Эдвард Бульвер-Литтон

ERNEST MALTRAVERS — COMPLETE

Эдвард Джордж Бульвер-Литтон
Ernest Maltravers — Complete

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Ernest Maltravers — Complete:

Содержание

Edward Bulwer-Lytton
Ernest Maltravers
— Complete

DEDICATION:

TO

THE GREAT GERMAN PEOPLE,

A race of thinkers and of critics;
A foreign but familiar audience,
Profound in judgment, candid in reproof, generous in appreciation,
This work is dedicated
By an English Author.

PREFACE TO THE EDITION OF 1840

HOWEVER numerous the works of fiction with which, my dear Reader, I have trespassed on your attention, I have published but three, of any account, in which the plot has been cast amidst the events, and coloured by the manner, of our own times. The first of these, *Pelham*, composed when I was little more than a boy, has the faults, and perhaps the merits, natural to a very early age,—when the novelty itself of life quickens the observation, —when we see distinctly, and represent vividly, what lies upon the surface of the world,—and when, half sympathising with the follies we satirise, there is a gusto in our paintings which atones for their exaggeration. As we grow older we observe less, we reflect more; and, like Frankenstein, we dissect in order to create.

The second novel of the present day,[1] which, after an interval of some years, I submitted to the world, was one I now, for the first time, acknowledge, and which (revised and corrected) will be included in this series, viz., *Godolphin*;—a work devoted to a particular portion of society, and the development of a peculiar class of character. The third, which I now reprint, is

[1] For *The Disowned* is cast in the time of our grandfathers, and *The Pilgrims of the Rhine* had nothing to do with actual life, and is not, therefore, to be called a novel.

Ernest Maltravers,[2] the most mature, and, on the whole, the most comprehensive of all that I have hitherto written.

For the original idea, which, with humility, I will venture to call the philosophical design of a moral education or apprenticeship, I have left it easy to be seen that I am indebted to Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*. But, in *Wilhelm Meister*, the apprenticeship is rather that of theoretical art. In the more homely plan that I set before myself, the apprenticeship is rather that of practical life. And, with this view, it has been especially my study to avoid all those attractions lawful in romance, or tales of pure humour or unbridled fancy, attractions that, in the language of reviewers, are styled under the head of "most striking descriptions," "scenes of extraordinary power," etc.; and are derived from violent contrasts and exaggerations pushed into caricature. It has been my aim to subdue and tone down the persons introduced, and the general agencies of the narrative, into the lights and shadows of life as it is. I do not mean by "life as it is," the vulgar and the outward life alone, but life in its spiritual and mystic as well as its more visible and fleshly characteristics. The idea of not only describing, but developing character under the ripening influences of time and circumstance, is not confined to the apprenticeship of Maltravers alone, but pervades the progress of Cesarini, Ferrers, and Alice Darvil.

The original conception of Alice is taken from real life—from a person I never saw but twice, and then she was no longer young

[2] At the date of this preface *Night and Morning* had not appeared.

—but whose history made on me a deep impression. Her early ignorance and home—her first love—the strange and affecting fidelity that she maintained, in spite of new ties—her final re-meeting, almost in middle-age, with one lost and adored almost in childhood—all this, as shown in the novel, is but the imperfect transcript of the true adventures of a living woman.

In regard to Maltravers himself, I must own that I have but inadequately struggled against the great and obvious difficulty of representing an author living in our own times, with whose supposed works or alleged genius and those of any one actually existing, the reader can establish no identification, and he is therefore either compelled constantly to humour the delusion by keeping his imagination on the stretch, or lazily driven to confound the Author *in* the Book with the Author *of* the Book.[3] But I own, also, I fancied, while aware of this objection, and in spite of it, that so much not hitherto said might be conveyed with advantage through the lips or in the life of an imaginary writer of our own time, that I was contented, on the whole, either to task the imagination, or submit to the suspicions of the reader. All that my own egotism appropriates in the book are some occasional remarks, the natural result of practical experience. With the life or the character, the adventures or the humours, the errors or

[3] In some foreign journal I have been much amused by a credulity of this latter description, and seen the various adventures of Mr. Maltravers gravely appropriated to the embellishment of my own life, including the attachment to the original of poor Alice Darvil; who now, by the way, must be at least seventy years of age, with a grandchild nearly as old as myself.

the good qualities, of Maltravers himself, I have nothing to do, except as the narrator and inventor.

E. B. L.

A WORD TO THE READER PREFIXED TO THE FIRST EDITION OF 1837

THOU must not, my old and partial friend, look into this work for that species of interest which is drawn from stirring adventures and a perpetual variety of incident. To a Novel of the present day are necessarily forbidden the animation, the excitement, the bustle, the pomp, and the stage effect which History affords to Romance. Whatever merits, in thy gentle eyes, *Rienzi*, or *The Last Days of Pompeii*, may have possessed, this Tale, if it please thee at all, must owe that happy fortune to qualities widely different from those which won thy favour to pictures of the Past. Thou must sober down thine imagination, and prepare thyself for a story not dedicated to the narrative of extraordinary events—nor the elucidation of the characters of great men. Though there is scarcely a page in this work episodical to the main design, there may be much that may seem to thee wearisome and prolix, if thou wilt not lend thyself, in a kindly spirit, and with a generous trust, to the guidance of the Author. In the hero of this tale thou wilt find neither a majestic demigod, nor a fascinating demon. He is a man with the weaknesses derived from humanity, with the strength that we inherit from the soul; not often obstinate in error, more often irresolute in virtue;

sometimes too aspiring, sometimes too despondent; influenced by the circumstances to which he yet struggles to be superior, and changing in character with the changes of time and fate; but never wantonly rejecting those great principles by which alone we can work the Science of Life—a desire for the Good, a passion for the Honest, a yearning after the True. From such principles, Experience, that severe Mentor, teaches us at length the safe and practical philosophy which consists of Fortitude to bear, Serenity to enjoy, and Faith to look beyond!

It would have led, perhaps, to more striking incidents, and have furnished an interest more intense, if I had cast Maltravers, the Man of Genius, amidst those fierce but ennobling struggles with poverty and want to which genius is so often condemned. But wealth and lassitude have their temptations as well as penury and toil. And for the rest—I have taken much of my tale and many of my characters from real life, and would not unnecessarily seek other fountains when the Well of Truth was in my reach.

The Author has said his say, he retreats once more into silence and into shade; he leaves you alone with the creations he has called to life—the representatives of his emotions and his thoughts—the intermediators between the individual and the crowd. Children not of the clay, but of the spirit, may they be faithful to their origin!—so should they be monitors, not loud but deep, of the world into which they are cast, struggling against the obstacles that will beset them, for the heritage of their parent—

the right to survive the grave!

LONDON, August 12th, 1837.

ERNEST MALTRAVERS

BOOK I

"Youth pastures in a valley of its own:
The glare of noon—the rains and winds of heaven
Mar not the calm yet virgin of all care.
But ever with sweet joys it buildeth up
The airy halls of life."

SOPH. Trachim. 144-147.

CHAPTER I

*"My meaning in't, I protest, was very honest in the behalf of the maid * * * * yet, who would have suspected an ambush where I was taken?"*
All's Well that Ends Well, Act iv. Sc. 3.

SOME four miles distant from one of our northern manufacturing towns, in the year 18—, was a wide and desolate common; a more dreary spot it is impossible to conceive—the herbage grew up in sickly patches from the midst of a black and stony soil. Not a tree was to be seen in the whole of the comfortless expanse. Nature herself had seemed to desert the

solitude, as if scared by the ceaseless din of the neighbouring forges; and even Art, which presses all things into service, had disdained to cull use or beauty from these unpromising demesnes. There was something weird and primeval in the aspect of the place; especially when in the long nights of winter you beheld the distant fires and lights which give to the vicinity of certain manufactories so preternatural an appearance, streaming red and wild over the waste. So abandoned by man appeared the spot, that you found it difficult to imagine that it was only from human fires that its bleak and barren desolation was illumined. For miles along the moor you detected no vestige of any habitation; but as you approached the verge nearest to the town, you could just perceive at a little distance from the main road, by which the common was intersected, a small, solitary, and miserable hovel.

Within this lonely abode, at the time in which my story opens, were seated two persons. The one was a man of about fifty years of age, and in a squalid and wretched garb, which was yet relieved by an affectation of ill-assorted finery. A silk handkerchief, which boasted the ornament of a large brooch of false stones, was twisted jauntily round a muscular but meagre throat; his tattered breeches were also decorated by buckles, one of pinchbeck, and one of steel. His frame was lean, but broad and sinewy, indicative of considerable strength. His countenance was prematurely marked by deep furrows, and his grizzled hair waved over a low, rugged, and forbidding brow, on which there

hung an everlasting frown that no smile from the lips (and the man smiled often) could chase away. It was a face that spoke of long-continued and hardened vice—it was one in which the Past had written indelible characters. The brand of the hangman could not have stamped it more plainly, nor have more unequivocally warned the suspicion of honest or timid men.

He was employed in counting some few and paltry coins, which, though an easy matter to ascertain their value, he told and retold, as if the act could increase the amount. "There must be some mistake here, Alice," he said in a low and muttered tone: "we can't be so low—you know I had two pounds in the drawer but Monday, and now—Alice, you must have stolen some of the money—curse you."

The person thus addressed sat at the opposite side of the smouldering and sullen fire; she now looked quietly up, and her face singularly contrasted that of the man.

She seemed about fifteen years of age, and her complexion was remarkably pure and delicate, even despite the sunburnt tinge which her habits of toil had brought it. Her auburn hair hung in loose and natural curls over her forehead, and its luxuriance was remarkable even in one so young. Her countenance was beautiful, nay, even faultless, in its small and child-like features, but the expression pained you—it was so vacant. In repose it was almost the expression of an idiot—but when she spoke or smiled, or even moved a muscle, the eyes, colour, lips, kindled into a life, which proved that the intellect was still there, though but imperfectly

awakened.

"I did not steal any, father," she said in a quiet voice; "but I should like to have taken some, only I knew you would beat me if I did."

"And what do you want money for?"

"To get food when I'm hungered."

"Nothing else?"

"I don't know."

The girl paused.—"Why don't you let me," she said, after a while, "why don't you let me go and work with the other girls at the factory? I should make money there for you and me both."

The man smiled—such a smile—it seemed to bring into sudden play all the revolting characteristics of his countenance. "Child," he said, "you are just fifteen, and a sad fool you are: perhaps if you went to the factory, you would get away from me; and what should I do without you? No, I think, as you are so pretty, you might get more money another way."

The girl did not seem to understand this allusion: but repeated, vacantly, "I should like to go to the factory."

"Stuff!" said the man, angrily; "I have three minds to—"

Here he was interrupted by a loud knock at the door of the hovel.

The man grew pale. "What can that be?" he muttered. "The hour is late—near eleven. Again—again! Ask who knocks, Alice."

The girl stood for a moment or so at the door; and as she stood,

her form, rounded yet slight, her earnest look, her varying colour, her tender youth, and a singular grace of attitude and gesture, would have inspired an artist with the very ideal of rustic beauty.

After a pause, she placed her lips to a chink in the door, and repeated her father's question.

"Pray pardon me," said a clear, loud, yet courteous voice, "but seeing a light at your window, I have ventured to ask if any one within will conduct me to ———; I will pay the service handsomely."

"Open the door, Alley," said the owner of the hut.

The girl drew a large wooden bolt from the door; and a tall figure crossed the threshold.

The new-comer was in the first bloom of youth, perhaps about eighteen years of age, and his air and appearance surprised both sire and daughter. Alone, on foot, at such an hour, it was impossible for any one to mistake him for other than a gentleman; yet his dress was plain and somewhat soiled by dust, and he carried a small knapsack on his shoulder. As he entered, he lifted his hat with somewhat of foreign urbanity, and a profusion of fair brown hair fell partially over a high and commanding forehead. His features were handsome, without being eminently so, and his aspect was at once bold and prepossessing.

"I am much obliged by your civility," he said, advancing carelessly and addressing the man, who surveyed him with a scrutinising eye; "and trust, my good fellow, that you will increase the obligation by accompanying me to ———."

"You can't miss well your way," said the man surlily: "the lights will direct you."

"They have rather misled me, for they seem to surround the whole common, and there is no path across it that I can see; however, if you will put me in the right road, I will not trouble you further."

"It is very late," replied the churlish landlord, equivocally.

"The better reason why I should be at ———. Come, my good friend, put on your hat, and I will give you half a guinea for your trouble."

The man advanced, then halted; again surveyed his guest, and said, "Are you quite alone, sir?"

"Quite."

"Probably you are known at ———?"

"Not I. But what matters that to you? I am a stranger in these parts."

"It is full four miles."

"So far, and I am fearfully tired already!" exclaimed the young man with impatience. As he spoke he drew out his watch. "Past eleven too!"

The watch caught the eye of the cottager; that evil eye sparkled. He passed his hand over his brow. "I am thinking, sir," he said in a more civil tone than he had yet assumed, "that as you are so tired and the hour is so late, you might almost as well—"

"What?" exclaimed the stranger, stamping somewhat petulantly.

"I don't like to mention it; but my poor roof is at your service, and I would go with you to ——— at daybreak to-morrow."

The stranger stared at the cottager, and then at the dingy walls of the hut. He was about, very abruptly, to reject the hospitable proposal, when his eye rested suddenly on the form of Alice, who stood eager-eyed and open-mouthed, gazing on the handsome intruder. As she caught his eye, she blushed deeply and turned aside. The view seemed to change the intentions of the stranger. He hesitated a moment, then muttered between his teeth: and sinking his knapsack on the ground, he cast himself into a chair beside the fire, stretched his limbs, and cried gaily, "So be it, my host: shut up your house again. Bring me a cup of beer, and a crust of bread, and so much for supper! As for bed, this chair will do vastly well."

"Perhaps we can manage better for you than that chair," answered the host. "But our best accommodation must seem bad enough to a gentleman: we are very poor people—hard-working, but very poor."

"Never mind me," answered the stranger, busying himself in stirring the fire; "I am tolerably well accustomed to greater hardships than sleeping on a chair in an honest man's house; and though you are poor, I will take it for granted you are honest."

The man grinned: and turning to Alice, bade her spread what their larder would afford. Some crusts of bread, some cold potatoes, and some tolerably strong beer, composed all the fare set before the traveller.

Despite his previous boasts, the young man made a wry face at these Socratic preparations, while he drew his chair to the board. But his look grew more gay as he caught Alice's eye; and as she lingered by the table, and faltered out some hesitating words of apology, he seized her hand, and pressing it tenderly —"Prettiest of lasses," said he—and while he spoke he gazed on her with undisguised admiration—"a man who has travelled on foot all day, through the ugliest country within the three seas, is sufficiently refreshed at night by the sight of so fair a face."

Alice hastily withdrew her hand, and went and seated herself in a corner of the room, when she continued to look at the stranger with her usual vacant gaze, but with a half-smile upon her rosy lips.

Alice's father looked hard first at one, then at the other.

"Eat, sir," said he, with a sort of chuckle, "and no fine words; poor Alice is honest, as you said just now."

"To be sure," answered the traveller, employing with great zeal a set of strong, even, and dazzling teeth at the tough crusts; "to be sure she is. I did not mean to offend you; but the fact is, that I am half a foreigner; and abroad, you know, one may say a civil thing to a pretty girl without hurting her feelings, or her father's either."

"Half a foreigner! why, you talk English as well as I do," said the host, whose intonation and words were, on the whole, a little above his station.

The stranger smiled. "Thank you for the compliment," said

he. “What I meant was, that I have been a great deal abroad; in fact, I have just returned from Germany. But I am English born.”

“And going home?”

“Yes.”

“Far from hence?”

“About thirty miles, I believe.”

“You are young, sir, to be alone.”

The traveller made no answer, but finished his uninviting repast and drew his chair again to the fire. He then thought he had sufficiently ministered to his host’s curiosity to be entitled to the gratification of his own.

“You work at the factories, I suppose?” said he.

“I do, sir. Bad times.”

“And your pretty daughter?”

“Minds the house.”

“Have you no other children?”

“No; one mouth besides my own is as much as I can feed, and that scarcely. But you would like to rest now; you can have my bed, sir; I can sleep here.”

“By no means,” said the stranger, quickly; “just put a few more coals on the fire, and leave me to make myself comfortable.”

The man rose, and did not press his offer, but left the room for a supply of fuel. Alice remained in her corner.

“Sweetheart,” said the traveller, looking round and satisfying himself that they were alone: “I should sleep well if I could get one kiss from those coral lips.”

Alice hid her face with her hands.

"Do I vex you?"

"Oh no, sir."

At this assurance the traveller rose, and approached Alice softly. He drew away her hands from her face, when she said gently, "Have you much money about you?"

"Oh, the mercenary baggage!" said the traveller to himself; and then replied aloud, "Why, pretty one? Do you sell your kisses so high then?"

Alice frowned and tossed the hair from her brow. "If you have money," she said, in a whisper, "don't say so to father. Don't sleep if you can help it. I'm afraid—hush—he comes!"

The young man returned to his seat with an altered manner. And as his host entered, he for the first time surveyed him closely. The imperfect glimmer of the half-dying and single candle threw into strong lights and shades the marked, rugged, and ferocious features of the cottager; and the eye of the traveller, glancing from the face to the limbs and frame, saw that whatever of violence the mind might design, the body might well execute.

The traveller sank into a gloomy reverie. The wind howled—the rain beat—through the casement shone no solitary star—all was dark and sombre. Should he proceed alone—might he not suffer a greater danger upon that wide and desert moor—might not the host follow—assault him in the dark? He had no weapon save a stick. But within he had at least a rude resource in the large kitchen poker that was beside him. At all events it would be

better to wait for the present. He might at any time, when alone, withdraw the bolt from the door, and slip out unobserved. Such was the fruit of his meditations while his host plied the fire.

"You will sleep sound to-night," said his entertainer, smiling.

"Humph! Why, I am *over*-fatigued; I dare say it will be an hour or two before I fall asleep; but when I once am asleep, I sleep like a rock!"

"Come, Alice," said her father, "let us leave the gentleman. Goodnight, sir."

"Good night—good night," returned the traveller, yawning.

The father and daughter disappeared through a door in the corner of the room. The guest heard them ascend the creaking stairs—all was still.

"Fool that I am," said the traveller to himself, "will nothing teach me that I am no longer a student at Gottingen, or cure me of these pedestrian adventures? Had it not been for that girl's big blue eyes, I should be safe at ——— by this time, if, indeed, the grim father had not murdered me by the road. However, we'll baulk him yet: another half-hour, and I am on the moor: we must give him time. And in the meanwhile here is the poker. At the worst it is but one to one; but the churl is strongly built."

Although the traveller thus endeavoured to cheer his courage, his heart beat more loudly than its wont. He kept his eyes stationed on the door by which the cottagers had vanished, and his hand on the massive poker.

