VARIOUS

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Содержание

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MARSTON; OR, THE MEMOIRS OF A STATESMAN

PART I

"Have I not in my time heard lions roar?
Have I not heard the sea, puft up with wind,
Rage like an angry boar chafed with sweat?
Have I not heard great ordnance in the field,
And heaven's artillery thunder in the skies?
Have I not in the pitched battle heard
Loud 'larums, neighing steeds, and trumpets clang?"

SHAKSPEARE

Why I give the world a sketch of my career through it, is not among the discoveries which I intend to make. I have been a public man; let those who know public life imagine what interest may be felt in reviewing the scenes and struggles of which such a life is full. May there not be a pleasure in conceiving once again the shapes and circumstances of things, as one sitting by his fireside sees castles and cottages, men, women, and children in the embers, and shapes them the better for the silence and the solitude round him? Let the reader take what reason he will. I have seen the world, and fought my way through it; have stumbled, like greater men, have risen, like lesser; have been flung into the most rapid current of the most hurried, wild, and vivid time that the world has ever seen—I have *lived* through the last fifty years. In all the vigour of my life, I have mingled in some of the greatest transactions, and been mingled with some of the greatest men, of my time. Like one who has tumbled down Niagara, and survived the fall, though I have reached still water, the roar of the cataract is yet in my ears; and I can even survey it with a fuller gaze, and stronger sense of its vastness and power, than, when I was rolling down its precipice.

I have been soldier, adventurer, traveller, statesman. I have been lover, husband, father—poor and opulent; obscure and conspicuous. There are few sensations of our nature, or circumstances of our life, which I have not undergone. Alternately suffering to the verge of ruin, and enjoying like an epicurean deity: I have been steeped in poverty to the lips; I have been surcharged with wealth. I have sacrificed, and fearfully, to the love of power; I have been disgusted with its possession. I figured in the great Babel until I loved even its confusion of tongues; I grew weary of it, until I hated the voice of man.

Every man is born for a special purpose, and with a special passion. The multitude, possessing both, exhibit neither; they are flung, or choose to be flung, into the pond, where they float only to perish, like blind puppies. But there are others who stem the great tide, and are only the stronger for the struggle. From my first sense, the passion to be known and felt, nay, at the expense of being feared, was my impulse. It has been the impulse of all men who have ever impressed the world. With great talents it is all-commanding: the thunderbolt in the hands of Jove. Even with inferior faculties,

and I make no pretence of mine, it singularly excites, urges, and animates. When the prophet saw the leopard *winged*, he saw a miracle; I claim for my powers only those of the muscle and sinew.

Ambition was the original passion of my nature. It rose before me, as the sun ascends before the Indian, until its fire drives him to the shade. I, too, have been scorched, have shrunk, and now I regret my shrinking. But time deals alike with all. I can now amuse myself only by images of the past; and, in the darkness and solitude of years, I take their Magic Lantern, and replace life by the strange, wild, and high-coloured extravagances, the ghosts and genii of the phantasmagoria of ambition.

I was the seventh son of one of the oldest families of England. If I had been the seventh son of the seventh son, I should, by all the laws of juggling, have been a conjurer; but I was a generation too early for fame. My father was an earl, and as proud of his titles as if he had won them at Crecy or Poictiers, and not in the campaigns of Westminster, consummated on the backstairs of Whitehall. He had served his country, as he termed it, in a long succession of Parliaments; and served her still more, as his country neighbours termed it, by accepting a peerage, which opened the county to any other representative among the sons of men. He was a strong-built, stern-countenanced, and haughty-tongued personage—by some thought a man of sense; by others a fool, with all his depth, arising from his darkness. My own experience convinced me, that no man made more of a secret, or thought less of a job. From my boyhood I own I feared more than honoured him; and as for love, if I had been more susceptible, mine would have flown round the globe before it could have fixed on that iron visage. The little love that I could afford for any human being, was for another and a different order of existence. Boys have a natural fondness for the mother; and mine was gentle, timid, and fond. She always parted with me, on my going to school, as if she had lost a limb, and when I returned, received me as if she had found a pinion in its place. She perhaps spoiled me by indulgence, as much as my lord and father spoiled me by severity; but indulgence is the pleasanter of the two, and I followed the course of nature, and gave her whatever heart I have. I still remember her. She was remarkably indebted to nature, at least for externals. She had fine eyes—large, dark, and sentimental; her dress, which would now be preposterous, seemed to me, then, the perfection of all taste, and was in the highest fashion of her time. Her beauty worked miracles; for now and then I have observed even my father's eye fixed on her, with something of the admiration which we might conceive in an Esquimaux for a fixed star, or in an Italian highwayman for some Parian statue which he had stumbled on in his thickets. But the admiration was soon absorbed in the job in hand, and he turned away—to scribble to the Minister. Of the younger portion of the family I shall say but little. Children are happiest in the nursery, and there I leave them. I had two sisters, sweet little creatures, one with black eyes and the other with blue. This is enough for their description. My four brothers were four rough, bold, well-looking animals, all intended for ambassadors, admirals, generals, and secretaries of state—for my father had too long tasted of the honey of official life to think that there was any other food for a gentleman in the world. He had been suckled for too many years at those breasts, which, like the bosom of the great Egyptian goddess, pour the stream of life through whole generations of hangers-on, to believe that any other fount of existence was to be named but the civil list. I am strongly inclined to surmise that he would have preferred a pencil, purloined from the Treasury, to all the cedars of Lebanon.

