

ЭДВАРД БУЛЬВЕР-ЛИТТОН

**"MY NOVEL" —  
VOLUME 09**

Эдвард Бульвер-Литтон  
**"My Novel" — Volume 09**

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# Edward Bulwer-Lytton

## «My Novel» — Volume 09

### BOOK NINTH

#### INITIAL CHAPTER

##### ON PUBLIC LIFE

Now that I am fairly in the heart of my story, these preliminary chapters must shrink into comparatively small dimensions, and not encroach upon the space required by the various personages whose acquaintance I have picked up here and there, and who are now all crowding upon me like poor relations to whom one has unadvisedly given a general invitation, and who descend upon one simultaneously about Christmas time. Where they are to be stowed, and what is to become of them all, Heaven knows; in the mean while, the reader will have already observed that the Caxton Family themselves are turned out of their own rooms, sent a packing, in order to make way for the new comers.

But to proceed: Note the heading to the present Chapter, "ON PUBLIC LIFE,"—a thesis pertinent to this portion of my narrative; and if somewhat trite in itself, the greater is the stimulus to suggest thereon some original hints for reflection.

Were you ever in public life, my dear reader? I don't mean, by that question, to ask whether you were ever Lord Chancellor, Prime Minister, Leader of the Opposition, or even a member of the House of Commons. An author hopes to find readers far beyond that very egregious but very limited segment of the Great Circle. Were you ever a busy man in your vestry, active in a municipal corporation, one of a committee for furthering the interests of an enlightened candidate for your native burgh, town, or shire,—in a word, did you ever resign your private comforts as men in order to share the public troubles of mankind? If ever you have so far departed from the Lucretian philosophy, just look back—was it life at all that you lived? Were you an individual distinct existence,—a passenger in the railway,—or were you merely an indistinct portion of that common flaine which heated the boiler and generated the steam that set off the monster train?—very hot, very active, very useful, no doubt; but all your identity fused in flame, and all your forces vanishing in gas.

And do you think the people in the railway carriages care for you? Do you think that the gentleman in the worsted wrapper is saying to his neighbour with the striped rug on his comfortable knees, "How grateful we ought to be for that fiery particle which is crackling and hissing under the boiler. It helps us on a fraction of an inch from Vauxhall to Putney!" Not a bit of it. Ten to one but he is saying, "Not sixteen miles an hour! What the deuce is the matter with the stoker?"

Look at our friend Audley Egerton. You have just had a glimpse of the real being that struggles under the huge copper; you have heard the hollow sound of the rich man's coffers under the tap of Baron Levy's friendly knuckle, heard the strong man's heart give out its dull warning sound to the scientific ear of Dr. F——. And away once more vanishes the separate existence, lost again in the flame that heats the boiler, and the smoke that curls into air from the grimy furnace.

Look to it, O Public Man, whoever thou art, and whatsoever thy degree,— see if thou canst not compound matters, so as to keep a little nook apart for thy private life; that is, for thyself! Let the Great Popkins Question not absorb wholly the individual soul of thee, as Smith or Johnson. Don't

so entirely consume thyself under that insatiable boiler, that when thy poor little monad rushes out from the sooty furnace, and arrives at the stars, thou mayest find no vocation for thee there, and feel as if thou hadst nothing to do amidst the still splendours of the Infinite. I don't deny to thee the uses of "Public Life;" I grant that it is much to have helped to carry that Great Popkins Question; but Private Life, my friend, is the life of thy private soul; and there may be matters concerned with that which, on consideration, thou mayest allow cannot be wholly mixed up with the Great Popkins Question, and were not finally settled when thou didst exclaim, "I have not lived in vain,—the Popkins Question is carried at last!" Oh, immortal soul, for one quarter of an hour per diem de-Popkinize thine immortality!