While the stranger was thus employed below, Alice, instead

of turning to her own narrow cell, went into her father's room.

The cottager was seated at the foot of his bed muttering to himself, and with eyes fixed on the ground.

The girl stood before him, gazing on his face, and with her arms lightly crossed above her bosom.

"It must be worth twenty guineas," said the host, abruptly to himself.

"What is it to you, father, what the gentleman's watch is worth?"

The man started.

"You mean," continued Alice, quietly, "you mean to do some injury to that young man; but you shall not."

The cottager's face grew black as night. "How," he began in a loud voice, but suddenly dropped the tone into a deep growl —"how dare you talk to me so?—go to bed—go to bed."

"No, father."

"No?"

"I will not stir from this room until daybreak."

"We will soon see that," said the man, with an oath.

"Touch me, and I will alarm the gentleman, and tell him that —"

"What?"

The girl approached her father, placed her lips to his ear, and whispered, "That you intend to murder him."

The cottager's frame trembled from head to foot; he shut his eyes, and gasped painfully for breath. "Alice," said he, gently,

after a pause—"Alice, we are often nearly starving."

"*I* am—*you* never!"

"Wretch, yes, if I do drink too much one day, I pinch for it the next. But go to bed, I say—I mean no harm to the young man. Think you I would twist myself a rope?—no, no; go along, go along."

Alice's face, which had before been earnest and almost intelligent, now relapsed into its wonted vacant stare.

"To be sure, father, they would hang you if you cut his throat. Don't forget that;—good night;" and so saying, she walked to her own opposite chamber.

Left alone, the host pressed his hand tightly to his forehead, and remained motionless for nearly half an hour.

"If that cursed girl would but sleep," he muttered at last, turning round, "it might be done at once. And there's the pond behind, as deep as a well; and I might say at daybreak that the boy had bolted. He seems quite a stranger here—nobody'll miss him. He must have plenty of blunt to give half a guinea to a guide across a common! I want money, and I won't work—if I can help it, at least."

While he thus soliloquised the air seemed to oppress him; he opened the window, he leant out—the rain beat upon him. He closed the window with an oath; took off his shoes, stole to the threshold, and, by the candle, which he shaded with his hand, surveyed the opposite door. It was closed. He then bent anxiously forward and listened.

"All's quiet," thought he, "perhaps he sleeps already. I will steal down. If Jack Walters would but come tonight, the job would be done charmingly."

With that he crept gently down the stairs. In a corner, at the foot of the staircase, lay sundry matters, a few faggots, and a cleaver. He caught up the last. "Aha," he muttered; "and there's the sledge-hammer somewhere for Walters." Leaning himself against the door, he then applied his eye to a chink which admitted a dim view of the room within, lighted fitfully by the fire.

CHAPTER II

"What have we here?
A carrion death!"

Merchant of Venice, Act ii. Sc. 7.

IT was about this time that the stranger deemed it advisable to commence his retreat. The slight and suppressed sound of voices, which at first he had heard above in the conversation of the father and child, had died away. The stillness at once encouraged and warned him. He stole to the front door, softly undid the bolt, and found the door locked, and the key missing. He had not observed that during his repast, and ere his suspicions had been aroused, his host, in replacing the bar, and relocking the

entrance, had abstracted the key. His fears were now confirmed. His next thought was the window—the shutter only protected it half-way, and was easily removed; but the aperture of the lattice, which only opened in part like most cottage casements, was far too small to admit his person. His only means of escape was in breaking the whole window; a matter not to be effected without noise and consequent risk.

He paused in despair. He was naturally of a strong-nerved and gallant temperament, nor unaccustomed to those perils of life and limb which German students delight to brave; but his heart well-nigh failed him at that moment. The silence became distinct and burdensome to him, and a chill moisture gathered to his brow. While he stood irresolute and in suspense, striving to collect his thoughts, his ear, preternaturally sharpened by fear, caught the faint muffled sound of creeping footsteps—he heard the stairs creak. The sound broke the spell. The previous vague apprehension gave way, when the danger became actually at hand. His presence of mind returned at once. He went back quickly to the fireplace, seized the poker, and began stirring the fire, and coughing loud, and indicating as vigorously as possible that he was wide awake.

He felt that he was watched—he felt that he was in momently peril. He felt that the appearance of slumber would be the signal for a mortal conflict. Time passed, all remained silent; nearly half an hour had elapsed since he had heard the steps upon the stairs. His situation began to prey upon his nerves, it irritated them—

it became intolerable. It was not now fear that he experienced, it was the overwrought sense of mortal enmity—the consciousness that a man may feel who knows that the eye of a tiger is on him, and who, while in suspense he has regained his courage, foresees that sooner or later the spring must come; the suspense itself becomes an agony, and he desires to expedite the deadly struggle he cannot shun.

Utterly incapable any longer to bear his own sensations, the traveller rose at last, fixed his eyes upon the fatal door, and was about to cry aloud to the listener to enter, when he heard a slight tap at the window; it was twice repeated; and at the third time a low voice pronounced the name of Darvil. It was clear, then, that accomplices had arrived; it was no longer against one man that he would have to contend. He drew his breath hard, and listened with throbbing ears. He heard steps without upon the plashing soil; they retired—all was still.

He paused a few minutes, and walked deliberately and firmly to the inner door, at which he fancied his host stationed; with a steady hand he attempted to open the door; it was fastened on the opposite side. "So!" said he, bitterly, and grinding his teeth, "I must die like a rat in a cage. Well, I'll die biting."

He returned to his former post, drew himself up to his full height, and stood grasping his homely weapon, prepared for the worst, and not altogether unelated with a proud consciousness of his own natural advantages of activity, stature, strength and daring. Minutes rolled on; the silence was broken by some one

at the inner door; he heard the bolt gently withdrawn. He raised his weapon with both hands; and started to find the intruder was only Alice. She came in with bare feet, and pale as marble, her finger on her lips.

She approached—she touched him.

"They are in the shed behind," she whispered, "looking for the sledge-hammer—they mean to murder you; get you gone—quick."

"How?—the door is locked."

"Stay. I have taken the key from his room."

She gained the door, applied the key—the door yielded. The traveller threw his knapsack once more over his shoulder, and made but one stride to the threshold. The girl stopped him. "Don't say anything about it; he is my father, they would hang him."

"No, no. But you?—are safe, I trust?—depend on my gratitude.—I shall be at ——— to-morrow—the best inn—seek me if you can. Which way now?"

"Keep to the left."

The stranger was already several paces distant; through the darkness, and in the midst of the rain, he fled on with the speed of youth. The girl lingered an instant, sighed, then laughed aloud; closed and re-barred the door, and was creeping back, when from the inner entrance advanced the grim father, and another man, of broad, short, sinewy frame, his arms bare, and wielding a large hammer.

"How?" asked the host; "Alice here, and—hell and the devil! have you let him go?"

"I told you that you should not harm him."

With a violent oath the ruffian struck his daughter to the ground, sprang over her body, unbarred the door, and, accompanied by his comrade, set off in vague pursuit of his intended victim.

CHAPTER III

"You knew—none so well, of my daughter's flight."

Merchant of Venice, Act iii. Sc. 1.

THE day dawned; it was a mild, damp, hazy morning; the sod sank deep beneath the foot, the roads were heavy with mire, and the rain of the past night lay here and there in broad shallow pools. Towards the town, waggons, carts, pedestrian groups were already moving; and, now and then, you caught the sharp horn of some early coach, wheeling its be-cloaked outside and be-nightcapped inside passengers along the northern thoroughfare.

A young man bounded over a stile into the road just opposite to the milestone, that declared him to be one mile from ———.

"Thank Heaven!" he said, almost aloud. "After spending the night wandering about morasses like a will-o'-the-wisp, I approach a town at last. Thank Heaven again, and for all its

mercies this night! I breathe freely. I AM SAFE."

He walked on somewhat rapidly; he passed a slow waggon—-he passed a group of mechanics—he passed a drove of sheep, and now he saw walking leisurely before him a single figure. It was a girl, in a worn and humble dress, who seemed to seek her weary way with pain and languor. He was about also to pass her, when he heard a low cry. He turned, and beheld in the wayfarer his preserver of the previous night.

"Heavens! is it indeed you? Can I believe my eyes?"

"I was coming to seek you, sir," said the girl, faintly. "I too have escaped; I shall never go back to father; I have no roof to cover my head now."

"Poor child! but how is this? Did they ill use you for releasing me?"

"Father knocked me down, and beat me again when he came back; but that is not all," she added, in a very low tone.

"What else?"

The girl grew red and white by turns. She set her teeth rigidly, stopped short, and then walking on quicker than before, replied: "It don't matter; I will never go back—I'm alone now. What, what shall I do?" and she wrung her hands.

The traveller's pity was deeply moved. "My good girl," said he, earnestly, "you have saved my life, and I am not ungrateful. Here" (and he placed some gold in her hand), "get yourself a lodging, food and rest; you look as if you wanted them; and see me again this evening when it is dark and we can talk

unobserved."

The girl took the money passively, and looked up in his face while he spoke; the look was so unsuspecting, and the whole countenance was so beautifully modest and virgin-like, that had any evil passion prompted the traveller's last words, it must have fled scared and abashed as he met the gaze.

"My poor girl," said he, embarrassed, and after a short pause; "you are very young, and very, very pretty. In this town you will be exposed to many temptations: take care where you lodge; you have, no doubt, friends here?"

"Friends?—what are friends?" answered Alice.

"Have you no relations?—no *mother's kin*?"

"None."

"Do you know where to ask shelter?"

"No, sir; for I can't go where father goes, lest he should find me out."

"Well, then, seek some quiet inn, and meet me this evening just here, half a mile from the town, at seven. I will try and think of something for you in the meanwhile. But you seem tired, you walk with pain; perhaps it will fatigue you to come—I mean, you had rather perhaps rest another day."

"Oh no, no! it will do me good to see you again, sir."

The young man's eyes met hers, and hers were not withdrawn; their soft blue was suffused with tears—they penetrated his soul. He turned away hastily, and saw that they were already the subject of curious observation to the various passengers that

overtook them. “Don’t forget!” he whispered, and strode on with a pace that soon brought him to the town.

He inquired for the principal hotel—entered it with an air that bespoke that nameless consciousness of superiority which belongs to those accustomed to purchase welcome wherever welcome is bought and sold—and before a blazing fire and no unsubstantial breakfast, forgot all the terrors of the past night, or rather felt rejoiced to think he had added a new and strange hazard to the catalogue of adventures already experienced by Ernest Maltravers.

CHAPTER IV

“Con una Dama tenia
Un galan conversacion.”[4]

MORATIN: El Teatro Espanol.—Num. 15.

MALTRAVERS was first at the appointed place. His character was in most respects singularly energetic, decided, and premature in its development; but not so in regard to women: with them he was the creature of the moment; and, driven to and fro by whatever impulse, or whatever passion, caught the caprice of a wild, roving, and all-poetical imagination, Maltravers was, half unconsciously, a poet—a poet of action, and woman was his

[4] With a dame he held a gallant conversation.

muse.

He had formed no plan of conduct towards the poor girl he was to meet. He meant no harm to her. If she had been less handsome, he would have been equally grateful; and her dress, and youth, and condition, would equally have compelled him to select the hour of dusk for an interview.

He arrived at the spot. The winter night had already descended; but a sharp frost had set in: the air was clear, the stars were bright, and the long shadows slept, still and calm, along the broad road, and the whitened fields beyond.

He walked briskly to and fro, without much thought of the interview, or its object, half chanting old verses, German and English, to himself, and stopping to gaze every moment at the silent stars.

At length he saw Alice approach: she came up to him timidly and gently. His heart beat more quickly; he felt that he was young and alone with beauty. "Sweet girl," he said, with involuntary and mechanical compliment, "how well this light becomes you. How shall I thank you for not forgetting me?"

Alice surrendered her hand to his without a struggle.

"What is your name?" said he, bending his face down to hers.

"Alice Darvil."

"And your terrible father,—*is* he, in truth, your father?"

"Indeed he is my father and mother too!"

"What made you suspect his intention to murder me? Has he ever attempted the like crime?"

"No; but lately he has often talked of robbery. He is very poor, sir. And when I saw his eye, and when afterwards, while your back was turned, he took the key from the door, I felt that—that you were in danger."

"Good girl—go on."

"I told him so when we went up-stairs. I did not know what to believe, when he said he would not hurt you; but I stole the key of the front door, which he had thrown on the table, and went to my room. I listened at my door; I heard him go down the stairs—he stopped there for some time; and I watched him from above. The place where he was opened to the field by the back-way. After some time, I heard a voice whisper him; I knew the voice, and then they both went out by the back-way; so I stole down, and went out and listened; and I knew the other man was John Walters. I'm afraid of *him*, sir. And then Walters said, says he, 'I will get the hammer, and, sleep or wake, we'll do it.' And father said, 'It's in the shed.' So I saw there was no time to be lost, sir, and—and—but you know all the rest."

"But how did you escape?"

"Oh, my father, after talking to Walters, came to my room, and beat and—and—frightened me; and when he was gone to bed, I put on my clothes, and stole out; it was just light; and I walked on till I met you."

"Poor child, in what a den of vice you have been brought up!"

"Anan, sir."

"She don't understand me. Have you been taught to read and

write?"

"Oh no!"

"But I suppose you have been taught, at least, to say your catechism—and you pray sometimes?"

"I have prayed to father not to beat me."

"But to God?"

"God, sir—what is that?"[5]

Maltravers drew back, shocked and appalled. Premature philosopher as he was, this depth of ignorance perplexed his wisdom. He had read all the disputes of schoolmen, whether or not the notion of a Supreme Being is innate; but he had never before been brought face to face with a living creature who was unconscious of a God.

After a pause, he said: "My poor girl, we misunderstand each other. You know that there is a God?"

"No, sir."

"Did no one ever tell you who made the stars you now survey—the earth on which you tread?"

"No."

"And have you never thought about it yourself?"

"Why should I? What has that to do with being cold and

[5] This ignorance—indeed the whole sketch of Alice—is from the life; nor is such ignorance, accompanied by what almost seems an instinctive or intuitive notion of right or wrong, very uncommon, as our police reports can testify. In the *Examiner* for, I think, the year 1835, will be found the case of a young girl ill-treated by her father, whose answers to the interrogatories of the magistrate are very similar to those of Alice to the questions of Maltravers.

hungry?"

Maltravers looked incredulous. "You see that great building, with the spire rising in the starlight?"

"Yes, sir, sure."

"What is it called?"

"Why, a church."

"Did you never go into it?"

"No."

"What do people do there?"

"Father says one man talks nonsense, and the other folk listen to him."

"Your father is—no matter. Good heavens! what shall I do with this unhappy child?"

"Yes, sir, I am very unhappy," said Alice, catching at the last words; and the tears rolled silently down her cheeks.

Maltravers never was more touched in his life. Whatever thoughts of gallantry might have entered his young head, had he found Alice such as he might reasonably have expected, he now felt that there was a kind of sanctity in her ignorance; and his gratitude and kindly sentiment towards her took almost a brotherly aspect.—"You know, at least, what school is?" he asked.

"Yes, I have talked with girls who go to school."

"Would you like to go there, too?"

"Oh, no, sir, pray not!"

"What should you like to do, then? Speak out, child. I owe you

so much, that I should be too happy to make you comfortable and contented in your own way."

"I should like to live with you, sir." Maltravers started, and half smiled, and coloured. But looking on her eyes, which were fixed earnestly on his, there was so much artlessness in their soft, unconscious gaze, that he saw she was wholly ignorant of the interpretation that might be put upon so candid a confession.

I have said that Maltravers was a wild, enthusiastic, odd being—he was, in fact, full of strange German romance and metaphysical speculations. He had once shut himself up for months to study astrology—and been even suspected of a serious hunt after the philosopher's stone; another time he had narrowly escaped with life and liberty from a frantic conspiracy of the young republicans of his university, in which, being bolder and madder than most of them, he had been an active ringleader; it was, indeed, some such folly that had compelled him to quit Germany sooner than himself or his parents desired. He had nothing of the sober Englishman about him. Whatever was strange and eccentric had an irresistible charm for Ernest Maltravers. And agreeably to this disposition, he now revolved an idea that enchanted his mobile and fantastic philosophy. He himself would educate this charming girl—he would write fair and heavenly characters upon this blank page—he would act the Saint Preux to this Julie of Nature. Alas, he did not think of the result which the parallel should have suggested. At that age, Ernest Maltravers never damped the ardour of an experiment by

the anticipation of consequences.

"So," he said, after a short reverie, "so you would like to live with me? But, Alice, we must not fall in love with each other."

"I don't understand, sir."

"Never mind," said Maltravers, a little disconcerted.

"I always wished to go into service."

"Ha!"

"And you would be a kind master."

Maltravers was half disenchanted.

"No very flattering preference," thought he: "so much the safer for us. Well, Alice, it shall be as you wish. Are you comfortable where you are, in your new lodgings?"

"No."

"Why, they do not insult you?"

"No; but they make a noise, and I like to be quiet to think of you."

The young philosopher was reconciled again to his scheme.

"Well, Alice—go back—I will take a cottage to-morrow, and you shall be my servant, and I will teach you to read and write and say your prayers, and know that you have a Father above who loves you better than he below. Meet me again at the same hour to-morrow. Why do you cry, Alice? why do you cry?"

"Because—because," sobbed the girl, "I am so happy, and I shall live with you and see you."

"Go, child—go, child," said Maltravers, hastily; and he walked away with a quicker pulse than became his new character of

master and preceptor.

He looked back, and saw the girl gazing at him; he waved his hand, and she moved on and followed him slowly back to the town.

Maltravers, though not an elder son, was the heir of affluent fortunes; he enjoyed a munificent allowance that sufficed for the whims of a youth who had learned in Germany none of the extravagant notions common to young Englishmen of similar birth and prospects. He was a spoiled child, with no law but his own fancy,—his return home was not expected,—there was nothing to prevent the indulgence of his new caprice. The next day he hired a cottage in the neighbourhood, which was one of those pretty thatched edifices, with verandas and monthly roses, a conservatory and a lawn, which justify the English proverb about a cottage and love. It had been built by a mercantile bachelor for some Fair Rosamond, and did credit to his taste. An old woman, let with the house, was to cook and do the work. Alice was but a nominal servant. Neither the old woman nor the landlord comprehended the Platonic intentions of the young stranger. But he paid his rent in advance, and they were not particular. He, however, thought it prudent to conceal his name. It was one sure to be known in a town not very distant from the residence of his father, a wealthy and long-descended country gentleman. He adopted, therefore, the common name of Butler; which, indeed, belonged to one of his maternal connections, and by that name alone was he known in the neighbourhood and to

Alice. From her he would not have sought concealment,—but somehow or other no occasion ever presented itself to induce him to talk much to her of his parentage or birth.

