

ЭДВАРД БУЛЬВЕР-ЛИТТОН

**WHAT WILL HE DO
WITH IT? – VOLUME
10**

Эдвард Бульвер-Литтон

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Edward Bulwer-Lytton

What Will He Do with It? — Volume 10

BOOK X

CHAPTER I

BRUTE-FORCE.

We left Jasper Losely resting for the night at the small town near Fawley. The next morning he walked on to the old Manor-house. It was the same morning in which Lady Montfort had held her painful interview with Darrell; and just when Losely neared the gate that led into the small park, he saw her re-enter the hired vehicle in waiting for her. As the carriage rapidly drove past the miscreant, Lady Montfort looked forth from the window to snatch a last look at the scenes still so clear to her, through eyes blinded by despairing tears. Jasper thus caught sight of her countenance, and recognised her, though she did not even notice him. Surprised at the sight, he halted by the palings. What could have brought Lady Montfort there? Could the intimacy his fraud had broken off so many years ago be renewed? If so, why the extreme sadness on the face of which he had caught but a hurried, rapid glance? Be that as it might, it was no longer of the interest to him it had once been; and after pondering on the circumstance a minute or two, he advanced to the gate. But while his hand was on the latch, he again paused; how should he obtain admission to Darrell?—how announce himself? If in his own name, would not exclusion be certain?—if as a stranger on business, would Darrell be sure to receive him? As he was thus cogitating, his ear, which, with all his other organs of sense, was constitutionally fine as a savage's, caught sound of a faint rustle among the boughs of a thick copse which covered a part of the little park, terminating at its pales. The rustle came nearer and nearer; the branches were rudely displaced; and in a few moments more Guy Darrell himself came out from the copse, close by the gate, and opening it quickly, stood face to face with his abhorrent son-in-law. Jasper was startled, but the opportunity was not to be lost. "Mr. Darrell," he said, "I come here again to see you; vouchsafe me, this time, a calmer hearing." So changed was Losely, so absorbed in his own emotions Darrell, that the words did not at once waken up remembrance. "Another time," said Darrell, hastily moving on into the road; "I am not at leisure now." "Pardon me, NOW," said Losely, unconsciously bringing himself back to the tones and bearing of his earlier and more civilised years. "You do not remember me, sir; no wonder. But my name is Jasper Losely."

Darrell halted; then, as if spellbound, looked fixedly at the broad-shouldered burly frame before him, cased in its coarse pea-jacket, and in that rude form, and that defeatured, bloated face, detected, though with strong effort, the wrecks of the masculine beauty which had ensnared his deceitful daughter. Jasper could not have selected a more unpropitious moment for his cause. Darrell was still too much under the influence of recent excitement and immense sorrow for that supremacy of prudence over passion which could alone have made him a willing listener to overtures from Jasper Losely. And about the man whose connection with himself was a thought of such bitter shame, there was now so unmistakably the air of settled degradation, that all Darrell's instincts of gentleman were revolted—just at the very time, too, when his pride had been most chafed and assailed by the obtrusion of all that rendered most galling to him the very name of Jasper Losely. What! Was it that man's asserted child whom Lionel Haughton desired as a wife?—was the alliance with that man to be thus renewed and strengthened?—that man have another claim to him and his in right of parentage to the bride of his nearest kinsman? What! was it that man's child whom he was asked to recognise

as of his own flesh and blood?—the last representative of his line? That man!—that! A flash shot from his bright eye, deepening its grey into dark; and, turning on his heel, Darrell said, through his compressed lips—

"You have heard, sir, I believe, through Colonel Morley, that only on condition of your permanent settlement in one of our distant colonies, or America if you prefer it, would I consent to assist you. I am of the same mind still. I can not parley with you myself. Colonel Morley is abroad, I believe. I refer you to my solicitor; you have seen him years ago; you know his address. No more, sir."

