

ЭДВАРД БУЛЬВЕР-ЛИТТОН

**THE DISOWNED —
VOLUME 06**

Эдвард Бульвер-Литтон

The Disowned — Volume 06

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Edward Bulwer-Lytton

The Disowned — Volume 06

CHAPTER LIX

Change and time take together their flight.—Golden Violet.

One evening in autumn, about three years after the date of our last chapter, a stranger on horseback, in deep mourning, dismounted at the door of the Golden Fleece, in the memorable town of W——. He walked into the taproom, and asked for a private apartment and accommodation for the night. The landlady, grown considerably plumper than when we first made her acquaintance, just lifted up her eyes to the stranger's face, and summoning a short stout man (formerly the waiter, now the second helpmate of the comely hostess), desired him, in a tone which partook somewhat more of the authority indicative of their former relative situations than of the obedience which should have characterized their present, "to show the gentleman to the Griffin, No. 4."

The stranger smiled as the sound greeted his ears, and he followed not so much the host as the hostess's spouse into the apartment thus designated. A young lady, who some eight years ago little thought that she should still be in a state of single blessedness, and who always honoured with an attentive eye the stray travellers who, from their youth, loneliness, or that ineffable air which usually designates the unmarried man, might be in the same solitary state of life, turned to the landlady and said,—

"Mother, did you observe what a handsome gentleman that was?"

"No," replied the landlady; "I only observed that he brought no servant"

"I wonder," said the daughter, "if he is in the army? he has a military air!"

"I suppose he has dined," muttered the landlady to herself, looking towards the larder.

"Have you seen Squire Mordaunt within a short period of time?" asked, somewhat abruptly, a little thick-set man, who was enjoying his pipe and negus in a sociable way at the window-seat. The characteristics of this personage were, a spruce wig, a bottle nose, an elevated eyebrow, a snuff-coloured skin and coat, and an air of that consequential self-respect which distinguishes the philosopher who agrees with the French sage, and sees "no reason in the world why a man should not esteem himself."

"No, indeed, Mr. Bossolton," returned the landlady; "but I suppose that, as he is now in the Parliament House, he will live less retired. It is a pity that the inside of that noble old Hall of his should not be more seen; and after all the old gentleman's improvements too! They say that the estate now, since the mortgages were paid off, is above 10,000 pounds a year, clear!"

"And if I am not induced into an error," rejoined Mr. Bossolton, refilling his pipe, "old Vavasour left a great sum of ready money besides, which must have been an aid, and an assistance, and an advantage, mark me, Mistress Merrylack, to the owner of Mordaunt Hall, that has escaped the calculation of your faculty,—and the—and the— faculty of your calculation!"

"You mistake, Mr. Boss," as, in the friendliness of diminutives, Mrs. Merrylack sometimes styled the grandiloquent practitioner, "you mistake: the old gentleman left all his ready money in two bequests,— the one to the College of ——, in the University of Cambridge, and the other to an hospital in London. I remember the very words of the will; they ran thus, Mr. Boss. 'And whereas my beloved son, had he lived, would have been a member of the College of —— in the University of Cambridge, which he would have adorned by his genius, learning, youthful virtue, and the various qualities which did equal honour to his head and heart, and would have rendered him alike distinguished as the scholar and the Christian, I do devise and bequeath the sum of thirty-seven

thousand pounds sterling, now in the English Funds,' etc; and then follows the manner in which he will have his charity vested and bestowed, and all about the prize which shall be forever designated and termed 'The Vavasour Prize,' and what shall be the words of the Latin speech which shall be spoken when the said prize be delivered, and a great deal more to that effect: so, then, he passes to the other legacy, of exactly the same sum, to the hospital, usually called and styled —, in the city of London, and says, 'And whereas we are assured by the Holy Scriptures, which, in these days of blasphemy and sedition, it becomes every true Briton and member of the Established Church to support, that "charity doth cover a multitude of sins," so I do give and devise,' etc., 'to be forever termed in the deeds,' etc., 'of the said hospital, "The Vavasour Charity;" and always provided that on the anniversary of the day of my death a sermon shall be preached in the chapel attached to the said hospital by a clergyman of the Established Church, on any text appropriate to the day and deed so commemorated.' But the conclusion is most beautiful, Mr. Bossolton: 'And now having discharged my duties, to the best of my humble ability, to my God, my king, and my country, and dying in the full belief of the Protestant Church, as by law established, I do set my hand and seal,' etc."

