

ЭДВАРД БУЛЬВЕР-ЛИТТОН

**PAUL CLIFFORD —
VOLUME 04**

Эдвард Джордж Бульвер-Литтон
Paul Clifford — Volume 04

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Edward Bulwer-Lytton

Paul Clifford — Volume 04

CHAPTER XVI

Whackum. My dear rogues, dear boys, Bluster and Dingboy! you are the bravest fellows that ever scoured yet!

—*SUADWELL: Scourers.*

Cato, the Thessalian, was wont to say that some things may be done unjustly, that many things may be done justly.

—*LORD BACON (being a, justification of every rascality).*

Although our three worthies had taken unto themselves a splendid lodging in Milsom Street, which, to please Ned, was over a hairdresser's shop, yet, instead of returning thither, or repairing to such taverns as might seem best befitting their fashion and garb, they struck at once from the gay parts of the town, and tarried not till they reached a mean-looking alehouse in a remote suburb.

The door was opened to them by an elderly lady; and Clifford, stalking before his companions into an apartment at the back of the house, asked if the other gentlemen were come yet.

"No," returned the dame. "Old Mr. Bags came in about ten

minutes ago; but hearing more work might be done, he went out again."

"Bring the lush and the pipes, old blone!" cried Ned, throwing himself on a bench; "we are never at a loss for company!"

"You, indeed, never can be, who are always inseparably connected with the object of your admiration," said Tomlin, son, dryly, and taking up an old newspaper. Ned, who, though choleric, was a capital fellow, and could bear a joke on himself, smiled, and drawing forth a little pair of scissors, began trimming his nails.

"Curse me," said he, after a momentary silence, "if this is not a devilish deal pleasanter than playing the fine gentleman in that great room, with a rose in one's button-hole! What say you, Master Lovett?"

Clifford (as henceforth, despite his other aliases, we shall denominate our hero), who had thrown himself at full length on a bench at the far end of the room, and who seemed plunged into a sullen revery, now looked up for a moment, and then, turning round and presenting the dorsal part of his body to Long Ned, muttered, "Fish!"

"Harkye, Master Lovett!" said Long Ned, colouring. "I don't know what has come over you of late; but I would have you to learn that gentlemen are entitled to courtesy and polite behaviour; and so, d' ye see, if you ride your high horse upon me, splice my extremities if I won't have satisfaction!"

"Hist, man! be quiet," said Tomlinson, philosophically,

snuffing the candles,—

"For companions to quarrel,
Is extremely immoral.'

"Don't you see that the captain is in a revery? What good man ever loves to be interrupted in his meditations? Even Alfred the Great could not bear it! Perhaps at this moment, with the true anxiety of a worthy chief, the captain is designing something for our welfare!"

"Captain indeed!" muttered Long Ned, darting a wrathful look at Clifford, who had not deigned to pay any attention to Mr. Pepper's threat; "for my part I cannot conceive what was the matter with us when we chose this green slip of the gallows-tree for our captain of the district. To be sure, he did very well at first, and that robbery of the old lord was not ill-planned; but lately—"

"Nay, nay," quoth Augustus, interrupting the gigantic grumbler; "the nature of man is prone to discontent. Allow that our present design of setting up the gay Lothario, and trying our chances at Bath for an heiress, is owing as much to Lovett's promptitude as to our invention."

"And what good will come of it?" returned Ned, as he lighted his pipe; "answer me that. Was I not dressed as fine as a lord, and did not I walk three times up and down that great room without being a jot the better for it?"

"Ah! but you know not how many secret conquests you may

have made. You cannot win a prize by looking upon it."

"Humph!" grunted Ned, applying himself discontentedly to the young existence of his pipe.

"As for the captain's partner," renewed Tomlinson, who maliciously delighted in exciting the jealousy of the handsome "tax-collector,"—for that was the designation by which Augustus thought proper to style himself and companions,—"I will turn Tory if she be not already half in love with him; and did you hear the old gentleman who cut into our rubber say what a fine fortune she had? Faith, Ned, it is lucky for us two that we all agreed to go shares in our marriage speculations; I fancy the worthy captain will think it a bad bargain for himself."

