

ЭДВАРД БУЛЬВЕР-ЛИТТОН

**WHAT WILL HE DO
WITH IT? – VOLUME
04**

Эдвард Бульвер-Литтон

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Edward Bulwer-Lytton

What Will He Do with It? — Volume 04

BOOK IV

CHAPTER I

In the kindest natures there is a certain sensitiveness, which, when wounded, occasions the same pain, and bequeaths the same resentment, as mortified vanity or galled self-love.

It is exactly that day week, towards the hour of five in the evening, Mr. Hartopp, alone in the parlour behind his warehouse, is locking up his books and ledgers preparatory to the return to his villa. There is a certain change in the expression of his countenance since we saw it last. If it be possible for Mr. Hartopp to look sullen,—sullen he looks; if it be possible for the Mayor of Gatesboro' to be crestfallen, crestfallen he is. That smooth existence has surely received some fatal concussion, and has not yet recovered the shock. But if you will glance beyond the parlour at Mr. Williams giving orders in the warehouse, at the warehousemen themselves, at the rough faces in the tan-yard,—nay, at Mike Callaghan, who has just brought a parcel from the railway, all of them have evidently shared in the effects of the concussion; all of them wear a look more or less sullen; all seem crestfallen. Could you carry your gaze farther on, could you peep into the shops in the High Street, or at the loungers in the city reading-room; could you extend the vision farther still,—to Mr. Hartopp's villa, behold his wife, his little ones, his men-servants, and his maid-servants, more and more impressively general would become the tokens of disturbance occasioned by that infamous concussion. Everywhere a sullen look,—everywhere that ineffable aspect of crestfallenness! What can have happened? is the good man bankrupt? No, rich as ever! What can it be? Reader! that fatal event which they who love Josiah Hartopp are ever at watch to prevent, despite all their vigilance, has occurred! Josiah Hartopp has been TAKEN IN! Other men may be occasionally taken in, and no one mourns; perhaps they deserve it! they are not especially benevolent, or they set up to be specially wise. But to take in that lamb! And it was not only the Mayor's heart that was wounded, but his pride, his self-esteem, his sense of dignity, were terribly humiliated. For as we know, though all the world considered Mr. Hartopp the very man born to be taken in, and therefore combined to protect him, yet in his secret soul Mr. Hartopp considered that no man less needed such protection; that he was never taken in, unless he meant to be so. Thus the cruelty and ingratitude of the base action under which his crest was so fallen jarred on his whole system. Nay, more, he could not but feel that the event would long affect his personal comfort and independence; he would be more than ever under the affectionate tyranny of Mr. Williams, more than ever be an object of universal surveillance and espionage. There would be one thought paramount throughout Gatesboro'. "The Mayor, God bless him! has been taken in: this must not occur again, or Gatesboro' is dishonoured, and Virtue indeed a name!" Mr. Hartopp felt not only mortified but subjugated,—he who had hitherto been the soft subjugator of the hardest. He felt not only subjugated, but indignant at the consciousness of being so. He was too meekly convinced of Heaven's unerring justice not to feel assured that the man who had taken him in would come to a tragic end. He would not have hung that man with his own hands: he was too mild for vengeance. But if he had seen that man hanging he would have said piously, "Fitting retribution," and passed on his way soothed and comforted. Taken in!—taken in at last!—he, Josiah Hartopp, taken in by a fellow with one eye!

CHAPTER II

The Mayor is so protected that he cannot help himself.

A commotion without,—a kind of howl, a kind of hoot. Mr. Williams, the warehousemen, the tanners, Mike Callaghan, share between them the howl and the hoot. The Mayor started: is it possible! His door is burst open, and, scattering all who sought to hold him back,—scattering them to the right and left from his massive torso in rushed the man who had taken in the Mayor,—the fellow with one eye, and with that fellow, shaggy and travel-soiled, the other dog!

"What have you done with the charge I intrusted to you? My child! my child! where is she?"

Waife's face was wild with the agony of his emotions, and his voice was so sharply terrible that it went like a knife into the heart of the men, who, thrust aside for the moment, now followed him, fearful, into the room.

"Mr.—Mr. Chapman, sir," faltered the Mayor, striving hard to recover dignity and self-possession, "I am astonished at your—your—"

"Audacity!" interposed Mr. Williams.

"My child! my Sophy! my child! answer me, man!" "Sir," said the Mayor, drawing himself up, "have you not got the note which I left at my bailiff's cottage in case you called there?"

"Your note! this thing!" said Waife, striking a crumpled paper with his hand, and running his eye over its contents. "You have rendered up, you say, the child to her lawful protector? Gracious heavens! did I trust her to you, or not?"

"Leave the room all of you," said the Mayor, with a sudden return of his usual calm vigour.