CHAPTER V

"Thought would destroy their Paradise."

—GRAY.

MALTRAVERS found Alice as docile a pupil as any reasonable preceptor might have desired. But still, reading and writing—they are very uninteresting elements! Had the groundwork been laid, it might have been delightful to raise the fairy palace of knowledge; but the digging the foundations and the constructing the cellars is weary labour. Perhaps he felt it so; for in a few days Alice was handed over to the very oldest and ugliest writing-master that the neighbouring town could afford. The poor girl at first wept much at the exchange; but the grave remonstrances and solemn exhortations of Maltravers reconciled her at last, and she promised to work hard and pay every attention to her lessons. I am not sure, however, that it was the tedium of the work that deterred the idealist—perhaps he felt its danger—and at the bottom of his sparkling dreams and brilliant follies lay a sound, generous, and noble heart. He was fond of pleasure, and had been already the darling of the sentimental German ladies.

But he was too young and too vivid, and too romantic, to be what is called a sensualist. He could not look upon a fair face, and a guileless smile, and all the ineffable symmetry of a woman's shape, with the eye of a man buying cattle for base uses. He very easily fell in love, or fancied he did, it is true,—but then he could not separate desire from fancy, or calculate the game of passion without bringing the heart or the imagination into the matter. And though Alice was very pretty and very engaging, he was not yet in love with her, and he had no intention of becoming so.

He felt the evening somewhat long, when for the first time Alice discontinued her usual lesson; but Maltravers had abundant resources in himself. He placed Shakespeare and Schiller on his table, and lighted his German meerschaum—he read till he became inspired, and then he wrote—and when he had composed a few stanzas he was not contented till he had set them to music, and tried their melody with his voice. For he had all the passion of a German for song, and music—that wild Maltravers! —and his voice was sweet, his taste consummate, his science profound. As the sun puts out a star, so the full blaze of his imagination, fairly kindled, extinguished for the time his fairy fancy for his beautiful pupil.

It was late that night when Maltravers went to bed—and as he passed through the narrow corridor that led to his chamber he heard a light step flying before him, and caught the glimpse of a female figure escaping through a distant door. "The silly child," thought he, at once divining the cause; "she has been listening to

my singing. I shall scold her." But he forgot that resolution.

The next day, and the next, and many days passed, and Maltravers saw but little of the pupil for whose sake he had shut himself up in a country cottage, in the depth of winter. Still he did not repent his purpose, nor was he in the least tired of his seclusion—he would not inspect Alice's progress, for he was certain he should be dissatisfied with its slowness—and people, however handsome, cannot learn to read and write in a day. But he amused himself, notwithstanding. He was glad of an opportunity to be alone with his own thoughts, for he was at one of those periodical epochs of life when we like to pause and breathe a while, in brief respite from that methodical race in which we run to the grave. He wished to re-collect the stores of his past experience, and repose on his own mind, before he started afresh upon the active world. The weather was cold and inclement; but Ernest Maltravers was a hardy lover of nature, and neither snow nor frost could detain him from his daily rambles. So, about noon, he regularly threw aside books and papers, took his hat and staff, and went whistling or humming his favourite airs through the dreary streets, or along the bleak waters, or amidst the leafless woods, just as the humour seized him; for he was not an Edwin or Harold, who reserved speculation only for lonely brooks and pastoral hills. Maltravers delighted to contemplate nature in men as well as in sheep or trees. The humblest alley in a crowded town had something poetical for him; he was ever ready to mix in a crowd, if it were only gathered

round a barrel-organ or a dog-fight, and listen to all that was said and notice all that was done. And this I take to be the true poetical temperament essential to every artist who aspires to be something more than a scene-painter. But, above all things, he was most interested in any display of human passions or affections; he loved to see the true colours of the heart, where they are most transparent—in the uneducated and poor—for he was something of an optimist, and had a hearty faith in the loveliness of our nature. Perhaps, indeed, he owed much of the insight into and mastery over character that he was afterwards considered to display, to his disbelief that there is any wickedness so dark as not to be susceptible of the light in some place or another. But Maltravers had his fits of unsociability, and then nothing but the most solitary scenes delighted him. Winter or summer, barren waste or prodigal verdure, all had beauty in his eyes; for their beauty lay in his own soul, through which he beheld them. From these walks he would return home at dusk, take his simple meal, rhyme or read away the long evenings with such alternation as music or the dreamy thoughts of a young man with gay life before him could afford. Happy Maltravers!—youth and genius have luxuries all the Rothschilds cannot purchase! And yet, Maltravers, you are ambitious!—life moves too slowly for you!—you would push on the wheels of the clock!—Fool—brilliant fool!—you are eighteen, and a poet!—What more can you desire?—Bid Time stop for ever!

One morning Ernest rose earlier than his wont, and sauntered

carelessly through the conservatory which adjoined his sitting-room; observing the plants with placid curiosity (for besides being a little of a botanist, he had odd visionary notions about the life of plants, and he saw in them a hundred mysteries which the herbalists do not teach us), when he heard a low and very musical voice singing at a little distance. He listened, and recognised, with surprise, words of his own, which he had lately set to music, and was sufficiently pleased with to sing nightly.

When the song ended, Maltravers stole softly through the conservatory, and as he opened the door which led into the garden, he saw at the open window of a little room which was apportioned to Alice, and jutted out from the building in the fanciful irregularity common to ornamental cottages, the form of his discarded pupil. She did not observe him, and it was not till he twice called her by name, that she started from her thoughtful and melancholy posture.

"Alice," said he, gently, "put on your bonnet, and walk with me in the garden: you look pale, child; the fresh air will do you good."

Alice coloured and smiled, and in a few moments was by his side. Maltravers, meanwhile, had gone in and lighted his meerschaum, for it was his great inspirer whenever his thoughts were perplexed, or he felt his usual fluency likely to fail him, and such was the case now. With this faithful ally he awaited Alice in the little walk that circled the lawn, amidst shrubs and evergreens.

"Alice," said he after a pause; but he stopped short.

Alice looked up at him with grave respect.

"Tush!" said Maltravers; "perhaps the smoke is unpleasant to you. It is a bad habit of mine."

"No, sir," answered Alice; and she seemed disappointed. Maltravers paused, and picked up a snowdrop.

"It is pretty," he said; "do you love flowers?"

"Oh, dearly," answered Alice, with some enthusiasm; "I never saw many till I came here."

"Now then I can go on," thought Maltravers; why, I cannot say, for I do not see the *sequitur*; but on he went *in medias res*. "Alice, you sing charmingly."

"Ah! sir, you—you—" she stopped abruptly, and trembled visibly.

"Yes, I overheard you, Alice."

"And you are angry?"

"I!—Heaven forbid! It is a *talent*—but you don't know what that is; I mean it is an excellent thing to have an ear; and a voice, and a heart for music; and you have all three."

He paused, for he felt his hand touched; Alice suddenly clasped and kissed it. Maltravers thrilled through his whole frame; but there was something in the girl's look that showed she was wholly unaware that she had committed an unmaidenly or forward action.

"I was so afraid you would be angry," she said, wiping her eyes as she dropped his hand; "and now I suppose you know all."

"All!"

"Yes; how I listened to you every evening, and lay awake the whole night with the music ringing in my ears, till I tried to go over it myself; and so at last I ventured to sing aloud. I like that much better than learning to read."

All this was delightful to Maltravers: the girl had touched upon one of his weak points; however, he remained silent. Alice continued:

"And now, sir, I hope you will let me come and sit outside the door every evening and hear you; I will make no noise—I will be so quiet."

"What, in that cold corridor, these bitter nights?"

"I am used to cold, sir. Father would not let me have a fire when he was not at home."

"No, Alice, but you shall come into the room while I play, and I will give you a lesson or two. I am glad you have so good an ear; it may be a means of your earning your own honest livelihood when you leave me."

"When I—but I never intend to leave you, sir!" said Alice, beginning fearfully and ending calmly.

Maltravers had recourse to the meerschaum.

Luckily, perhaps, at this time, they were joined by Mr. Simcox, the old writing-master. Alice went in to prepare her books; but Maltravers laid his hand upon the preceptor's shoulder.

"You have a quick pupil, I hope, sir?" said he.

"Oh, very, very, Mr. Butler. She comes on famously. She

practises a great deal when I am away, and I do my best."

"And," asked Maltravers, in a grave tone, "have you succeeded in instilling into the poor child's mind some of those more sacred notions of which I spoke to you at our first meeting?"

"Why, sir, she was indeed quite a heathen—quite a Mahometan, I may say; but she is a little better now."

"What have you taught her?"

"That God made her."

"That is a great step."

"And that He loves good girls, and will watch over them."

"Bravo! You beat Plato."

"No, sir, I never beat any one, except little Jack Turner; but he is a dunce."

"Bah! What else do you teach her?"

"That the devil runs away with bad girls, and—"

"Stop there, Mr. Simcox. Never mind the devil yet a while. Let her first learn to do good, that God may love her; the rest will follow. I would rather make people religious through their best feelings than their worst,—through their gratitude and affections, rather than their fears and calculations of risk and punishment."

Mr. Simcox stared.

"Does she say her prayers?"

"I have taught her a short one."

"Did she learn it readily?"

"Lord love her, yes! When I told her she ought to pray to God to bless her benefactor, she would not rest till I had repeated a

prayer out of our Sunday School book, and she got it by heart at once."

"Enough, Mr. Simcox. I will not detain you longer."

Forgetful of his untasted breakfast, Maltravers continued his meerschaum and his reflections: he did not cease, till he had convinced himself that he was but doing his duty to Alice, by teaching her to cultivate the charming talent she evidently possessed, and through which she might secure her own independence. He fancied that he should thus relieve himself of a charge and responsibility which often perplexed him. Alice would leave him, enabled to walk the world in an honest professional path. It was an excellent idea. "But there is danger," whispered Conscience. "Ay," answered Philosophy and Pride, those wise dupes that are always so solemn and always so taken in; "but what is virtue without trial?"

And now every evening, when the windows were closed, and the hearth burnt clear, while the winds stormed, and the rain beat without, a lithe and lovely shape hovered about the student's chamber; and his wild songs were sung by a voice which Nature had made even sweeter than his own.

Alice's talent for music was indeed surprising; enthusiastic and quick as he himself was in all he undertook, Maltravers was amazed at her rapid progress. He soon taught her to play by ear; and Maltravers could not but notice that her hand, always delicate in shape, had lost the rude colour and roughness of labour. He thought of that pretty hand more often than he ought to have

done, and guided it over the keys when it could have found its way very well without him.

On coming to the cottage he had directed the old servant to provide suitable and proper clothes for Alice; but now that she was admitted "to sit with the gentleman," the crone had the sense, without waiting for new orders, to buy the "pretty young woman" garments, still indeed simple, but of better materials and less rustic fashion; and Alice's redundant tresses were now carefully arranged into orderly and glossy curls, and even the texture was no longer the same; and happiness and health bloomed on her downy cheeks, and smiled from the dewy lips, which never quite closed over the fresh white teeth, except when she was sad—but that seemed never, now she was not banished from Maltravers.

To say nothing of the unusual grace and delicacy of Alice's form and features, there is nearly always something of Nature's own gentility in very young women (except, indeed, when they get together and fall a-giggling); it shames us men to see how much sooner they are polished into conventional shape than our rough, masculine angles. A vulgar boy requires Heaven knows what assiduity to make three steps—I do not say like a gentleman, but like a body that has a soul in it; but give the least advantage of society or tuition to a peasant girl, and a hundred to one but she will glide into refinement before the boy can make a bow without upsetting the table. There is sentiment in all women, and sentiment gives delicacy to thought, and tact to manner. But sentiment with men is generally acquired, an offspring of the

intellectual quality, not, as with the other sex, of the moral.

In the course of his musical and vocal lessons, Maltravers gently took the occasion to correct poor Alice's frequent offences against grammar and accent: and her memory was prodigiously quick and retentive. The very tones of her voice seemed altered in the ear of Maltravers; and, somehow or other, the time came when he was no longer sensible of the difference in their rank.

The old woman-servant, when she had seen how it would be from the first, and taken a pride in her own prophecy, as she ordered Alice's new dresses, was a much better philosopher than Maltravers; though he was already up to his ears in the moonlit abyss of Plato, and had filled a dozen commonplace books with criticisms on Kant.

CHAPTER VI

"Young man, I fear thy blood is rosy red,
Thy heart is soft."

D'AGUILAR'S Fiesco, Act iii. Sc. 1.

As education does not consist in reading and writing only, so Alice, while still very backward in those elementary arts, forestalled some of their maturest results in her intercourse with Maltravers. Before the inoculation took effect, she caught knowledge in the natural way. For the refinement of a graceful

mind and a happy manner is very contagious. And Maltravers was encouraged by her quickness in music to attempt such instruction in other studies as conversation could afford. It is a better school than parents and masters think for: there was a time when all information was given orally; and probably the Athenians learned more from hearing Aristotle than we do from reading him. It was a delicious revival of Academe—in the walks, or beneath the rustic porticoes of that little cottage—the romantic philosopher and the beautiful disciple! And his talk was much like that of a sage of the early world, with some wistful and earnest savage for a listener: of the stars and their courses—of beasts, and birds, and fishes, and plants, and flowers—the wide family of Nature—of the beneficence and power of God;—of the mystic and spiritual history of Man.

Charmed by her attention and docility, Maltravers at length diverged from lore into poetry; he would repeat to her the simplest and most natural passages he could remember in his favourite poets; he would himself compose verses elaborately adapted to her understanding; she liked the last the best, and learned them the easiest. Never had young poet a more gracious inspiration, and never did this inharmonious world more complacently resolve itself into soft dreams, as if to humour the novitiate of the victims it must speedily take into its joyless priesthood. And Alice had now quietly and insensibly carved out her own avocations—the tenor of her service. The plants in the conservatory had passed under her care, and no one else was

privileged to touch Maltravers's books, or arrange the sacred litter of a student's apartment. When he came down in the morning, or returned from his walks, everything was in order, yet, by a kind of magic, just as he wished it; the flowers he loved best bloomed, fresh-gathered, on his table; the very position of the large chair, just in that corner by the fireplace, whence, on entering the roof, its hospitable arms opened with the most cordial air of welcome, bespoke the presiding genius of a woman; and then, precisely as the clock struck eight, Alice entered, so pretty and smiling, and happy-looking, that it was no wonder the single hour at first allotted to her extended into three.

Was Alice in love with Maltravers?—she certainly did not exhibit the symptoms in the ordinary way—she did not grow more reserved, and agitated, and timid—there was no worm in the bud of her damask check: nay, though from the first she had been tolerably bold; she was more free and confidential, more at her ease every day; in fact, she never for a moment suspected that she ought to be otherwise; she had not the conventional and sensitive delicacy of girls who, whatever their rank of life, have been taught that there is a mystery and a peril in love; she had a vague idea about girls going wrong, but she did not know that love had anything to do with it; on the contrary, according to her father, it had connection with money, not love; all that she felt was so natural and so very sinless. Could she help being so delighted to listen to him, and so grieved to depart? What thus she felt she expressed, no less simply and no less guilelessly: candour

sometimes completely blinded and misled him. No, she could not be in love, or she could not so frankly own that she loved him—it was a sisterly and grateful sentiment.

"The dear girl—I am rejoiced to think so," said Maltravers to himself; "I knew there would be no danger."

Was he not in love himself?—The reader must decide.

"Alice," said Maltravers, one evening after a long pause of thought and abstraction on his side, while she was unconsciously practising her last lesson on the piano—"Alice,—no, don't turn round—sit where you are, but listen to me. We cannot live always in this way."

Alice was instantly disobedient—she did turn round, and those great blue eyes were fixed on his own with such anxiety and alarm, that he had no resource but to get up and look round for the meerschaum. But Alice, who divined by an instinct his lightest wish, brought it to him, while he was yet hunting, amidst the further corners of the room, in places where it was certain not to be. There it was, already filled with the fragrant Salonica glittering with the gilt pastile, which, not too healthfully, adulterates the seductive weed with odours that pacify the repugnant censure of the fastidious—for Maltravers was an epicurean even in his worst habits;—there it was, I say, in that pretty hand which he had to touch as he took it; and while he lit the weed he had again to blush and shrink beneath those great blue eyes.

"Thank you, Alice," he said; "thank you. Do sit down there

—out of the draught. I am going to open the window, the night is so lovely."

He opened the casement overgrown with creepers, and the moonlight lay fair and breathless upon the smooth lawn. The calm and holiness of the night soothed and elevated his thoughts; he had cut himself off from the eyes of Alice, and he proceeded with a firm, though gentle voice:

"My dear Alice, we cannot always live together in this way; you are now wise enough to understand me, so listen patiently. A young woman never wants a fortune so long as she has a good character; she is always poor and despised without one. Now a good character in this world is lost as much by imprudence as guilt; and if you were to live with me much longer, it would be imprudent, and your character would suffer so much that you would not be able to make your own way in the world; far, then, from doing you a service, I should have done you a deadly injury, which I could not atone for: besides, Heaven knows what may happen worse than imprudence; for, I am very sorry to say," added Maltravers, with great gravity, "that you are much too pretty and engaging to—to—in short, it won't do. I must go home; my friends will have a right to complain of me if I remain thus lost to them many weeks longer. And you, my dear Alice, are now sufficiently advanced to receive better instruction than I or Mr. Simcox can give you. I therefore propose to place you in some respectable family, where you will have more comfort and a higher station than you have here. You can finish your education,

and, instead of being taught, you will be thus enabled to become a teacher to others. With your beauty, Alice" (and Maltravers sighed), "and natural talents, and amiable temper, you have only to act well and prudently to secure at last a worthy husband and a happy home. Have you heard me, Alice? Such is the plan I have formed for you."

The young man thought as he spoke, with honest kindness and upright honour; it was a bitterer sacrifice than perhaps the reader thinks for. But Maltravers, if he had an impassioned, had not a selfish heart; and he felt, to use his own expression, more emphatic than eloquent, that "it would not do" to live any longer alone with this beautiful girl, like the two children whom the good Fairy kept safe from sin and the world in the Pavilion of Roses.

But Alice comprehended neither the danger to herself nor the temptations that Maltravers, if he could not resist, desired to shun. She rose, pale and trembling—approached Maltravers and laid her hand gently on his arm.

"I will go away, when and where you wish—the sooner the better—to-morrow—yes, to-morrow; you are ashamed of poor Alice; and it has been very silly in me to be so happy." (She struggled with her emotion for a moment, and went on.) "You know Heaven can hear me, even when I am away from you, and when I know more I can pray better; and Heaven will bless you, sir, and make you happy, for I never can pray for anything else."

With these words she turned away, and walked proudly

towards the door. But when she reached the threshold, she stopped and looked round, as if to take a last farewell. All the associations and memories of that beloved spot rushed upon her—she gasped for breath,—tottered,—and fell to the ground insensible.