"This will not do, Mr. Darrell," said Losely, doggedly; and, planting himself right before Darrell's way, "I have come here on purpose to have all differences out with you, face to face—and I will—"

"You will!" said Darrell, pale with haughty anger, and with the impulse of his passion, his hand clenched. In the bravery of his nature, and the warmth of a temper constitutionally quick, he thought nothing of the strength and bulk of the insolent obtruder—nothing of the peril of odds so unequal in a personal encounter. But the dignity which pervaded all his habits, and often supplied to him the place of discretion, came, happily for himself, to his aid now. He strike a man whom he so despised!—he raise that man to his own level by the honour of a blow from his hand! Impossible! "You will!" he said. "Well, be it so. Are you come again to tell me that a child of my daughter lives, and that you won my daughter's fortune by a deliberate lie?"

"I am not come to speak of that girl, but of myself. I say that I have a claim on you, Mr. Darrell; I say that turn and twist the truth as you will, you are still my father-in-law, and that it is intolerable that I should be wanting bread, or driven into actual robbery, while my wife's father is a man of countless wealth, and has no heir except—but I will not now urge that child's cause; I am content to abandon it if so obnoxious to you. Do you wish me to cut a throat, and to be hanged, and all the world to hear the last dying speech and confession of Guy Darrell's son-in-law? Answer me, sir?"

"I answer you briefly and plainly. It is simply because I would not have that last disgrace on Guy Darrell's name that I offer you a subsistence in lands where you will be less exposed to those temptations which induced you to invest the sums that, by your own tale, had been obtained from me on false pretences, in the sink of a Paris gambling house. A subsistence that, if it does not pamper vice, at least places you beyond the necessity of crime, is at your option. Choose it or reject it as you will."

"Look you, Mr. Darrell," said Jasper, whose temper was fast giving way beneath the cold and galling scorn with which he was thus cast aside, "I am in a state so desperate, that, rather than starve, I may take what you so contemptuously fling to—your daughter's husband; but—"

"Knave!" cried Darrell, interrupting him, "do you again and again urge it as a claim upon me, that you decoyed from her home, under a false name, my only child; that she died in a foreign land—broken-hearted, if I have rightly heard is that a claim upon your duped victim's father?"

"It seems so, since your pride is compelled to own that the world would deem it one, if the jail chaplain took down the last words of your son-in-law! But, /basta, basta!/ hear me out, and spare hard names; for the blood is mounting into my brain, and I may become dangerous. Had any other man eyed, and scoffed, and railed at me as you have done, he would be lying dead and dumb as this stone at my foot; but you-are my father-in-law! Now, I care not to bargain with you what be the precise amount of my stipend if I obey your wish, and settle miserably in one of those raw, comfortless corners into which they who burthen this Old World are thrust out of sight. I would rather live my time out in this country— live it out in peace and for half what you may agree to give in transporting me. If you are to do anything for me, you had better do it so as to make me contented on easy terms to your own pockets, rather than to leave me dissatisfied, and willing to annoy you, which I could do somehow or other, even on the far side of the Herring Pond. I might keep to the letter of a bargain, live in Melbourne or Sydney, and take your money, and yet molest and trouble you by deputy. That girl, for instance—your grandchild; well, well, disown her if you please; but if

I find out where she is, which I own I have not done yet, I might contrive to render her the plague of your life, even though I were in Australia."

"Ay," said Darrell, murmuring—"ay, ay; but"—(suddenly gathering himself up)—"No! Man, if she were my grandchild, your own child, could you talk of her thus? make her the object of so base a traffic, and such miserable threats? Wicked though you be, this were against nature! even in nature's wickedness—even in the son of a felon, and in the sharper of a hell. Pooh! I despise your malice. I will listen to you no longer. Out of my path."

"No!"

"No?"

"No, Guy Darrell, I have not yet done; you shall hear my terms, and accept them—a moderate sum down; say a few hundreds, and two hundred a-year to spend in London as I will—but out of your beat, out of your sight and hearing. Grant this, and I will never cross you again—never attempt to find, and, if I find by chance, never claim as my child by your daughter that wandering girl. I will never shame you by naming our connection. I will not offend the law, nor die by the hangman; yet I shall not live long, for I suffer much, and I drink hard."