"You go,—you, sirs; what the deuce do you do here?" growled Williams to the meaner throng. "Out! I stay, never fear, men, I'll take care of him!"

The bystanders surlily slunk off: but none returned to their work; they stood within reach of call by the shut door. Williams tucked up his coat-sleeves, clenched his fists, hung his head doggedly on one side, and looked altogether so pugnacious and minatory that Sir Isaac, who, though in a state of great excitement, had hitherto retained self-control, peered at him under his curls, stiffened his back, showed his teeth, and growled formidably.

"My good Williams, leave us," said the Mayor; "I would be alone with this person."

"Alone,—you! out of the question. Now you have been once taken in, and you own it,—it is my duty to protect you henceforth; and I will to the end of my days."

The Mayor sighed heavily. "Well, Williams, well!—take a chair, and be quiet. Now, Mr. Chapman, so to call you still; you have deceived me."

"I? how?"

The Mayor was puzzled. "Deceived me," he said at last, "in my knowledge of human nature. I thought you an honest man, sir. And you are—but no matter."

WAIFFE (impatiently).—"My child! my child! you have given her up to— to—"

MAYOR.—"Her own father, sir."

WAIFFE (echoing the words as he staggers back).—"I thought so! I thought it!"

MAYOR.—"In so doing I obeyed the law: he had legal power to enforce his demand." The Mayor's voice was almost apologetic in its tone; for he was affected by Waife's anguish, and not able to silence a pang of remorse. After all, he had been trusted; and he had, excusably perhaps, necessarily perhaps, but still he had failed to fulfil the trust. "But," added the Mayor, as if reassuring himself, "but I refused at first to give her up even to her own father; at first insisted upon waiting till your return; and it was only when I was informed what you yourself were that my scruples gave way."

Waife remained long silent, breathing very hard, passing his hand several times over his forehead; at last he said more quietly than he had yet spoken, "Will you tell me where they have gone?"

"I do not know; and, if I did know, I would not tell you! Are they not right when they say that that innocent child should not be tempted away by—by—a—in short by you, sir?"

"They said! Her father—said that!—he said that!—Did he—did he say it? Had he the heart?"

MAYOR.—"No, I don't think he said it. Eh, Mr. Williams? He spoke little to me!"

MR. WILLIAMS.—"Of course he would not expose that person. But the woman,—the lady, I mean."

WAIFFE.—"Woman! Ah, yes. The bailiff's wife said there was a woman.

What woman? What's her name?"

MAYOR.—"Really you must excuse me. I can say no more. I have consented to see you thus, because whatever you might have been, or may be, still it was due to myself to explain how I came to give up the child; and, besides, you left money with me, and that, at least, I can give to your own hand."

The Mayor turned to his desk, unlocked it, and drew forth the bag which Waife had sent to him.

As he extended it towards the Comedian, his hand trembled, and his cheek flushed. For Waife's one bright eye had in it such depth of reproach, that again the Mayor's conscience was sorely troubled; and he would have given ten times the contents of that bag to have been alone with the vagrant, and to have said the soothing things he did not dare to say before Williams, who sat there mute and grim, guarding him from being once more "taken in." "If you had confided in me at first, Mr. Chapman," he said, pathetically, "or even if now, I could aid you in an honest way of life!"

"Aid him—now!" said Williams, with a snort. "At it again! you're not a man: you're an angel!"

"But if he is penitent, Williams."

"So! so! so!" murmured Waife. "Thank Heaven it was not he who spoke against me: it was but a strange woman. Oh!" he suddenly broke off with a groan. "Oh—but that strange woman,—who, what can she be? and Sophy with her and him. Distraction! Yes, yes, I take the money. I shall want it all. Sir Isaac, pick up that bag. Gentlemen, good day to you!" He bowed; such a failure that bow! Nothing ducal in it! bowed and turned towards the door; then, when he gained the threshold, as if some meeker, holier thought restored to him dignity of bearing, his form rose, though his face softened, and stretching his right hand towards the Mayor, he said, "You did but as all perhaps would have done on the evidence before you. You meant to be kind to her."

"If you knew all, how you would repent! I do not blame,—I forgive you."

He was gone: the Mayor stood transfixed. Even Williams felt a cold comfortless thrill. "He does not look like it," said the foreman. "Cheer up, sir, no wonder you were taken in: who would not have been?"

"Hark! that hoot again. Go, Williams, don't let the men insult him. Go, do,—I shall be grateful."