It may be presumed that I was destined for public life—in other words, to live on the public; and, to prepare me for the performance of a part, alternately menial and master—supple as the slave, and superb as the minister—I was sent to Eton. At this great school of the aristocracy, would-be and real—barons and dukes *in esse*, and the herald's office alone, or bedlam, knows what *in posse*, I remained for the customary number of years. If whoever does me the honour to read these pages, hates the history of schooldays as much as I do their memory, he will easily pardon my passing by the topic altogether. If the first purpose of all great public institutions is to stand still; the great schools of England, fifty years ago, were righteous adherents to their contract; they never moved. The world might whirl round them as it would; there remained the grey milestones, only measuring the speed with which every thing on the road passed them. This, they say, has largely and fortunately changed

in later years. But the change must proceed; the venerable cripples must throw by their crutches, and try the effect of flesh and blood. Flogging and fagging, are the education for a footman; they disgrace the common sense, and offend the feelings of a manly people. The pugilist must be expelled, and the puppy must follow him. The detestable grossness of classical impurity, must be no longer the price at which Latin "quantities" are to be learned. The last lesson of the "prodigal son," must not be the first learned by the son of the gentleman of England—to be fed on the "husks" fit only for the swine.

On my delighted release from this supreme laboratory of statesmen, I found the state of things considerably altered at Mortimer Castle. I had left it a stately but rather melancholy-looking household; I found the mansion glittering in all the novelty of French furniture, gilding, and *or-molu*—crowded with fashion, and all its menial tribe, from the groom in the stables to the gentleman's gentleman, who slipped along the chambers in soft silence, and seemed an embodying of Etiquette, all in new equipments of all kinds—the avenue trimmed, until it resembled a theatrical wood; and the grounds, once sober and silent enough for a Jacques to escape from the sight of human kind, and hold dialogues with the deer; now levelled, opened, shorn, and shaved, with the precision of a retired citizen's elysium.

The heads of the family were equally changed; my mother, unhappily, for the worse. Her fine eyes beamed with joy as she threw herself upon my neck, and murmured some of those mingled blessings and raptures which have a language of their own. But when the first flush was past, I perceived that the cheek was thin, the eye was hollow and heavy, and the tremulous motion of her slight hand, as it lay in mine, alarmed me; in all my ignorance of the frailty of the human frame. But the grand change was in the Earl. My father, whom I had left rather degenerating into the shape which three courses and a bottle of claret a-day inflict on country gentlemen "who live at home at ease," was now braced and laced, costumed in the newest fashion, and overflowing with exuberant volatility. He breathed of Bond Street. He welcomed me with an ardour which astonished, more than delighted, me; Talked fragments of French, congratulated me on my "*air distingué*," advised me to put myself "*en grande tenue*;" and, after enchanting me in all kinds of strange ways, concluded by making an attempt to kiss me on both cheeks, like a true Frenchman. My Eton recollections enabled me to resist the paternal embrace; until the wonder was simplified, by the discovery that the family had but just returned from a continental residence of a couple of years—a matter of which no letter or word had given me the knowledge at my school. My next discovery was, that an old uncle had died, and left us money enough to carry the county; and the last and crowning one was, that my eldest brother had just been returned for the North Riding.

This was such an accumulation of good-luck as might have thrown any elderly gentleman off the balance of his gravity. It was like Philip's three plates at the Greek horse-races, crowned by the birth of Alexander. If my lordly father had danced the "Minuette de la Cour" over the marble tesselation of his own hall, I should now not have been surprised. But, from my first sense, or insensibility, I had felt no great delight in matters which were to make my own condition neither better nor worse; and after a remarkably brief period, the showy *déjeûnés* and dinners which commemorated the triumphs of the heir-apparent of our house, grew tiresome to me beyond all count, and I openly petitioned to be sent to college, or to the world's end.

My petition was listened to with a mixture of contempt for my want of taste, and astonishment at my presumption. But before the reply had time to burst out from lips, at no time too retentive, I was told, that at the end of one week more I should be suffered to take my way; that week being devoted to a round of especial entertainments in honour of my brother's election; the whole to be wound up by that most preposterous of all delights, an amateur play.

To keep a house in commotion, to produce mysterious conversations, conferences without number, and confidences without end; and to swell maidens' hearts and milliners' bills, let me recommend an amateur play in the country. The very mention of it awoke every soul in the Castle; caps and complexions were matched, and costumes criticised, from morning till night, among the

ladies. The "acting drama" was turned over leaf by leaf by the gentlemen. The sound of many a heavy tread of many a heavy student, was heard in the chambers; the gardens were haunted by "the characters" getting their parts; and the poet's burlesque of those who "rave, recite, and madden round the land," was realized to the life in the histrionic labours of the votaries of Thalia and Melpomene, who ranged the groves of Mortimer Castle.