The last words were spoken gloomily, not altogether without a strange dreary pathos. And amidst all his just scorn and anger, the large human heart of Guy Darrell was for the moment touched. He was silent—his mind hesitated; would it not be well—would it not be just as safe to his own peace, and to that of the poor child, whom, no matter what her parentage, Darrell could not but desire to free from the claim set up by so bold a ruffian, to gratify Losely's wish, and let him remain in England, upon an allowance that would suffice for his subsistence? Unluckily for Jasper, it was while this doubt passed through Darrell's relenting mind, that the miscreant, who was shrewd enough to see that he had gained ground, but too coarse of apprehension to ascribe his advantage to its right cause, thought to strengthen his case by additional arguments. "You see, sir," resumed Jasper, in almost familiar accents, "that there is no dog so toothless but what he can bite, and no dog so savage but what, if you give him plenty to eat, he will serve you."

Darrell looked up, and his brow darkened.

Jasper continued: "I have hinted how I might plague you; perhaps, on the other hand, I might do you a good turn with that handsome lady who drove from your park-gate as I came up. Ah! you were once to have been married to her. I read in the newspapers that she has become a widow; you may marry her yet. There was a story against you once; her mother made use of it, and broke off an old engagement. I can set that story right."

"You can," said Darrell, with that exceeding calmness which comes from exceeding wrath; "and perhaps, sir, that story, whatever it might be, you invented. No dog so toothless as not to bite—eh, sir?"

"Well," returned Jasper, mistaking Darrell's composure, "at that time certainly it seemed my interest that you should not marry again; but /basta! basta!/ enough of by-gones. If I bit once, I will serve now. Come, sir, you are a man of the world, let us close the bargain."

All Darrell's soul was now up in arms. What, then! this infamous wretch was the author of the tale by which the woman he had loved, as woman never was loved before, had excused her breach of faith, and been lost to him forever? And he learned this, while yet fresh from her presence—fresh from the agonising conviction that his heart loved still, but could not pardon. With a spring so sudden that it took Losely utterly by surprise, he leaped on the bravo, swung aside that huge bulk which Jasper had boasted four draymen could not stir against its will, cleared his way; and turning back before Losely had recovered his amaze, cried out: "Execrable villain! I revoke every offer to aid a life that has existed but to darken and desolate those it was permitted to approach. Starve or rob! perish miserably! And if I pour not on your head my parting curse, it is only because I know that man has no right to curse; and casting you back on your own evil self is the sole revenge which my belief in Heaven permits me."

Thus saying, Darrell strode on-swiftly, but not as one who flies. Jasper made three long bounds, and was almost at his side, when he was startled by the explosion of a gun. A pheasant fell dead on the road, and Darrell's gamekeeper, gun in hand, came through a gap in the hedge opposite the park-pales, and, seeing his master close before him, approached to apologise for the suddenness of the shot.