Maltravers was already by her side; he lifted her light weight in his arms; he uttered wild and impassioned exclamations —"Alice, beloved Alice—forgive me; we will never part!" He chafed her hands in his own, while her head lay on his bosom, and he kissed again and again those beautiful eyelids, till they opened slowly upon him, and the tender arms tightened round him involuntarily.

"Alice," he whispered—"Alice, dear Alice, I love thee." Alas, it was true: he loved—and forgot all but that love. He was eighteen.

CHAPTER VII

"How like a younker or a prodigal,
The scarfed bark puts from her native bay!"

Merchant of Venice.

WE are apt to connect the voice of Conscience with the stillness of midnight. But I think we wrong that innocent hour. It is that terrible "NEXT MORNING," when reason is wide awake,

upon which remorse fastens its fangs. Has a man gambled away his all, or shot his friend in a duel—has he committed a crime or incurred a laugh—it is the *next morning*, when the irretrievable Past rises before him like a spectre; then doth the churchyard of memory yield up its grisly dead—then is the witching hour when the foul fiend within us can least tempt perhaps, but most torment. At night we have one thing to hope for, one refuge to fly to—oblivion and sleep! But at morning, sleep is over, and we are called upon coldly to review, and re-act, and live again the waking bitterness of self-reproach. Maltravers rose a penitent and unhappy man—remorse was new to him, and he felt as if he had committed a treacherous and fraudulent as well as guilty deed. This poor girl, she was so innocent, so confiding, so unprotected, even by her own sense of right. He went down-stairs listless and dispirited. He longed yet dreaded to encounter Alice. He heard her step in the conservatory—paused, irresolute, and at length joined her. For the first time she blushed and trembled, and her eyes shunned his. But when he kissed her hand in silence, she whispered, "And am I now to leave you?" And Maltravers answered fervently, "Never!" and then her face grew so radiant with joy that Maltravers was comforted despite himself. Alice knew no remorse, though she felt agitated and ashamed; as she had not comprehended the danger, neither was she aware of the fall. In fact, she never thought of herself. Her whole soul was with him; she gave him back in love the spirit she had caught from him in knowledge.

And they strolled together through the garden all that day, and Maltravers grew reconciled to himself. He had done wrong, it is true; but then perhaps Alice had already suffered as much as she could in the world's opinion, by living with him alone, though innocent, so long. And now she had an everlasting claim to his protection—she should never know shame or want. And the love that had led to the wrong should, by fidelity and devotion, take from it the character of sin.

Natural and commonplace sophistries! *L'homme se pique!* as old Montaigne said; Man is his own sharper! The conscience is the most elastic material in the world. To-day you cannot stretch it over a mole-hill, to-morrow it hides a mountain.

O how happy they were now—that young pair! How the days flew like dreams! Time went on, winter passed away, and the early spring, with its flowers and sunshine, was like a mirror to their own youth. Alice never accompanied Maltravers in his walks abroad, partly because she feared to meet her father, and partly because Maltravers himself was fastidiously averse to all publicity. But then they had all that little world of three acres—lawn and fountain, shrubbery and terrace, to themselves, and Alice never asked if there was any other world without. She was now quite a scholar, as Mr. Simcox himself averred. She could read aloud and fluently to Maltravers, and copied out his poetry in a small, fluctuating hand, and he had no longer to chase throughout his vocabulary for short Saxon monosyllables to make the bridge of intercourse between their ideas. Eros and Psyche

are ever united, and Love opens all the petals of the soul. On one subject alone, Maltravers was less eloquent than of yore. He had not succeeded as a moralist, and he thought it hypocritical to preach what he did not practise. But Alice was gentler and purer, and as far as she knew, sweet fool! better than ever—she had invented a new prayer for herself; and she prayed as regularly and as fervently as if she were doing nothing amiss. But the code of Heaven is gentler than that of earth, and does not declare that ignorance excuseth not the crime.

CHAPTER VIII

"Some clouds sweep on as vultures for their prey.
No azure more shall robe the firmament,
Nor spangled stars be glorious."

BYRON, Heaven and Earth.

IT was a lovely evening in April, the weather was unusually mild and serene for the time of year, in the northern districts of our isle, and the bright drops of a recent shower sparkled upon the buds of the lilac and laburnum that clustered round the cottage of Maltravers. The little fountain that played in the centre of a circular basin, on whose clear surface the broad-leaved water-lily cast its fairy shadow, added to the fresh green of the lawn;

"And softe as velvet the yonge grass,"

on which the rare and early flowers were closing their heavy lids. That twilight shower had given a racy and vigorous sweetness to the air which stole over many a bank of violets, and slightly stirred the golden ringlets of Alice as she sate by the side of her entranced and silent lover. They were seated on a rustic bench just without the cottage, and the open window behind them admitted the view of that happy room—with its litter of books and musical instruments—eloquent of the POETRY of HOME.

Maltravers was silent, for his flexile and excitable fancy was conjuring up a thousand shapes along the transparent air, or upon those shadowy violet banks. He was not thinking, he was imagining. His genius reposed dreamily upon the calm, but exquisite sense of his happiness. Alice was not absolutely in his thoughts, but unconsciously she coloured them all—if she had left his side, the whole charm would have been broken. But Alice, who was not a poet or a genius, *was* thinking, and thinking only of Maltravers.... His image was "the broken mirror" multiplied in a thousand faithful fragments over everything fair and soft in that lovely microcosm before her. But they were both alike in one thing—they were not with the Future, they were sensible of the Present—the sense of the actual life, the enjoyment of the breathing time was strong within them. Such is the privilege of the extremes of our existence—Youth and Age. Middle life

is never with to-day, its home is in to-morrow... anxious, and scheming, and desiring, and wishing this plot ripened, and that hope fulfilled, while every wave of the forgotten Time brings it nearer and nearer to the end of all things. Half our life is consumed in longing to be nearer death.

"Alice," said Maltravers, waking at last from his reverie, and drawing that light, childlike form nearer to him, "you enjoy this hour as much as I do."

"Oh, much more!"

"More! and why so?"

"Because I am thinking of you, and perhaps you are not thinking of yourself."

Maltravers smiled and stroked those beautiful ringlets, and kissed that smooth, innocent forehead, and Alice nestled herself in his breast.

"How young you look by this light, Alice!" said he, tenderly looking down.

"Would you love me less if I were old?" asked Alice.

"I suppose I should never have loved you in the same way if you had been old when I first saw you."

"Yet I am sure I should have felt the same for you if you had been—oh! ever so old!"

"What, with wrinkled cheeks, and palsied head, and a brown wig, and no teeth, like Mr. Simcox?"

"Oh, but you could never be like that! You would always look young—your heart would be always in your face. That clear smile

—ah, you would look beautiful to the last!"

"But Simcox, though not very lovely now, has been, I dare say, handsomer than I am, Alice; and I shall be contented to look as well when I am as old!"

"I should never know you were old, because I can see you just as I please. Sometimes, when you are thoughtful, your brows meet, and you look so stern that I tremble; but then I think of you when you last smiled, and look up again, and though you are frowning still, you seem to smile. I am sure you are different to other eyes than to mine... and time must kill *me* before, in my sight, it could alter *you*."

"Sweet Alice, you talk eloquently, for you talk love."

"My heart talks to you. Ah! I wish it could say all I felt. I wish it could make poetry like you, or that words were music—I would never speak to you in anything else. I was so delighted to learn music, because when I played I seemed to be talking to you. I am sure that whoever invented music did it because he loved dearly and wanted to say so. I said '*he*,' but I think it was a woman. Was it?"

"The Greeks I told you of, and whose life was music, thought it was a god."

"Ah, but you say the Greeks made Love a god. Were they wicked for it?"

"Our own God above is Love," said Ernest, seriously, "as our own poets have said and sung. But it is a love of another nature—divine, not human. Come, we will go within, the air grows cold

for you."

They entered, his arm round her waist. The room smiled upon them its quiet welcome; and Alice, whose heart had not half vented its fulness, sat down to the instrument still to "talk love" in her own way.

But it was Saturday evening. Now every Saturday, Maltravers received from the neighbouring town the provincial newspaper —it was his only medium of communication with the great world. But it was not for that communication that he always seized it with avidity, and fed on it with interest. The county in which his father resided bordered on the shire in which Ernest sojourned, and the paper included the news of that familiar district in its comprehensive columns. It therefore satisfied Ernest's conscience and soothed his filial anxieties to read from time to time that "Mr. Maltravers was entertaining a distinguished party of friends at his noble mansion of Lisle Court;" or that "Mr. Maltravers's foxhounds had met on such a day at something copse;" or that, "Mr. Maltravers, with his usual munificence, had subscribed twenty guineas to the new county gaol."... And as now Maltravers saw the expected paper laid beside the hissing urn, he seized it eagerly, tore the envelope, and hastened to the well-known corner appropriated to the paternal district. The very first words that struck his eye were these:

ALARMING ILLNESS OF MR. MALTRAVERS

"We regret to state that this exemplary and distinguished gentleman was suddenly seized on Wednesday night with a severe spasmodic affection. Dr. ——— was immediately sent for, who pronounced it to be gout in the stomach. The first medical assistance from London has been summoned.

"Postscript.—We have just learned, in answer to our inquiries at Lisle Court, that the respected owner is considerably worse: but slight hopes are entertained of his recovery. Captain Maltravers, his eldest son and heir, is at Lisle Court. An express has been despatched in search of Mr. Ernest Maltravers, who, involved by his high English spirit in some dispute with the authorities of a despotic government, had suddenly disappeared from Gottingen, where his extraordinary talents had highly distinguished him. He is supposed to be staying at Paris."

The paper dropped on the floor. Ernest threw himself back on the chair, and covered his face with his hands.

Alice was beside him in a moment. He looked up, and caught her wistful and terrified gaze. "Oh, Alice!" he cried, bitterly, and almost pushing her away, "if you could but guess my remorse!" Then springing on his feet, he hurried from the room.

Presently the whole house was in commotion. The gardener, who was always in the house about supper-time, flew to the town for post-horses. The old woman was in despair about the

laundress, for her first and only thought was for "master's shirts." Ernest locked himself in his room. Alice! poor Alice!

In little more than twenty minutes, the chaise was at the door: and Ernest, pale as death, came into the room where he had left Alice.

She was seated on the floor, and the fatal paper was on her lap. She had been endeavouring, in vain, to learn what had so sensibly affected Maltravers, for, as I said before, she was unacquainted with his real name, and therefore the ominous paragraph did not even arrest her eye.

He took the paper from her, for he wanted again and again to read it: some little word of hope or encouragement must have escaped him. And then Alice flung herself on his breast. "Do not weep," said he; "Heaven knows I have sorrow enough of my own! My father is dying! So kind, so generous, so indulgent! O God, forgive me! Compose yourself, Alice. You will hear from me in a day or two."

He kissed her, but the kiss was cold and forced. He hurried away. She heard the wheels grate on the pebbles. She rushed to the window; but that beloved face was not visible. Maltravers had drawn the blinds, and thrown himself back to indulge his grief. A moment more, and even the vehicle that bore him away was gone. And before her were the flowers, and the starlit lawn, and the playful fountain, and the bench where they had sat in such heartfelt and serene delight. He was gone; and often, oh, how often, did Alice remember that his last words had been uttered

in estranged tones—that his last embrace had been without love!

CHAPTER IX

"Thy due from me
Is tears: and heavy sorrows of the blood,
Which nature, love, and filial tenderness
Shall, O dear father, pay thee plenteously!"

Second Part of Henry IV., Act iv. Sc. 4.

IT was late at night when the chaise that bore Maltravers stopped at the gates of a park lodge. It seemed an age before the peasant within was aroused from the deep sleep of labour-loving health. "My father," he cried, while the gate creaked on its hinges; "my father—is he better? Is he alive?"

"Oh, bless your heart, Master Ernest, the squire was a little better this evening."

"Thank Heaven!—On—on!"

The horses smoked and galloped along a road that wound through venerable and ancient groves. The moonlight slept soft upon the sward, and the cattle, disturbed from their sleep, rose lazily up, and gazed upon the unseasonable intruder.

It is a wild and weird scene, one of those noble English parks at midnight, with its rough forest-ground broken into dell and valley, its never-innovated and mossy grass, overrun with fern, and its immemorial trees, that have looked upon the birth, and

look yet upon the graves, of a hundred generations. Such spots are the last proud and melancholy trace of Norman knighthood and old romance left to the laughing landscapes of cultivated England. They always throw something of shadow and solemn gloom upon minds that feels their associations, like that which belongs to some ancient and holy edifice. They are the cathedral aisles of Nature with their darkened vistas, and columned trunks, and arches of mighty foliage. But in ordinary times the gloom is pleasing, and more delightful than all the cheerful lawns and sunny slopes of the modern taste. *Now* to Maltravers it was ominous and oppressive: the darkness of death seemed brooding in every shadow, and its warning voice moaning in every breeze.

The wheels stopped again. Lights flitted across the basement story; and one above, more dim than the rest, shone palely from the room in which the sick man slept. The bell rang shrilly out from amidst the dark ivy that clung around the porch. The heavy door swung back—Maltravers was on the threshold. His father lived—was better—was awake. The son was in the father's arms.

CHAPTER X

"The guardian oak
Mourn'd o'er the roof it shelter'd: the thick air
Labour'd with doleful sounds."

ELLIOTT of Sheffield.

MANY days had passed, and Alice was still alone; but she had heard twice from Maltravers. The letters were short and hurried. One time his father was better, and there were hopes; another time, and it was not expected that he could survive the week. They were the first letters Alice had ever received from him. Those *first* letters are an event in a girl's life—in Alice's life they were a very melancholy one. Ernest did not ask her to write to him; in fact, he felt, at such an hour, a repugnance to disclose his real name, and receive the letters of clandestine love in the house in which a father lay in death. He might have given the feigned address he had previously assumed, at some distant post-town, where his person was not known. But, then, to obtain such letters, he must quit his father's side for hours. The thing was impossible. These difficulties Maltravers did not explain to Alice.

She thought it singular he did not wish to hear from her; but Alice was humble. What could she say worth troubling him with, and at such an hour? But how kind in him to write! how precious those letters! and yet they disappointed her, and cost her floods of tears: they were so short—so full of sorrow—there was so little love in them; and "dear," or even "*dearest* Alice," that uttered by the voice was so tender, looked cold upon the lifeless paper. If she but knew the exact spot where he was it would be some comfort; but she only knew that he was away, and in grief; and though he was little more than thirty miles distant, she felt as if immeasurable space divided them. However, she consoled herself as she could; and strove to shorten the long

miserable day by playing over all the airs he liked, and reading all the passages he had commended. She should be so improved when he returned; and how lovely the garden would look; for every day its trees and bouquets caught a new smile from the deepening spring. Oh, they would be so happy once more! Alice *now* learned the life that lies in the future; and her young heart had not, as yet, been taught that of that future there is any prophet but Hope!

Maltravers, on quitting the cottage, had forgotten that Alice was without money, and now that he found his stay would be indefinitely prolonged, he sent a remittance. Several bills were unpaid—some portion of the rent was due; and Alice, as she was desired, intrusted the old servant with a bank note, with which she was to discharge these petty debts. One evening, as she brought Alice the surplus, the good dame seemed greatly discomposed. She was pale and agitated; or, as she expressed it, "had a terrible fit of the shakes."

"What is the matter, Mrs. Jones? you have no news of him—of—of my—of your master?"

"Dear heart, miss—no," answered Mrs. Jones; "how should I? But I'm sure I don't wish to frighten you; there has been two sich robberies in the neighbourhood!"

"Oh, thank Heaven that's all!" exclaimed Alice.

"Oh, don't go for to thank Heaven for that, miss; it's a shocking thing for two lone females like us, and them 'ere windows all open to the ground! You sees, as I was taking the note to be

changed at Mr. Harris's, the great grocer's shop, where all the poor folk was a-buying agin to-morrow" (for it was Saturday night, the second Saturday after Ernest's departure; from that Hegira Alice dated all her chronology), "and everybody was a-talking about the robberies last night. La, miss, they bound old Betty—you know Betty—a most respectable 'oman, who has known sorrows, and drinks tea with me once a week. Well, miss, they (only think!) bound Betty to the bedpost, with nothing on her but her shift—poor old soul! And as Mr. Harris gave me the change (please to see, miss, it's all right), and I asked for half gould, miss, it's more convenient, sich an ill-looking fellow was by me, a-buying o' baccy, and he did so stare at the money, that I vows I thought he'd have rin away with it from the counter; so I grabbled it up and went away. But, would you believe, miss, just as I got into the lane, afore you turns through the gate, I chanced to look back, and there, sure enough, was that ugly fellow close behind, a-running like mad. Oh, I set up such a screetch; and young Dobbins was a-taking his cow out of the field, and he perked up over the hedge when he heard me; and the cow, too, with her horns, Lord bless her! So the fellow stopped, and I bustled through the gate, and got home. But la, miss, if we are all robbed and murdered?"

Alice had not heard much of this harangue; but what she did hear very slightly affected her strong, peasant-born nerves; not half so much indeed, as the noise Mrs. Jones made in double-locking all the doors, and barring, as well as a peg and a rusty

inch of chain would allow, all the windows—which operation occupied at least an hour and a half.

All at last was still. Mrs. Jones had gone to bed—in the arms of sleep she had forgotten her terrors—and Alice had crept upstairs, and undressed, and said her prayers, and wept a little; and, with the tears yet moist upon her dark eyelashes, had glided into dreams of Ernest. Midnight was passed—the stroke of one sounded unheard from the clock at the foot of the stars. The moon was gone—a slow, drizzling rain was falling upon the flowers, and cloud and darkness gathered fast and thick around the sky.

About this time, a low, regular, grating sound commenced at the thin shutters of the sitting-room below, preceded by a very faint noise, like the tinkling of small fragments of glass on the gravel without. At length it ceased, and the cautious and partial gleam of a lanthorn fell along the floor; another moment, and two men stood in the room.

"Hush, Jack!" whispered one: "hang out the glim, and let's look about us."

The dark-lanthorn, now fairly unmuffled, presented to the gaze of the robbers nothing that could gratify their cupidity.

Books and music, chairs, tables, carpet, and fire-irons, though valuable enough in a house-agent's inventory, are worthless to the eyes of a housebreaker. They muttered a mutual curse.

"Jack," said the former speaker, "we must make a dash at the spoons and forks, and then hey for the money. The old girl had

thirty shiners, besides flimsies."