"A very pleasing and charitable and devout and virtuous testament or will, Mistress Merrylack," said Mr. Bossolton; "and in a time when anarchy with gigantic strides does devastate and devour and harm the good old customs of our ancestors and forefathers, and tramples with its poisonous breath the Magna Charta and the glorious revolution, it is beautiful, ay, and sweet, mark you, Mrs. Merrylack, to behold a gentleman of the aristocratic classes or grades supporting the institutions of his country with such remarkable energy of sentiments and with—and with, Mistress Merrylack, with sentiments of such remarkable energy."

"Pray," said the daughter, adjusting her ringlets by a little glass which hung over the tap, "how long has Mr. Mordaunt's lady been dead?"

"Oh! she died just before the squire came to the property," quoth the mother. "Poor thing! she was so pretty! I am sure I cried for a whole hour when I heard it! I think it was three years last month when it happened. Old Mr. Vavasour died about two months afterwards."

"The afflicted husband" (said Mr. Bossolton, who was the victim of a most fiery Mrs. Boss at home) "went into foreign lands or parts, or, as it is vulgarly termed, the Continent, immediately after an event or occurrence so fatal to the cup of his prosperity and the sunshine of his enjoyment, did he not, Mrs. Merrylack?"

"He did. And you know, Mr. Boss, he only returned about six months ago."

"And of what borough or burgh or town or city is he the member and representative?" asked Mr. Jeremiah Bossolton, putting another lump of sugar into his negus. "I have heard, it is true, but my memory is short; and, in the multitude and multifariousness of my professional engagements, I am often led into a forgetfulness of matters less important in their variety, and less—less various in their importance."

"Why," answered Mrs. Merrylack, "somehow or other, I quite forget too; but it is some distant borough. The gentleman wanted him to stand for the county, but he would not hear of it; perhaps he did not like the publicity of the thing, for he is mighty reserved."

"Proud, haughty, arrogant, and assumptious!" said Mr. Bossolton, with a puff of unusual length.

"Nay, nay," said the daughter (young people are always the first to defend), "I'm sure he's not proud: he does a mort of good, and has the sweetest smile possible! I wonder if he'll marry again! He is very young yet, not above two or three and thirty." (The kind damsel would not have thought two or three and thirty very young some years ago; but we grow wonderfully indulgent to the age of other people as we grow older ourselves!)

"And what an eye he has!" said the landlady. "Well, for my part,— but, bless me. Here, John, John, John, waiter, husband I mean,— here's a carriage and four at the door. Lizzy, dear, is my cap right?"

And mother, daughter, and husband all flocked, charged with simper, courtesy, and bow, to receive their expected guests. With a disappointment which we who keep not inns can but very imperfectly conceive, the trio beheld a single personage,—a valet, descend from the box, open the carriage door, and take out—a desk! Of all things human, male or female, the said carriage was utterly empty.

The valet bustled up to the landlady: "My master's here, ma'am, I think; rode on before!"

"And who is your master?" asked Mrs. Merrylack, a thrill of alarm, and the thought of No. 4, coming across her at the same time.

"Who!" said the valet, rubbing his hands; "who!—why, Clarence Talbot Linden, Esq., of Scarsdale Park, county of York, late Secretary of Legation at the court of —, now M.P., and one of his Majesty's Under Secretaries of State."

"Mercy upon us!" cried the astounded landlady, "and No. 4! only think of it. Run, John,—John,—run, light a fire (the night's cold, I think) in the Elephant, No. 16; beg the gentleman's pardon; say it was occupied till now; ask what he'll have for dinner,—fish, flesh, fowl, steaks, joints, chops, tarts; or, if it's too late (but it's quite early yet; you may put back the day an hour or so), ask what he'll have for supper; run, John, run: what's the oaf staying for? run, I tell you! Pray, sir, walk in (to the valet, our old friend Mr. Harrison)—you'll be hungry after your journey, I think; no ceremony, I beg."