"I am not so sure of that, Mr. Tomlinson," said Long Ned, sourly eying his comrade. "Some women may be caught by a smooth skin and a showy manner; but real masculine beauty,—eyes, colour, and hair,—Mr. Tomlinson, must ultimately make its way; so hand me the brandy, and cease your jaw."

"Well, well," said Tomlinson, "I'll give you a toast,—'The prettiest girl in England,' and that's Miss Brandon!"

"You shall give no such toast, sir!" said Clifford, starting from the bench. "What the devil is Miss Brandon to you? And now, Ned," seeing that the tall hero looked on him with an unfavourable aspect, "here's my hand; forgive me if I was uncivil. Tomlinson will tell you, in a maxim, men are changeable. Here's to your health; and it shall not be my fault, gentlemen, if we have not a merry evening!"

This speech, short as it was, met with great applause from the two friends; and Clifford, as president, stationed himself in a huge chair at the head of the table. Scarcely had he assumed this dignity, before the door opened, and half-a-dozen of the gentlemen confederates trooped somewhat noisily into the apartment.

"Softly, softly, messieurs," said the president, recovering all his constitutional gayety, yet blending it with a certain negligent command, —"respect for the chair, if you please! 'T is the way with all assemblies where the public purse is a matter of deferential interest!"

"Hear him!" cried Tomlinson.

"What, my old friend Bags!" said the president; "you have not come empty-handed, I will swear; your honest face is like the table of contents to the good things in your pockets!"

"Ah, Captain Clifford," said the veteran, groaning, and shaking his reverend head, "I have seen the day when there was not a lad in England forked so largely, so comprehensively-like, as I did. But, as King Lear says at Common Garden, 'I be's old now!'"

"But your zeal is as youthful as ever, my fine fellow," said the captain, soothingly; "and if you do not clean out the public as thoroughly as heretofore, it is not the fault of your inclinations."

"No, that it is not!" cried the "tax-collectors" unanimously.

"And if ever a pocket is to be picked neatly, quietly, and effectually," added the complimentary Clifford, "I do not know

to this day, throughout the three kingdoms, a neater, quieter, and more effective set of fingers than Old Bags's!"

The veteran bowed disclaimingly, and took his seat among the heartfelt good wishes of the whole assemblage.

"And now, gentlemen," said Clifford, as soon as the revellers had provided themselves with their wonted luxuries, potatory and fumous, "let us hear your adventures, and rejoice our eyes with their produce. The gallant Attie shall begin; but first, a toast,—'May those who leap from a hedge never leap from a tree!'"

This toast being drunk with enthusiastic applause, Fighting Attie began the recital of his little history.

"You sees, Captain," said he, putting himself in a martial position, and looking Clifford full in the face, "that I'm not addicted to much blarney. Little cry and much wool is my motto. At ten o'clock A.M. saw the enemy—in the shape of a Doctor of Divinity. 'Blow me,' says I to Old Bags, 'but I'll do his reverence!' 'Blow me,' says Old Bags, 'but you sha' n't,—you'll have us scragged if you touches the Church.' 'My grandmother!' says I. Bags tells the pals,—all in a fuss about it,— what care I? I puts on a decent dress, and goes to the doctor as a decayed soldier wot supplies the shops in the turning line. His reverence—a fat jolly dog as ever you see—was at dinner over a fine roast pig; so I tells him I have some bargains at home for him. Splice me, if the doctor did not think he had got a prize; so he puts on his boots, and he comes with me to my house. But when I gets him into a lane, out come my pops. 'Give up, Doctor,' says I; 'others

must share the goods of the Church now.' You has no idea what a row he made; but I did the thing, and there's an end on't."

"Bravo, Attie!" cried Clifford; and the word echoed round the board. Attie put a purse on the table, and the next gentleman was called to confession.

"It skills not, boots not," gentlest of readers, to record each of the narratives that now followed one another. Old Bags, in especial, preserved his well-earned reputation by emptying six pockets, which had been filled with every possible description of petty valuables. Peasant and prince appeared alike to have come under his hands; and perhaps the good old man had done in the town more towards effecting an equality of goods among different ranks than all the Reformers, from Cornwall to Carlisle. Yet so keen was his appetite for the sport that the veteran appropriator absolutely burst into tears at not having "forked more."