Whatever Losely's intention in hastening after Darrell, he had no option now but to relinquish it, and drop back. The village itself was not many hundred yards distant; and, after all, what good in violence, except the gratified rage of the moment? Violence would not give to Jasper Losely the income that had just been within his grasp, and had so unexpectedly eluded it. He remained, therefore, in the lane, standing still, and seeing Darrell turn quietly into his park through another gate close to the Manor-house. The gamekeeper, meanwhile, picked up his bird, reloaded his gun, and eyed Jasper suspiciously askant. The baffled gladiator at length turned and walked slowly back to the town he had left. It was late in the afternoon when he once more gained his corner in the coffee-room of his commercial inn; and, to his annoyance, the room was crowded—it was market-day. Farmers, their business over, came in and out in quick succession; those who did not dine at the ordinaries taking their hasty snack, or stirrup-cup, while their horses were being saddled; others to look at the newspaper, or exchange a word on the state of markets and the nation. Jasper, wearied and sullen, had to wait for the refreshments he ordered, and meanwhile fell into a sort of half-doze, as was not now unusual in him in the intervals between food and mischief. From this creeping torpor he was suddenly roused by the sound of Darrell's name. Three farmers standing close beside him, their backs to the fire, were tenants to Darrell—two of them on the lands that Darrell had purchased in the years of his territorial ambition; the third resided in the hamlet of Fawley, and rented the larger portion of the comparatively barren acres to which the old patrimonial estate was circumscribed. These farmers were talking of their Squire's return to the county—of his sequestered mode of life—of his peculiar habits—of the great unfinished house which was left to rot. The Fawley tenant then said that it might not, be left to rot after all, and that the village workmen had been lately employed, and still were, in getting some of the rooms into rough order; and then he spoke of the long gallery in which the Squire had been arranging his fine pictures, and how he had run up a passage between that gallery and his own room, and how he would spend hours at day, and night too, in that awful long room as lone as a churchyard; and that Mr. Mills had said that his master now lived almost entirely either in that gallery or in the room in the roof of the old house—quite cut off, as you might say, except from the eyes of those dead pictures, or the rats, which had grown so excited at having their quarters in the new building invaded, that if you peeped in at the windows in moonlit nights you might see them in dozens, sitting on their haunches, as if holding council, or peering at the curious old things which lay beside the crates out of which they had been taken. Then the rustic gossips went on to talk of the rent-day which was at hand—of the audit feast, which, according to immemorial custom, was given at the old Manor-house on that same rent-day—supposed that Mr. Fairthorn would preside—that the Squire himself would not appear—made some incidental observations on their respective rents and wheat-crops-remarked that they should have a good moonlight for their ride back from the audit feast—cautioned each other, laughing, not to drink too much of Mr. Fairthorn's punch—and finally went their way, leaving on the mind of Jasper Losely—who, leaning his scheming head on his powerful hand, had appeared in dull sleep all the while—these two facts: 1st, That on the third day from that which was then declining, sums amounting to thousands would find their way into Fawley Manor-house; and, 2ndly, That a communication existed between the unfinished, uninhabited building, and Darrell's own solitary chamber. As soon as he had fortified himself by food and drink, Jasper rose, paid for his refreshments and walked forth. Noiseless and rapid, skirting the hedgerows by the lane that led to Fawley, and scarcely distinguishable under their shadow, the human wild-beast strided on in scent of its quarry. It was night when Jasper once more reached the moss-grown pales round the demesnes of the old Manor-house. In a few minutes he was standing under the black shadow of the buttresses to the unfinished pile. His object was not, then, to assault, but to reconnoitre. He prowled

round the irregular walls, guided in his survey, now and then, faintly by the stars—more constantly and clearly by the lights from the contiguous Manor-house—especially the light from that high chamber in the gable, close by which ran the thin framework of wood which linked the two buildings of stone, just as any frail scheme links together the Past which man has not enjoyed, with the Future he will not complete. Jasper came to a large bay unglazed window, its sill but a few feet from the ground, from which the boards, nailed across the mullions, had been removed by the workmen whom Darrell had employed on the interior, and were replaced but by a loose tarpaulin. Pulling aside this slight obstacle, Jasper had no difficulty in entering through the wide mullions into the dreary edifice. Finding himself in profound darkness, he had recourse to a lucifer-box which he had about him, and the waste of a dozen matches sufficed him to examine the ground. He was in a space intended by the architect for the principal staircase; a tall ladder, used by the recent workmen, was still left standing against the wall, the top of it resting on a landing-place opposite a doorway, that, from the richness of its half-finished architrave, obviously led to what had been designed for the state apartments; between the pediments was a slight temporary door of rough deal planks. Satisfied with his reconnoitre, Losely quitted the skeleton pile, and retraced his steps to the inn he had left. His musings by the way suggested to him the expediency, nay, the necessity, of an accomplice. Implements might be needed—disguises would be required—swift horses for flight to be hired—and, should the robbery succeed, the bulk of the spoil would be no doubt in bank-notes, which it would need some other hand than his own to dispose of, either at the bank next morning at the earliest hour, or by transmission abroad. For help in all this Jasper knew no one to compare to Cutts; nor did he suspect his old ally of any share in the conspiracy against him, of which he had been warned by Mrs. Crane. Resolving, therefore, to admit that long-tried friend into his confidence, and a share of the spoils, he quickened his pace, arrived at the railway-station in time for a late train to London, and, disdainful of the dangers by which he was threatened in return to any of the haunts of his late associates, gained the dark court wherein he had effected a lodgment on the night of his return to London, and roused Cutts from his slumbers with tales of an enterprise so promising, that the small man began to recover his ancient admiration for the genius to which he had bowed at Paris, but which had fallen into his contempt in London.