"He's not so handsome as his master," said Miss Elizabeth, glancing at Harrison discontentedly; "but he does not look like a married man, somehow. I'll just step up stairs and change my cap: it would be but civil if the gentleman's gentleman sups with us."

Meanwhile Clarence, having been left alone in the quiet enjoyment of No. 4, had examined the little apartment with an interest not altogether unmingled with painful reflections. There are few persons, however fortunate, who can look back to eight years of their life, and not feel somewhat of disappointment in the retrospect; few persons, whose fortunes the world envy, to whom the token of past time suddenly obtruded on their remembrance does not awaken hopes destroyed and wishes deceived which that world has never known. We tell our triumphs to the crowd, but our own hearts are the sole confidants of our sorrows. "Twice," said Clarence to himself, "twice before have I been in this humble room; the first was when, at the age of eighteen, I was just launched into the world, —a vessel which had for its only hope the motto of the chivalrous Sidney,—

'Aut viam inveniam, aut—faciam;'

['I will either find my way, or—make it.]

yet, humble and nameless as I was, how well I can recall the exaggerated ambition, nay, the certainty of success, as well as its desire, which then burned within me. I smile now at the overweening vanity of those hopes,—some, indeed, realized, but how many nipped and withered forever! seeds, of which a few fell upon rich ground and prospered, but of which how far the greater number were scattered: some upon the wayside, and were devoured by immediate cares; some on stony places, and when the sun of manhood was up they were scorched, and because they had no root withered away; and some among thorns, and the thorns sprang up and choked them. I am now rich, honoured, high in the favour of courts, and not altogether unknown or unesteemed arbitrio popularis auræ: and yet I almost think I was happier when, in that flush of youth and inexperience, I looked forth into the wide world, and imagined that from every corner would spring up a triumph for my vanity or an object for my affections. The next time I stood in this little spot, I was no longer the dependant of a precarious charity, or the idle adventurer who had no stepping-stone but his ambition. I was then just declared the heir of wealth, which I could not rationally have hoped for five years before, and which was in itself sufficient to satisfy the aspirings of ordinary men. But I was corroded with anxieties for the object of my love, and regret for the friend whom I had lost: perhaps the eagerness of my heart for the one rendered me, for the moment, too little mindful of the other; but, in after years, memory

took ample atonement for that temporary suspension of her duties. How often have I recalled, in this world of cold ties and false hearts, that true and generous friend, from whose lessons my mind took improvement, and from whose warnings example; who was to me, living, a father, and from whose generosity whatever worldly advantages I have enjoyed or distinctions I have gained are derived! Then I was going, with a torn yet credulous heart, to pour forth my secret and my passion to her, and, within one little week thence, how shipwrecked of all hope, object, and future happiness I was! Perhaps, at that time, I did not sufficiently consider the excusable cautions of the world: I should not have taken such umbrage at her father's letter; I should have revealed to him my birth and accession of fortune; nor bartered the truth of certain happiness for the trials and manoeuvres of romance. But it is too late to repent now. By this time my image must be wholly obliterated from her heart: she has seen me in the crowd, and passed me coldly by; her cheek is pale, but not for me; and in a little, little while, she will be another's, and lost to me forever! Yet have I never forgotten her through change or time, the hard and harsh projects of ambition, the labours of business, or the engrossing schemes of political intrigue. Never! but this is a vain and foolish subject of reflection now."

And not the less reflecting upon it for that sage and veracious recollection, Clarence turned from the window, against which he had been leaning, and drawing one of the four chairs to the solitary table, he sat down, moody and disconsolate, and leaning his face upon his hands, pursued the confused yet not disconnected thread of his meditations.

The door abruptly opened, and Mr. Merrylack appeared.

"Dear me, sir!" cried he, "a thousand pities you should have been put here, sir! Pray step upstairs, sir; the front drawing-room is just vacant, sir; what will you please to have for dinner, sir?" etc., according to the instructions of his wife. To Mr. Merrylack's great dismay, Clarence, however, resolutely refused all attempts at locomotion, and contenting himself with entrusting the dinner to the discretion of the landlady, desired to be left alone till it was prepared.