## CHAPTER II

It had not been without much persuasion on the part of Jackeymo that Riccabocca had consented to settle himself in the house which Randal had recommended to him. Not that the exile conceived any suspicion of the young man beyond that which he might have shared with Jackeymo, namely, that Randal's interest in the father was increased by a very natural and excusable admiration of the daughter; but the Italian had the pride common to misfortune,—he did not like to be indebted to others, and he shrank from the pity of those to whom it was known that he had held a higher station in his own land. These scruples gave way to the strength of his affection for his daughter and his dread of his foe. Good men, however able and brave, who have suffered from the wicked, are apt to form exaggerated notions of the power that has prevailed against them. Jackeymo had conceived a superstitious terror of Peschiera; and Riccabocca, though by no means addicted to superstition, still had a certain creep of the flesh whenever he thought of his foe.

But Riccabocca—than whom no man was more physically brave, and no man, in some respects, more morally timid—feared the count less as a foe than as a gallant. He remembered his kinsman's surpassing beauty, the power he had obtained over women. He knew him versed in every art that corrupts, and wholly void of the conscience that deters. And Riccabocca had unhappily nursed himself into so poor an estimate of the female character, that even the pure and lofty nature of Violante did not seem to him a sufficient safeguard against the craft and determination of a practised and remorseless intriguer. But of all the precautions he could take, none appeared more likely to conduce to safety than his establishing a friendly communication with one who professed to be able to get at all the count's plans and movements, and who could apprise Riccabocca at once should his retreat be discovered. "Forewarned is forearmed," said he to himself, in one of the proverbs common to all nations. However, as with his usual sagacity he came to reflect upon the alarming intelligence conveyed to him by Randal, namely, that the count sought his daughter's hand, he divined that there was some strong personal interest under such ambition; and what could be that interest save the probability of Riccabocca's ultimate admission to the Imperial grace, and the count's desire to assure himself of the heritage to an estate that he might be permitted to retain no more? Riccabocca was not indeed aware of the condition (not according to usual customs in Austria) on which the count held the forfeited domains. He knew not that they had been granted merely on pleasure; but he was too well aware of Peschiera's nature to suppose that he would woo a bride without a dower, or be moved by remorse in any overture of reconciliation. He felt assured too—and this increased all his fears—that Peschiera would never venture to seek an interview with himself; all the count's designs on Violante would be dark, secret, and clandestine. He was perplexed and tormented by the doubt whether or not to express openly to Violante his apprehensions of the nature of the danger to be apprehended. He had told her vaguely that it was for her sake that he desired secrecy and concealment. But that might mean anything: what danger to himself would not menace her? Yet to say more was so contrary to a man of his Italian notions and Machiavellian maxims! To say to a young girl, "There is a man come over to England on purpose to woo and win you. For Heaven's sake take care of him; he is diabolically handsome; he never fails where he sets his heart.—/Cospetto!" cried the doctor, aloud, as these admonitions shaped themselves to speech in the camera obscura of his brain; "such a warning would have undone a Cornelia while she was yet an innocent spinster." No, he resolved to say nothing to Violante of the count's intention, only to keep guard, and make himself and Jackeymo all eyes and all ears.

The house Randal had selected pleased Riccabocca at first glance. It stood alone, upon a little eminence; its upper windows commanded the high road. It had been a school, and was surrounded by high walls, which contained a garden and lawn sufficiently large for exercise. The garden doors

were thick, fortified by strong bolts, and had a little wicket lattice, shut and opened at pleasure, from which Jackeymo could inspect all visitors before he permitted them to enter.

An old female servant from the neighbourhood was cautiously hired; Riccabocca renounced his Italian name, and abjured his origin. He spoke English sufficiently well to think he could pass as an Englishman. He called himself Mr. Richmouth (a liberal translation of Riccabocca). He bought a blunderbuss, two pairs of pistols, and a huge housedog. Thus provided for, he allowed Jackeymo to write a line to Randal and communicate his arrival.

