the proud mother. The younger son had scarcely told his ninth year; and the soft, auburn ringlets, descending half-way down the shoulders; the rich and delicate bloom that exhibits at once the hardy health and the gentle fostering; the large deep-blue eyes; the flexile and almost effeminate contour of the harmonious features; altogether made such an ideal of childlike beauty as Lawrence had loved to paint or Chantrey model. And the daintiest cares of a mother, who, as yet, has her darling all to herself—her toy, her plaything—were visible in the large falling collar of finest cambric, and the blue velvet dress with its filigree buttons and embroidered sash.

Both the boys had about them the air of those whom Fate ushers blandly into life; the air of wealth, and birth, and luxury, spoiled and pampered as if earth had no thorn for their feet, and heaven not a wind to visit their young cheeks too roughly. The mother had been extremely handsome; and though the first bloom of youth was now gone, she had still the beauty that might captivate new love—an easier task than to retain the old. Both her sons, though differing from each other, resembled her; she had the features of the younger; and probably any one who had seen her in her own earlier youth would have recognized in that child's gay yet gentle countenance the mirror of the mother when a girl. Now, however, especially when silent or thoughtful, the expression of her face was rather that of the elder boy;—the cheek, once so rosy was now pale, though clear, with something which time had given, of pride and thought, in the curved lip and the high forehead. One who could have looked on her in her more lonely hours, might have seen that the pride had known shame, and the thought was the shadow of the passions of fear and sorrow.

But now as she read those hasty, brief, but well-remembered characters— read as one whose heart was in her eyes—joy and triumph alone were visible in that eloquent countenance. Her eyes flashed, her breast heaved; and at length, clasping the letter to her lips, she kissed it again and again with passionate transport. Then, as her eyes met the dark, inquiring, earnest gaze of her eldest born, she flung her arms round him, and wept vehemently.

"What is the matter, mamma, dear mamma?" said the youngest, pushing himself between Philip and his mother. "Your father is coming back, this day—this very hour;—and you—you—child—you, Philip—" Here sobs broke in upon her words, and left her speechless.

The letter that had produced this effect ran as follows:

TO MRS MORTON, Fernside Cottage.

"DEAREST KATE,—My last letter prepared you for the news I have now to relate—my poor uncle is no more. Though I had seen little of him, especially of late years, his death sensibly affected me; but I have at least the consolation of thinking that there is nothing now to prevent my doing justice to you. I am the sole heir to his fortune—I have it in my power, dearest Kate, to offer you a tardy recompense for all you have put up with for my sake;—a sacred testimony to your long forbearance, your unreproachful love, your wrongs, and your devotion. Our children, too— my noble Philip!—kiss them, Kate—kiss them for me a thousand times.

"I write in great haste—the burial is just over, and my letter will only serve to announce my return. My darling Catherine, I shall be with you almost as soon as these lines meet your eyes—those clear eyes, that, for all the tears they have shed for my faults and follies, have never looked the less kind. Yours, ever as ever,

"PHILIP BEAUFORT.

This letter has told its tale, and little remains to explain. Philip Beaufort was one of those men of whom there are many in his peculiar class of society—easy, thoughtless, good-humoured, generous, with feelings infinitely better than his principles.

Inheriting himself but a moderate fortune, which was three parts in the hands of the Jews before he was twenty-five, he had the most brilliant expectations from his uncle; an old bachelor, who, from a courtier, had turned a misanthrope—cold—shrewd—penetrating—worldly—sarcastic—and imperious; and from this relation he received, meanwhile, a handsome and, indeed, munificent allowance. About sixteen years before the date at which this narrative opens, Philip Beaufort had "run off," as the saying is, with Catherine Morton, then little more than a child,—a motherless child—educated at a boarding-school to notions and desires far beyond her station; for she was the daughter of a provincial tradesman. And Philip Beaufort, in the prime of life, was possessed of most of the qualities that dazzle the eyes and many of the arts that betray the affections. It was suspected by some that they were privately married: if so, the secret had been closely kept, and baffled all the inquiries of the stern old uncle. Still there was much, not only in the manner, at once modest and dignified, but in the character of Catherine, which was proud and high-spirited, to give colour to the suspicion. Beaufort, a man naturally careless of forms, paid her a marked and punctilious respect; and his attachment was evidently one not only of passion, but of confidence and esteem. Time developed in her mental qualities far superior to those of Beaufort, and for these she had ample leisure of cultivation. To the influence derived from her mind and person she added that of a frank, affectionate, and winning disposition; their children cemented the bond between them. Mr. Beaufort was passionately attached to field sports. He lived the greater part of the year with Catherine, at the beautiful cottage to which he had built hunting stables that were the admiration of the county; and though the cottage was near London, the pleasures of the metropolis seldom allured him for more than a few days— generally but a few hours-at a time; and he—always hurried back with renewed relish to what he considered his home.

Whatever the connection between Catherine and himself (and of the true nature of that connection, the Introductory Chapter has made the reader more enlightened than the world), her influence had, at least, weaned from all excesses, and many follies, a man who, before he knew her, had seemed likely, from the extreme joviality and carelessness of his nature, and a very imperfect education, to contract whatever vices were most in fashion as preservatives against *ennui*. And if their union had been openly hallowed by the Church, Philip Beaufort had been universally esteemed the model of a tender husband and a fond father. Ever, as he became more and more acquainted with Catherine's natural good qualities, and more and more attached to his home, had Mr. Beaufort, with the generosity of true affection, desired to remove from her the pain of an equivocal condition by a public marriage. But Mr. Beaufort, though generous, was not free from the worldliness which had met him everywhere, amidst the society in which his youth had been spent. His uncle, the head of one of those families which yearly vanish from the commonalty into the peerage, but which once formed a distinguished peculiarity in the aristocracy of England—families of ancient birth, immense possessions, at once noble and untitled—held his estates by no other tenure than his own caprice. Though he professed to like Philip, yet he saw but little of him. When the news of the illicit connection his nephew was reported to have formed reached him, he at first resolved to break it off; but observing that Philip no longer gambled, nor ran in debt, and had retired from the turf to the safer and more economical pastimes of the field, he contented himself with inquiries which satisfied him that Philip was not married; and perhaps he thought it, on the whole, more prudent to wink at an error that was not attended by the bills which had here-to-fore characterised the human infirmities of his reckless nephew. He took care, however, incidentally, and in reference to some scandal of the day, to pronounce his opinion, not upon the fault, but upon the only mode of repairing it.

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