Now, when Mr. John Merrylack returned to the taproom, and communicated the stubborn adherence to No. 4 manifested by its occupier, our good hostess felt exceedingly discomposed. "You are so stupid, John," said she: "I'll go and expostulate like with him;" and she was rising for that purpose when Harrison, who was taking particularly good care of himself, drew her back; "I know my master's temper better than you do, ma'am," said he; "and when he is in the humour to be stubborn, the very devil himself could not get him out of it. I dare say he wants to be left to himself: he is very fond of being alone now and then; state affairs, you know" (added the valet, mysteriously touching his forehead), "and even I dare not disturb him for the world; so make yourself easy, and I'll go to him when he has dined, and I supped. There is time enough for No. 4 when we have taken care of number one. Miss, your health!"

The landlady, reluctantly overruled in her design, reseated herself.

"Mr. Clarence Linden, M. P., did you say, sir?" said the learned Jeremiah: "surely, I have had that name or appellation in my books, but I cannot, at this instant of time, recall to my recollection the exact date and circumstance of my professional services to the gentleman so designated, styled, or, I may say, termed."

"Can't say, I am sure, sir," said Harrison; "lived with my master many years; never had the pleasure of seeing you before, nor of travelling this road,—a very hilly road it is, sir. Miss, this negus is as bright as your eyes and as warm as my admiration."

"Oh, sir!"

"Pray," said Mr. Merrylack, who like most of his tribe was a bit of a politician; "is it the Mr. Linden who made that long speech in the House the other day?"

"Precisely, sir. He is a very eloquent gentleman, indeed: pity he speaks so little; never made but that one long speech since he has been in the House, and a capital one it was too. You saw how the prime minister complimented him upon it. 'A speech,' said his lordship, 'which had united the graces of youthful genius with the sound calculations of matured experience.'"

"Did the prime minister really so speak?" said Jeremiah "what a beautiful, and noble, and sensible compliment! I will examine my books when I go home,—'the graces of youthful genius with the sound calculations of matured experience'!"

"If he is in the Parliament House," quoth the landlady, "I suppose he will know our Mr. Mordaunt, when the squire takes his seat next—what do you call it—sessions?"

"Know Mr. Mordaunt!" said the valet. "It is to see him that we have come down here. We intended to have gone there to-night, but Master thought it too late, and I saw he was in a melancholy humour: we therefore resolved to come here; and so Master took one of the horses from the groom, whom we have left behind with the other, and came on alone. I take it, he must have been in this town before, for he described the inn so well.—Capital cheese this! as mild,—as mild as your sweet smile, miss."

"Oh, sir!"

"Pray, Mistress Merrylack," said Mr. Jeremiah Bossolton, depositing his pipe on the table, and awakening from a profound revery, in which for the last five minutes his senses had been buried, "pray, Mistress Merrylack, do you not call to your mind or your reminiscence or your— your recollection, a young gentleman, equally comely in his aspect and blandiloquent (ehem!) in his address, who had the misfortune to have his arm severely contused and afflicted by a violent kick from Mr. Mordaunt's horse, even in the yard in which your stables are situated, and who remained for two or three days in your house or tavern or hotel? I do remember that you were grievously perplexed because of his name, the initials of which only he gave or entrusted or communicated to you, until you did exam—"

"I remember," interrupted Miss Elizabeth, "I remember well,—a very beautiful young gentleman, who had a letter directed to be left here, addressed to him by the letters C. L., and who was afterwards kicked, and who admired your cap, Mother, and whose name was Clarence Linden. You remember it well enough, Mother, surely?"

"I think I do, Lizzy," said the landlady, slowly; for her memory, not so much occupied as her daughter's by beautiful young gentlemen, struggled slowly amidst dim ideas of the various travellers and visitors with whom her house had been honoured, before she came, at last, to the reminiscence of Clarence Linden, "I think I do; and Squire Mordaunt was very attentive to him; and he broke one of the panes of glass in No. 8 and gave me half a guinea to pay for it. I do remember perfectly, Lizzy. So that is the Mr. Linden now here?—only think!"