Randal lost no time in calling. With his usual adaptability and his powers of dissimulation, he contrived easily to please Mrs. Riccabocca, and to increase the good opinion the exile was disposed to form of him. He engaged Violante in conversation on Italy and its poets. He promised to bring her books. He began, though more distantly than he could have desired,—for her sweet stateliness awed him,—the preliminaries of courtship. He established himself at once as a familiar guest, riding down daily in the dusk of evening, after the toils of office, and returning at night. In four or five days he thought he had made great progress with all. Riccabocca watched him narrowly, and grew absorbed in thought after every visit. At length one night, when he and Mrs. Riccabocca were alone in the drawing-room, Violante having retired to rest, he thus spoke as he filled his pipe,—

"Happy is the man who has no children! Thrice happy he who has no girls!"

"My dear Alphonso!" said the wife, looking up from the waistband to which she was attaching a neat mother-o'-pearl button. She said no more; it was the sharpest rebuke she was in the custom of administering to her husband's cynical and odious observations. Riccabocca lighted his pipe with a thread paper, gave three great puffs, and resumed,

"One blunderbuss, four pistols, and a house-dog called Pompey, who would have made mincemeat of Julius Caesar!"

"He certainly eats a great deal, does Pompey!" said Mrs. Riccabocca, simply. "But if he relieves your mind!"

"He does not relieve it in the least, ma'am," groaned Riccabocca; "and that is the point I am coming to. This is a most harassing life, and a most undignified life. And I who have only asked from Heaven dignity and repose! But if Violante were once married, I should want neither blunderbuss, pistol, nor Pompey. And it is that which would relieve my mind, cara mia,—Pompey only relieves my larder."

Now Riccabocca had been more communicative to Jemima than he had been to Violante. Having once trusted her with one secret, he had every motive to trust her with another; and he had accordingly spoken out his fears of the Count di Peschiera. Therefore she answered, laying down the work, and taking her husband's hand tenderly,

"Indeed, my love, since you dread so much (though I own that I must think unreasonably) this wicked, dangerous man, it would be the happiest thing in the world to see dear Violante well married; because, you see, if she is married to one person she cannot be married to another; and all fear of this count, as you say, would be at an end."

"You cannot express yourself better. It is a great comfort to unbosom one's-self to a wife, after all," quoth Riccabocca.

"But," said the wife, after a grateful kiss,— "but where and how can we find a husband suitable to the rank of your daughter?"

"There! there! there!" cried Riccabocca, pushing back his chair to the farther end of the room, "that comes of unbosoming one's-self! Out flies one secret; it is opening the lid of Pandora's box; one is betrayed, ruined, undone!"

"Why, there's not a soul that can hear us!" said Mrs. Riccabocca, soothingly.

"That's chance, ma'am! If you once contract the habit of blabbing out a secret when nobody's by, how on earth can you resist it when you have the pleasurable excitement of telling it to all the world? Vanity, vanity,— woman's vanity! Woman never could withstand rank,—never!" The doctor

went on railing for a quarter of an hour, and was very reluctantly appeased by Mrs. Riccabocca's repeated and tearful assurances that she would never even whisper to herself that her husband had ever held any other rank than that of doctor. Riccabocca, with a dubious shake of the head, renewed,

"I have done with all pomp and pretension. Besides, the young man is a born gentleman: he seems in good circumstances; he has energy and latent ambition; he is akin to L'Estrange's intimate friend: he seems attached to Violante. I don't think it probable that we could do better. Nay, if Peschiera fears that I shall be restored to my country, and I learn the wherefore, and the ground to take, through this young man—why, gratitude is the first virtue of the noble!"

"You speak, then, of Mr. Leslie?"

"To be sure—of whom else?"

Mrs. Riccabocca leaned her cheek on her hand thoughtfully. "Now you have told me that, I will observe him with different eyes."

"Anima mia, I don't see how the difference of your eyes will alter the object they look upon!" grumbled Riccabocca, shaking the ashes out of his pipe.

"The object alters when we see it in a different point of view!" replied Jemima, modestly. "This thread does very well when I look at it in order to sew on a button, but I should say it would never do to tie up Pompey in his Kennel."

"Reasoning by illustration, upon my soul!" ejaculated Riccabocca, amazed.