The accomplice nodded consent; the lanthorn was again partially shaded, and with noiseless and stealthy steps the men quitted the apartment. Several minutes elapsed, when Alice was awakened from her slumber by a loud scream she started, all was again silent: she must have dreamt it: her little heart beat violently at first, but gradually regained its tenor. She rose, however, and the kindness of her nature being more susceptible than her fear, she imagined Mrs. Jones might be ill—she would go to her. With this idea she began partially dressing herself, when she distinctly heard heavy footsteps and a strange voice in the room beyond. She was now thoroughly alarmed—her first impulse was to escape from the house—her next to bolt the door, and call aloud for assistance. But who would hear her cries? Between the two purposes, she halted irresolute... and remained, pale and trembling, seated at the foot of the bed, when a broad light streamed through the chinks of the door—an instant more, and a rude hand seized her.

"Come, mem, don't be fritted, we won't harm you; but where's the gold-dust—where's the money?—the old girl says you've got it. Fork it over."

"O mercy, mercy! John Walters, is that you?"

"Damnation!" muttered the man, staggering back; "so you knows me then; but you sha'n't peach; you sha'n't scrag me, b —-t you."

While he spoke, he again seized Alice, held her forcibly down

with one hand, while with the other he deliberately drew from a side pouch a long case-knife. In that moment of deadly peril, the second ruffian, who had been hitherto delayed in securing the servant, rushed forward. He had heard the exclamation of Alice, he heard the threat of his comrade; he darted to the bedside, cast a hurried gaze upon Alice, and hurled the intended murderer to the other side of the room.

"What, man, art mad?" he growled between his teeth. "Don't you know her? It is Alice;—it is my daughter."

Alice had sprung up when released from the murderer's knife, and now, with eyes strained and starting with horror, gazed upon the dark and evil face of her deliverer.

"O God, it is—it is my father!" she muttered, and fell senseless.

"Daughter or no daughter," said John Walters, "I shall not put my scrag in her power; recollect how she fritted us before, when she run away."

Darvil stood thoughtful and perplexed; and his associate approached doggedly with a look of such settled ferocity as it was impossible for even Darvil to contemplate without a shudder.

"You say right," muttered the father, after a pause, but fixing his strong gripe on his comrade's shoulder,—"the girl must not be left here—the cart has a covering. We are leaving the country; I have a right to my daughter—she shall go with us. There, man, grab the money—it's on the table;.... you've got the spoons. Now then—" as Darvil spoke he seized his daughter in his arms; threw

over her a shawl and a cloak that lay at hand, and was already on the threshold.

"I don't half like it," said Walters, grumblingly—"it been't safe."

"At least it is as safe as murder!" answered Darvil, turning round, with a ghastly grin. "Make haste."

When Alice recovered her senses, the dawn was breaking slowly along desolate and sullen hills. She was lying upon rough straw—the cart was jolting over the ruts of a precipitous, lonely road,—and by her side scowled the face of that dreadful father.

CHAPTER XI

"Yet he beholds her with the eyes of mind—
He sees the form which he no more shall meet;
She like a passionate thought is come and gone,
While at his feet the bright rill bubbles on."

ELLIOTT of Sheffield.

IT was a little more than three weeks after that fearful night, when the chaise of Maltravers stopped at the cottage door—the windows were shut up; no one answered the repeated summons of the post-boy. Maltravers himself, alarmed and amazed, descended from the vehicle: he was in deep mourning. He went impatiently to the back entrance; that also was locked; round to the French windows of the drawing-room, always

hitherto half-opened, even in the frosty days of winter,—they were now closed like the rest. He shouted in terror, "Alice, Alice!"—no sweet voice answered in breathless joy, no fairy step bounded forward in welcome. At this moment, however, appeared the form of the gardener coming across the lawn. The tale was soon told; the house had been robbed—the old woman at morning found gagged and fastened to her bed-post—Alice flown. A magistrate had been applied to,—suspicion fell upon the fugitive. None knew anything of her origin or name, not even the old woman. Maltravers had naturally and sedulously ordained Alice to preserve that secret, and she was too much in fear of being detected and claimed by her father not to obey the injunction with scrupulous caution. But it was known, at least, that she had entered the house a poor peasant girl; and what more common than for ladies of a certain description to run away from their lover, and take some of his property by mistake? And a poor girl like Alice, what else could be expected? The magistrate smiled, and the constables laughed. After all, it was a good joke at the young gentleman's expense! Perhaps, as they had no orders from Maltravers, and they did not know where to find him, and thought he would be little inclined to prosecute, the search was not very rigorous. But two houses had been robbed the night before. Their owners were more on the alert. Suspicion fell upon a man of infamous character, John Walters; he had disappeared from the place. He had been last seen with an idle, drunken fellow, who was said to have known better days, and who at one

time had been a skilful and well-paid mechanic, till his habits of theft and drunkenness threw him out of employ; and he had been since accused of connection with a gang of coiners—tried—and escaped from want of sufficient evidence against him. That man was Luke Darvil. His cottage was searched; but he also had fled. The trace of cart-wheels by the gate of Maltravers gave a faint clue to pursuit; and after an active search of some days, persons answering to the description of the suspected burglars—with a young female in their company—were tracked to a small inn, notorious as a resort for smugglers, by the sea-coast. But there every vestige of their supposed whereabouts disappeared.

And all this was told to the stunned Maltravers; the garrulity of the gardener precluded the necessity of his own inquiries, and the name of Darvil explained to him all that was dark to others. And Alice was suspected of the basest and the blackest guilt! Obscure, beloved, protected as she had been, she could not escape the calumny from which he had hoped everlastingly to shield her. But did *he* share that hateful thought? Maltravers was too generous and too enlightened.

"Dog!" said he, grinding his teeth, and clenching his hands, at the startled menial, "dare to utter a syllable of suspicion against her, and I will trample the breath out of your body!"

The old woman, who had vowed that for the 'varsal world she would not stay in the house after such a "night of shakes," had now learned the news of her master's return, and came hobbling up to him. She arrived in time to hear his menace to her fellow-

servant.

"Ah, that's right; give it him, your honour; bless your good heart!—that's what I says. Miss rob the house! says I—Miss run away. Oh no—depend on it they have murdered her and buried the body."

Maltravers gasped for breath, but without uttering another word he re-entered the chaise and drove to the house of the magistrate. He found that functionary a worthy and intelligent man of the world. To him he confided the secret of Alice's birth and his own. The magistrate concurred with him in believing that Alice had been discovered and removed by her father. New search was made—gold was lavished. Maltravers himself headed the search in person. But all came to the same result as before, save that by the descriptions he heard of the person—the dress—the tears, of the young female who had accompanied the men supposed to be Darvil and Walters, he was satisfied that Alice yet lived; he hoped she might yet escape and return. In that hope he lingered for weeks—for months, in the neighbourhood; but time passed and no tidings.... He was forced at length to quit a neighbourhood at once so saddened and endeared. But he secured a friend in the magistrate, who promised to communicate with him if Alice returned, or her father was discovered. He enriched Mrs. Jones for life, in gratitude for her vindication of his lost and early love; he promised the amplest rewards for the smallest clue. And with a crushed and desponding spirit, he obeyed at last the repeated and anxious summons of

the guardian to whose care, until his majority was attained, the young orphan was now entrusted.

CHAPTER XII

"Sure there are poets that did never dream
Upon Parnassus."

—DENHAM.

"Walk sober off, before a sprightlier age
Come tittering on, and shove you from the stage."

—POPE.

"Hence to repose your trust in me was wise."

DRYDEN'S Absalom and Achitophel.

MR. FREDERICK CLEVELAND, a younger son of the Earl of Byrneham, and therefore entitled to the style and distinction of "Honourable," was the guardian of Ernest Maltravers. He was now about the age of forty-three; a man of letters and a man of fashion, if the last half-obsolete expression be permitted to us, as being at least more classical and definite than any other which modern euphuism has invented to convey the same meaning. Highly educated, and with natural abilities considerably above

mediocrity, Mr. Cleveland early in life had glowed with the ambition of an author.... He had written well and gracefully—but his success, though respectable, did not satisfy his aspirations. The fact is, that a new school of literature ruled the public, despite the critics—a school very different from that in which Mr. Cleveland formed his unimpassioned and polished periods. And as that old Earl, who in the time of Charles the First was the reigning wit of the court, in the time of Charles the Second was considered too dull even for a butt, so every age has its own literary stamp and coinage, and consigns the old circulation to its shelves and cabinets as neglected curiosities. Cleveland could not become the fashion with the public as an author, though the coteries cried him up and the reviewers adored him —and the ladies of quality and the amateur dilettanti bought and bound his volumes of careful poetry and cadenced prose. But Cleveland had high birth and a handsome competence— his manners were delightful, his conversation fluent—and his disposition was as amiable as his mind was cultured. He became, therefore, a man greatly sought after in society both respected and beloved. If he had not genius, he had great good sense; he did not vex his urbane temper and kindly heart with walking after a vain shadow, and disquieting himself in vain. Satisfied with an honourable and unenvied reputation, he gave up the dream of that higher fame which he clearly saw was denied to his aspirations —and maintained his good-humour with the world, though in his secret soul he thought it was very wrong in its literary

caprices. Cleveland never married: he lived partly in town, but principally at Temple Grove, a villa not far from Richmond. Here, with an excellent library, beautiful grounds, and a circle of attached and admiring friends, which comprised all the more refined and intellectual members of what is termed, by emphasis, *Good Society*—this accomplished and elegant person passed a life perhaps much happier than he would have known had his young visions been fulfilled, and it had become his stormy fate to lead the rebellious and fierce Democracy of Letters.

Cleveland was indeed, if not a man of high and original genius, at least very superior to the generality of patrician authors. In retiring, himself, from frequent exercise in the arena, he gave up his mind with renewed zest to the thoughts and masterpieces of others. From a well-read man, he became a deeply instructed one. Metaphysics, and some of the material sciences, added new treasures to information more light and miscellaneous, and contributed to impart weight and dignity to a mind that might otherwise have become somewhat effeminate and frivolous. His social habits, his clear sense, and benevolence of judgment, made him also an exquisite judge of all those indefinable nothings, or little things, that, formed into a total, become knowledge of the Great World. I say the Great World—for of the world without the circle of the great, Cleveland naturally knew but little. But of all that related to that subtle orbit in which gentlemen and ladies move in elevated and ethereal order, Cleveland was a profound philosopher. It was the mode with many of his admirers to style

him the Horace Walpole of the day. But though in some of the more external and superficial points of character they were alike, Cleveland had considerably less cleverness, and infinitely more heart.

The late Mr. Maltravers, a man not indeed of literary habits but an admirer of those who were—an elegant, high-bred, hospitable *seigneur de province*—had been one of the earliest of Cleveland's friends—Cleveland had been his fag at Eton—and he found Hal Maltravers—(Handsome Hal!) had become the darling of the clubs, when he made his own *debut* in society. They were inseparable for a season or two—and when Mr. Maltravers married, and enamoured of country pursuits, proud of his old hall, and sensibly enough conceiving that he was a greater man in his own broad lands than in the republican aristocracy of London, settled peaceably at Lisle Court, Cleveland corresponded with him regularly, and visited him twice a year. Mrs. Maltravers died in giving birth to Ernest, her second son. Her husband loved her tenderly, and was long inconsolable for her loss. He could not bear the sight of the child that had cost him so dear a sacrifice. Cleveland and his sister, Lady Julia Danvers, were residing with him at the time of this melancholy event; and with judicious and delicate kindness, Lady Julia proposed to place the unconscious offender amongst her own children for some months. The proposition was accepted, and it was two years before the infant Ernest was restored to the paternal mansion. During the greater part of that time, he had gone through all the

events and revolutions of baby life under the bachelor roof of Frederick Cleveland.

The result of this was, that the latter loved the child like a father. Ernest's first intelligible word hailed Cleveland as "papa;" and when the urchin was at length deposited at Lisle Court, Cleveland talked all the nurses out of breath with admonitions, and cautions, and injunctions, and promises, and threats, which might have put many a careful mother to the blush. This circumstance formed a new tie between Cleveland and his friend. Cleveland's visits were now three times a year instead of twice. Nothing was done for Ernest without Cleveland's advice. He was not even breeched till Cleveland gave his grave consent. Cleveland chose his school, and took him to it,—and he spent a week of every vacation in Cleveland's house. The boy never got into a scrape, or won a prize, or wanted *a tip*, or coveted a book, but what Cleveland was the first to know of it. Fortunately, too, Ernest manifested by times tastes which the graceful author thought similar to his own. He early developed very remarkable talents, and a love for learning—though these were accompanied with a vigour of life and soul—an energy—a daring—which gave Cleveland some uneasiness, and which did not appear to him at all congenial with the moody shyness of an embryo genius, or the regular placidity of a precocious scholar. Meanwhile the relation between father and son was rather a singular one. Mr. Maltravers had overcome his first, not unnatural, repugnance to the innocent cause of his irremediable loss. He was now fond and proud of

his boy—as he was of all things that belonged to him. He spoiled and petted him even more than Cleveland did. But he interfered very little with his education or pursuits. His eldest son, Cuthbert, did not engross all his heart, but occupied all his care. With Cuthbert he connected the heritage of his ancient name, and the succession of his ancestral estates. Cuthbert was not a genius, nor intended to be one; he was to be an accomplished gentleman, and a great proprietor. The father understood Cuthbert, and could see clearly both his character and career. He had no scruple in managing his education, and forming his growing mind. But Ernest puzzled him. Mr. Maltravers was even a little embarrassed in the boy's society; he never quite overcame that feeling of strangeness towards him which he had experienced when he first received him back from Cleveland, and took Cleveland's directions about his health and so forth. It always seemed to him as if his friend shared his right to the child; and he thought it a sort of presumption to scold Ernest, though he very often swore at Cuthbert. As the younger son grew up, it certainly was evident that Cleveland did understand him better than his own father did; and so, as I have before said, on Cleveland the father was not displeased passively to shift the responsibility of the rearing.

Perhaps Mr. Maltravers might not have been so indifferent, had Ernest's prospects been those of a younger son in general. If a profession had been necessary for him, Mr. Maltravers would have been naturally anxious to see him duly fitted for it. But from a maternal relation Ernest inherited an estate of about four

thousand pounds a year; and he was thus made independent of his father. This loosened another tie between them; and so by degrees Mr. Maltravers learned to consider Ernest less as his own son, to be advised or rebuked, praised or controlled, than as a very affectionate, promising, engaging boy, who, somehow or other, without any trouble on his part, was very likely to do great credit to his family, and indulge his eccentricities upon four thousand pounds a year. The first time that Mr. Maltravers was seriously perplexed about him was when the boy, at the age of sixteen, having taught himself German, and intoxicated his wild fancies with *Werter* and *The Robbers*, announced his desire, which sounded very like a demand, of going to Gottingen instead of to Oxford. Never were Mr. Maltravers's notions of a proper and gentlemanlike finish to education more completely and rudely assaulted. He stammered out a negative, and hurried to his study to write a long letter to Cleveland, who, himself an Oxford prize-man, would, he was persuaded, see the matter in the same light. Cleveland answered the letter in person: listened in silence to all the father had to say, and then strolled through the park with the young man. The result of the latter conference was, that Cleveland declared in favour of Ernest.

"But, my dear Frederick," said the astonished father, "I thought the boy was to carry off all the prizes at Oxford?"

"I carried off some, Maltravers; but I don't see what good they did me."

"Oh, Cleveland!"

"I am serious."

"But it is such a very odd fancy."

"Your son is a very odd young man."

"I fear he is so—I fear he is, poor fellow! But what will he learn at Gottingen?"

"Languages and Independence," said Cleveland.

"And the classics—the classics—you are such an excellent Grecian!"

"There are great Grecians in Germany," answered Cleveland; "and Ernest cannot well unlearn what he knows already. My dear Maltravers, the boy is not like most clever young men. He must either go through action, and adventure, and excitement in his own way, or he will be an idle dreamer, or an impracticable enthusiast all his life. Let him alone.—So Cuthbert is gone into the Guards?"

"But he went first to Oxford."

"Humph! What a fine young man he is!"

"Not so tall as Ernest, but—"

"A handsome face," said Cleveland. "He is a son to be proud of in one way, as I hope Ernest will be in another. Will you show me your new hunter?"

It was to the house of this gentleman, so judiciously made his guardian, that the student of Gottingen now took his melancholy way.

CHAPTER XIII

"But if a little exercise you choose,
Some zest for ease, 'tis not forbidden here;
Amid the groves you may indulge the Muse,
Or tend the blooms and deck the vernal year."

Castle of Indolence.

THE house of Mr. Cleveland was an Italian villa adapted to an English climate. Through an Ionic arch you entered a domain of some eighty or a hundred acres in extent, but so well planted and so artfully disposed, that you could not have supposed the unseen boundaries inclosed no ampler a space. The road wound through the greenest sward, in which trees of venerable growth were relieved by a profusion of shrubs, and flowers gathered into baskets intertwined with creepers, or blooming from classic vases, placed with a tasteful care in such spots as required the *filling up*, and harmonised well with the object chosen. Not an old ivy-grown pollard, not a modest and bending willow, but was brought out, as it were, into a peculiar feature by the art of the owner. Without being overloaded, or too minutely elaborate (the common fault of the rich man's villa), the whole place seemed one diversified and cultivated garden; even the air almost took a different odour from different vegetation, with each winding of the road; and the colours of the flowers and foliage varied with

every view.