Mr. Cutts held a very peculiar position in that section of the great world to which he belonged. He possessed the advantage of an education superior to that of the generality of his companions, having been originally a clerk to an Old Bailey attorney, and having since that early day accomplished his natural shrewdness by a variety of speculative enterprises both at home and abroad. In these adventures he had not only contrived to make money, but, what is very rare with the foes of law, to save it. Being a bachelor, he was at small expenses, but besides his bachelor's lodging in the dark court, he had an establishment in the heart of the City, near the Thames, which was intrusted to the care of a maiden sister, as covetous and as crafty as himself. At this establishment, ostensibly a pawnbroker's, were received the goods which Cutts knew at his residence in the court were to be sold a bargain, having been obtained for nothing. It was chiefly by this business that the man enriched himself. But his net was one that took in fishes of all kinds. He was a general adviser to the invaders of law. If he shared in the schemes he advised, they were so sure to be successful, that he enjoyed the highest reputation for luck. It was but seldom that he did actively share in those schemes—lucky in what he shunned as in what he performed. He had made no untruthful boast to Mrs. Crane of the skill with which he had kept himself out of the fangs of justice. With a certain portion of the police he was indeed rather a favourite; for was anything mysteriously "lost," for which the owner would give a reward equal to its value in legal markets, Cutts was the man who would get it back. Of violence he had a wholesome dislike; not that he did not admire force in others—not that he was physically a coward—but that caution was his predominant characteristic. He employed force when required—set a just value on it—would plan a burglary, and dispose of the spoils; but it was only where the prize was great and the danger small, that he lent his hand to the work that his brain approved. When Losely proposed to him the robbery of a lone country-house, in which Jasper, making light of

all perils, brought prominently forward the images of some thousands of pounds in gold and notes, guarded by an elderly gentleman, and to be approached with ease through an uninhabited building—Cutts thought it well worth personal investigation. Nor did he consider himself bound, by his general engagement to Mrs. Crane, to lose the chance of a sum so immeasurably greater than he could expect to obtain from her by revealing the plot and taking measures to frustrate it. Cutts was a most faithful and intelligent agent when he was properly paid, and had proved himself so to Mrs. Crane on various occasions. But then, to be paid properly meant a gain greater in serving than he could get in not serving. Hitherto it had been extremely lucrative to obey Mrs. Crane in saving Jasper from crime and danger. In this instance the lucre seemed all the other way. Accordingly, the next morning, having filled a saddle-bag with sundry necessaries, such as files, picklocks, masks—to which he added a choice selection of political tracts and newspapers—he and Jasper set out on two hired but strong and fleet hackneys to the neighbourhood of Fawley. They put up at a town on the other side of the Manor-house from that by which Jasper had approached it, and at about the same distance. After baiting their steeds, they proceeded to Fawley by the silent guide of a finger-post, gained the vicinity of the park, and Cutts, dismounting, flitted across the turf, and plunged himself into the hollows of the unfinished mansion while Jasper took charge of the horses in a corner of the wooded lane. Cutts, pleased by the survey of the forlorn interior, ventured, in the stillness that reigned around, to mount the ladder, to apply a picklock to the door above, and, opening this with ease, crept into the long gallery, its walls covered with pictures. Through the crevices in another door at the extreme end gleamed a faint light. Cutts applied his eye to the chinks and keyhole, and saw that the light came from a room on the other side the narrow passage which connected the new house with the old. The door of that room was open, candles were on the table, and beside the table Cutts could distinguish the outline of a man's form seated—doubtless the owner; but the form did not seem "elderly." If inferior to Jasper's in physical power, it still was that of vigorous and unbroken manhood. Cutts did not like the appearance of that form, and he retreated to outer air with some misgivings. However, on rejoining Losely, he said: "As yet things look promising—place still as death—only one door locked, and that the common country lock, which a schoolboy might pick with his knife."