"And," continued Jemima, "when I am to regard one who is to constitute the happiness of that dear child, and for life, can I regard him as I would the pleasant guest of an evening? Ah, trust me, Alphonso; I don't pretend to be wise like you; but when a woman considers what a man is likely to prove to woman,—his sincerity, his honour, his heart,—oh, trust me, she is wiser than the wisest man!"

Riccabocca continued to gaze on Jemima with unaffected admiration and surprise. And certainly, to use his phrase, since he had unbosomed himself to his better half, since he had confided in her, consulted with her, her sense had seemed to quicken, her whole mind to expand.

"My dear," said the sage, "I vow and declare that Machiavelli was a fool to you. And I have been as dull as the chair I sit upon, to deny myself so many years the comfort and counsel of such a —But, /corpo di Bacco!/ forget all about rank; and so now to bed.—One must not holloa till one's out of the wood," muttered the ungrateful, suspicious villain, as he lighted the chamber candle.

### CHAPTER III

RICCABOCCA could not confine himself to the precincts within the walls to which he condemned Violante. Resuming his spectacles, and wrapped in his cloak, he occasionally sallied forth upon a kind of outwatch or reconnoitring expedition,—restricting himself, however, to the immediate neighbourhood, and never going quite out of sight of his house. His favourite walk was to the summit of a hillock overgrown with stunted bush-wood. Here he would sit himself musingly, often till the hoofs of Randal's horse rang on the winding road, as the sun set, over fading herbage, red and vaporous, in autumnal skies. Just below the hillock, and not two hundred yards from his own house, was the only other habitation in view,—a charming, thoroughly English cottage, though somewhat imitated from the Swiss, with gable ends, thatched roof, and pretty, projecting casements, opening through creepers and climbing roses. From his height he commanded the gardens of this cottage, and his eye of artist was pleased, from the first sight, with the beauty which some exquisite taste had given to the ground. Even in that cheerless season of the year, the garden wore a summer smile; the evergreens were so bright and various, and the few flowers still left so hardy and so healthful. Facing the south, a colonnade, or covered gallery, of rustic woodwork had been formed, and creeping plants, lately set, were already beginning to clothe its columns. Opposite to this colonnade there was a fountain which reminded Riccabocca of his own at the deserted Casino. It was indeed singularly like it; the same circular shape, the same girdle of flowers around it. But the jet from it varied every day, fantastic and multiform, like the sports of a Naiad,—sometimes shooting up like a tree, sometimes shaped as a convolvulus, sometimes tossing from its silver spray a flower of vermilion, or a fruit of gold,—as if at play with its toy like a happy child. And near the fountain was a large aviary, large enough to enclose a tree. The Italian could just catch a gleam of rich colour from the wings of the birds, as they glanced to and fro within the network, and could hear their songs, contrasting the silence of the freer populace of air, whom the coming winter had already stilled.

Riccabocca's eye, so alive to all aspects of beauty, luxuriated in the view of this garden. Its pleasantness had a charm that stole him from his anxious fear and melancholy memories.

He never saw but two forms within the demesnes, and he could not distinguish their features. One was a woman, who seemed to him of staid manner and homely appearance: she was seen but rarely. The other a man, often pacing to and fro the colonnade, with frequent pauses before the playful fountain, or the birds that sang louder as he approached. This latter form would then disappear within a room, the glass door of which was at the extreme end of the colonnade; and if the door were left open, Riccabocca could catch a glimpse of the figure bending over a table covered with books.

Always, however, before the sun set, the man would step forth more briskly, and occupy himself with the garden, often working at it with good heart, as if at a task of delight; and then, too, the woman would come out, and stand by as if talking to her companion. Riccabocca's curiosity grew aroused. He bade Jemima inquire of the old maid-servant who lived at the cottage, and heard that its owner was a Mr. Oran,—a quiet gentleman, and fond of his book.