At length, when, on a lawn sloping towards a glassy lake overhung by limes and chestnuts, and backed by a hanging wood, the house itself came in sight, the whole prospect seemed suddenly to receive its finishing and crowning feature. The house was long and low. A deep peristyle that supported the roof extended the whole length, and being raised above the basement had the appearance of a covered terrace; broad flights of steps, with massive balustrades, supporting vases of aloes and orange-trees, led to the lawn; and under the peristyle were ranged statues, Roman antiquities and rare exotics. On this side the lake another terrace, very broad, and adorned, at long intervals, with urns and sculpture, contrasted the shadowy and sloping bank beyond; and commanded, through unexpected openings in the trees, extensive views of the distant landscape, with the stately Thames winding through the midst. The interior of the house corresponded with the taste without. All the principal rooms, even those appropriated to sleep, were on the same floor. A small but lofty and octagonal hall conducted to a suite of four rooms. At one extremity was a moderately-sized dining-room with a ceiling copied from the rich and gay colours of Guido's "Hours;" and landscapes painted by Cleveland himself, with no despicable skill, were let into the walls. A single piece of sculpture copied from the Piping Faun, and tinged with a flesh-like glow by purple and orange draperies behind it, relieved without darkening the broad and arched window which formed

its niche. This communicated with a small picture-room, not indeed rich with those immortal gems for which princes are candidates; for Cleveland's fortune was but that of a private gentleman, though, managed with a discreet if liberal economy, it sufficed for all his elegant desires. But the pictures had an interest beyond that of art, and their subjects were within the reach of a collector of ordinary opulence. They made a series of portraits —some originals, some copies (and the copies were often the best) of Cleveland's favourite authors. And it was characteristic of the man, that Pope's worn and thoughtful countenance looked down from the central place of honour. Appropriately enough, this room led into the library, the largest room in the house, the only one indeed that was noticeable from its size, as well as its embellishments. It was nearly sixty feet in length. The bookcases were crowned with bronze busts, while at intervals statues, placed in open arches, backed with mirrors, gave the appearance of galleries, opening from the book-lined walls, and introduced an inconceivable air of classic lightness and repose into the apartment; with these arches the windows harmonised so well, opening on the peristyle, and bringing into delightful view the sculpture, the flowers, the terraces, and the lake without, that the actual prospects half seduced you into the belief that they were designs by some master-hand of the poetical gardens that yet crown the hills of Rome. Even the colouring of the prospects on a sunny day favoured the delusion, owing to the deep, rich hues of the simple draperies, and the stained glass

of which the upper panes of the windows were composed. Cleveland was especially fond of sculpture; he was sensible, too, of the mighty impulse which that art has received in Europe within the last half century. He was even capable of asserting the doctrine, not yet sufficiently acknowledged in this country, that Flaxman surpassed Canova. He loved sculpture, too, not only for its own beauty, but for the beautifying and intellectual effect that it produces wherever it is admitted. It is a great mistake, he was wont to say, in collectors of statues, to arrange them *pele mele* in one long monotonous gallery. The single relief, or statue, or bust, or simple urn, introduced appropriately in the smallest apartment we inhabit, charms us infinitely more than those gigantic museums, crowded into rooms never entered but for show, and without a chill, uncomfortable shiver. Besides, this practice of galleries, which the herd consider orthodox, places sculpture out of the patronage of the public. There are not a dozen people who can afford galleries. But very moderately affluent gentlemen can afford a statue or a bust. The influence, too, upon a man's mind and taste, created by the constant and habitual view of monuments of the only imperishable art which resorts to physical materials, is unspeakable. Looking upon the Greek marble, we become acquainted, almost insensibly, with the character of the Greek life and literature. That Aristides, that Genius of Death, that fragment of the unrivalled Psyche, are worth a thousand Scaligers!

"Do you ever look at the Latin translation when you read

Aeschylus?" said a schoolboy once to Cleveland.

"That is my Latin translation," said Cleveland, pointing to the Laocoon.

The library opened at the extreme end to a small cabinet for curiosities and medals, which, still in a straight line, conducted to a long belvidere, terminating in a little circular summer-house, that, by a sudden wind of the lake below, hung perpendicularly over its transparent tide, and, seen from the distance, appeared almost suspended on air, so light were its slender columns and arching dome. Another door from the library opened upon a corridor which conducted to the principal sleeping-chambers; the nearest door was that of Cleveland's private study communicating with his bedroom and dressing-closet. The other rooms were appropriated to, and named after, his several friends.

Mr. Cleveland had been advised by a hasty line of the movements of his ward, and he received the young man with a smile of welcome, though his eyes were moist and his lips trembled—for the boy was like his father!—a new generation had commenced for Cleveland!

"Welcome, my dear Ernest," said he; "I am so glad to see you, that I will not scold you for your mysterious absence. This is your room, you see your name over the door; it is a larger one than you used to have, for you are a man now; and there is your German sanctum adjoining—for Schiller and the meerschaum! —a bad habit that, the meerschaum! but not worse than the Schiller, perhaps. You see you are in the peristyle immediately.

The meerschaum is good for flowers, I fancy, so have no scruple. Why, my dear boy, how pale you are! Be cheered—be cheered. Well, I must go myself, or you will infect me."

Cleveland hurried away; he thought of his lost friend. Ernest sank upon the first chair, and buried his face in his hands. Cleveland's valet entered, and bustled about and unpacked the portmanteau, and arranged the evening dress. But Ernest did not look up nor speak; the first bell sounded; the second tolled unheard upon his ear. He was thoroughly overcome by his emotions. The first notes of Cleveland's kind voice had touched upon a soft chord, that months of anxiety and excitement had strained to anguish, but had never woke to tears. His nerves were shattered—those strong young nerves! He thought of his dead father when he first saw Cleveland; but when he glanced round the room prepared for him, and observed the care for his comfort, and the tender recollection of his most trifling peculiarities everywhere visible, Alice, the watchful, the humble, the loving, the lost Alice rose before him. Surprised at his ward's delay, Cleveland entered the room; there sat Ernest still, his face buried in his hands. Cleveland drew them gently away, and Maltravers sobbed like an infant. It was an easy matter to bring tears to the eyes of that young man: a generous or a tender thought, an old song, the simplest air of music, sufficed for that touch of the mother's nature. But the vehement and awful passion which belongs to manhood when thoroughly unmanned—this was the first time in which the relief of that stormy bitterness

was known to him!

CHAPTER XIV

"Musing full sadly in his sullen mind."

—SPENSER.

"There forth issued from under the altar-smoke
A dreadful fiend."

—Ibid. on Superstition.

NINE times out of ten it is over the Bridge of Sighs that we pass the narrow gulf from Youth to Manhood. That interval is usually occupied by an ill-placed or disappointed affection. We recover, and we find ourselves a new being. The intellect has been hardened by the fire through which it has passed. The mind profits by the wrecks of every passion, and we may measure our road to wisdom by the sorrows we have undergone.

But Maltravers was yet on the bridge, and, for a time, both mind and body were prostrate and enfeebled. Cleveland had the sagacity to discover that the affections had their share in the change that he grieved to witness, but he had also the delicacy not to force himself into the young man's confidence. But by little and little his kindness so completely penetrated the heart of his ward, that Ernest one evening told his whole tale. As a man

of the world, Cleveland perhaps rejoiced that it was no worse, for he had feared some existing entanglement perhaps with a married woman. But as a man who was better than the world in general, he sympathised with the unfortunate girl whom Ernest pictured to him in faithful and unflattered colours, and he long forbore consolations which he foresaw would be unavailing. He felt, indeed, that Ernest was not a man "to betray the noon of manhood to a myrtle-shade:"—that with so sanguine, buoyant, and hardy a temperament, he would at length recover from a depression which, if it could bequeath a warning, might as well not be wholly divested of remorse. And he also knew that few become either great authors or great men (and he fancied Ernest was born to be one or the other) without the fierce emotions and passionate struggles, through which the Wilhelm Meister of real life must work out his apprenticeship, and attain the Master Rank. But at last he had serious misgivings about the health of his ward. A constant and spectral gloom seemed bearing the young man to the grave. It was in vain that Cleveland, who secretly desired him to thirst for a public career, endeavoured to arouse his ambition—the boy's spirit seemed quite broken—and the visit of a political character, the mention of a political work, drove him at once into his solitary chamber. At length his mental disease took a new turn. He became, of a sudden, most morbidly and fanatically—I was about to say religious: but that is not the word; let me call it pseudo-religious. His strong sense and cultivated taste did not allow him to delight in the raving tracts of

illiterate fanatics—and yet out of the benign and simple elements of the Scripture he conjured up for himself a fanaticism quite as gloomy and intense. He lost sight of God the Father, and night and day dreamed only of God the Avenger. His vivid imagination was perverted to raise out of its own abyss phantoms of colossal terror. He shuddered aghast at his own creations, and earth and heaven alike seemed black with the everlasting wrath. These symptoms completely baffled and perplexed Cleveland. He knew not what remedy to administer—and to his unspeakable grief and surprise he found that Ernest, in the true spirit of his strange bigotry, began to regard Cleveland—the amiable, the benevolent Cleveland—as one no less out of the pale of grace than himself. His elegant pursuits, his cheerful studies, were considered by the young but stern enthusiast as the miserable recreations of Mammon and the world. There seemed every probability that Ernest Maltravers would die in a madhouse or, at best, succeed to the delusions without the cheerful intervals of Cowper.

CHAPTER XV

"Sagacious, bold, and turbulent of wit,
Restless—unfixed in principles and place."

—DRYDEN.

"Whoever acquires a very great number of ideas interesting to the society in which he lives, will be

regarded in that society as a man of abilities."
—HELVETIUS.

IT was just when Ernest Maltravers was so bad that he could not be worse that a young man visited Temple Grove. The name of this young man was Lumley Ferrers, his age was about twenty-six, his fortune about eight hundred a year—he followed no profession. Lumley Ferrers had not what is usually called genius; that is, he had no enthusiasm; and if the word talent be properly interpreted as meaning the talent of doing something better than others, Ferrers had not much to boast of on that score. He had no talent for writing, nor for music, nor painting, nor the ordinary round of accomplishments; neither at present had he displayed much of the hard and useful talent for action and business. But Ferrers had what is often better than either genius or talent; he had a powerful and most acute mind.

He had, moreover, great animation of manner, high physical spirits, a witty, odd, racy vein of conversation, determined assurance, and profound confidence in his own resources. He was fond of schemes, stratagems, and plots—they amused and excited him—his power of sarcasm, and of argument, too, was great, and he usually obtained an astonishing influence over those with whom he was brought in contact. His high spirits and a most happy frankness of bearing carried off and disguised his leading vices of character, which were callousness to whatever was affectionate and insensibility to whatever was moral. Though less learned than Maltravers, he was on the whole a very

instructed man. He mastered the surfaces of many sciences, became satisfied of their general principles, and threw the study aside never to be forgotten (for his memory was like a vice), but never to be prosecuted any further. To this he added a general acquaintance with whatever is most generally acknowledged as standard in ancient or modern literature. What is admired only by a few, Lumley never took the trouble to read. Living amongst trifles, he made them interesting and novel by his mode of viewing and treating them. And here indeed was *a* talent—it was the talent of social life—the talent of enjoyment to the utmost with the least degree of trouble to himself. Lumley Ferrers was thus exactly one of those men whom everybody calls exceedingly clever, and yet it would puzzle one to say in what he was so clever. It was, indeed, that nameless power which belongs to ability, and which makes one man superior, on the whole, to another, though in many details by no means remarkable. I think it is Goethe who says somewhere that, in reading the life of the greatest genius, we always find that he was acquainted with some men superior to himself, who yet never attained to general distinction. To the class of these mystical superior men Lumley Ferrers might have belonged; for though an ordinary journalist would have beaten him in the arts of composition, few men of genius, however eminent, could have felt themselves above Ferrers in the ready grasp and plastic vigour of natural intellect. It only remains to be said of this singular young man, whose character as yet was but half developed, that he had seen a great deal of the world, and

could live at ease and in content with all tempers and ranks; fox-hunters or scholars, lawyers or poets, patricians or *parvenus*, it was all one to Lumley Ferrers.

Ernest was, as usual, in his own room, when he heard, along the corridor without, all that indefinable bustling noise which announces an arrival. Next came a most ringing laugh, and then a sharp, clear, vigorous voice, that ran through his ears like a dagger. Ernest was immediately aroused to all the majesty of indignant sullenness. He walked out on the terrace of the portico, to avoid the repetition of the disturbance: and once more settled back into his broken and hypochondriacal reveries. Pacing to and fro that part of the peristyle which occupied the more retired wing of the house, with his arms folded, his eyes downcast, his brows knit, and all the angel darkened on that countenance which formerly looked as if, like truth, it could shame the devil and defy the world, Ernest followed the evil thought that mastered him, through the Valley of the Shadow. Suddenly he was aware of something—some obstacle which he had not previously encountered. He started, and saw before him a young man, of plain dress, gentlemanlike appearance, and striking countenance.

"Mr. Maltravers, I think," said the stranger, and Ernest recognised the voice that had so disturbed him: "this is lucky; we can now introduce ourselves, for I find Cleveland means us to be intimate. Mr. Lumley Ferrers, Mr. Ernest Maltravers. There now, I am the elder, so I first offer my hand, and grin properly.

People always grin when they make a new acquaintance! Well, that's settled. Which way are you walking?"

Maltravers could, when he chose it, be as stately as if he had never been out of England. He now drew himself up in displeased astonishment; extricated his hand from the gripe of Ferrers, and saying, very coldly, "Excuse me, sir, I am busy," stalked back to his chamber. He threw himself into his chair, and was presently forgetful of his late annoyance, when, to his inexpressible amazement and wrath, he heard again the sharp, clear voice close at his elbow.

Ferrers had followed him through the French casement into the room. "You are busy, you say, my dear fellow. I want to write some letters: we sha'n't interrupt each other—don't disturb yourself:" and Ferrers seated himself at the writing-table, dipped a pen into the ink, arranged blotting-book and paper before him in due order, and was soon employed in covering page after page with the most rapid and hieroglyphical scrawl that ever engrossed a mistress or perplexed a dun.

"The presuming puppy!" growled Maltravers, half audibly, but effectually roused from himself; and examining with some curiosity so cool an intruder, he was forced to own that the countenance of Ferrers was not that of a puppy.

A forehead compact and solid as a block of granite, overhung small, bright, intelligent eyes of a light hazel; the features were handsome, yet rather too sharp and fox-like; the complexion, though not highly coloured, was of that hardy, healthy hue

which generally betokens a robust constitution, and high animal spirits; the jaw was massive, and, to a physiognomist, betokened firmness and strength of character; but the lips, full and large, were those of a sensualist, and their restless play, an habitual half smile, spoke of gaiety and humour, though when in repose there was in them something furtive and sinister.

Maltravers looked at him in grave silence; but when Ferrers, concluding his fourth letter before another man would have got through his first page, threw down the pen, and looked full at Maltravers, with a good-humoured but penetrating stare, there was something so whimsical in the intruder's expression of face, and indeed in the whole scene, that Maltravers bit his lip to restrain a smile, the first he had known for weeks.

"I see you read, Maltravers," said Ferrers, carelessly turning over the volumes on the table. "All very right: we should begin life with books; they multiply the sources of employment; so does capital;—but capital is of no use, unless we live on the interest,—books are waste paper, unless we spend in action the wisdom we get from thought. Action, Maltravers, action; that is the life for us. At our age we have passion, fancy, sentiment; we can't read them away, or scribble them away;—we must live upon them generously, but economically."

Maltravers was struck; the intruder was not the empty bore he had chosen to fancy him. He roused himself languidly to reply. "Life, *Mr.* Ferrers—"

"Stop, *mon cher*, stop; don't call me Mister; we are to be

friends; I hate delaying that which *must be*, even by a superfluous dissyllable; you are Maltravers, I am Ferrers. But you were going to talk about life. Suppose we *live* a little while, instead of talking about it? It wants an hour to dinner; let us stroll into the grounds; I want to get an appetite;—besides, I like nature when there are no Swiss mountains to climb before one can arrive at a prospect. *Allons*!"

"Excuse—" again began Maltravers, half interested, half annoyed.

"I'll be shot if I do. Come."

Ferrers gave Maltravers his hat, wound his arm into that of his new acquaintance, and they were on the broad terrace by the lake before Ernest was aware of it.

How animated, how eccentric, how easy was Ferrers' talk (for talk it was, rather than conversation, since he had the ball to himself); books, and men, and things; he tossed them about and played with them like shuttlecocks; and then his egotistical narrative of half a hundred adventures, in which he had been the hero, told so, that you laughed at him and laughed with him.

CHAPTER XVI

"Now the bright morning star, day's harbinger,
Comes dancing from the east."

—MILTON.

HITHERTO Ernest had never met with any mind that had exercised a strong influence over his own. At home, at school, at Gottingen, everywhere, he had been the brilliant and wayward leader of others, persuading or commanding wiser and older heads than his own: even Cleveland always yielded to him, though not aware of it. In fact, it seldom happens that we are very strongly influenced by those much older than ourselves. It is the senior, of from two to ten years, that most seduces and enthrals us. He has the same pursuits—views, objects, pleasures, but more art and experience in them all. He goes with us in the path we are ordained to tread, but from which the elder generation desires to warn us off. There is very little influence where there is not great sympathy. It was now an epoch in the intellectual life of Maltravers. He met for the first time with a mind that controlled his own. Perhaps the physical state of his nerves made him less able to cope with the half-bullying, but thoroughly good-humoured imperiousness of Ferrers. Every day this stranger became more and more potential with Maltravers. Ferrers, who was an utter egotist, never asked his new friend to give him his confidence; he never cared three straws about other people's secrets, unless useful to some purpose of his own. But he talked with so much zest about himself—about women and pleasure, and the gay, stirring life of cities—that the young spirit of Maltravers was roused from its dark lethargy without an effort

of its own. The gloomy phantoms vanished gradually—his sense broke from its cloud—he felt once more that God had given the sun to light the day, and even in the midst of darkness had called up the host of stars.

Perhaps no other person could have succeeded so speedily in curing Maltravers of his diseased enthusiasm: a crude or sarcastic unbeliever he would not have listened to; a moderate and enlightened divine he would have disregarded, as a worldly and cunning adjuster of laws celestial with customs earthly. But Lumley Ferrers, who, when he argued, never admitted a sentiment or a simile in reply, who wielded his plain iron logic like a hammer, which, though its metal seemed dull, kindled the ethereal spark with every stroke—Lumley Ferrers was just the man to resist the imagination, and convince the reason, of Maltravers; and the moment the matter came to argument, the cure was soon completed: for, however we may darken and puzzle ourselves with fancies and visions, and the ingenuities of fanatical mysticism, no man can mathematically or syllogistically contend that the world which a God made, and a Saviour visited, was designed to be damned.

And Ernest Maltravers one night softly stole to his room and opened the New Testament, and read its heavenly moralities with purged eyes; and when he had done, he fell upon his knees, and prayed the Almighty to pardon the ungrateful heart that, worse than the Atheist's, had confessed His existence, but denied His goodness. His sleep was sweet and his dreams were cheerful. Did

he rise to find that the penitence which had shaken his reason would henceforth suffice to save his life from all error? Alas! remorse overstrained has too often reactions as dangerous; and homely Luther says well, that "the mind, like the drunken peasant on horseback, when propped on the one side, nods and falls on the other."—All that can be said is, that there are certain crises in life which leave us long weaker; from which the system recovers with frequent revulsion and weary relapse,—but from which, looking back, after years have passed on, we date the foundation of strength or the cure of disease. It is not to mean souls that creation is darkened by a fear of the anger of Heaven.

CHAPTER XVII

"There are times when we are diverted out of errors, but could not be preached out of them.—There are practitioners who can cure us of one disorder, though, in ordinary cases, they be but poor physicians—nay, dangerous quacks."
-STEPHEN MONTAGUE.

LUMLEY FERRERS had one rule in life; and it was this: to make all things and all persons subservient to himself. And Ferrers now intended to go abroad for some years. He wanted a companion, for he disliked solitude: besides, a companion shared the expenses; and a man of eight hundred a year, who desires all the luxuries of life, does not despise a partner in the taxes to

be paid for them. Ferrers, at this period, rather liked Ernest than not: it was convenient to choose friends from those richer than himself, and he resolved, when he first came to Temple Grove, that Ernest should be his travelling companion. This resolution formed, it was very easy to execute it.