But before Williams got to the door, the cripple and his dog had vanished; vanished down a dark narrow alley on the opposite side of the street. The rude workmen had followed him to the mouth of the alley, mocking him. Of the exact charge against the Comedian's good name they were not informed; that knowledge was confined to the Mayor and Mr. Williams. But the latter had dropped such harsh expressions, that bad as the charge might really be, all in Mr. Hartopp's employment probably deemed it worse, if possible, than it really was. And wretch indeed must be the man by whom the Mayor had been confessedly taken in, and whom the Mayor had indignantly given up to the reproaches of his own conscience. But the cripple was now out of sight, lost amidst those labyrinths of squalid homes which, in great towns, are thrust beyond view, branching off abruptly behind High Streets and Market Places, so that strangers passing only along the broad thoroughfares, with glittering shops and gaslit causeways, exclaim, "Ah here do the poor live?"

CHAPTER III

Ecce iterum Crispinus!

It was by no calculation, but by involuntary impulse, that Waife, thus escaping from the harsh looks and taunting murmurs of the gossips round the Mayor's door, dived into those sordid devious lanes. Vaguely he felt that a ban was upon him; that the covering he had thrown over his brand of outcast was lifted up; that a sentence of expulsion from the High Streets and Market Places of decorous life was passed against him. He had been robbed of his child, and Society, speaking in the voice of the Mayor of Gatesboro', said, "Rightly! thou art not fit companion for the innocent!"

At length he found himself out of the town, beyond its straggling suburbs, and once more on the solitary road. He had already walked far that day. He was thoroughly exhausted. He sat himself down in a dry ditch by the hedgerow, and taking his head between his hands, strove to recollect his thoughts and rearrange his plans.

Waife had returned that day to the bailiff's cottage joyous and elated. He had spent the week in travelling; partly, though not all the way, on foot, to the distant village, in which he had learned in youth the basketmaker's art! He had found the very cottage wherein he had then lodged vacant and to be let. There seemed a ready opening for the humble but pleasant craft to which he had diverted his ambition.

The bailiff intrusted with the letting of the cottage and osier-ground had, it is true, requested some reference; not, of course, as to all a tenant's antecedents, but as to the reasonable probability that the tenant would be a quiet sober man, who would pay his rent and abstain from poaching. Waife thought he might safely presume that the Mayor of Gatesboro' would not, so far as that went, object to take his VOL. i.-IS past upon trust, and give him a good word towards securing so harmless and obscure a future. Waife had never before asked such a favour of any man; he shrank from doing so now; but for his grandchild's sake, he would waive his scruples or humble his pride.

Thus, then, he had come back, full of Elysian dreams, to his Sophy, —his Enchanted Princess. Gone, taken away, and with the Mayor's consent,—the consent of the very man upon whom he had been relying to secure a livelihood and a shelter! Little more had he learned at the cottage, for Mr. and Mrs. Gooch had been cautioned to be as brief as possible, and give him no clew to regain his lost treasure, beyond the note which informed him it was with a lawful possessor. And, indeed, the worthy pair were now prejudiced against the vagrant, and were rude to him. But he had not tarried to cross-examine and inquire. He had rushed at once to the Mayor. Sophy was with one whose legal right to dispose of her he could not question. But where that person would take her, where he resided, what he would do with her, he had no means to conjecture. Most probably (he thought and guessed) she would be carried abroad, was already out of the country. But the woman with Losely, he had not heard her described; his guesses did not turn towards Mrs. Crane: the woman was evidently hostile to him; it was the woman who had spoken against him,— not Losely; the woman whose tongue had poisoned Hartopp's mind, and turned into scorn all that admiring respect which had before greeted the great Comedian. Why was that woman his enemy? Who could she be? What had she to do with Sophy? He was half beside himself with terror. It was to save her less even from Losely than from such direful women as Losely made his confidants and associates that Waife had taken Sophy to himself. As for Mrs. Crane, she had never seemed a foe to him; she had ceded the child to him willingly: he had no reason to believe, from the way in which she had spoken of Losely when he last saw her, that she could henceforth aid the interests or share the schemes of the man whose perfidies she then denounced; and as to Rugge, he had not appeared at Gatesboro'. Mrs. Crane had prudently suggested that his presence would not be propitiatory or discreet, and that all reference to him, or to the contract with him, should be suppressed. Thus Waife was wholly without one guiding evidence,

one groundwork for conjecture, that might enable him to track the lost; all he knew was, that she had been given up to a man whose whereabouts it was difficult to discover,—a vagrant, of life darker and more hidden than his own.

But how had the hunters discovered the place where he had treasured up his Sophy? how dogged that retreat? Perhaps from the village in which we first saw him. Ay, doubtless, learned from Mrs. Saunders of the dog he had purchased, and the dog would have served to direct them on his path. At that thought he pushed away Sir Isaac, who had been resting his head on the old man's knee,—pushed him away angrily; the poor dog slunk off in sorrowful surprise, and whined.

"Ungrateful wretch that I am!" cried Waife, and he opened his arms to the brute, who bounded forgivingly to his breast.