While Riccabocca thus amused himself, Randal had not been prevented, either by his official cares or his schemes on Violante's heart and fortune, from furthering the project that was to unite Frank Hazeldean and Beatrice di Negra. Indeed, as to the first, a ray of hope was sufficient to fire the ardent and unsuspecting lover. And Randal's artful misrepresentation of his conference with Mrs. Hazeldean removed all fear of parental displeasure from a mind always too disposed to give itself up to the temptation of the moment. Beatrice, though her feelings for Frank were not those of love, became more and more influenced by Randal's arguments and representations, the more especially as her brother grew morose, and even menacing, as days slipped on, and she could give no clew to the retreat of those whom he sought for. Her debts, too, were really urgent. As Randal's profound knowledge of human infirmity had shrewdly conjectured, the scruples of honour and pride, that had

made her declare she would not bring to a husband her own encumbrances, began to yield to the pressure of necessity. She listened already, with but faint objections, when Randal urged her not to wait for the uncertain discovery that was to secure her dowry, but by a private marriage with Frank escape at once into freedom and security. While, though he had first held out to young Hazeldean the inducement of Beatrice's dowry as a reason of self-justification in the eyes of the squire, it was still easier to drop that inducement, which had always rather damped than fired the high spirit and generous heart of the poor Guardsman. And Randal could conscientiously say, that when he had asked the squire if he expected fortune with Frank's bride, the squire had replied, "I don't care." Thus encouraged by his friend and his own heart, and the softening manner of a woman who might have charmed many a colder, and fooled many a wiser man, Frank rapidly yielded to the snares held out for his perdition. And though as yet he honestly shrank from proposing to Beatrice or himself a marriage without the consent, and even the knowledge, of his parents, yet Randal was quite content to leave a nature, however good, so thoroughly impulsive and undisciplined, to the influences of the first strong passion it had ever known. Meanwhile, it was so easy to dissuade Frank from even giving a hint to the folks at home. "For," said the wily and able traitor, "though we may be sure of Mrs. Hazeldean's consent, and her power over your father, when the step is once taken, yet we cannot count for certain on the squire, he is so choleric and hasty. He might hurry to town, see Madame di Negra, blurt out some passionate, rude expressions, which would wake her resentment, and cause her instant rejection. And it might be too late if he repented afterwards, as he would be sure to do."

Meanwhile Randal Leslie gave a dinner at the Clarendon Hotel (an extravagance most contrary to his habits), and invited Frank, Mr. Borrowell, and Baron Levy.

But this house-spider, which glided with so much ease after its flies, through webs so numerous and mazy, had yet to amuse Madame di Negra with assurances that the fugitives sought for would sooner or later be discovered. Though Randal baffled and eluded her suspicion that he was already acquainted with the exiles ("the persons he had thought of were," he said, "quite different from her description;" and he even presented to her an old singing-master and a sallow-faced daughter, as the Italians who had caused his mistake), it was necessary for Beatrice to prove the sincerity of the aid she had promised to her brother, and to introduce Randal to the count. It was no less desirable to Randal to know, and even win the confidence of this man—his rival.

The two met at Madame di Negra's house. There is something very strange, and almost mesmeric, in the rapport between two evil natures. Bring two honest men together, and it is ten to one if they recognize each other as honest; differences in temper, manner, even politics, may make each misjudge the other. But bring together two men unprincipled and perverted—men who, if born in a cellar, would have been food for the hulks or gallows—and they understand each other by instant sympathy. The eyes of Franzini, Count of Peschiera, and Randal Leslie no sooner met than a gleam of intelligence shot from both. They talked on indifferent subjects,—weather, gossip, politics,—what not. They bowed and they smiled; but all the while, each was watching, plumbing the other's heart, each measuring his strength with his companion; each inly saying, "This is a very remarkable rascal; am I a match for him?" It was at dinner they met; and following the English fashion, Madame di Negra left them alone with their wine.

Then, for the first time, Count di Peschiera cautiously and adroitly made a covered push towards the object of the meeting.