Maltravers was now warmly attached to his new friend, and eager for change. Cleveland was sorry to part with him; but he dreaded a relapse, if the young man were again left upon his hands. Accordingly, the guardian's consent was obtained; a travelling carriage was bought, and fitted up with every imaginable imperial and *malle*. A Swiss (half valet and half courier) was engaged, one thousand a year was allowed to Maltravers;—and one soft and lovely morning, towards the close of October, Ferrers and Maltravers found themselves midway on the road to Dover.

"How glad I am to get out of England," said Ferrers: "it is a famous country for the rich; but here, eight hundred a year, without a profession, save that of pleasure, goes upon pepper and salt; it is a luxurious competence abroad."

"I think I have heard Cleveland say that you will be rich some day or other."

"O yes: I have what are called expectations! You must know that I have a kind of settlement on two stools, the Well-born and the Wealthy; but between two stools—you recollect the proverb! The present Lord Saxingham, once plain Frank Lascelles, and my father, Mr. Ferrers, were first cousins. Two or three relations

good-naturedly died, and Frank Lascelles became an earl; the lands did not go with the coronet; he was poor, and married an heiress. The lady died; her estate was settled on her only child, the handsomest little girl you ever saw. Pretty Florence, I often wish I could look up to you! Her fortune will be nearly all at her own disposal, too, when she comes of age; now she is in the nursery, 'eating bread and honey.' My father, less lucky and less wise than his cousin, thought fit to marry a Miss Templeton—a nobody. The Saxingham branch of the family politely dropped the acquaintance. Now, my mother had a brother, a clever, plodding fellow, in what is called 'business:' he became richer and richer: but my father and mother died, and were never the better for it. And I came of age, and *worth* (I like that expression) not a farthing more or less than this often-quoted eight hundred pounds a year. My rich uncle is married, but has no children. I am, therefore, heir-presumptive,—but he is a saint, and close, though ostentatious. The quarrel between Uncle Templeton and the Saxinghams still continues. Templeton is angry if I see the Saxinghams and the Saxinghams—my Lord, at least—is by no means so sure that I shall be Templeton's heir as not to feel a doubt lest I should some day or other sponge upon his lordship for a place. Lord Saxingham is in the administration, you know. Somehow or other I have an equivocal amphibious kind of place in London society, which I don't like; on one side I am a patrician connection, whom the *parvenu* branches always incline lovingly to—and on the other side I am a half-dependent cadet, whom the

noble relations look civilly shy at. Some day, when I grow tired of travel and idleness, I shall come back and wrestle with these little difficulties, conciliate my methodistical uncle, and grapple with my noble cousin. But now I am fit for something better than getting on in the world. Dry chips, not green wood, are the things for making a blaze! How slow this fellow drives! Hollo, you sir! get on! mind, twelve miles to the hour! You shall have sixpence a mile. Give me your purse, Maltravers; I may as well be cashier, being the elder and the wiser man; we can settle accounts at the end of the journey. By Jove, what a pretty girl!"

BOOK II

"He, of wide-blooming youth's fair flower possest,
Owns the vain thoughts—the heart that cannot rest!"

SIMONIDES, in Tit. Hum.

CHAPTER I

"Il y eut certainement quelque chose de singulier dans mes sentimens pour cette charmante femme."[6]
—ROUSSEAU.

IT was a brilliant ball at the Palazzo of the Austrian embassy at Naples: and a crowd of those loungers, whether young or old, who attach themselves to the reigning beauty, was gathered round Madame de Ventadour. Generally speaking, there is more caprice than taste in the election of a beauty to the Italian throne. Nothing disappoints a stranger more than to see for the first time the woman to whom the world has given the golden apple. Yet he usually falls at last into the popular idolatry, and passes with inconceivable rapidity from indignant scepticism into superstitious veneration. In fact, a thousand things beside mere symmetry of feature go to make up the Cytherea of the hour.

[6] There certainly was something singular in my sentiments for this charming woman.

—tact in society—the charm of manner—nameless and piquant brilliancy. Where the world find the Graces they proclaim the Venus. Few persons attain pre-eminent celebrity for anything, without some adventitious and extraneous circumstances which have nothing to do with the thing celebrated. Some qualities or some circumstances throw a mysterious or personal charm about them. "Is Mr. So-and-So really such a genius?" "Is Mrs. Such-a-One really such a beauty?" you ask incredulously. "Oh, yes," is the answer. "Do you know all about him or her? Such a thing is said, or such a thing has happened." The idol is interesting in itself, and therefore its leading and popular attribute is worshipped.

Now Madame de Ventadour was at this time the beauty of Naples: and though fifty women in the room were handsomer, no one would have dared to say so. Even the women confessed her pre-eminence—for she was the most perfect dresser that even France could exhibit. And to no pretensions do ladies ever concede with so little demur, as those which depend upon that feminine art which all study, and in which few excel. Women never allow beauty in a face that has an odd-looking bonnet above it, nor will they readily allow any one to be ugly whose caps are unexceptionable. Madame de Ventadour had also the magic that results from intuitive high breeding, polished by habit to the utmost. She looked and moved the *grande dame*, as if Nature had been employed by Rank to make her so. She was descended from one of the most illustrious houses of

France; had married at sixteen a man of equal birth, but old, dull, and pompous—a caricature rather than a portrait of that great French *noblesse*, now almost if not wholly extinct. But her virtue was without a blemish—some said from pride, some said from coldness. Her wit was keen and court-like—lively, yet subdued; for her French high breeding was very different from the lethargic and taciturn imperturbability of the English. All silent people can seem conventionally elegant. A groom married a rich lady; he dreaded the ridicule of the guests whom his new rank assembled at his table—an Oxford clergyman gave him this piece of advice, "Wear a black coat and hold your tongue!" The groom took the hint, and is always considered one of the most gentlemanlike fellows in the county. Conversation is the touchstone of the true delicacy and subtle grace which make the ideal of the moral mannerism of a court. And there sat Madame de Ventadour, a little apart from the dancers, with the silent English dandy Lord Taunton, exquisitely dressed and superbly tall, bolt upright behind her chair; and the sentimental German Baron von Schomberg, covered with orders, whiskered and wigged to the last hair of perfection, sighing at her left hand; and the French minister, shrewd, bland, and eloquent, in the chair at her right; and round on all sides pressed, and bowed, and complimented, a crowd of diplomatic secretaries and Italian princes, whose bank is at the gaming-table, whose estates are in their galleries, and who sell a picture, as English gentlemen cut down a wood, whenever the cards grow gloomy. The charming

De Ventadour! she had attraction for them all! smiles for the silent, badinage for the gay, politics for the Frenchman, poetry for the German, the eloquence of loveliness for all! She was looking her best—the slightest possible tinge of rouge gave a glow to her transparent complexion, and lighted up those large dark sparkling eyes (with a latent softness beneath the sparkle) seldom seen but in the French—and widely distinct from the unintellectual languish of the Spaniard, or the full and majestic fierceness of the Italian gaze. Her dress of black velvet, and graceful hat with its princely plume, contrasted the alabaster whiteness of her arms and neck. And what with the eyes, the skin, the rich colouring of the complexion, the rosy lips and the small ivory teeth, no one would have had the cold hypercriticism to observe that the chin was too pointed, the mouth too wide, and the nose, so beautiful in the front face, was far from perfect in the profile.

"Pray was Madame in the Strada Nuova to-day?" asked the German, with as much sweetness in his voice as if he had been vowing eternal love.

"What else have we to do with our mornings, we women?" replied Madame de Ventadour. "Our life is a lounge from the cradle to the grave; and our afternoons are but the type of our career. A promenade and a crowd,—*voila tout*! We never see the world except in an open carriage."

"It is the pleasantest way of seeing it," said the Frenchman, drily.

"I doubt it; the worst fatigue is that which comes without exercise."

"Will you do me the honour to waltz?" said the tall English lord, who had a vague idea that Madame de Ventadour meant she would rather dance than sit still. The Frenchman smiled.

"Lord Taunton enforces your own philosophy," said the minister.

Lord Taunton smiled because every one else smiled; and, besides, he had beautiful teeth: but he looked anxious for an answer.

"Not to-night,—I seldom dance. Who is that very pretty woman? What lovely complexions the English have! And who," continued Madame de Ventadour, without waiting for an answer to the first question, "who is that gentleman,—the young one I mean,—leaning against the door?"

"What, with the dark moustache?" said Lord Taunton. "He is a cousin of mine."

"Oh, no; not Colonel Bellfield; I know him—how amusing he is!—no; the gentleman I mean wears no moustache."

"Oh, the tall Englishman with the bright eyes and high forehead," said the French minister. "He is just arrived—from the East, I believe."

"It is a striking countenance," said Madame de Ventadour; "there is something chivalrous in the turn of the head. Without doubt, Lord Taunton, he is '*noble*'?"

"He is what you call '*noble*,'" replied Lord Taunton—"that

is, what we call a 'gentleman;' his name is Maltravers. He lately came of age; and has, I believe, rather a good property."

"Monsieur Maltravers; only Monsieur?" repeated Madame de Ventadour.

"Why," said the French minister, "you understand that the English *gentilhomme* does not require a De or a title to distinguish him from the *roturier*."

"I know that; but he has an air above a simple *gentilhomme*. There is something *great* in his look; but it is not, I must own, the conventional greatness of rank: perhaps he would have looked the same had he been born a peasant."

"You don't think him handsome?" said Lord Taunton, almost angrily (for he was one of the Beauty-men, and Beauty-men are sometimes jealous).

"Handsome! I did not say that," replied Madame de Ventadour, smiling; "it is rather a fine head than a handsome face. Is he clever, I wonder?—but all you English, milord, are well educated."

"Yes, profound—profound: we are profound, not superficial," replied Lord Taunton, drawing down his wrist-bands.

"Will Madame de Ventadour allow me to present to her one of my countrymen?" said the English minister approaching—"Mr. Maltravers."

Madame de Ventadour half smiled and half blushed, as she looked up, and saw bent admiringly upon her the proud and earnest countenance she had remarked.

The introduction made—a few monosyllables exchanged. The French diplomatist rose and walked away with the English one. Maltravers succeeded to the vacant chair.

"Have you been long abroad?" asked Madame de Ventadour.

"Only four years; yet long enough to ask whether I should not be most abroad in England."

"You have been in the East—I envy you. And Greece, and Egypt,—all the associations! You have travelled back into the Past; you have escaped, as Madame D'Epinay wished, out of civilisation and into romance."

"Yet Madame D'Epinay passed her own life in making pretty romances out of a very agreeable civilisation," said Maltravers, smiling.

"You know her Memoirs, then," said Madame de Ventadour, slightly colouring. "In the current of a more exciting literature few have had time for the second-rate writings of a past century."

"Are not those second-rate performances often the most charming," said Maltravers, "when the mediocrity of the intellect seems almost as if it were the effect of a touching, though too feeble, delicacy of sentiment? Madame D'Epinay's Memoirs are of this character. She was not a virtuous woman—but she felt virtue and loved it; she was not a woman of genius—but she was tremblingly alive to all the influences of genius. Some people seem born with the temperament and the tastes of genius without its creative power; they have its nervous system, but something is wanting in the intellectual. They feel acutely, yet express tamely.

These persons always have in their character an unspeakable kind of pathos—a court civilisation produces many of them—and the French memoirs of the last century are particularly fraught with such examples. This is interesting—the struggle of sensitive minds against the lethargy of a society, dull, yet brilliant, that *glares* them, as it were, to sleep. It comes home to us; for," added Maltravers, with a slight change of voice, "how many of us fancy we see our own image in the mirror!"

And where was the German baron?—flirting at the other end of the room. And the English lord?—dropping monosyllables to dandies by the doorway. And the minor satellites?—dancing, whispering, making love, or sipping lemonade. And Madame de Ventadour was alone with the young stranger in a crowd of eight hundred persons; and their lips spoke of sentiment, and their eyes involuntarily applied it!

While they were thus conversing, Maltravers was suddenly startled by hearing close behind him, a sharp, significant voice, saying in French, "Hein, hein! I've my suspicions—I've my suspicions."

Madame de Ventadour looked round with a smile. "It is only my husband," said she, quietly; "let me introduce him to you."

Maltravers rose and bowed to a little thin man, most elaborately dressed, and with an immense pair of spectacles upon a long sharp nose.

"Charmed to make your acquaintance, sir!" said Monsieur de Ventadour. "Have you been long in Naples?... Beautiful weather

—won't last long—hein, hein, I've my suspicions! No news as to your parliament—be dissolved soon! Bad opera in London this year!—hein, hein—I've my suspicions."

This rapid monologue was delivered with appropriate gesture. Each new sentence Mons. de Ventadour began with a sort of bow, and when it dropped in the almost invariable conclusion affirmative of his shrewdness and incredulity, he made a mystical sign with his forefinger by passing it upward in a parallel line with his nose, which at the same time performed its own part in the ceremony by three convulsive twitches, that seemed to shake the bridge to its base.

Maltravers looked with mute surprise upon the connubial partner of the graceful creature by his side, and Mons. de Ventadour, who had said as much as he thought necessary, wound up his eloquence by expressing the rapture it would give him to see Mons. Maltravers at his hotel. Then, turning to his wife, he began assuring her of the lateness of the hour, and the expediency of departure. Maltravers glided away, and as he regained the door was seized by our old friend, Lumley Ferrers. "Come, my dear fellow," said the latter; "I have been waiting for you this half hour. *Allons*. But, perhaps, as I am dying to go to bed, you have made up your mind to stay supper. Some people have no regard for other people's feelings."

"No, Ferrers, I'm at your service;" and the young man descended the stairs and passed along the Chiaja towards their hotel. As they gained the broad and open space on which it stood,

with the lovely sea before them, sleeping in the arms of the curving shore, Maltravers, who had hitherto listened in silence to the volubility of his companion, paused abruptly.

"Look at that sea, Ferrers.... What a scene!—what delicious air! How soft this moonlight! Can you not fancy the old Greek adventurers, when they first colonised this divine Parthenope—the darling of the ocean—gazing along those waves, and pining no more for Greece?"

"I cannot fancy anything of the sort," said Ferrers.... "And, depend upon it, the said gentlemen, at this hour of the night, unless they were on some piratical excursion—for they were cursed ruffians, those old Greek colonists—were fast asleep in their beds."

"Did you ever write poetry, Ferrers?"

"To be sure; all clever men have written poetry once in their lives—small-pox and poetry—they are our two juvenile diseases."

"And did you ever *feel* poetry!"

"Feel it!"

"Yes, if you put the moon into your verses, did you first feel it shining into your heart?"

"My dear Maltravers, if I put the moon into my verses, in all probability it was to rhyme to noon. 'The night was at her noon'—is a capital ending for the first hexameter—and the moon is booked for the next stage. Come in."

"No, I shall stay out."

"Don't be nonsensical."

"By moonlight there is no nonsense like common sense."

"What! we—who have climbed the Pyramids, and sailed up the Nile, and seen magic at Cairo, and been nearly murdered, bagged, and Bosphorized at Constantinople, is it for us, who have gone through so many adventures, looked on so many scenes, and crowded into four years events that would have satisfied the appetite of a cormorant in romance, if it had lived to the age of a phoenix;—is it for us to be doing the pretty and sighing to the moon, like a black-haired apprentice without a neckcloth on board of the Margate hoy? Nonsense, I say—we have lived too much not to have lived away our green sickness of sentiment."

"Perhaps you are right, Ferrers," said Maltravers, smiling. "But I can still enjoy a beautiful night."

"Oh, if you like flies in your soup, as the man said to his guest, when he carefully replaced those entomological blackamoors in the tureen, after helping himself—if you like flies in your soup, well and good—*buona notte*."

Ferrers certainly was right in his theory, that when we have known real adventures we grow less morbidly sentimental. Life is a sleep in which we dream most at the commencement and the close—the middle part absorbs us too much for dreams. But still, as Maltravers said, we can enjoy a fine night, especially on the shores of Naples.

Maltravers paced musingly to and fro for some time. His heart was softened—old rhymes rang in his ear—old memories

passed through his brain. But the sweet dark eyes of Madame de Ventadour shone forth through every shadow of the past. Delicious intoxication—the draught of the rose-coloured phial —which is fancy, but seems love!

CHAPTER II

"Then 'gan the Palmer thus—'Most wretched man
That to affections dost the bridle lend:
In their beginnings they are weak and wan,
But soon, through suffrance, growe to fearfull end;
While they are weak, betimes with them contend.'"

SPENSER.

MALTRAVERS went frequently to the house of Madame de Ventadour—it was open twice a week to the world, and thrice a week to friends. Maltravers was soon of the latter class. Madame de Ventadour had been in England in her childhood, for her parents had been *emigres*. She spoke English well and fluently, and this pleased Maltravers; for though the French language was sufficiently familiar to him, he was like most who are more vain of the mind than the person, and proudly averse to hazarding his best thoughts in the domino of a foreign language. We don't care how faulty the accent, or how incorrect the idiom, in which we talk nothings; but if we utter any of the poetry within us, we shudder at the risk of the most trifling solecism.

This was especially the case with Maltravers; for, besides being now somewhat ripened from his careless boyhood into a proud and fastidious man, he had a natural love for the Becoming. This love was unconsciously visible in trifles: it is the natural parent of Good Taste. And it was indeed an inborn good taste which redeemed Ernest's natural carelessness in those personal matters in which young men usually take a pride. An habitual and soldier-like neatness, and a love of order and symmetry, stood with him in the stead of elaborate attention to equipage and dress.

Maltravers had not thought twice in his life whether he was handsome or not; and, like most men who have a knowledge of the gentler sex, he knew that beauty had little to do with engaging the love of women. The air, the manner, the tone, the conversation, the something that interests, and the something to be proud of—these are the attributes of the man made to be loved. And the Beauty-man is, nine times out of ten, little more than the oracle of his aunts, and the "*Sich* a love!" of the housemaids!

To return from this digression, Maltravers was glad that he could talk in his own language to Madame de Ventadour; and the conversation between them generally began in French, and glided away into English. Madame de Ventadour was eloquent, and so was Maltravers; yet a more complete contrast in their mental views and conversational peculiarities can scarcely be conceived. Madame de Ventadour viewed everything as a woman of the world: she was brilliant, thoughtful, and not without

delicacy and tenderness of sentiment; still all was cast in a worldly mould. She had been formed by the influences of society, and her mind betrayed its education. At once witty and melancholy (no uncommon union), she was a disciple of the sad but caustic philosophy produced by *satiety*. In the life she led, neither her heart nor her head was engaged; the faculties of both were irritated, not satisfied or employed. She felt somewhat too sensitively the hollowness of the great world, and had a low opinion of human nature. In fact, she was a woman of the French memoirs—one of those charming and *spirituelles* Aspasias of the boudoir, who interest us by their subtlety, tact, and grace, their exquisite tone of refinement, and are redeemed from the superficial and frivolous, partly by a consummate knowledge of the social system in which they move, and partly by a half-concealed and touching discontent of the trifles on which their talents and affections are wasted. These are the women who, after a youth of false pleasure, often end by an old age of false devotion. They are a class peculiar to those ranks and countries in which shines and saddens that gay and unhappy thing—*a woman without a home*!