"I should not have known him, certainly," said Miss Elizabeth; "he is grown so much taller, and his hair looks quite dark now, and his face is much thinner than it was; but he's very handsome still; is he not, sir?" turning to the valet.

"Ah! ah! well enough," said Mr. Harrison, stretching out his right leg, and falling away a little to the left, in the manner adopted by the renowned Gil Blas, in his address to the fair Laura, "well enough; but he's a little too tall and thin, I think."

Mr. Harrison's faults in shape were certainly not those of being too tall and thin.

"Perhaps so!" said Miss Elizabeth, who scented the vanity by a kindred instinct, and had her own reasons for pampering it, "perhaps so!"

"But he is a great favourite with the ladies all the same; however, he only loves one lady. Ah, but I must not say who, though I know. However, she is so handsome: such eyes, they would go through you like a skewer; but not like yours,—yours, miss, which I vow and protest are as bright as a service of plate."

"Oh, sir!"

And amidst these graceful compliments the time slipped away, till Clarence's dinner and his valet's supper being fairly over, Mr. Harrison presented himself to his master, a perfectly different being in attendance to what he was in companionship: flippancy, impertinence, forwardness, all merged in the steady, sober, serious demeanour which characterize the respectful and well-bred domestic.

Clarence's orders were soon given. They were limited to the appurtenances of writing; and as soon as Harrison reappeared with his master's writing-desk, he was dismissed for the night.

Very slowly did Clarence settle himself to his task, and attempt to escape the ennui of his solitude, or the restlessness of thought feeding upon itself, by inditing the following epistle:—

TO THE DUKE OF HAVERFIELD

I was very unfortunate, my dear Duke, to miss seeing you, when I called in Arlington Street the evening before last, for I had a great deal to say to you,—something upon public and a little upon private affairs. I will reserve the latter, since I only am the person concerned, for a future opportunity. With respect to the former—

And now, having finished the political part of my letter, let me congratulate you most sincerely upon your approaching marriage with Miss Trevanion. I do not know her myself; but I remember that she was the bosom friend of Lady Flora Ardenne, whom I have often heard speak of her in the highest and most affectionate terms, so that I imagine her brother could not better atone to you for dishonestly carrying off the fair Julia some three years ago, than by giving you his sister in honourable and orthodox exchange,—the gold amour for the brazen.

As for my lot, though I ought not, at this moment, to dim yours by dwelling upon it, you know how long, how constantly, how ardently I have loved Lady Flora Ardenne; how, for her sake, I have refused opportunities of alliance which might have gratified to the utmost that worldliness of heart which so many who saw me only in the crowd have been pleased to impute to me. You know that neither pleasure, nor change, nor the insult I received from her parents, nor the sudden indifference which I so little deserved from herself, has been able to obliterate her image. You will therefore sympathize with me, when I inform you that there is no longer any doubt of her marriage with Borodaile (or rather Lord Ulswater, since his father's death), as soon as the sixth month of his mourning expires; to this period only two months remain.

Heavens! when one thinks over the past, how incredulous one could become to the future: when I recall all the tokens of love I received. from that woman, I cannot persuade myself that they are now all forgotten, or rather, all lavished upon another.

But I do not blame her: may she be happier with him than she could have been with me! and that hope shall whisper peace to regrets which I have been foolish to indulge so long, and it is perhaps well for me that they are about to be rendered forever unavailing.

I am staying at an inn, without books, companions, or anything to beguile time and thought, but this pen, ink, and paper. You will see, therefore, a reason and an excuse for my scribbling on to you, till my two sheets are filled, and the hour of ten (one can't well go to bed earlier) arrived.

You remember having often heard me speak of a very extraordinary man whom I met in Italy, and with whom I became intimate. He returned to England some months ago; and on hearing it my desire of renewing our acquaintance was so great that I wrote to invite myself to his house. He gave me what is termed a very obliging answer, and left the choice of time to myself. You see now, most noble Festus, the reason of my journey hitherwards.