Then we had all the charming difficulty of fixing on the play. The dullest and dreariest of our country Rosciuses were uniformly for comedy; but the fair sex have a leaning to the tragic muse. We had one or two, who would have had no objection to be piquant in Lady Teazle, or petulant in Lady Townley; but we had half a dozen Desdemonas and Ophelias. The soul of an O'Neil was in every one of our party conscious of a pair of good eyes, a tolerable shape, and the captivation which, in some way or other, most women in existence contrive to discover in their own share of the gifts of nature. At length the votes carried it for Romeo and Juliet. The eventful night came; the *élite* of the county poured in, the theatre was crowded; all was expectancy before the curtain; all was terror, nervousness, and awkwardness behind. The orchestra performed its flourish, and the curtain rose.

To do the heads of the household justice, they had done their duty as managers. The theatre, though but a temporary building, projecting from the ball-room into one of the gardens, was worthy of the very handsome apartment which formed its vestibule. The skill of a famous London architect had been exerted on this fairy erection, and Verona itself had, perhaps, in its palmiest days, seldom exhibited a display of more luxuriant elegance. The audience, too, so totally different from the mingled, ill-dressed, and irregular assemblage that fills a city theatre; blooming girls and showy matrons, range above range, feathered and flowered, glittering with all the family jewels, and all animated by the novelty of the scene before them, formed an exhibition which, for the night, inspired me with the idea, that (strolling excepted) the stage might not be a bad resource for a man of talents, after all.

But the play was—must I confess it? though I myself figured as the Romeo—utterly deplorable. The men forgot their parts, and their casual attempts to recover them made terrible havoc of the harmony of Shakspeare. The ladies lost their voices, and carried on their loves, their sorrows, and even their scoldings, in a whisper. Our play perfectly deserved the criticism of the old gentleman, who, after a similar performance, being asked which of the personages he liked best, candidly replied, "the prompter, for of him he had heard the most and seen the least."

However, every thing has an end; and we had carried Juliet to the tomb of all the Capulets, the chant was done, and the mourners were gathered in the green-room. I was standing, book in hand, preparing for the last agonies of a love very imperfectly committed to memory, when I heard a slight confusion in the court-yard, and shortly after the rattle of a post-chaise. The sound subsided, and I was summoned to my post at the entrance to the place where the lovely Juliet lay entranced. The pasteboard gate gave way to knocks enforced with an energy which called down rapturous applause; and in all the tortures of a broken heart, rewarded by a profusion of handkerchiefs applied to bright eyes, and a strong scent of hartshorn round the house, I summoned my fair bride to my arms. There was no reply. I again invoked her; still silent. Her trance was evidently of the deepest order. I rose from the ground, where I had been "taking the measure of my unmade grave," and approaching the bier, ventured to drop a despairing hand upon her pillow. To my utter surprise, it was vacant. If I had been another Shakspeare, the situation was a fine one for a display of original genius. But I was paralyzed. A sense of the general embarrassment was my first impression, and I was absolutely struck dumb. But this was soon shaken off. My next was a sense of the particular burlesque of my situation; I burst out into laughter, in which the whole house joined; and throwing down my mattock, rushed off the stage. My theatrical dream was broken up for ever.

But weightier matters now absorbed the universal interest. The disappearance of the heroine from the stage was speedily accounted for by her flight in the carriage whose wheels had disturbed my study. But where fled, why, and with whom? We now found other defalcations in our numbers;

the Chevalier Paul Charlatanski, a gallant Polish exile, who contrived to pass a very pleasant time on the merit of his misfortunes, a man of enormous mustaches and calamities, was also missing. His valet, his valise, every atom that ever appertained to him, had vanished; the clearance was complete. The confusion now thickened. I never saw the master of the mansion in such a rage before. Pistols and post-chaises were in instant requisition. He vowed that the honour of his house was involved in the transaction, and that nothing should tempt him to slumber until he had brought the fugitive fair one to the arms of her noble family; my Juliet being the ward of a duke, and being also entitled to about twenty thousand pounds a-year on her coming of age.

As for the unlucky, or rather the lucky, Chevalier, nothing human ever received a hotter shower of surmise and sarcasm. That he was "an impostor, a swindler, a spy," was the Earl's conviction, declared in the most public manner. The whole body of matrons looked round on their blooming innocents, as if they had been snatched from the jaws of a legion of wolves and thanked their own prudence which had not trusted those men of mustaches within their hall doors. The blooming innocents responded in filial gratitude, and, with whatever sincerity, thanked their stars for their fortunate escape.