"You have never been abroad, my dear sir? You must contrive to visit me at Vienna. I grant the splendour of your London world; but, honestly speaking, it wants the freedom of ours,—a freedom which unites gayety with polish. For as your society is mixed, there are pretension and effort with those who have no right to be in it, and artificial condescension and chilling arrogance with those who have to keep their inferiors at a certain distance. With us, all being of fixed rank and acknowledged birth, familiarity is at once established. Hence," added the count, with his French lively smile,—"*hence there is no place like Vienna for a young man, no place like Vienna for /bonnes fortunes/.*"

"Those make the paradise of the idle," replied Randal, "but the purgatory of the busy. I confess frankly to you, my dear count, that I have as little of the leisure which becomes the aspirer to /bonnes fortunes/ as I have the personal graces which obtain them without an effort;" and he inclined his head as in compliment.

"So," thought the count, "woman is not his weak side. What is?"

"Morbleu! my dear Mr. Leslie, had I thought as you do some years since, I had saved myself from many a trouble. After all, Ambition is the best mistress to woo; for with her there is always the hope, and never the possession."

"Ambition, Count," replied Randal, still guarding himself in dry sententiousness, "is the luxury of the rich, and the necessity of the poor."

"Aha," thought the count, "it comes, as I anticipated from the first,— comes to the bribe." He passed the wine to Randal, filling his own glass, and draining it carelessly; "/Sur mon ame, mon cher/," said the count, "luxury is ever pleasanter than necessity; and I am resolved at least to give Ambition a trial; je vais me refugier dans le sein du bonheur domestique,—a married life and a settled home. /Peste!/ If it were not for ambition, one would die of /ennui/. /A propos/, my dear sir, I have to thank you for promising my sister your aid in finding a near and dear kinsman of mine, who has taken refuge in your country, and hides himself even from me."

"I should be most happy to assist in your search. As yet, however, I have only to regret that all my good wishes are fruitless. I should have thought, however, that a man of such rank had been easily found, even through the medium of your own ambassador."

"Our own ambassador is no very warm friend of mine; and the rank would be no clew, for it is clear that my kinsman has never assumed it since he quitted his country."

"He quitted it, I understand, not exactly from choice," said Randal, smiling. "Pardon my freedom and curiosity, but will you explain to me a little more than I learn from English rumour (which never accurately reports upon foreign matters still more notorious), how a person who had so much to lose, and so little to win, by revolution, could put himself into the same crazy boat with a crew of hair-brained adventurers and visionary professors."

"Professors!" repeated the count; "I think you have hit on the very answer to your question; not but what men of high birth were as mad as the /canaille/. I am the more willing to gratify your curiosity, since it will perhaps serve to guide your kind search in my favour. You must know, then, that my kinsman was not born the heir to the rank he obtained. He was but a distant relation to the head of the House which he afterwards represented. Brought up in an Italian university, he was distinguished for his learning and his eccentricities. There too, I suppose, brooding over old wives' tales about freedom, and so forth, he contracted his carbonaro, chimerical notions for the independence of Italy. Suddenly, by three deaths, he was elevated, while yet young, to a station and honours which might have satisfied any man in his senses. /Que diable!/ what could the independence of Italy do for him? He and I were cousins; we had played together as boys; but our lives had been separated till his succession to rank brought us necessarily together. We became exceedingly intimate. And you may judge how I loved him," said the count, averting his eyes slightly from Randal's quiet, watchful gaze, "when I add, that I forgave him for enjoying a heritage that, but for him, had been mine."

"Ah, you were next heir?"

"And it is a hard trial to be very near a great fortune, and yet just to miss it."

"True," cried Randal, almost impetuously. The count now raised his eyes, and again the two men looked into each other's souls.

"Harder still, perhaps," resumed the count, after a short pause,— "harder still might it have been to some men to forgive the rival as well as the heir."

"Rival! how?"

"A lady, who had been destined by her parents to myself, though we had never, I own, been formally betrothed, became the wife of my kinsman."

"Did he know of your pretensions?"

"I do him the justice to say he did not. He saw and fell in love with the young lady I speak of. Her parents were dazzled. Her father sent for me. He apologized, he explained; he set before me, mildly enough, certain youthful imprudences or errors of my own, as an excuse for his change of mind; and he asked me not only to resign all hope of his daughter, but to conceal from her new suitor that I had ever ventured to hope."