Now this was a specimen of life—this Valerie de Ventadour—that Maltravers had never yet contemplated, and Maltravers was perhaps equally new to the Frenchwoman. They were delighted with each other's society, although it so happened that they never agreed.

Madame de Ventadour rode on horseback, and Maltravers

was one of her usual companions. And oh, the beautiful landscapes through which their daily excursions lay!

Maltravers was an admirable scholar. The stores of the immortal dead were as familiar to him as his own language. The poetry, the philosophy, the manner of thought and habits of life—of the graceful Greek and the luxurious Roman—were a part of knowledge that constituted a common and household portion of his own associations and peculiarities of thought. He had saturated his intellect with the Pactolus of old—and the grains of gold came down from the classic Tmolus with every tide. This knowledge of the dead, often so useless, has an inexpressible charm when it is applied to the places where the dead lived. We care nothing about the ancients on Highgate Hill—but at Baiae, Pompeii, by the Virgilian Hades, the ancients are society with which we thirst to be familiar. To the animated and curious Frenchwoman what a cicerone was Ernest Maltravers! How eagerly she listened to accounts of a life more elegant than that of Paris!—of a civilisation which the world never can know again! So much the better;—for it was rotten at the core, though most brilliant in the complexion. Those cold names and unsubstantial shadows which Madame de Ventadour had been accustomed to yawn over in skeleton histories, took from the eloquence of Maltravers the breath of life—they glowed and moved—they feasted and made love—were wise and foolish, merry and sad, like living things. On the other hand, Maltravers learned a thousand new secrets of the existing and actual world from the

lips of the accomplished and observant Valerie. What a new step in the philosophy of life does a young man of genius make, when he first compares his theories and experience with the intellect of a clever woman of the world! Perhaps it does not elevate him, but how it enlightens and refines!—what numberless minute yet important mysteries in human character and practical wisdom does he drink unconsciously from the sparkling *persiflage* of such a companion! Our education is hardly ever complete without it.

"And so you think these stately Romans were not, after all, so dissimilar to ourselves?" said Valerie, one day, as they looked over the same earth and ocean along which had roved the eyes of the voluptuous but august Lucullus.

"In the last days of their Republic, a *coup-d'oeil* of their social date might convey to us a general notion of our own. Their system, like ours—a vast aristocracy heaved and agitated, but kept ambitious and intellectual, by the great democratic ocean which roared below and around it. An immense distinction between rich and poor—a nobility sumptuous, wealthy, cultivated, yet scarcely elegant or refined; a people with mighty aspirations for more perfect liberty, but always liable, in a crisis, to be influenced and subdued by a deep-rooted veneration for the very aristocracy against which they struggled;—a ready opening through all the walls of custom and privilege, for every description of talent and ambition; but so strong and universal a respect for wealth, that the finest spirit grew avaricious, griping, and corrupt, almost unconsciously; and the man who rose from

the people did not scruple to enrich himself out of the abuses he affected to lament; and the man who would have died for his country could not help thrusting his hands into her pockets. Cassius, the stubborn and thoughtful patriot, with his heart of iron, had, you remember, an itching palm. Yet, what a blow to all the hopes and dreams of a world was the overthrow of the free party after the death of Caesar! What generations of freemen fell at Philippi! In England, perhaps, we may have ultimately the same struggle; in France, too (perhaps a larger stage, with far more inflammable actors), we already perceive the same war of elements which shook Rome to her centre, which finally replaced the generous Julius with the hypocritical Augustus, which destroyed the colossal patricians to make way for the glittering dwarfs of a court, and cheated the people out of the substance with the shadow of liberty. How it may end in the modern world, who shall say? But while a nation has already a fair degree of constitutional freedom, I believe no struggle so perilous and awful as that between the aristocratic and the democratic principle. A people against a despot—*that* contest requires no prophet; but the change from an aristocratic to a democratic commonwealth is indeed the wide, unbounded prospect upon which rest shadows, clouds, and darkness. If it fail—for centuries is the dial-hand of Time put back; if it succeed—"

Maltravers paused.

"And if it succeed?" said Valerie.

"Why, then, man will have colonised Utopia!" replied

Maltravers.

"But at least, in modern Europe," he continued, "there will be fair room for the experiment. For we have not that curse of slavery which, more than all else, vitiated every system of the ancients, and kept the rich and the poor alternately at war; and we have a press, which is not only the safety-valve of the passions of every party, but the great note-book of the experiments of every hour—the homely, the invaluable ledger of losses and of gains. No; the people who keep that tablet well, never can be bankrupt. And the society of those old Romans; their daily passions—occupations—humours!—why, the satire of Horace is the glass of our own follies! We may fancy his easy pages written in the Chaussee d'Antin, or Mayfair; but there was one thing that will ever keep the ancient world dissimilar from the modern."

"And what is that?"

"The ancients knew not that delicacy in the affections which characterises the descendants of the Goths," said Maltravers, and his voice slightly trembled; "they gave up to the monopoly of the senses what ought to have had an equal share in the reason and the imagination. Their love was a beautiful and wanton butterfly; but not the butterfly which is the emblem of the soul."

Valerie sighed. She looked timidly into the face of the young philosopher, but his eyes were averted.

"Perhaps," she said, after a short pause, "we pass our lives more happily without love than with it. And in our modern social system" (she continued, thoughtfully, and with profound

truth, though it is scarcely the conclusion to which a woman often arrives) "I think we have pampered Love to too great a preponderance over the other excitements of life. As children, we are taught to dream of it; in youth, our books, our conversation, our plays, are filled with it. We are trained to consider it the essential of life; and yet, the moment we come to actual experience, the moment we indulge this inculcated and stimulated craving, nine times out of ten we find ourselves wretched and undone. Ah, believe me, Mr. Maltravers, this is not a world in which we should preach up too far the philosophy of Love!"

"And does Madame de Ventadour speak from experience?" asked Maltravers, gazing earnestly upon the changing countenance of his companion.

"No; and I trust that I never may!" said Valerie, with great energy.

Ernest's lip curled slightly, for his pride was touched.

"I could give up many dreams of the future," said he, "to hear Madame de Ventadour revoke that sentiment."

"We have outridden our companions, Mr. Maltravers," said Valerie, coldly, and she reined in her horse. "Ah, Mr. Ferrers," she continued, as Lumley and the handsome German baron now joined her, "you are too gallant; I see you imply a delicate compliment to my horsemanship, when you wish me to believe you cannot keep up with me: Mr. Maltravers is not so polite."

"Nay," returned Ferrers, who rarely threw away a compliment

without a satisfactory return, "Nay, you and Maltravers appeared lost among the old Romans; and our friend the baron took that opportunity to tell me of all the ladies who adored him."

"Ah, Monsieur Ferrare, *que vous etes malin*!" said Schomberg, looking very much confused.

"*Malin*! no; I spoke from no envy: *I* never was adored, thank Heaven! What a bore it must be!"

"I congratulate you on the sympathy between yourself and Ferrers," whispered Maltravers to Valerie.

Valerie laughed; but during the rest of the excursion she remained thoughtful and absent, and for some days their rides were discontinued. Madame de Ventadour was not well.

CHAPTER III

"O Love, forsake me not;
Mine were a lone dark lot
Bereft of thee."

HEMANS, Genius singing to Love.

I FEAR that as yet Ernest Maltravers had gained little from Experience, except a few current coins of worldly wisdom (and not very valuable those!) while he has lost much of that nobler wealth with which youthful enthusiasm sets out on the journey of life. Experience is an open giver, but a stealthy thief. There is, however, this to be said in her favour, that we retain her gifts;

and if ever we demand restitution in earnest, 'tis ten to one but what we recover her thefts. Maltravers had lived in lands where public opinion is neither strong in its influence, nor rigid in its canons; and that does not make a man better. Moreover, thrown headlong amidst the temptations that make the first ordeal of youth, with ardent passions and intellectual superiority, he had been led by the one into many errors, from the consequences of which the other had delivered him; the necessity of roughing it through the world—of resisting fraud to-day, and violence to-morrow,—had hardened over the surface of his heart, though at bottom the springs were still fresh and living. He had lost much of his chivalrous veneration for women, for he had seen them less often deceived than deceiving. Again, too, the last few years had been spent without any high aims or fixed pursuits. Maltravers had been living on the capital of his faculties and affections in a wasteful, speculating spirit. It is a bad thing for a clever and ardent man not to have from the onset some paramount object of life.

All this considered, we can scarcely wonder that Maltravers should have fallen into an involuntary system of pursuing his own amusements and pursuits, without much forethought of the harm or the good they were to do to others or himself. The moment we lose forethought, we lose sight of duty; and though it seems like a paradox, we can seldom be careless without being selfish.

In seeking the society of Madame de Ventadour, Maltravers obeyed but the mechanical impulse that leads the idler towards

the companionship which most pleases his leisure. He was interested and excited; and Valerie's manners, which to-day flattered, and to-morrow piqued him, enlisted his vanity and pride on the side of his fancy. But although Monsieur de Ventadour, a frivolous and profligate Frenchman, seemed utterly indifferent as to what his wife chose to do—and in the society in which Valerie lived, almost every lady had her cavalier,—yet Maltravers would have started with incredulity or dismay had any one accused him of a systematic design on her affections. But he was living with the world, and the world affected him as it almost always does every one else. Still he had, at times, in his heart, the feeling that he was not fulfilling his proper destiny and duties; and when he stole from the brilliant resorts of an unworthy and heartless pleasure, he was ever and anon haunted by his old familiar aspirations for the Beautiful, the Virtuous, and the Great. However, hell is paved with good intentions; and so, in the meanwhile, Ernest Maltravers surrendered himself to the delicious presence of Valerie de Ventadour.

One evening, Maltravers, Ferrers, the French minister, a pretty Italian, and the Princess di ———, made the whole party collected at Madame de Ventadour's. The conversation fell upon one of the tales of scandal relative to English persons, so common on the Continent.

"Is it true, Monsieur," said the French minister, gravely, to Lumley, "that your countrymen are much more immoral than other people? It is very strange, but in every town I enter, there

is always some story in which *les Anglais* are the heroes. I hear nothing of French scandal—nothing of Italian—*toujours les Anglais*."

"Because we are shocked at these things, and make a noise about them, while you take them quietly. Vice is our episode—your epic."

"I suppose it is so," said the Frenchman, with affected seriousness. "If we cheat at play, or flirt with a fair lady, we do it with decorum, and our neighbours think it no business of theirs. But you treat every frailty you find in your countrymen as a public concern, to be discussed and talked over, and exclaimed against, and told to all the world."

"I like the system of scandal," said Madame de Ventadour, abruptly; "say what you will, the policy of fear keeps many of us virtuous. Sin might not be odious, if we did not tremble at the consequence even of appearances."

"Hein, hein," grunted Monsieur de Ventadour, shuffling into the room. "How are you?—how are you? Charmed to see you. Dull night—I suspect we shall have rain. Hein, hein. Aha, Monsieur Ferrers, *comment ca va-t-il*? Will you give me my revenge at *ecarte*? I have my suspicions that I am in luck to-night. Hein, hein."

"*Ecarte*!—well, with pleasure," said Ferrers.

Ferrers played well.

The conversation ended in a moment. The little party gathered round the table—all, except Valerie and Maltravers. The chairs

that were vacated left a kind of breach between them; but still they were next to each other, and they felt embarrassed, for they felt alone.

"Do you never play?" asked Madame de Ventadour, after a pause.

"I *have* played," said Maltravers, "and I know the temptation. I dare not play now. I love the excitement, but I have been humbled at the debasement: it is a moral drunkenness that is worse than the physical."

"You speak warmly."

"Because I feel keenly. I once won of a man I respected, who was poor. His agony was a dreadful lesson to me. I went home, and was terrified to think I had felt so much pleasure in the pain of another. I have never played since that night."

"So young and so resolute!" said Valerie, with admiration in her voice and eyes; "you are a strange person. Others would have been cured by losing, you were cured by winning. It is a fine thing to have principle at your age, Mr. Maltravers."

"I fear it was rather pride than principle," said Maltravers. "Error is sometimes sweet; but there is no anguish like an error of which we feel ashamed. I cannot submit to blush for myself."

"Ah!" muttered Valerie; "this is the echo of my own heart!" She rose and went to the window. Maltravers paused a moment, and followed her. Perhaps he half thought there was an invitation in the movement.

There lay before them the still street, with its feeble and

unfrequent lights; beyond, a few stars, struggling through an atmosphere unusually clouded, brought the murmuring ocean partially into sight. Valerie leaned against the wall, and the draperies of the window veiled her from all the guests, save Maltravers; and between her and himself was a large marble vase filled with flowers; and by that uncertain light Valerie's brilliant cheek looked pale, and soft, and thoughtful. Maltravers never before felt so much in love with the beautiful Frenchwoman.

"Ah, madam!" said he, softly; "there is one error, if it be so, that never can cost me shame."

"Indeed!" said Valerie with an unaffected start, for she was not aware he was so near her. As she spoke she began plucking (it is a common woman's trick) the flowers from the vase between her and Ernest. That small, delicate, almost transparent hand!—Maltravers gazed upon the hand, then on the countenance, then on the hand again. The scene swam before him, and, involuntarily and as by an irresistible impulse, the next moment that hand was in his own.

"Pardon me—pardon me," said he, falteringly; "but that error is in the feelings that I know for you."

Valerie lifted on him her large and radiant eyes, and made no answer.

Maltravers went on. "Chide me, scorn me, hate me if you will. Valerie, I love you."

Valerie drew away her hand, and still remained silent.

"Speak to me," said Ernest, leaning forward; "one word, I

implore you—speak to me!"

He paused,—still no reply; he listened breathlessly—he heard her sob. Yes; that proud, that wise, that lofty woman of the world, in that moment, was as weak as the simplest girl that ever listened to a lover. But how different the feelings that made her weak!—what soft and what stern emotions were blent together!

"Mr. Maltravers," she said, recovering her voice, though it sounded hollow, yet almost unnaturally firm and clear"—the die is cast, and I have lost for ever the friend for whose happiness I cannot live, but for whose welfare I would have died; I should have foreseen this, but I was blind. No more—no more; see me to-morrow, and leave me now!"

"But, Valerie—"

"Ernest Maltravers," said she, laying her hand lightly on his own; "*there is no anguish, like an error of which we feel ashamed*!"

Before he could reply to this citation from his own aphorism, Valerie had glided away; and was already seated at the card-table, by the side of the Italian princess.

Maltravers also joined the group. He fixed his eyes on Madame de Ventadour, but her face was calm—not a trace of emotion was discernible. Her voice, her smile, her charming and courtly manner, all were as when he first beheld her.

"These women—what hypocrites they are!" muttered Maltravers to himself; and his lip writhed into a sneer, which had of late often forced away the serene and gracious expression

of his earlier years, ere he knew what it was to despise. But Maltravers mistook the woman he dared to scorn.

He soon withdrew from the palazzo, and sought his hotel. There, while yet musing in his dressing-room, he was joined by Ferrers. The time had passed when Ferrers had exercised an influence over Maltravers; the boy had grown up to be the equal of the man, in the exercise of that two-edged sword—the reason. And Maltravers now felt, unalloyed, the calm consciousness of his superior genius. He could not confide to Ferrers what had passed between him and Valerie. Lumley was too *hard* for a confidant in matters where the heart was at all concerned. In fact, in high spirits, and in the midst of frivolous adventures, Ferrers was charming. But in sadness, or in the moments of deep feeling, Ferrers was one whom you would wish out of the way.

"You are sullen to-eight, *mon cher*," said Lumley, yawning; "I suppose you want to go to bed—some persons are so ill-bred, so selfish, they never think of their friends. Nobody asks me what I won at *ecarte*. Don't be late to-morrow—I hate breakfasting alone, and I am never later than a quarter before nine—I hate egotistical, ill-mannered people. Good night."

With this, Ferrers sought his own room; there, as he slowly undressed, he thus soliloquised: "I think I have put this man to all the use I can make of him. We don't pull well together any longer; perhaps I myself am a little tired of this sort of life. That is not right. I shall grow ambitious by and by; but I think it a bad calculation not to make the most of youth. At four or five-and-

thirty it will be time enough to consider what one ought to be at fifty."

CHAPTER IV

"Most dangerous
Is that temptation that does goad us on
To sin in loving virtue."

—Measure for Measure.

"SEE her to-morrow!—that morrow is come!" thought Maltravers, as he rose the next day from a sleepless couch. Ere yet he had obeyed the impatient summons of Ferrers, who had thrice sent to say that "*he* never kept people waiting," his servant entered with a packet from England, that had just arrived by one of those rare couriers who sometimes honour that Naples, which *might* be so lucrative a mart to English commerce, if Neapolitan kings cared for trade, or English senators for "foreign politics." Letters from stewards and bankers were soon got through; and Maltravers reserved for the last an epistle from Cleveland. There was much in it that touched him home. After some dry details about the property to which Maltravers had now succeeded, and some trifling comments upon trifling remarks in Ernest's former letters, Cleveland went on thus:

"I confess, my dear Ernest, that I long to welcome you back to England. You have been abroad long enough to see other

countries; do not stay long enough to prefer them to your own. You are at Naples, too—I tremble for you. I know well that delicious, dreaming, holiday-life of Italy, so sweet to men of learning and imagination—so sweet, too, to youth—so sweet to pleasure! But, Ernest, do you not feel already how it enervates?—how the luxurious *far niente* unfits us for grave exertion? Men may become too refined and too fastidious for useful purposes; and nowhere can they become so more rapidly than in Italy. My dear Ernest, I know you well; you are not made to sink down into a virtuoso, with a cabinet full of cameos and a head full of pictures; still less are you made to be an indolent *cicisbeo* to some fair Italian, with one passion and two ideas: and yet I have known men as clever as you, whom that bewitching Italy has sunk into one or other of these insignificant beings. Don't run away with the notion that you have plenty of time before you. You have no such thing. At your age, and with your fortune (I wish you were not so rich), the holiday of one year becomes the custom of the next. In England, to be a useful or a distinguished man, you must labour. Now, labour itself is sweet, if we take to it early. We are a hard race, but we are a manly one; and our stage is the most exciting in Europe for an able and an honest ambition. Perhaps you will tell me you are not ambitious now; very possibly—but ambitious you will be; and, believe me, there is no unhappier wretch than a man who is ambitious but disappointed,—who has the desire for fame, but has lost the power to achieve it—who longs for the goal, but will not, and cannot, put away his slippers

to walk to it. What I most fear for you is one of these two evils —an early marriage or a fatal *liaison*

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.