Still, the Earl's indignation was of so *ultra* a quality; his revenge was so fiery, and his tongue so fluent; that I began to suspect he had other motives than the insulted laws of hospitality. I reached this discovery, too, in time. The declining health of his partner had made him speculate on the chances of survivorship. He certainly was no longer young, and he had never been an Adonis. Yet his glass did not altogether throw him into the rank of the impracticable. A coronet was a well-known charm, which had often compensated for every other; in short, he had quietly theorized himself into the future husband of the ducal ward; and felt on this occasion as an Earl should, plundered, before his face, of a clear twenty thousand a-year.

But he was not to suffer alone. On further enquiry, it was ascertained that the chevalier's valet had not gone with him. This fellow, a Frenchman, had taken wing in another direction, and carried off his turtle-dove, too; not one of the full-blown roses of the servant's-hall, but a rosebud, the daughter of one of the bulkiest squires of the Riding; a man of countless beeves and blunders; one of our Yorkshire Nimrods, "a mighty hunter," until club dinners and home-brewed ale tied him to his arm-chair, and gout made him a man of peace and flannels, the best thriven weed in the swamps of Yorkshire. The young lady had been intended for my eldest brother, as a convenient medium of connexion between two estates, palpably made for matrimony. Thus we received two mortal blows in one evening; never was family pilfered more ignominiously; never was amateur play more peevishly catastrophized.

It must be owned, to the credit of "private theatricals," that the play had no slight share in the plot. The easy intercourse produced by rehearsals, the getting of tender speeches by heart, the pretty personalities and allusions growing out of those speeches, the ramblings through shades and rose-twined parterres, the raptures and romance, all tend prodigiously to take off the alarm, or instruct the inexperience, of the female heart. I know no more certain cure for the rigidity that is supposed to be a barrier. At all events, the Chevalier and his valet, probably both footmen, alike had profited of their opportunity. Our play had cost us two elopements; two shots between wind and water, which threatened to send the ship down; two breakings of that heart which men carry in their purse. I laughed, and the world laughed also. But I was then thoughtless, and the world is malicious. My father and the member, though they had "never told their love," felt the blow "like a worm in the bud," and from that night I date the family decline.

Of course, the two whiskered vagabonds could not be suffered to carry off their laurels without an attempt to diminish them, and my father and brother were too much in earnest in their objects to lose time. In half an hour, four post-horses to each britchska whirled them off;—my father, to take the northern road, some hints of Gretna having transpired in the slipshod secrecy of the servants' hall —my brother, to pursue on the Dover road, conjecturing, with more sagacity than I had given him credit for, that as the fox runs round to his earth, the Frenchman always speeds for Paris.

The company soon dispersed, after having stayed long enough to glean all that they could of the family misfortune, and fix appointments for every day in the week to meet each other, and make the most of the whole transaction. But still a tolerable number of the steadier hands remained, who, to show their sympathy with us, resolved not to separate until they received tidings of his lordship's success. I was voted to the head of the table, more claret was ordered, the wreck of the general supper was cleared for one of a snugger kind; and we drew our chairs together. Toast followed toast, and all became communicative. Family histories, not excepting our own, were now discussed, with a confidence new to my boyish conjectures. Charlatanski's career abroad and at home seemed to be as well known as if he had been pilloried in the county town; the infinite absurdity of the noble duke who suffered him to make his way under his roof, and the palpable *penchant* of his ward, next underwent discussion; until the ignorance of my noble father on the subject, gave, with me, the death-blow to his penetration. The prettinesses which had won the primrose heart of my brother's intended spouse, I found were equally notorious; the Earl's project was as plain as if he had pronounced it *viva voce*; and before we parted for the night, which did not occur until the sun was blazing through the curtains of our banqueting room, I had made up my mind, once for all, that neither character nor cunning can be concealed in this world; that the craftiest impostor is but a clumsier kind of clown; and that the most dexterous disguise is but a waste of time.

I must hasten to the *dénouement*. Our excellent friends indulged us with their company, and bored us with their society for a mortal week. But, as Sterne says of the sentimental traveller, scenes of sentiment are always exhibiting themselves to an appetite eager for knowing what the world is doing; the knowledge was contributed with a copiousness which left nothing to learn, and but little to desire. Our guests were of that class which usually fills the houses of noblemen, in the annihilation of life in town; clubmen, to whom St James's Street was the terraqueous globe; guardsmen, on leave of absence for the shooting season, and saturated with London; several older exhibitors in the fashionable circles, who as naturally followed where young guardsmen and wealthy squires were to be found, as flies wing to the honey on which they live; and two or three of the most opulent and dullest baronets who ever played whist and billiards, for the advantage of losing guinea points to gentlemen more accomplished in the science of chances.