"And you consented?"

"I consented."

"That was generous. You must indeed have been much attached to your kinsman. As a lover, I cannot comprehend it; perhaps, my dear count, you may enable me to understand it better—as a man of the world."

"Well," said the count, with his most roue air, "I suppose we are both men of the world?"

"Both! certainly," replied Randal, just in the tone which Peachum might have used in courting the confidence of Lockit.

"As a man of the world, then, I own," said the count, playing with the rings on his fingers, "that if I could not marry the lady myself (and that seemed to me clear), it was very natural that I should wish to see her married to my wealthy kinsman."

"Very natural; it might bring your wealthy kinsman and yourself still closer together."

"This is really a very clever fellow!" thought the count, but he made no direct reply.

"/Enfin/, to cut short a long story, my cousin afterwards got entangled in attempts, the failure of which is historically known. His projects were detected, himself denounced. He fled, and the emperor, in sequestrating his estates, was pleased, with rare and singular clemency, to permit me, as his nearest kinsman, to enjoy the revenues of half those estates during the royal pleasure; nor was the other half formally confiscated. It was no doubt his Majesty's desire not to extinguish a great Italian name; and if my cousin and his child died in exile, why, of that name, I, a loyal subject of Austria,—I, Franzini, Count di Peschiera, would become the representative. Such, in a similar case, has been sometimes the Russian policy towards Polish insurgents."

"I comprehend perfectly; and I can also conceive that you, in profiting so largely, though so justly, by the fall of your kinsman, may have been exposed to much unpopularity, even to painful suspicion."

"/Entre nous, mon cher/, I care not a stiver for popularity; and as to suspicion, who is he that can escape from the calumny of the envious? But, unquestionably, it would be most desirable to unite the divided members of our house; and this union I can now effect by the consent of the emperor to my marriage with my kinsman's daughter. You see, therefore, why I have so great an interest in this research?"

"By the marriage articles you could no doubt secure the retention of the half you hold; and if you survive your kinsman, you would enjoy the whole. A most desirable marriage; and, if made, I suppose that would suffice to obtain your cousin's amnesty and grace?"

"You say it."

"But even without such marriage, since the emperor's clemency has been extended to so many of the proscribed, it is perhaps probable that your cousin might be restored?"

"It once seemed to me possible," said the count, reluctantly; "but since I have been in England, I think not. The recent revolution in France, the democratic spirit rising in Europe, tend to throw back the cause of a proscribed rebel. England swarms with revolutionists; my cousin's residence in this country is in itself suspicious. The suspicion is increased by his strange seclusion. There are many Italians here who would aver that they had met with him, and that he was still engaged in revolutionary projects."

"Aver—untruly?"

"/Ma foi/, it comes to the same thing; 'les absents ont toujours tort.' I speak to a man of the world. No; without some such guarantee for his faith as his daughter's marriage with myself would give, his recall is improbable. By the heaven above us, it shall be impossible!" The count rose as he said this,—rose as if the mask of simulation had fairly fallen from the visage of crime; rose tall and towering, a very image of masculine power and strength, beside the slight, bended form and sickly face of the intellectual schemer. And had you seen them thus confronted and contrasted, you would have felt that if ever the time should come when the interest of the one would compel him openly to denounce or boldly to expose the other, the odds were that the brilliant and audacious reprobate would master the weaker nerve but superior wit of the furtive traitor. Randal was startled; but rising also, he said carelessly,

"What if this guarantee can no longer be given; what if, in despair of return, and in resignation to his altered fortunes, your cousin has already married his daughter to some English suitor?"

"Ah, that would indeed be, next to my own marriage with her, the most fortunate thing that could happen to myself."

"How? I don't understand!"