"I love a warm-hearted enthusiasm," cried Clifford, handling the movables, while he gazed lovingly on the ancient purloiner. "May new cases never teach us to forget Old Bags!"

As soon as this "sentiment" had been duly drunk, and Mr. Bagshot had dried his tears and applied himself to his favourite drink,—which, by the way, was "blue ruin,"—the work of division took place. The discretion and impartiality of the captain in this arduous part of his duty attracted universal admiration; and each gentleman having carefully pouched his share, the youthful president hemmed thrice, and the society became aware

of a purposed speech.

"Gentlemen!" began Clifford,—and his main supporter, the sapient Augustus, shouted out, "Hear!"—"gentlemen, you all know that when some months ago you were pleased, partly at the instigation of Gentleman George—God bless him!—partly from the exaggerated good opinion expressed of me by my friends, to elect me to the high honour of the command of this district, I myself was by no means ambitious to assume that rank, which I knew well was far beyond my merits, and that responsibility which I knew with equal certainty was too weighty for my powers. Your voices, however, overruled my own; and as Mr. Muddlepudd, the great metaphysician, in that excellent paper, 'The Asinaeum,' was wont to observe, 'the susceptibilities, innate, extensible, incomprehensible, and eternal,' existing in my bosom, were infinitely more powerful than the shallow suggestions of reason,—that ridiculous thing which all wise men and judicious Asinaeans sedulously stifle."

"Plague take the man! what is he talking about?" said Long Ned, who we have seen was of an envious temper, in a whisper to Old Bags. Old Bags shook his head.

"In a word, gentlemen," renewed Clifford, "your kindness overpowered me; and despite my cooler inclinations, I accepted your flattering proposal. Since then I have endeavoured, so far as I have been able, to advance your interests; I have kept a vigilant eye upon all my neighbours; I have, from county to county, established numerous correspondents; and our exertions have

been carried on with a promptitude that has ensured success.

"Gentlemen, I do not wish to boast; but on these nights of periodical meetings, when every quarter brings us to go halves,—when we meet in private to discuss the affairs of the public, show our earnings as it were in privy council, and divide them amicably as it were in the Cabinet ["Hear! hear!" from Mr. Tomlinson],—it is customary for your captain for the time being to remind you of his services, engage your pardon for his deficiencies, and your good wishes for his future exertions. Gentlemen, has it ever been said of Paul Lovett that he heard of a prize and forgot to tell you of his news? ["Never! never!" loud cheering.] Has it ever been said of him that he sent others to seize the booty, and stayed at home to think how it should be spent? ["No! no!" repeated cheers.] Has it ever been said of him that he took less share than his due of your danger, and more of your guineas? [Cries in the negative, accompanied with vehement applause.] Gentlemen, I thank you for these flattering and audible testimonials in my favour; but the points on which I have dwelt, however necessary to my honour, would prove but little for my merits; they might be worthy notice in your comrade, you demand more subtle duties in your chief. Gentlemen, has it ever been said of Paul Lovett that he sent out brave men on forlorn hopes; that he hazarded your own heads by rash attempts in acquiring pictures of King George's; that zeal, in short, was greater in him than caution, or that his love of a quid (A guinea) ever made him neglectful of your just aversion to a quod? (A prison) [Unanimous cheering.]

"Gentlemen, since I have had the honour to preside over your welfare, Fortune, which favours the bold, has not been unmerciful to you! But three of our companions have been missed from our peaceful festivities. One, gentlemen, I myself expelled from our corps for ungentlemanlike practices; he picked pockets of fogles, (handkerchiefs)—it was a vulgar employment. Some of you, gentlemen, have done the same for amusement; Jack Littlefork did it for occupation. I expostulated with him in public and in private; Mr. Pepper cut his society; Mr. Tomlinson read him an essay on Real Greatness of Soul: all was in vain. He was pumped by the mob for the theft of a *bird's-eye wipe*. The fault I had borne with,— the detection was unpardonable; I expelled him. Who's here so base as would be a fogle-hunter? If any, speak; for him have I offended! Who's here so rude as would not be a gentleman? If any, speak; for him have I offended! I pause for a reply! What, none! then none have I offended. [Loud cheers.] Gentlemen, I may truly add, that I have done no more to Jack Littlefork than you should do to Paul Lovett! The next vacancy in our ranks was occasioned by the loss of Patrick Blunderbull. You know, gentlemen, the vehement exertions that I made to save that misguided creature, whom I had made exertions no less earnest to instruct. But he chose to swindle under the name of the 'Honourable Captain Smico;' the Peerage gave him the lie at once; his case was one of aggravation, and he was so remarkably ugly that he 'created no interest.' He left us for a foreign exile; and if as a man I lament him, I confess