At length, on the sixth day, when I really began to feel anxious, an express announced that his lordship had arrived at a village, about fifty miles off, on his way home, wounded, and in great danger. I instantly broke up the convivial party, and set out to see him. To the imagination of a boy, as I was then, nothing could be more startling than the aspect of the habitation which now held the haughty Earl of Mortimer. After passing through a variety of dungeon-like rooms, for the house had once been a workhouse, or something of the kind, I was ushered into the chamber where the patient lay. The village doctor, and one or two of the wise people of the neighbourhood, who thought it their duty to visit a stranger, that stranger being a man of rank, were standing by; and the long faces of those persons, seconded by the professional shake of the doctor's head, told me, that they at least had no hope. It was not so with the sufferer himself, for he talked as largely and loftily of what he was to do within the next ten years, as if he was to survive the century. He still breathed rage and retribution against the Chevalier, and actually seemed to regard the lady's choice as a particular infraction of personal claims. He had pursued the fugitives day and night, until the pursuit threw him into a kind of fever. While under this paroxysm he had met the enamoured pair, but it was on their way from that forge on the Border where so many heavy chains have been manufactured. Useless as challenging was now, he challenged the husband. The parties met, and my father received a bullet in his body, while he had the satisfaction of lodging one in his antagonist's knee-pan. The Chevalier was doomed to waltz no more. But his bullet was fatal.

As I looked round the wretched chamber in which this bold, arrogant, and busy spirit was evidently about to breathe its last, Pope's lines on the most splendid *roué* of his day involuntarily and painfully shot across my recollection:—

"In the worst inn's worst room, with mat half hung,
The walls of plaster, and the floor of dung;
The George and Garter dangling from the bed,
Where tawdry yellow strove with dirty red,
Great Villiers lies; alas, how changed from him
The glass of fashion!"

I say no more of those scenes; a few days, only enough to collect the branches of the family round the bed, terminated every thing. Grief, they say, cannot exist where there is no love, but I was not inclined, just then, to draw subtle distinctions. I was grieved; and paid the last duties, without blame to myself, or, I hope, irreverence in the sight of others. The funeral was stately, and all was over.

Matters now took a new shape at the castle. My brother returned, to find himself its possessor. His journey had been equally unproductive with my unfortunate father's. By dint of bribing the postilions, he had even overpassed the fugitives on the Dover road. But, as he stopped to dine in Canterbury, where he had prepared a posse of constables for their reception, he had, unluckily, been accosted by an old London acquaintance, who had accidentally fixed his quarters there for a day or two, "seeking whom he might devour." The dinner was followed by a carouse, the carouse by a "quiet game," or games, which lasted till the next day; and when my brother rose, with the glow of a superb sunset giving him the first intimation that he was among the living, he made the discovery that he was stripped of the last shilling of five hundred pounds, and that the Frenchman and his prize had quietly changed horses at the same hotel half a dozen hours before.

The young forget quickly, but they feel keenly. The event which I had just witnessed threw a shade over me, which, in the want of any vigorous occupation, began to affect my health. I abjured the sports of the field, for which, indeed, I had never felt much liking. I rambled through the woods in a kind of dreamy idleness of mind, which took but little note of any thing, time included. As mendicants sell tapes and matches to escape the imputation of mendicancy, I carried a pencil and portfolio, and seemed to be sketching venerable oaks and patches of the picturesque, while my mind was wandering from Line to Pole. But in this earth no one can be singular with impunity. The gentlemen were "convinced" that my meditations were heavy with unpaid college bills; and the ladies, from high to low, from "Tilburina, mad in white satin," to her "confidant, mad in white linen," were all of opinion that some one among their peerless selves had destroyed the "five wits of young Mr Marston." I could have fallen on them with a two-handed sword; but as the massacre of the sex was not then in my power, I had only to escape.

There were higher matters to move me. Clouds were gathering on the world; the times were fitful; the air was thick with rumours from abroad; the sleep of the Continent was breaking up, and Europe lay in the anxious and strange expectancy in which some great city might see the signs of a coming earthquake, without the power of ascertaining at what moment, or from what quarter, its foundations were to be flung up in sight of the sun.—We were then in the first stage of the French Revolution!

I resolved to linger and be libelled no more; and being ushered, by appointment, into the library —for the new master was already all etiquette—I promptly stated my wishes, and demanded my portion, to try my fortune in the world.

Our conference, if it had but little of the graces of diplomacy, had much more than its usual decision. It was abrupt and unhesitating. My demand had evidently taken his "lordship" by surprise. He started from the magisterial chair, in which he was yet to awe so many successions of rustic functionaries, and with a flushed cheek asked "Whether I was lunatic, or supposed him to be so?"

"Neither the one nor the other," was my answer. "But, to waste life here is out of the question. I demand the means of entering a profession."

"Are you aware, sir, that our interest is lost since the last change of ministers? that my estate is loaded with encumbrances? that every profession is overstocked? and what can you do in the crowd?"

"What others have done—what I should do in a crowd in the streets—push some aside, get before others; if made way for, be civil; if resisted, trample; it has been the history of thousands, why not mine?"

The doctrine was as new to this son of indulgence, as if I had propounded the philosopher's stone. But his courage was exhausted by a controversy perhaps longer than he had ever ventured on before. He walked to the glass, adjusted his raven ringlets, and having refreshed his spirits with the contemplation, enquired, with a smile which made the nearest possible approach to a sneer, whether I had any thing more to say?

I had more, and of the kind that least suited his feelings. I demanded "my property."