"Or a crooked nail," said Jasper.

"Ay, no better picklock in good hands. But there are other things besides locks to think of."

Cutts then hurried on to suggest that it was just the hour when some of the workmen employed on the premises might be found in the Fawley public-house; that he should ride on, dismount there, and take his chance of picking up details of useful information as to localities and household. He should represent himself as a commercial traveller on his road to the town they had quitted; he should take out his cheap newspapers and tracts; he should talk politics—all workmen love politics, especially the politics of cheap newspapers and tracts. He would rejoin Losely in an hour or so.

The bravo waited—his horse grazed—the moon came forth, stealing through the trees, bringing into fantastic light the melancholy old dwelling-house—the yet more melancholy new pile. Jasper was not, as we have seen, without certain superstitious fancies, and they had grown on him more of late as his brain had become chronically heated and his nerves relaxed by pain. He began to feel the awe of the silence and the moonlight; and some vague remembrances of earlier guiltless days—of a father's genial love—of joyous sensations in the priceless possession of youth and vigour—of the admiring smiles and cordial hands which his beauty, his daring, and high spirits had attracted towards him—of the all that he had been, mixed with the consciousness of what he was, and an uneasy conjecture of the probable depth of the final fall—came dimly over his thoughts, and seemed like the whispers of remorse. But it is rarely that man continues to lay blame on himself; and Jasper hastened to do, as many a better person does without a blush for his folly—viz., shift upon the innocent shoulders of fellow-men, or on the hazy outlines of that clouded form which ancient schools and modern plagiarists call sometimes "Circumstance," sometimes "Chance," sometimes "Fate," all the guilt due to his own wilful abuse of irrevocable hours.

With this consolatory creed came, of necessity—the devil's grand luxury, Revenge. Say to yourself, "For what I suffer I condemn another man, or I accuse the Arch-Invisible, be it a Destiny, be it a Maker!" and the logical sequel is to add evil to evil, folly to folly—to retort on the man who so wrongs, or on the Arch-Invisible who so afflicts you. Of all our passions, is not Revenge the one into which enters with the most zest a devil? For what is a devil?—A being whose sole work on earth is some revenge on God!

Jasper Losely was not by temperament vindictive; he was irascible, as the vain are—combative, aggressive, turbulent, by the impulse of animal spirits; but the premeditation of vengeance was foreign to a levity and egotism which abjured the self-sacrifice that is equally necessary to hatred as to love. But Guy Darrell had forced into his moral system a passion not native to it. Jasper had expected so much from his marriage with the great man's daughter—counted so thoroughly on her power to obtain pardon and confer wealth—and his disappointment had been so keen—been accompanied with such mortification—that he regarded the man whom he had most injured as the man who had most injured him. But not till now did his angry feelings assume the shape of a definite vengeance. So long as there was a chance that he could extort from Darrell the money that was the essential necessary to his life, he checked his thoughts whenever they suggested a profitless gratification of rage. But now that Darrell had so scornfully and so inexorably spurned all concession—now that nothing was to be wrung from him except by force—force and vengeance came together in his projects. And yet even in the daring outrage he was meditating, murder itself did not stand out as a thought accepted—no; what pleased his wild and turbid imagination was the idea of humiliating by terror the man who had humbled him. To penetrate into the home of this haughty scorner—to confront him in his own chamber at the dead of night, man to man, force to force; to say to him, "None now can deliver you from me—I come no more as a suppliant—I command you to accept my terms"; to gloat over the fears which, the strong man felt assured, would bow the rich man to beg for mercy at his feet;—this was the picture which Jasper Losely conjured up; and even the spoil to be won by violence smiled on him less than the grand position which the violence itself would bestow. Are not nine murders out of ten fashioned thus from conception into deed? "Oh that my enemy were but before me face to face—none to part us!" says the vindictive dreamer. Well, and what then? There, his imagination halts—there he drops the sable curtain; he goes not on to say, "Why, then another murder will be added to the long catalogue from Cain." He palters with his deadly wish, and mutters, perhaps, at most, "Why, then—come what may!"