to you, gentlemen, as a 'tax-collector' I am easily consoled.

"Our third loss must be fresh in your memory. Peter Popwell, as bold a fellow as ever breathed, is no more! [A movement in the assembly.] Peace be with him! He died on the field of battle; shot dead by a Scotch Colonel, whom poor Popwell thought to rob of nothing with an empty pistol. His memory, gentlemen,—in solemn silence!

"These make the catalogue of our losses," resumed the youthful chief, so soon as the "red cup had crowned the memory" of Peter Popwell; "I am proud, even in sorrow, to think that the blame of those losses rests not with me. And now, friends and followers! Gentlemen of the Road, the Street, the Theatre, and the Shop! Prigs, Tobymen, and Squires of the Cross! according to the laws of our Society, I resign into your hands that power which for two quarterly terms you have confided to mine, ready to sink into your ranks as a comrade, nor unwilling to renounce the painful honour I have borne,—borne with much infirmity, it is true, but at least with a sincere desire to serve that cause with which you have intrusted me."

So saying, the captain descended from his chair amidst the most uproarious applause; and as soon as the first burst had partially subsided, Augustus Tomlinson rising, with one hand in his breeches' pocket and the other stretched out, said,—

"Gentlemen, I move that Paul Lovett be again chosen as our captain for the ensuing term of three months. [Deafening cheers.] Much might I say about his surpassing merits; but why

dwell upon that which is obvious? Life is short! Why should speeches be long? Our lives, perhaps, are shorter than the lives of other men; why should not our harangues be of a suitable brevity? Gentlemen, I shall say but one word in favour of my excellent friend,—of mine, say I? ay, of mine, of yours. He is a friend to all of us! A prime minister is not more useful to his followers and more burdensome to the public than I am proud to say is—Paul Lovett. [Loud plaudits.] What I shall urge in his favour is simply this: the man whom opposite parties unite in praising must have supereminent merit. Of all your companions, gentlemen, Paul Lovett is the only man who to that merit can advance a claim. [Applause.] You all know, gentlemen, that our body has long been divided into two factions,—each jealous of the other, each desirous of ascendancy, and each emulous which shall put the greatest number of fingers into the public pie. In the language of the vulgar, the one faction would be called 'swindlers,' and the other 'highwaymen.' I, gentlemen, who am fond of finding new names for things and for persons, and am a bit of a politician, call the one Whigs, and the other Tories. [Clamorous cheering.] Of the former body I am esteemed no influential member; of the latter faction Mr. Bags is justly considered the most shining ornament. Mr. Attie and Mr. Edward Pepper can scarcely be said to belong entirely to either; they unite the good qualities of both. 'British compounds' some term them; I term them Liberal Aristocrats! [Cheers.] I now call upon you all, Whig, or Swindler, Tory, or Highwayman, 'British Compounds,' or Liberal

Aristocrats,—I call upon you all to name me one man whom you will all agree to elect."

All,—"Lovett forever!"

"Gentlemen," continued the sagacious Augustus, "that shout is sufficient; without another word, I propose, as your captain, Mr. Paul Lovett."

"And I seconds the motion!" said old Mr. Bags.

Our hero, being now by the unanimous applause of his confederates restored to the chair of office, returned thanks in a neat speech; and Scarlet Jem declared, with great solemnity, that it did equal honour to his head and heart.