"Why, if my cousin has so abjured his birthright, and forsworn his rank; if this heritage, which is so dangerous from its grandeur, pass, in case of his pardon, to some obscure Englishman,—a foreigner, a native of a country that has no ties with ours, a country that is the very refuge of levellers and Carbonari—/mort de ma vie!/ do you think that such would not annihilate all chance of my cousin's restoration, and be an excuse even in the eyes of Italy for formally conferring the sequestered estates on an Italian? No; unless, indeed, the girl were to marry an Englishman of such name and birth and connection as would in themselves be a guarantee (and how in poverty is this likely?) I should go back to Vienna with a light heart, if I could say, 'My kinswoman is an Englishman's wife; shall her children be the heirs to a house so renowned for its lineage, and so formidable for its wealth?' / Parbleu!/ if my cousin were but an adventurer, or merely a professor, he had been pardoned long ago. The great enjoy the honour not to be pardoned easily."

Randal fell into deep but brief thought. The count observed him, not face to face, but by the reflection of an opposite mirror. "This man knows something; this man is deliberating; this man can help me," thought the count.

But Randal said nothing to confirm these hypotheses. Recovering from his abstraction, he expressed courteously his satisfaction at the count's prospects, either way. "And since, after all," he added, "you mean so well to your cousin, it occurs to me that you might discover him by a very simple English process."

"How?"

"Advertise that, if he will come to some place appointed, he will hear of something to his advantage."

The count shook his head. "He would suspect me, and not come."

"But he was intimate with you. He joined an insurrection; you were more prudent. You did not injure him, though you may have benefited yourself. Why should he shun you?"

"The conspirators forgive none who do not conspire; besides, to speak frankly, he thought I injured him."

"Could you not conciliate him through his wife—whom you resigned to him?"

"She is dead,—died before he left the country."

"Oh, that is unlucky! Still I think an advertisement might do good. Allow me to reflect on that subject. Shall we now join Madame la Marquise?"

On re-entering the drawing-room, the gentlemen found Beatrice in full dress, seated by the fire, and reading so intently that she did not remark them enter.

"What so interests you, /ma seuur/?—the last novel by Balzac, no doubt?"

Beatrice started, and, looking up, showed eyes that were full of tears. "Oh, no! no picture of miserable, vicious, Parisian life. This is beautiful; there is soul here."

Randal took up the book which the marchesa laid down; it was the same which had charmed the circle at Hazeldean, charmed the innocent and fresh-hearted, charmed now the wearied and tempted votaress of the world.

"Hum," murmured Randal; "the parson was right. This is power,—a sort of a power."

"How I should like to know the author! Who can he be? Can you guess?"

"Not I. Some old pedant in spectacles."

"I think not, I am sure not. Here beats a heart I have ever sighed to find, and never found."

"Oh, /la naive enfant!/" cried the count; "comme son imagination s'egare en reves enchantes. And to think that while you talk like an Arcadian, you are dressed like a princess."

"Ah, I forgot—the Austrian ambassador's. I shall not go to-night. This book unfits me for the artificial world."

"Just as you will, my sister. I shall go. I dislike the man, and he me; but ceremonies before men!"

"You are going to the Austrian Embassy?" said Randal. "I, too, shall be there. We shall meet." And he took his leave.

"I like your young friend prodigiously," said the count, yawning. "I am sure that he knows of the lost birds, and will stand to them like a pointer, if I can but make it his interest to do so. We shall see."

## CHAPTER IV

Randal arrived at the ambassador's before the count, and contrived to mix with the young noblemen attached to the embassy, and to whom he was known. Standing among these was a young Austrian, on his travels, of very high birth, and with an air of noble grace that suited the ideal of the old German chivalry. Randal was presented to him, and, after some talk on general topics, observed, "By the way, Prince, there is now in London a countryman of yours, with whom you are, doubtless, familiarly acquainted,—the Count di Peschiera."

"He is no countryman of mine. He is an Italian. I know him but by sight and by name," said the prince, stiffly.

"He is of very ancient birth, I believe."

"Unquestionably. His ancestors were gentlemen."

"And very rich."

"Indeed! I have understood the contrary. He enjoys, it is true, a large revenue."

A young attache, less discreet than the prince; here observed, "Oh, Peschiera! poor fellow, he is too fond of play to be rich."

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