"Come, come, we will go back to the village in Surrey. Tramp, tramp!" said the cripple, rousing himself. And at that moment, just as he gained his feet, a friendly hand was laid on his shoulder, and a friendly voice said,

"I have found you! the crystal said so! Marbellous!"

"Merle," faltered out the vagrant, "Merle, you here! Oh, perhaps you come to tell me good news: you have seen Sophy; you know where she is!"

The Cobbler shook his head. "Can't see her just at present. Crystal says nout about her. But I know she was taken from you—and—and—you shake tremenjous! Lean on me, Mr. Waite, and call off that big animal. He's a suspicating my calves and circumtittivating them. Thank ye, sir. You see I was born with sinister aspects in my Twelfth House, which appertains to big animals and enemies; and dogs of that size about one's calves are—malefics!"

As Merle now slowly led the cripple, and Sir Isaac, relinquishing his first suspicions, walked droopingly beside them, the Cobbler began a long story, much encumbered by astrological illustrations and moralizing comments. The substance of his narrative is thus epitomized: Rugge, in pursuing Waife's track, had naturally called on Merle in company with Losely and Mrs. Crane. The Cobbler had no clew to give, and no mind to give it if clew he had possessed. But his curiosity being roused, he had smothered the inclination to dismiss the inquirers with more speed than good breeding, and even refreshed his slight acquaintance with Mr. Rugge in so well simulated a courtesy that that gentleman, when left behind by Losely and Mrs. Crane in their journey to Gatesboro', condescended, for want of other company, to drink tea with Mr. Merle; and tea being succeeded by stronger potations, he fairly unbosomed himself of his hopes of recovering Sophy and his ambition of hiring the York theatre.

The day afterwards Rugge went away seemingly in high spirits, and the Cobbler had no doubt, from some words he let fall in passing Merle's stall towards the railway, that Sophy was recaptured, and that Rugge was summoned to take possession of her. Ascertaining from the manager that Losely and Mrs. Crane had gone to Gatesboro', the Cobbler called to mind that he had a sister living there, married to a green-grocer in a very small way, whom he had not seen for many years; and finding his business slack just then, he resolved to pay this relative a visit, with the benevolent intention of looking up Waife, whom he expected from Rugge's account to find there, and offering him any consolation or aid in his power, should Sophy have been taken from him against his will. A consultation with his crystal, which showed him the face of Mr. Waife alone and much dejected, and a horary scheme which promised success to his journey, decided his movements. He had arrived at Gatesboro' the day before, had heard a confused story about a Mr. Chapman, with his dog and his child, whom the Mayor had first taken up, but who afterwards, in some mysterious manner, had taken in the Mayor. Happily, the darker gossip in the High Street had not penetrated the back lane in which Merle's sister resided. There, little more was known than the fact that this mysterious stranger had imposed on the wisdom of Gatesboro's learned Institute and enlightened Mayor. Merle, at no loss to identify Waife with Chapman, could only suppose that he had been discovered to be a strolling player in Rugge's exhibition, after pretending to be some much greater man. Such an offence the

Cobbler was not disposed to consider heinous. But Mr. Chapman was gone from Gatesboro' none knew whither; and Merle had not yet ventured to call himself on the chief magistrate of the place, to inquire after a man by whom that august personage had been deceived. "Howsomever," quoth Merle, in conclusion, "I was just standing at my sister's door, with her last babby in my arms, in Scrob Lane, when I saw you pass by like a shot. You were gone while I ran in to give up the babby, who is teething, with malefics in square,—gone, clean out of sight. You took one turn; I took another: but you see we meet at last, as good men always do in this world or the other, which is the same thing in the long run."

Waife, who had listened to his friend without other interruption than an occasional nod of the head or interjectional expletive, was now restored to much of his constitutional mood of sanguine cheerfulness. He recognized Mrs. Crane in the woman described; and, if surprised, he was rejoiced. For, much as he disliked that gentlewoman, he thought Sophy might be in worse female hands. Without much need of sagacity, he divined the gist of the truth. Losely had somehow or other become acquainted with Ruge, and sold Sophy to the manager. Where Ruge was, there would Sophy be. It could not be very difficult to find out the place in which Ruge was now exhibiting; and then—ah then! Waife whistled to Sir Isaac, tapped his forehead, and smiled triumphantly. Meanwhile the Cobbler had led him back into the suburb, with the kind intention of offering him food and bed for the night at his sister's house. But Waife had already formed his plan; in London, and in London alone, could he be sure to learn where Ruge was now exhibiting; in London there were places at which that information could be gleaned at once. The last train to the metropolis was not gone. He would slink round the town to the station: he and Sir Isaac at that hour might secure places unnoticed.