The thunders of eloquence being hushed, flashes of lightning, or, as the vulgar say, *glasses of gin*, gleamed about. Good old Mr. Bags stuck, however, to his blue ruin, and Attie to the bottle of bingo; some, among whom were Clifford and the wise Augustus, called for wine; and Clifford, who exerted himself to the utmost in supporting the gay duties of his station, took care that the song should vary the pleasures of the bowl. Of the songs we have only been enabled to preserve two. The first is by Long Ned; and though we confess we can see but little in it, yet (perhaps from some familiar allusion or other with which we are necessarily unacquainted) it produced a prodigious sensation. It ran thus:—

THE ROGUE'S RECIPE

Your honest fool a rogue to make,
As great as can be seen, sir,
Two hackneyed rogues you first must take,
Then place your fool between, sir.

Virtue 's a dunghill cock, ashamed
Of self when paired with game ones;
And wildest elephants are tamed
If stuck betwixt two tame ones.

The other effusion with which we have the honour to favour our readers is a very amusing duet which took place between Fighting Attie and a tall thin robber, who was a dangerous fellow in a mob, and was therefore called Mobbing Francis; it was commenced by the latter:—

MOBBING FRANCIS:

The best of all robbers as ever I knowed
Is the bold Fighting Attie, the pride of the road!—
Fighting Attie, my hero, I saw you to-day
A purse full of yellow boys seize;
And as, just at present, *I'm low in the lay,*
I'll borrow a quid, if you please.
Oh! bold Fighting Attie, the knowing, the natty,
By us all it must sure be confest,

Though your shoppers and snobbers are pretty good robbers,
A soldier is always the best.

FIGHTING ATTIE

Stubble your whids, (Hold your tongue)
You wants to trick I.
Lend you my quids?
Not one, by Dickey.

MOBBING FRANCIS:

Oh, what a beast is a niggardly ruffler,
Nabbing, grabbing all for himself!
Hang it, old fellow, I'll hit you a muffler,
Since you won't give me a pinch of the pelf.
You has not a heart for the *general distress*,
You cares not a mag if our party should fall,
And if Scarlet Jem were not good at a press,
By Goles, it would soon be all up with us all!
Oh, Scarlet Jem, he is trusty and trim,
Like his wig to his poll, sticks his conscience to him;
But I vows I despises the fellow who prizes
More his own ends than the popular stock, sir;

And the soldier as bones for himself and his cronos,
Should be boned like a traitor himself at the block, sir.

The severe response of Mobbing Francis did not in the least ruffle the constitutional calmness of Fighting Attie; but the wary Clifford, seeing that Francis had lost his temper, and watchful over the least sign of disturbance among the company, instantly called for another song, and Mobbing Francis sullenly knocked down Old Bags.

The night was far gone, and so were the wits of the honest tax-gatherers, when the president commanded silence, and the convivialists knew that their chief was about to issue forth the orders for the ensuing term. Nothing could be better timed than such directions,—during merriment and before oblivion.

"Gentlemen," said the captain, "I will now, with your leave, impart to you all the plans I have formed for each. You, Attie, shall repair to London: be the Windsor road and the purlieus of Pimlico your especial care. Look you, my hero, to these letters; they will apprise you of much work. I need not caution you to silence. Like the oyster, you never open your mouth but for something. Honest Old Bags, a rich grazier will be in Smithfield on Thursday; his name is Hodges, and he will have somewhat like a thousand pounds in his pouch. He is green, fresh, and avaricious; offer to assist him in defrauding his neighbours in a bargain, and cease not till thou hast done that with him which he wished to do to others. Be, excellent old man, like the frog-fish,

which fishes for other fishes with two horns that resemble baits; the prey dart at the horns, and are down the throat in an instant!— For thee, dearest Jem, these letters announce a prize: fat is Parson Pliant; full is his purse; and he rides from Henley to Oxford on Friday,—I need say no more! As for the rest of you, gentlemen, on this paper you will see your destinations fixed. I warrant you, ye will find enough work till we meet again this day three months. Myself, Augustus Tomlinson, and Ned Pepper remain in Bath; we have business in hand, gentlemen, of paramount importance; should you by accident meet us, never acknowledge us,—we are *incog.*; striking at high game, and putting on falcon's plumes to do it in character,—you understand; but this accident can scarcely occur, for none of you will remain at Bath; by to-morrow night, may the road receive you. And now, gentlemen, speed the glass, and I'll give you a sentiment by way of a spur to it,—

"Much sweeter than honey
Is other men's money!"