Losely continued to gaze on the pale walls gleaming through the wintry boughs, as the moon rose high and higher. And now out broke the light from Darrell's lofty casement, and Losely smiled fiercely, and muttered—hark! the very words—"And then! come what may!"

Hoofs are now heard on the hard road, and Jasper is joined by his accomplice.

"Well!" said Jasper.

"Mount!" returned Cutts; "I have much to say as we ride."

"This will not do," resumed Cutts, as they sped fast down the lane; "why, you never told me all the drawbacks. There are no less than four men in the house—two servants besides the master and his secretary; and one of those servants, the butler or valet, has firearms, and knows how to use them."

"Pshaw!" said Jasper scoffingly; "is that all? Am I not a match for four?"

"No, it is not all; you told me the master of the house was a retired elderly man, and you mentioned his name. But you never told me that your Mr. Darrell was the famous lawyer and Parliament man—a man about whom the newspapers have been writing the last six months."

"What does that signify?"

"Signify! Just this, that there will be ten times more row about the affair you propose than there would be if it concerned only a stupid old country squire, and therefore ten times as much danger. Besides, on principle I don't like to have anything to do with lawyers—a cantankerous, spiteful set of fellows. And this Guy Darrell! Why, General Jas., I have seen the man. He cross-examined me

once when I was a witness on a case of fraud, and turned me inside out with as much ease as if I had been an old pincushion stuffed with bran. I think I see his eye now, and I would as lief have a loaded pistol at my head as that eye again fixed on mine."

"Pooh! You have brought a mask; and, besides, YOU need not see him; I can face him alone."

"No, no; there might be murder! I never mix myself with things of that kind, on principle; your plan will not do. There might be a much safer chance of more swag in a very different sort of scheme. I hear that the pictures in that ghostly long room I crept through are worth a mint of money. Now, pictures of great value are well known, and there are collectors abroad who would pay almost any price for some pictures, and never ask where they came from; hide them for some years perhaps, and not bring them forth till any tales that would hurt us had died away. This would be safe, I say. If the pictures are small, no one in the old house need be disturbed. I can learn from some of the trade what pictures Darrell really has that would fetch a high price, and then look out for customers abroad. This will take a little time, but be worth waiting for."

"I will not wait," said Jasper, fiercely; "and you are a coward. I have resolved that to-morrow night I will be in that man's room, and that man shall be on his knees before me."

Cutts turned sharply round on his saddle, and by the aid of the moonlight surveyed Losely's countenance. "Oh, I see," he said, "there is more than robbery in your mind. You have some feeling of hate—of vengeance; the man has injured you?"

"He has treated me as if I were a dog," said Jasper; "and a dog can bite."

Cutts mused a few moments. "I have heard you talk at times about some rich relation or connection on whom you had claims; Darrell is the man, I suppose?"

"He is; and hark ye, Cutts, if you try to balk me here, I will wring your neck off. And since I have told you so much, I will tell you this much more—that I don't think there is the danger you count on; for I don't mean to take Darrell's blood, and I believe he would not take mine."