When Merle found it was in vain to press him to stay over the night, the good-hearted Cobbler accompanied him to the train, and, while Waife shrank into a dark corner, bought the tickets for dog and master. As he was paying for these, he overheard two citizens talking of Mr. Chapman. It was indeed Mr. Williams explaining to a fellow-burgess just returned to Gatesboro', after a week's absence, how and by what manner of man Mr. Hartopp had been taken in. At what Williams said, the Cobbler's cheek paled. When he joined the Comedian his manner was greatly altered; he gave the tickets without speaking, but looked hard into Waife's face, as the latter repaid him the fares. "No," said the Cobbler, suddenly, "I don't believe it."

"Believe what?" asked Waife, startled. "That you are—"

The Cobbler paused, bent forward, whispered the rest of the sentence close in the vagrant's ear. Waife's head fell on his bosom, but he made no answer.

"Speak," cried Merle; "say 't is a lie." The poor cripple's lip writhed, but he still spoke not.

Merle looked aghast at that obstinate silence. At length, but very slowly, as the warning bell summoned him and Sir Isaac to their several places in the train, Waife found voice. "So you too, you too desert and despise me! God's will be done!" He moved away,—spiritless, limping, hiding his face as well as he could. The porter took the dog from him, to thrust it into one of the boxes reserved for such four-footed passengers.

Waife thus parted from his last friend—I mean the dog—looked after Sir Isaac wistfully, and crept into a third-class carriage, in which luckily there was no one else. Suddenly Merle jumped in, snatched his hand, and pressed it tightly.

"I don't despise, I don't turn my back on you: whenever you and the little one want a home and a friend, come to Kit Merle as before, and I'll bite my tongue out if I ask any more questions of you; I'll ask the stars instead."

The Cobbler had but just time to splutter out these comforting words and redescend the carriage, when the train put itself into movement, and the lifelike iron miracle, fuming, hissing, and screeching, bore off to London its motley convoy of human beings, each passenger's heart a mystery to the other, all bound the same road, all wedged close within the same whirling mechanism; what a separate and distinct world in each! Such is Civilization! How like we are one to the other in the mass! how strangely dissimilar in the abstract!

CHAPTER IV

"If," says a great thinker (Degerando, "/Du Perfectionment Moral/," chapter ix., "On the Difficulties we encounter in Self-Study")—"if one concentrates reflection too much on one's self, one ends by no longer seeing anything, or seeing only what one wishes. By the very act, as it were, of capturing one's self, the personage we believe we have seized escapes, disappears. Nor is it only the complexity of our inner being which obstructs our examination, but its exceeding variability. The investigator's regard should embrace all the sides of the subject, and perseveringly pursue all its phases."

It is the race-week in Humberston, a county town far from Gatesboro', and in the north of England. The races last three days: the first day is over; it has been a brilliant spectacle; the course crowded with the carriages of provincial magnates, with equestrian betters of note from the metropolis; blacklegs in great muster; there have been gaming-booths on the ground, and gypsies telling fortunes; much champagne imbibed by the well-bred, much soda-water and brandy by the vulgar. Thousands and tens of thousands have been lost and won: some paupers have been for the time enriched; some rich men made poor for life. Horses have won fame; some of their owners lost character. Din and uproar, and coarse oaths, and rude passions,—all have had their hour. The amateurs of the higher classes have gone back to dignified country-houses, as courteous hosts or favoured guests. The professional speculators of a lower grade have poured back into the county town, and inns and taverns are crowded. Drink is hotly called for at reeking bars; waiters and chambermaids pass to and fro, with dishes and tankards and bottles in their hands. All is noise and bustle, and eating and swilling, and disputation and slang, wild glee, and wilder despair, amongst those who come back from the race-course to the inns in the county town. At one of these taverns, neither the best nor the worst, and in a small narrow slice of a room that seemed robbed from the landing-place, sat Mrs. Crane, in her iron-gray silk gown. She was seated close by the open window, as carriages, chaises, flies, carts, vans, and horsemen succeeded each other thick and fast, watching the scene with a soured, scornful look. For human joy, as for human grief, she had little sympathy. Life had no Saturnalian holidays left for her. Some memory in her past had poisoned the well-springs of her social being. Hopes and objects she had still, but out of the wrecks of the natural and healthful existence of womanhood, those objects and hopes stood forth exaggerated, intense, as are the ruling passions in monomania. A bad woman is popularly said to be worse than a wicked man. If so, partly because women, being more solitary, brood more unceasingly over cherished ideas, whether good or evil; partly also, for the same reason that makes a wicked gentleman, who has lost caste and character, more irreclaimable than a wicked clown, low-born and lowbred, namely, that in proportion to the loss of shame is the gain in recklessness: but principally, perhaps, because in extreme wickedness there is necessarily a distortion of the reasoning faculty; and man, accustomed from the cradle rather to reason than to feel, has that faculty more firm against abrupt twists and lesions than it is in woman; where virtue may have left him, logic may still linger; and he may decline to push evil to a point at which it is clear to his understanding that profit vanishes and punishment rests; while woman, once abandoned to ill, finds sufficient charm in its mere excitement, and, regardless of consequences, where the man asks, "Can I?" raves out, "I will!" Thus man may be criminal through cupidity, vanity, love, jealousy, fear, ambition; rarely in civilized, that is, reasoning life, through hate and revenge; for hate is a profitless investment, and revenge a ruinous speculation. But when women are thoroughly depraved and hardened, nine times out of ten it is hatred or revenge that makes them so. Arabella Crane had not, however, attained to that last state of wickedness, which, consistent in evil, is callous to remorse; she was not yet unsexed. In her nature was still that essence, "varying and mutable," which