Our hero's maxim was received with all the enthusiasm which agreeable truisms usually create. And old Mr. Bags rose to address the chair; unhappily for the edification of the audience, the veteran's foot slipped before he had proceeded further than "Mr. President;" he fell to the earth with a sort of reel,—

"Like shooting stars he fell to rise no more!"

His body became a capital footstool for the luxurious Pepper. Now Augustus Tomlinson and Clifford, exchanging looks, took every possible pains to promote the hilarity of the evening; and before the third hour of morning had sounded, they had the satisfaction of witnessing the effects of their benevolent labours in the prostrate forms of all their companions. Long Ned, naturally more capacious than the rest, succumbed the last.

"As leaves of trees," said the chairman, waving his hand,

"As leaves of trees the race of man is found,
Now fresh with dew, now withering on the ground."

"Well said, my Hector of Highways;" cried Tomlinson; and then helping himself to the wine, while he employed his legs in removing the supine forms of Scarlet Jem and Long Ned, he continued the Homeric quotation, with a pompous and self-gratulatory tone,—

"So flourish these when those have passed away!"

"We managed to get rid of our friends," began Clifford—

"Like Whigs in place," interrupted the politician.

"Right, Tomlinson, thanks to the milder properties of our drink, and perchance to the stronger qualities of our heads; and now tell me, my friend, what think you of our chance of success? Shall we catch an heiress or not?"

"Why, really," said Tomlinson, "women are like those calculations in arithmetic, which one can never bring to an exact

account; for my part, I shall stuff my calves, and look out for a widow. You, my good fellow, seem to stand a fair chance with Miss ——"

"Oh, name her not!" cried Clifford, colouring, even through the flush which wine had spread over his countenance. "Ours are not the lips by which her name should be breathed; and, faith, when I think of her, I do it anonymously."

"What, have you ever thought of her before this evening?"

"Yes, for months," answered Clifford. "You remember some time ago, when we formed the plan for robbing Lord Mauleverer, how, rather for frolic than profit, you robbed Dr. Slopperton, of Warlock, while I compassionately walked home with the old gentleman. Well, at the parson's house I met Miss Brandon—mind, if I speak of her by name, *you* must not; and, by Heaven!—But I won't swear. I accompanied her home. You know, before morning we robbed Lord Mauleverer; the affair made a noise, and I feared to endanger you all if I appeared in the vicinity of the robbery. Since then, business diverted my thoughts; we formed the plan of trying a matrimonial speculation at Bath. I came hither,—guess my surprise at seeing her—"

"And your delight," added Tomlinson, "at hearing she is as rich as she is pretty."

"No!" answered Clifford, quickly; "that thought gives me no pleasure. You stare. I will try and explain. You know, dear Tomlinson, I'm not much of a canter, and yet my heart shrinks when I look on that innocent face, and hear that soft happy voice,

and think that my love to her can be only ruin and disgrace; nay, that my very address is contamination, and my very glance towards her an insult."

"Heyday!" quoth Tomlinson; "have you been under my instructions, and learned the true value of words, and can you have any scruples left on so easy a point of conscience? True, you may call your representing yourself to her as an unprofessional gentleman, and so winning her affections, deceit; but why call it deceit when a genius for intrigue is so much neater a phrase? In like manner, by marrying the young lady, if you say you have ruined her, you justly deserve to be annihilated; but why not say you have saved yourself, and then, my dear fellow, you will have done the most justifiable thing in the world."

"Pish, man!" said Clifford, peevishly; "none of thy sophisms and sneers!"

"By the soul of Sir Edward Coke, I am serious! But look you, my friend! this is not a matter where it is convenient to have a tender-footed conscience. You see these fellows on the ground, all d—d clever, and so forth; but you and I are of a different order. I have had a classical education, seen the world, and mixed in decent society; you, too, had not been long a member of our club before you distinguished yourself above us all. Fortune smiled on your youthful audacity. You grew particular in horses and dress, frequented public haunts, and being a deuced good-looking fellow, with an inborn air of gentility and some sort of education, you became sufficiently well received to acquire in

a short time the manner and tone of a—what shall I say?—a gentleman, and the taste to like suitable associates. This is my case too! Despite our labours for the public weal, the ungrateful dogs see that we are above them; a single envious breast is sufficient to give us to the hangman. We have agreed that we are in danger; we have agreed to make an honourable retreat; we cannot do so without money. You know the vulgar distich among our set. Nothing can be truer,—

"Hanging is 'nation
More nice than starvation!"