The effect of those two words was electrical. The apathy of the exquisite was at an end, and in a voice of the most indignant displeasure, he rapidly demanded whether I expected money to fall from the moon? whether I was not aware of the expense of keeping up the castle? whether I supposed that my mother's jointure and my sisters' portions could ever be paid without dipping the rent-roll deeper still? and, after various and bitter expostulation, "What right had I to suppose that I was worth the smallest coin of the realm, except by his bounty?"

One query answered them all. "My lord, is it not true that I am entitled to five thousand pounds?"

"Five thousand –?" what word was to fill up the interval I can only guess. But the first lesson which a man learns at the clubs is, to control his temper when its display is not likely to be attended with effect. He saw that I stood his gaze with but few symptoms of giving way, and he changed his tactics with an adroitness that did honour to his training. Approaching me, he held out his hand. "Charles, why should *we* quarrel about trifles? I was really not acquainted with the circumstance to which you allude, but I shall look into it without delay. Pray, can you tell me the when, the where, the how?"

"Your questions may be easily answered. The *when* was at the death of our uncle, the *where* was in his will, and the *how*—in any way your lordship pleases." The truce was now made; he begged of me, "as I valued *his* feelings," to drop the formality of his title, to regard him simply as a brother, and to rely on his wish to forward every object that might gratify my inclination.

Our conference broke up. He galloped to a neighbouring horse-race. I went to take a solitary ramble through the Park.

The hour and the scene were what the poet pronounces "fit to cure all sadness but despair." Noble old trees, the "roof star-proof" overhead, the cool velvet grass under the feet—glimpses of sunlight striking through the trunks—the freshened air coming in gusts across the lake, like new life, bathing my burning forehead and feverish hands—the whole unrivalled sweetness of the English landscape softened and subdued me. Those effects are so common, that I can claim no credit for their operation on my mind; and, before I had gone far, I was on the point of returning, if not to recant, at least to palliate the harshness of my appeal to fraternal justice.

But, by this time I had reached a rising ground which commanded a large extent of the surrounding country. The evening was one of those magnificent closes of the year, which, like a final scene in a theatre, seems intended to comprehend all the beauties and brilliancies of the past. The western sky was a blaze of all colours, and all pouring over the succession of forest, cultured field, and mountain top, which make the English view, if not the most sublime, the most touching of the earth!

But as I stood on the hill, gazing round to enjoy every shape and shade at leisure, my eye turned on the Castle. It spoiled all my serenity at once. I felt that it was a spot from which I was excluded by nature; that it belonged to others so wholly, that scarcely by any conceivable chance could it ever be mine; and that I could remain within its walls no longer, but with a sense of uselessness and shame.

If I could have taken staff in hand and pack on shoulder, I would have started at that moment on a pilgrimage that might have circled the globe. But the most fiery resolution must submit to circumstances. One night more, at least, I must sleep under the paternal roof, and I was hastening home, brooding over bitter thoughts, when I suddenly rushed against some one whom I nearly overthrew.—"Bless me, Mr Marston, is it you?"—told me that I had run down my old tutor, Mr Vincent, the parson of the parish. He had been returning from visiting some of his flock, and in the exercise of the vocation which he had just been fulfilling, he saw that something went ill with me, and taking my arm, forced me to go home with him, for such comfort as he could give.

Parsons, above all men, are the better for wives and families; for, without them, they are wonderfully apt to grow saturnine or stupid. Of course there are exceptions. Vincent had a wife not much younger than himself, to whom he always spoke with the courtiership of a *preux chevalier*. A portrait of her in her bridal dress, showed that she had been a pretty brunette in her youth; and her husband still evidently gave her credit for all that she had been. They had, as is generally the fate of the clergy, a superfluity of daughters, four or five I think, creatures as thoughtless and innocent as their own poultry, or their own pet-sheep. But all round their little vicarage was so pure, so quiet, and so neat—there was such an aspect of order and even of elegance, however inexpensive, that its contrast with the glaring and restless tumult of the "great house" was irresistible. I never had so full a practical understanding of the world's "pomps and vanities," as while looking at the trimmings and trelisses of the parson's dwelling.

I acknowledge myself a worldling, but I suppose that all is not lead or iron within me, from my sense of scenes like this. In my wildest hour, the sight of fields and gardens has been a kind of febrifuge to me—has conveyed a feeling of tranquillity to my mind; as if it drank the silence and the freshness, as the flowers drink the dew. I have often thus experienced a sudden soothing, which checked the hot current of my follies or frenzies, and made me think that there were better things than the baubles of cabinets. But it did not last long.

I mention this evening, because it decided my future life; or at least the boldest, and perhaps the best portion of it. We had an hour or two of the little variations of placid amusement which belong to all parsonages in romances, but which here were reality; easy conversation on the events of the county; a little political talking with the vicar; a few details of persons and fashions at the castle, to which the ladies listened as Desdemona might have listened to Othello's history—for the Castle was so seldom visited by them, that it had almost the air of a Castle of Otranto, and they evidently thought that its frowning towers and gilded halls belonged to another race, if not to another region of existence; we had, too, some of the last new songs, (at least half a century old, but which were not the less touching,) and a duet of Geminiani, performed by the two elder proficients on a spinet which might have been among the "chamber music" of the Virgin Queen; all slight matters to speak of, and yet which contributed to the quietude of a mind longing for rest—sights of innocence and sounds of peace, which, like the poet's music—

> "Might take the prison'd soul
> And wrap it in Elysium."