"But there may be a struggle—and then?"

"Ay, if so, and then—man to man," replied Jasper, mutteringly.

Nothing more was said, but both spurred on their horses to a quicker pace. The sparks flashed from the hoofs. Now through the moonlight, now under shade of the boughs, scoured on the riders—Losely's broad chest and marked countenance, once beautiful, now fearful, formidably defined even under the shadows—his comrade's unsubstantial figure and goblin features flitting vague even under the moonlight.

The town they had left came in sight, and by this time Cutts had resolved on the course his prudence suggested to him. The discovery that, in the proposed enterprise, Losely had a personal feeling of revenge to satisfy had sufficed to decide the accomplice peremptorily to have nothing to do with the affair. It was his rule to abstain from all transactions in which fierce passions were engaged. And the quarrels between relations or connections were especially those which his experience of human nature told him brought risk upon all intermeddlers. But he saw that Jasper was desperate; that the rage of the bravo might be easily turned on himself; and therefore, since it was no use to argue, it would be discreet to dissimulate. Accordingly, when they reached their inn, and were seated over their brandy-and-water, Cutts resumed the conversation, appeared gradually to yield to Jasper's reasonings, concerted with him the whole plan for the next night's operations, and took care meanwhile to pass the brandy. The day had scarcely broken before Cutts was off, with his bag of implements and tracts. He would have fain carried off also both the horses; but the ostler, surly at being knocked up at so early an hour, might not have surrendered the one ridden by Jasper, without Jasper's own order to do so. Cutts, however, bade the ostler be sure and tell the gentleman, before going away, that he, Cutts, strongly advised him "to have nothing to do with the bullocks."

Cutts, on arriving in London, went straight to Mrs. Crane's old lodging opposite to Jasper's. But she had now removed to Podden Place, and left no address. On reaching his own home, Cutts, however, found a note from her, stating that she should be at her old lodging that evening, if he would

call at half-past nine o'clock; for, indeed, she had been expecting Jasper's promised visit—had learned that he had left his lodgings, and was naturally anxious to learn from Cutts what had become of him. When Cutts called at the appointed hour and told his story, Arabella Crane immediately recognised all the danger which her informant had so prudently shunned. Nor was she comforted by Cutts's assurance that Jasper, on finding himself deserted, would have no option but to abandon, or at least postpone, an enterprise that, undertaken singly, would be too rash even for his reckless temerity. As it had become the object of her life to save Losely from justice, so she now shrunk from denouncing to justice his meditated crime; and the idea of recurring to Colonel Morley happily flashed upon her.

Having thus explained to the reader these antecedents in the narrative, we return to Jasper. He did not rise till late at noon; and as he was generally somewhat stupefied on rising by the drink he had taken the night before, and by the congested brain which the heaviness of such sleep produced, he could not at first believe that Cutts had altogether abandoned the enterprise—rather thought that, with his habitual wariness, that Ulysses of the Profession had gone forth to collect further information in the neighbourhood of the proposed scene of action. He was not fully undeceived in this belief till somewhat late in the day, when, strolling into the stable-yard, the ostler, concluding from the gentleman's goodly thews and size that he was a north-country grazier, delivered Cutts's allegorical caution against the bullocks.

Thus abandoned, Jasper's desperate project only acquired a still more concentrated purpose and a ruder simplicity of action. His original idea, on first conceiving the plan of robbery, had been to enter into Darrell's presence disguised and masked. Even, however, before Cutts deserted him; the mere hope of plunder had become subordinate to the desire of a personal triumph; and now that Cutts had left him to himself, and carried away the means of disguise, Jasper felt rather pleased than otherwise at the thought that his design should have none of the characteristics of a vulgar burglary. No mask now; his front should be as open as his demand. Cutts's report of the facility of penetrating into Darrell's very room also lessened the uses of an accomplice. And in the remodification of his first hasty plan of common place midnight stealthy robbery, he would no longer even require an assistant to dispose of the plunder he might gain.

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