You will not carry off some of the common stock, though I think you justly might, considering how much you have put into it. What, then, shall we do? Work we cannot, beg we will not; and, between you and me, we are cursedly extravagant! What remains but marriage?"

"It is true," said Clifford, with a half sigh.

"You may well sigh, my good fellow. Marriage is a lackadaisical proceeding at best; but there is no resource. And now, when you have got a liking to a young lady who is as rich as a she-Craesus, and so gilded the pill as bright as a lord mayor's coach, what the devil have you to do with scruples?"

Clifford made no answer, and there was a long pause; perhaps he would not have spoken so frankly as he had done, if the wine had not opened his heart.

"How proud," renewed Tomlinson, "the good old matron at Thames Court would be if you married a lady! You have not seen her lately?"

"Not for years," answered our hero. "Poor old soul! I believe that she is well in health, and I take care that she should not be poor in pocket."

"But why not visit her? Perhaps, like all great men, especially of a liberal turn of mind, you are ashamed of old friends, eh?"

"My good fellow, is that like me? Why, you know the beaux of our set look askant on me for not keeping up my dignity, robbing only in company with well-dressed gentlemen, and swindling under the name of a lord's nephew. No, my reasons are these: first, you must know, that the old dame had set her heart on my turning out an honest man."

"And so you have," interrupted Augustus,— "honest to your party; what more would you have from either prig or politician?"

"I believe," continued Clifford, not heeding the interruption, "that my poor mother, before she died, desired that I might be reared honestly; and strange as it may seem to you, Dame Lobkins is a conscientious woman in her own way,—it is not her fault if I have turned out as I have done. Now I know well that it would grieve her to the quick to see me what I am. Secondly, my friend, under my new names, various as they are, — Jackson and Howard, Russell and Pigwiggin, Villiers and Gotobed, Cavendish and Solomons,—you may well suppose that the good persons in the neighbourhood of Thames Court have

no suspicion that the adventurous and accomplished ruffler, at present captain of this district, under the new appellation of Lovett, is in reality no other than the obscure and surnameless Paul of the Mug. Now you and I, Augustus, have read human nature, though in the black letter; and I know well that were I to make my appearance in Thames Court, and were the old lady (as she certainly would, not from unkindness, but insobriety,—not that she loves me less, but heavy wet more) to divulge the secret of that appearance—"

"You know well," interrupted the vivacious Tomlinson, "that the identity of your former meanness with your present greatness would be easily traced; the envy and jealousy of your early friends aroused; a hint of your whereabouts and your aliases given to the police, and yourself grabbed, with a slight possibility of a hempen consummation."

"You conceive me exactly!" answered Clifford. "The fact is, that I have observed in nine cases out of ten our bravest fellows have been taken off by the treachery of some early sweetheart or the envy of some boyish friend. My destiny is not yet fixed. I am worthy of better things than a ride in the cart with a nosegay in my hand; and though I care not much about death in itself, I am resolved, if possible, not to die a highwayman. Hence my caution, and that prudential care for secrecy and safe asylums, which men less wise than you have so often thought an unnatural contrast to my conduct on the road."

"Fools!" said the philosophical Tomlinson; "what has the

bravery of a warrior to do with his insuring his house from fire?"

"However," said Clifford, "I send my good nurse a fine gift every now and then to assure her of my safety; and thus, notwithstanding my absence, I show my affection by my presents,—excuse a pun."

"And have you never been detected by any of your quondam associates?"

"Never! Remember in what a much more elevated sphere of life I have been thrown; and who could recognize the scamp Paul with a fustian jacket in gentleman Paul with a laced waistcoat? Besides, I have diligently avoided every place where I was likely to encounter those who saw me in childhood. You know how little I frequent flash houses, and how scrupulous I am in admitting new confederates into our band; you and Pepper are the only two of my associates—save my /protege/, as you express it, who never deserts the cave—that possess a knowledge of my identity with the lost Paul; and as ye have both taken that dread oath to silence, which to disobey until indeed I be in the jail or on the gibbet, is almost to be assassinated, I consider my secret is little likely to be broken, save with my own consent."