The moon shining in through panes covered with honeysuckle and fragrance of all kinds, at length warned me that I was intruding on a household primitive in their hours, as in every thing else, and I rose to take my leave. But I could not be altogether parted with yet. It seems that they had found me a most amusing guest; while, to my own conception, I had been singularly spiritless; but the little anecdotes which were trite to me had been novelties to them. Fashion has a charm even for philosophers; and the freaks and follies of the high-toned sons and daughters of fashion—who wore down my gentle mother's frame, drained my showy father's rental, and made even myself loathe the sight of loaded barouches coming to discharge their cargoes of beaux and belles on us for weeks

together—were nectar and ambrosia to my sportive and rosy-cheeked audience. The five girls put on their bonnets, and looking like a group of Titania and her nymphs, as they bounded along in the moonlight, escorted us to the boundary of the vicar's territory.

We were about to separate, with all the pretty formalities of village leave-taking; when their father, in the act of shaking hands with me, fixed his eye on mine, and insisted on seeing me home. Whether the thought occurred to him that I had still something on my mind, which was not to be trusted within sight of a brook that formed the boundary to the Castle grounds, I know not, but I complied; the girls were sent homewards, and I heard their gay voices mingling, at a distance, and not unsuitably, with the songs of the nightingale.

I took his arm, and we walked on for a while in silence. At length, slackening his pace, and speaking in a tone whose earnestness struck me, "Charles," said he, "has any thing peculiarly painful lately happened to you?—if so, speak out. I know your nature to be above disguise; and with whom can you repose your vexations, if such there be, more safely than with your old tutor?"

I was taken unawares; and not having yet formed a distinct conception of my own grievances, promptly denied that I had any.

"It may be so," said my friend; "and yet once or twice this evening I saw your cheek alternately flush and grow pale, with a suddenness that alarmed me for your health. In one of your pleasantest stories, while you were acting the narrative with a liveliness evidently unconscious, and giving me and mine a treat which we have not had for a long time, I observed your voice falter, as if some spasm of soul had shot across you; and I unquestionably saw, that rare sight in the eyes of man, a tear."

I denied this instance of weakness stoutly; but the old man's importunities prevailed, and, by degrees, I told him, or rather his good-natured cross-examination moulded for me, a statement of my anxieties at home.

The Vicar, with all his simplicity of manner, was a man of powerful and practical understanding. He had been an eminent scholar at his university, and was in a fair way for all its distinctions, when he thought proper to fall desperately in love. This, of course, demolished his prospects at once. I never heard his subsequent history in detail; but he had left England, and undergone a long period of disheartening and distress. Whether he had not, in those times of desolation, taken service in the Austrian army, and even shared some of its Turkish campaigns, was a question which I heard once or twice started at the Castle; and a slight contraction of the arm, and a rather significant scar which crossed his bold forehead, had been set down to the account of the Osmanli cimeter.

Vincent had never told the story of either, but a rumour reached his college of his having been seen in the Austrian uniform on the Transylvanian frontier, during the campaigns of the Prince of Coburg and Laudohn against the Turks. It was singular enough, that on this very evening, in arguing against some of my whims touching destinies and omens, he illustrated the facility of imposture on such points by an incident from one of those campaigns.

"A friend of mine," said he, "a captain in the Lichtenstein hussars, happened to be on the outpost service of the army. As the enemy were in great force, and commanded by the Vizier in person, an action was daily expected, and the pickets and videttes were ordered to be peculiarly on the alert. But, on a sudden, every night produced some casualty. They either lost videttes, or their patrol was surprised, or their baggage plundered—in short, they began to be the talk of the army. The regiment had been always one of the most distinguished in the service, and all those misfortunes were wholly unaccountable. At length a stronger picket than usual was ordered for the night—not a man of them was to be found in the morning. As no firing had been heard, the natural conjecture was, that they must all have deserted. As this was a still more disgraceful result than actual defeat, the colonel called his officers together, to give what information they could. The camp, as usual, swarmed with Bohemians, fortune-tellers, and gipsies, a race who carry intelligence on both sides; and whose performances fully accounted for the knowledge which the enemy evidently had of our outposts. The

first order was, to clear the quarters of the regiment of those encumbrances, and the next to direct the videttes to fire without challenging. At midnight a shot was heard; all turned out, and on reaching the spot where the alarm had been given, the vidette was found lying on the ground and senseless, though without a wound. On his recovery, he said that he had seen a ghost; but that having fired at it, according to orders, it looked so horribly grim at him, that he fell from his horse and saw no more. The Austrians are brave, but they are remarkably afraid of supernatural visitants, and a ghost would be a much more formidable thing to them than a discharge of grape-shot.