distinguishes woman while womanhood is left to her. And now, as she sat gazing on the throng below, her haggard mind recoiled perhaps from the conscious shadow of the Evil Principle which, invoked as an ally, remains as a destroyer. Her dark front relaxed; she moved in her seat uneasily. "Must it be always thus?" she muttered,— "always this hell here! Even now, if in one large pardon I could include the undoer, the earth, myself, and again be human,— human, even as those slight triflers or coarse brawlers that pass yonder! Oh, for something in common with common life!"

Her lips closed, and her eyes again fell upon the crowded street. At that moment three or four heavy vans or wagons filled with operatives or labourers and their wives, coming back from the race-course, obstructed the way; two outriders in satin jackets were expostulating, cracking their whips, and seeking to clear space for an open carriage with four thoroughbred impatient horses. Towards that carriage every gazer from the windows was directing eager eyes; each foot-passenger on the pavement lifted his hat: evidently in that carriage some great person! Like all who are at war with the world as it is, Arabella Crane abhorred the great, and despised the small for worshipping the great. But still her own fierce dark eyes mechanically followed those of the vulgar. The carriage bore a marquess's coronet on its panels, and was filled with ladies; two other carriages bearing a similar coronet, and evidently belonging to the same party, were in the rear. Mrs. Crane started. In that first carriage, as it now slowly moved under her very window, and paused a minute or more till the obstructing vehicles in front were marshalled into order, there flashed upon her eyes a face radiant with female beauty in its most glorious prime. Amongst the crowd at that moment was a blind man, adding to the various discords of the street by a miserable hurdy-gurdy. In the movement of the throng to get nearer to a sight of the ladies in the carriage, this poor creature was thrown forward; the dog that led him, an ugly brute, on his own account or his master's took fright, broke from the string, and ran under the horses' hoofs, snarling. The horses became restive; the blind man made a plunge after his dog, and was all but run over. The lady in the first carriage, alarmed for his safety, rose up from her seat, and made her outriders dismount, lead away the poor blind man, and restore to him his dog. Thus engaged, her face shone full upon Arabella Crane; and with that face rushed a tide of earlier memories. Long, very long, since she had seen that face,—seen it in those years when she herself, Arabella Crane, was young and handsome.

The poor man,—who seemed not to realize the idea of the danger he had escaped,—once more safe, the lady resumed her seat; and now that the momentary animation of humane fear and womanly compassion passed from her countenance, its expression altered; it took the calm, almost the coldness, of a Greek statue. But with the calm there was a listless melancholy which Greek sculpture never gives to the Parian stone: stone cannot convey that melancholy; it is the shadow which needs for its substance a living, mortal heart.

Crack went the whips: the horses bounded on; the equipage rolled fast down the street, followed by its satellites. "Well!" said a voice in the street below, "I never saw Lady Montfort in such beauty. Ah, here comes my lord!"

Mrs. Crane heard and looked forth again. A dozen or more gentlemen on horseback rode slowly up the street; which of these was Lord Montfort?— not difficult to distinguish. As the bystanders lifted their hats to the cavalcade, the horsemen generally returned their salutation by simply touching their own: one horseman uncovered wholly. That one must be the Marquess, the greatest man in those parts, with lands stretching away on either side that town for miles and miles,—a territory which in feudal times might have alarmed a king. He, the civilest, must be the greatest. A man still young, decidedly good-looking, wonderfully well-dressed, wonderfully well-mounted, the careless ease of high rank in his air and gesture. To the superficial gaze, just what the great Lord of Montfort should be. Look again! In that fair face is there not something that puts you in mind of a florid period which contains a feeble platitude?— something in its very prettiness that betrays a weak nature and a sterile mind?

The cavalcade passed away; the vans and the wagons again usurped the thoroughfare. Arabella Crane left the window, and approached the little looking-glass over the mantelpiece. She gazed upon her own face bitterly; she was comparing it with the features of the dazzling marchioness.

The door was flung open, and Jasper Losely sauntered in, whistling a French air, and flapping the dust from his boots with his kid glove.