"True," said Augustus, nodding; "one more glass, and to bed, Mr. Chairman."

"I pledge you, my friend; our last glass shall be philanthropically quaffed,—'All fools, and may their money soon be parted!'"

"All fools!" cried Tomlinson, filling a bumper; "but I quarrel

with the wisdom of your toast. May fools be rich, and rogues will never be poor! I would make a better livelihood off a rich fool than a landed estate."

So saying, the contemplative and ever-sagacious Tomlinson tossed off his bumper; and the pair, having kindly rolled by pedal applications the body of Long Ned into a safe and quiet corner of the room, mounted the stairs, arm-in-arm, in search of somnambular accommodations.

CHAPTER XVII

*That contrast of the hardened and mature,
The calm brow brooding o'er the project dark,
With the clear loving heart, and spirit pure
Of youth,—I love, yet, hating, love to mark!*

H. FLETCHER.

On the forenoon of the day after the ball, the carriage of William Brandon, packed and prepared, was at the door of his abode at Bath; meanwhile the lawyer was closeted with his brother.

"My dear Joseph," said the barrister, "I do not leave you without being fully sensible of your kindness evinced to me, both in coming hither, contrary to your habits, and accompanying me everywhere, despite of your tastes."

"Mention it not, my dear William," said the kind-hearted squire, "for your delightful society is to me the most agreeable (and that's what I can say of very few people like you; for, for my own part, I generally find the cleverest men *the most unpleasant in the world!* And I think lawyers in particular (very different, indeed, from your tribe *you are!*) *perfectly intolerable!*"

"I have now," said Brandon, who with his usual nervous quickness of action was walking with rapid strides to and fro the apartment, and scarcely noted his brother's compliment,—"I

have now another favour to request of you. Consider this house and these servants yours for the next month or two at least. Don't interrupt me,—it is no compliment,— I speak for our family benefit." And then seating himself next to his brother's armchair, for a fit of the gout made the squire a close prisoner, Brandon unfolded to his brother his cherished scheme of marrying Lucy to Lord Mauleverer. Notwithstanding the constancy of the earl's attentions to the heiress, the honest squire had never dreamed of their palpable object; and he was overpowered with surprise when he heard the lawyer's expectations.

"But, my dear brother," he began, "so great a match for my Lucy, the Lord-Lieutenant of the Coun—"

"And what of that?" cried Brandon, proudly, and interrupting his brother. "Is not the race of Brandon, which has matched its scions with royalty, far nobler than that of the upstart stock of Mauleverer? What is there presumptuous in the hope that the descendant of the Earls of Suffolk should regild a faded name with some of the precious dust of the quondam silversmiths of London? Besides," he continued, after a pause, "Lucy will be rich, very rich, and before two years my rank may possibly be of the same order as Mauleverer's!"

The squire stared; and Brandon, not giving him time to answer, resumed. It is needless to detail the conversation; suffice it to say that the artful barrister did not leave his brother till he had gained his point, —till Joseph Brandon had promised to remain at Bath in possession of the house and establishment of

his brother; to throw no impediment on the suit of Mauleverer; to cultivate society, as before; and above all, not to alarm Lucy, who evidently did not yet favour Mauleverer exclusively, by hinting to her the hopes and expectations of her uncle and father. Brandon, now taking leave of his brother, mounted to the drawing-room in search of Lucy. He found her leaning over the gilt cage of one of her feathered favourites, and speaking to the little inmate in that pretty and playful language in which all thoughts, innocent yet fond, should be clothed. So beautiful did Lucy seem, as she was thus engaged in her girlish and caressing employment, and so utterly unlike one meet to be the instrument of ambitious designs, and the sacrifice of worldly calculations, that Brandon paused, suddenly smitten at heart, as he beheld her. He was not, however, slow in recovering himself; he approached. "Happy he," said the man of the world, "for whom caresses and words like these are reserved!"

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