His house, a fine old mansion, is situated about five or six miles from this town: and as I arrived here late in the evening, and knew that his habits were reserved and peculiar, I thought it better to take "mine ease in my inn" for this night, and defer my visit to Mordaunt Court till to-morrow morning. In truth, I was not averse to renewing an old acquaintance,—not, as you in your malice would suspect, with my hostess, but with her house. Some years ago, when I was eighteen, I first made a slight acquaintance with Mordaunt at this very inn, and now, at twenty-six, I am glad to have one evening to myself on the same spot, and retrace here all that has since happened to me.

Now do not be alarmed: I am not going to inflict upon you the unquiet retrospect with which I have just been vexing myself; no, I will rather speak to you of my acquaintance and host to be. I

have said that I first met Mordaunt some years since at this inn,—an accident, for which his horse was to blame, brought us acquainted,—I spent a day at his house, and was much interested in his conversation; since then, we did not meet till about two years and a half ago, when we were in Italy together. During the intermediate interval Mordaunt had married; lost his property by a lawsuit; disappeared from the world (whither none knew) for some years; recovered the estate he had lost by the death of his kinsman's heir, and shortly afterwards by that of the kinsman himself; and had become a widower, with one only child, a beautiful little girl of about four years old. He lived in perfect seclusion, avoided all intercourse with society, and seemed so perfectly unconscious of having ever seen me before, whenever in our rides or walks we met, that I could not venture to intrude myself on a reserve so rigid and unbroken as that which characterized his habits and life.

The gloom and loneliness, however, in which Mordaunt's days were spent, were far from partaking of that selfishness so common, almost so necessarily common, to recluses. Wherever he had gone in his travels through Italy, he had left light and rejoicing behind him. In his residence at —, while unknown to the great and gay, he was familiar with the outcast and the destitute. The prison, the hospital, the sordid cabins of want, the abodes (so frequent in Italy, that emporium of artists and poets) where genius struggled against poverty and its own improvidence,—all these were the spots to which his visits were paid, and in which "the very stones prated of his whereabouts." It was a strange and striking contrast to compare the sickly enthusiasm of those who flocked to Italy to lavish their sentiments on statues, and their wealth on the modern impositions palmed upon their taste as the masterpieces of ancient art,—it was a noble contrast, I say, to compare that ludicrous and idle enthusiasm with the quiet and wholesome energy of mind and heart which led Mordaunt, not to pour forth worship and homage to the unconscious monuments of the dead but to console, to relieve, and to sustain the woes, the wants, the feebleness of the living.

Yet while he was thus employed in reducing the miseries and enlarging the happiness of others, the most settled melancholy seemed to mark himself "as her own." Clad in the deepest mourning, a stern and unbroken gloom sat forever upon his countenance. I have observed, that if in his walks or rides any one, especially of the better classes, appeared to approach, he would strike into a new path. He could not bear even the scrutiny of a glance or the fellowship of a moment: and his mien, high and haughty, seemed not only to repel others, but to contradict the meekness and charity which his own actions so invariably and unequivocally displayed. It must, indeed, have been a powerful exertion of principle over feeling which induced him voluntarily to seek the abodes and intercourse of the rude beings he blessed and relieved.

We met at two or three places to which my weak and imperfect charity had led me, especially at the house of a sickly and distressed artist: for in former life I had intimately known one of that profession; and I have since attempted to transfer to his brethren that debt of kindness which an early death forbade me to discharge to himself. It was thus that I first became acquainted with Mordaunt's occupations and pursuits; for what ennobled his benevolence was the remarkable obscurity in which it was veiled. It was in disguise and in secret that his generosity flowed; and so studiously did he conceal his name, and hide even his features, during his brief visits to "the house of mourning," that only one like myself, a close and minute investigator of whatever has once become an object of interest, could have traced his hand in the various works of happiness it had aided or created.

One day, among some old ruins, I met him with his young daughter. By great good-fortune I preserved the latter, who had wandered away from her father, from a fall of loose stones, which would inevitably have crushed her. I was myself much hurt by my effort, having received upon my shoulder a fragment of the falling stones; and thus our old acquaintance was renewed, and gradually ripened into intimacy; not, I must own, without great patience and constant endeavour on my part; for his gloom and lonely habits rendered him utterly impracticable of access to any (as Lord Aspeden would say) but a diplomatist. I saw a great deal of him during the six months I remained in Italy, and

—but you know already how warmly I admire his extraordinary powers and venerate his character —Lord Aspeden's recall to England separated us.