"All right," said he, gayly. "A famous day of it!"

"You have won," said Mrs. Crane, in a tone rather of disappointment than congratulation.

"Yes. That L100 of Rugge's has been the making of me."

"I only wanted a capital just to start with!" He flung himself into a chair, opened his pocket-book, and scrutinized its contents. "Guess," said he, suddenly, "on whose horse I won these two rouleaux? Lord Montfort's! Ay, and I saw my lady!"

"So did I see her from this window. She did not look happy!"

"Not happy!—with such an equipage,—neatest turn-out I ever set eyes on; not happy, indeed! I had half a mind to ride up to her carriage and advance a claim to her gratitude."

"Gratitude? Oh, for your part in that miserable affair of which you told me?"

"Not a miserable affair for her; but certainly I never got any good from it. Trouble for nothing! / Basta! / No use looking back."

"No use; but who can help it?" said Arabella Crane, sighing heavily; then, as if eager to change the subject, she added abruptly, "Mr. Rugge has been here twice this morning, highly excited the child will not act. He says you are bound to make her do so!"

"Nonsense. That is his look-out. I see after children, indeed!"

MRS. CRANE (with a visible effort).—"Listen to me, Jasper Losely. I have no reason to love that child, as you may suppose. But now that you so desert her, I think I feel compassion for her; and when this morning I raised my hand to strike her for her stubborn spirit, and saw her eyes unflinching, and her pale, pale, but fearless face, my arm fell to my side powerless. She will not take to this life without the old man. She will waste away and die."

LOSELY.—"How you bother me! Are you serious? What am I to do?"

MRS. CRANE.—"You have won money you say; revoke the contract; pay Rugge back his L100. He is disappointed in his bargain; he will take the money."

LOSELY.—"I dare say he will indeed! No: I have won to-day, it is true, but I may lose to-morrow; and besides I am in want of so many things: when one gets a little money, one has an immediate necessity for more— ha! ha! Still I would not have the child die; and she may grow up to be of use. I tell you what I will do; if, when the races are over, I find I have gained enough to afford it, I will see about buying her off. But L100 is too much! Rugge ought to take half the money, or a quarter, because, if she don't act, I suppose she does eat."

Odious as the man's words were, he said them with a laugh that seemed to render them less revolting,—the laugh of a very handsome mouth, showing teeth still brilliantly white. More comely than usual that day, for he was in great good-humour, it was difficult to conceive that a man with so healthful and fair an exterior was really quite rotten at heart.

"Your own young laugh," said Arabella Crane, almost tenderly. "I know not how it is, but this day I feel as if I were less old,—altered though I be in face and mind. I have allowed myself to pity that child; while I speak, I can pity you. Yes! pity,—when I think of what you were. Must you go on thus? To what! Jasper Losely," she continued, sharply, eagerly, clasping her hands, "hear me: I have an income, not large, it is true, but assured; you have nothing but what, as you say, you may lose to-morrow; share my income! Fulfil your solemn promises: marry me. I will forget whose daughter that girl is; I will be a mother to her. And for yourself, give me the right to feel for you again as I once did, and I may find a way to raise you yet,—higher than you can raise yourself. I have some wit, Jasper, as you know. At the worst you shall have the pastime, I the toil. In your illness I will

nurse you: in your joys I will intrude no share. Whom else can you marry? to whom else could you confide? who else could—"

She stopped short as if an adder had stung her, uttering a shriek of rage, of pain; for Jasper Losely, who had hitherto listened to her, stupefied, astounded, here burst into a fit of merriment, in which there was such undisguised contempt, such an enjoyment of the ludicrous, provoked by the idea of the marriage pressed upon him, that the insult pierced the woman to her very soul.

Continuing his laugh, despite that cry of wrathful agony it had caused, Jasper rose, holding his sides, and surveying himself in the glass, with very different feelings at the sight from those that had made his companion's gaze there a few minutes before so mournful.

"My dear good friend," he said, composing himself at last, and wiping his eyes, "excuse me, but really when you said whom else could I marry—ha! ha!—it did seem such a capital joke! Marry you, my fair Crane! No: put that idea out of your head; we know each other too well for conjugal felicity. You love me now: you always did, and always will; that is, while we are not tied to each other. Women who once love me, always love me; can't help themselves. I am sure I don't know why, except that I am what they call a villain! Ha! the clock striking seven: I dine with a set of fellows I have picked up on the race-ground; they don't know me, nor I them; we shall be better acquainted after the third bottle. Cheer up, Crane: go and scold Sophy, and make her act if you can; if not, scold Rugge into letting her alone. Scold somebody; nothing like it, to keep other folks quiet, and one's self busy. Adieu! and pray, no more matrimonial solicitations: they frighten me! Gad," added Losely, as he banged the door, "such overtures would frighten Old Nick himself!"