A general election ensued. I was returned for ——. I entered eagerly into domestic politics; your friendship, Lord Aspeden's kindness, my own wealth and industry, made my success almost unprecedentedly rapid. Engaged heart and hand in those minute yet engrossing labours for which the aspirant in parliamentary and state intrigue must unhappily forego the more enlarged though abstruser speculations of general philosophy, and of that morality which may be termed universal, politics, I have necessarily been employed in very different pursuits from those to which Mordaunt's contemplations are devoted, yet have I often recalled his maxims, with admiration at their depth, and obtained applause for opinions which were only imperfectly filtered from the pure springs of his own.

It is about six months since he has returned to England, and he has very lately obtained a seat in Parliament: so that we may trust soon to see his talents displayed upon a more public and enlarged theatre than they hitherto have been; and though I fear his politics will be opposed to ours, I anticipate his public debut with that interest which genius, even when adverse to one's self, always inspires. Yet I confess that I am desirous to see and converse with him once more in the familiarity and kindness of private intercourse. The rage of party, the narrowness of sectarian zeal, soon exclude from our friendship all those who differ from our opinions; and it is like sailors holding commune for the last time with each other, before their several vessels are divided by the perilous and uncertain sea, to confer in peace and retirement for a little while with those who are about to be launched with us on that same unquiet ocean where any momentary caprice of the winds may disjoin us forever, and where our very union is only a sympathy in toil and a fellowship in danger.

Adieu, my dear duke! it is fortunate for me that our public opinions are so closely allied, and that I may so reasonably calculate in private upon the happiness and honour of subscribing myself your affectionate friend, C. L.

Such was the letter to which we shall leave the explanation of much that has taken place within the last three years of our tale, and which, in its tone, will serve to show the kindness and generosity of heart and feeling that mingled (rather increased than abated by the time which brought wisdom) with the hardy activity and resolute ambition that characterized the mind of our "Disowned." We now consign him to such repose as the best bedroom in the Golden Fleece can afford, and conclude the chapter.

CHAPTER LX

*Though the wilds of enchantment all vernal and bright,
In the days of delusion by fancy combined
With the vanishing phantoms of love and delight,
Abandon my soul, like a dream of the night,
And leave but a desert behind,
Be hush'd my dark spirit, for Wisdom condemns
When the faint and the feeble deplore;
Be strong as the rock of the ocean that stems
A thousand wild waves on the shore.*

—CAMPBELL.

"Shall I order the carriage round, sir?" said Harrison; "it is past one."

"Yes; yet stay: the day is fine; I will ride; let the carriage come on in the evening; see that my horse is saddled; you looked to his mash last night?"

"I did, sir. He seems wonderfully fresh: would you please to have me stay here with the carriage, sir, till the groom comes on with the other horse?"

"Ay, do: I don't know yet how far strange servants may be welcome where I am going."

"Now, that's lucky!" said Harrison to himself, as he shut the door: "I shall have a good five hours' opportunity of making my court here. Miss Elizabeth is really a very pretty girl, and might not be a bad match. I don't see any brothers; who knows but she may succeed to the inn—hem! A servant may be ambitious as well as his master, I suppose."

So meditating, Harrison sauntered to the stables; saw (for he was an admirable servant, and could, at a pinch, dress a horse as well as its master) that Clarence's beautiful steed received the utmost nicety of grooming which the ostler could bestow; led it himself to the door; held the stirrup for his master, with the mingled humility and grace of his profession, and then strutted away—"pride on his brow and glory in his eye"—to be the cynosure and oracle of the taproom.

Meanwhile Linden rode slowly onwards. As he passed that turn of the town by which he had for the first time entered it, the recollection of the eccentric and would-be gypsy flashed upon him. "I wonder," thought he, "where that singular man is now, whether he still preserves his itinerant and woodland tastes,—

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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