Did Arabella Crane hear those last words,—or had she not heard enough? If Losely had turned and beheld her face, would it have startled back his trivial laugh? Possibly; but it would have caused only a momentary uneasiness. If Alecto herself had reared over him her brow horrent with vipers, Jasper Losely would have thought he had only to look handsome and say coaxingly, "Alecto, my dear," and the Fury would have pawned her head-dress to pay his washing-bill.

After all, in the face of the grim woman he had thus so wantonly incensed, there was not so much menace as resolve. And that resolve was yet more shown in the movement of the hands than in the aspect of the countenance; those hands—lean, firm, nervous hands—slowly expanded, then as slowly clenched, as if her own thought had taken substance, and she was locking it in a clasp—tightly, tightly—never to be loosened till the pulse was still.

CHAPTER V

The most submissive where they love may be the most stubborn where they do not love.—Sophy is stubborn to Mr. Rugge.—That injured man summons to his side Mrs. Crane, imitating the policy of those potentates who would retrieve the failures of force by the successes of diplomacy.

Mr. Rugge has obtained his object. But now comes the question, "What will he do with it?" Question with as many heads as the Hydra; and no sooner does an author dispose of one head than up springs another.

Sophy has been bought and paid for: she is now, legally, Mr. Rugge's property. But there was a wise peer who once bought Punch: Punch became his property, and was brought in triumph to his lordship's house. To my lord's great dismay, Punch would not talk. To Rugge's great dismay, Sophy would not act.

Rendered up to Jasper Losely and Mrs. Crane, they had lost not an hour in removing her from Gatesboro' and its neighbourhood. They did not, however, go back to the village in which they had left Rugge, but returned straight to London, and wrote to the manager to join them there.

Sophy, once captured, seemed stupefied: she evinced no noisy passion; she made no violent resistance. When she was told to love and obey a father in Jasper Losely, she lifted her eyes to his face; then turned them away, and shook her head mute and credulous. That man her father! she, did not believe it. Indeed, Jasper took no pains to convince her of the relationship or win her attachment. He was not unkindly rough: he seemed wholly indifferent; probably he was so. For the ruling vice of the man was in his egotism. It was not so much that he had bad principles and bad feelings, as that he had no principles and no feelings at all, except as they began, continued, and ended in that system of centralization which not more paralyzes healthful action in a State than it does in the individual man. Self-indulgence with him was absolute. He was not without power of keen calculation, not without much cunning. He could conceive a project for some gain far off in the future, and concoct, for its realization, schemes subtly woven, astutely guarded. But he could not secure their success by any long-sustained sacrifices of the caprice of one hour or the indolence of the next. If it had been a great object to him for life to win Sophy's filial affection, he would not have bored himself for five minutes each day to gain that object. Besides, he had just enough of shame to render him uneasy at the sight of the child he had deliberately sold. So after chucking her under the chin, and telling her to be a good girl and be grateful for all that Mrs. Crane had done for her and meant still to do, he consigned her almost solely to that lady's care.

When Rugge arrived, and Sophy was informed of her intended destination, she broke silence,—her colour went and came quickly,—she declared, folding her arms upon her breast, that she would never act if separated from her grandfather. Mrs. Crane, struck by her manner, suggested to Rugge that it might be as well, now that she was legally secured to the manager, to humour her wish and re-engage Waife. Whatever the tale with which, in order to obtain Sophy from the Mayor, she had turned that worthy magistrate's mind against the Comedian, she had not gratified Mr. Rugge by a similar confidence to him. To him she said nothing which might operate against renewing engagements with Waife, if he were so disposed. But Rugge had no faith in a child's firmness, and he had a strong spite against Waife, so he obstinately refused. He insisted, however, as a peremptory condition of the bargain, that Mr. Losely and Mrs. Crane should accompany him to the town to which he had transferred his troupe, both in order by their presence to confirm his authority over Sophy, and to sanction his claim to her, should Waife reappear and dispute it. For Rugge's profession being scarcely legitimate and decidedly equivocal, his right to bring up a female child to the same calling might be called into question before a magistrate, and necessitate the production of her father in order

to substantiate the special contract. In return, the manager handsomely offered to Mr. Losely and Mrs. Crane to pay their expenses in the excursion,—a liberality haughtily rejected by Mrs. Crane for herself, though she agreed at her own charge to accompany Losely if he decided on complying with the manager's request. Losely at first raised objections, but hearing that there would be races in the neighbourhood, and having a peculiar passion for betting and all kinds of gambling, as well as an ardent desire to enjoy his L100 in so fashionable a manner, he consented to delay his return to the Continent, and attend Arabella Crane to the provincial Elis. Rugge, carried off Sophy to her fellow "orphans."

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