"The captain in question was an Englishman, and as John Bull is supposed, among foreigners, to carry an unusual portion of brains about him, the colonel took him into his special council in the emergency. Having settled their measures, the captain prepared to take charge of the pickets for the night, making no secret of his dispositions. At dark, the videttes and sentries were posted as usual, and the officer took his post in the old field redoubt, which had been the headquarters of the pickets for the last fortnight.

"All went on quietly until about midnight; the men off duty fast asleep in their cloaks, and the captain reading an English novel. He, too, had grown weary of the night, and was thinking of stretching himself on the floor of his hut, when he saw, and not without some perturbation, a tall spectral figure, in armour, enter the works, stride over the sleeping men without exciting the smallest movement amongst them, and advance towards him. He drew his breath hard, and attempted to call out, but his voice was choked, and he began to think himself under the dominion of nightmare. The figure came nearer still, looking more menacing, and drew its sword. My friend, with an effort which he afterwards acknowledged to be desperate, put his hand to his side to draw his own. What was his alarm when he found that it had vanished? At this moment his poodle, which, against all precautions, had followed him, began barking fiercely, and rushing alternately towards him and a corner of the redoubt. Though his sabre was gone, a brace of English pistols lay on the table beside him, and he fired one of them in the direction. The shot was followed by a groan and the disappearance of the spectre. The men started to their feet, and all rushed out in pursuit. The captain's first step struck upon a dead body, evidently that of the spy who had fallen by his fire. The pursuit was now joined in by the whole regiment, who had been posted in the rear unseen, to take advantage of circumstances. They pushed on, swept all before them, and bore down patrol and picket until they reached the enemy's camp. The question then was, what to do next? whether to make the best of their way back, or try their chance onward? The Englishman's voice was for taking fortune at the flow; and the accidental burning of a tent or two by the fugitives showed him the Turks already in confusion. The trampling of battalions in the rear told him at the same time that he had powerful help at hand, and he dashed among the lines at once. The hussars, determined to retrieve their reputation, did wonders—the enemy were completely surprised. No troops but those in the highest state of discipline are good for any thing when attacked at night. The gallantry of the Turk by day, deserts him in the dark; and a night surprise, if well followed up, is sure to end in a victory. From the random firing and shouting on every side, it was clear that they were totally taken unawares; and the rapid and general advance of the Austrian brigades, showed that Laudohn was in the mind to make a handsome imperial bulletin. Day dawned on a rout as entire as ever was witnessed in a barbarian campaign. The enemy were flying in all directions like a horde of Tartars, and camp, cannon, baggage, standards, every thing was left at the mercy of the pursuers."

"But the captain, the Englishman, what became of him?" I asked, slightly glancing at the countenance of the narrator.

"Oh, very well off indeed! Foreign Governments are showy to the soldier, and Joseph the Second, though an economist in civil matters, was liberal to his successful officers. The captain received a pension; a couple of orders; was made a colonel on the first opportunity; and, besides, had his share of the plunder—no slight addition to his finances, for the military chest had been taken in the baggage of the Seraskier."

"And by this time," said I, with an unenquiring air, "he is doubtless a field-marshal?"

"Nothing of the kind," replied my reverend friend, "for his victory cured him of soldiership. He was wounded in the engagement, and if he had been ever fool enough to think of fame, the solitary hours of his invalidism put an end to the folly. Other and dearer thoughts recurred to his mind. He had now obtained something approaching to a competence, if rightly managed; he asked permission to retire, returned to England, married the woman he loved; and never for a moment regretted that he was listening to larks and linnets instead of trumpets and cannon, and settling the concerns of rustics instead of manœuvring squadrons and battalions."

"But what was the ghost, after all?"

"Oh, the mere trick of a juggler! a figure projected on the wall by some ingenious contrivance of glasses. The instrument was found on the body of the performer, who turned out to be the colonel's valet—of course in the enemy's pay, and who furnished them with daily intelligence of all our proceedings. As for the loss of the sabre, which actually startled the ghost-seer most, he found it next morning hanging up in the hut, where he himself had placed it, and forgotten that he had done so."

"And the captain, or rather the colonel, brought with him to England, a cimeter-cut on his arm, and another on his forehead?" I asked, fixing my eyes on him. A crimson flush passed over his countenance, he bit his lip and turned away. I feared that I had offended irreparably. But his natural kindliness of heart prevailed, he turned to me gently, laughed, and pressing my hand in his, said, "You have my secret. It has escaped me for the first time these thirty years. Keep it like a man of honour."

I have always held that the life of man's mind, where man *has* a mind—which is not always the case—is a thing of fits and starts. I even doubt whether any one who will take the trouble to recollect, will not be able to put his finger on the precise periods at which new views of every thing suddenly opened before him, and he emerged at once, if not into new powers, at least into a new use of them. The frame may grow like a tree; the faculties may grow as imperceptibly as the frame; but the mind acquires that knowledge of life which forms its exercise, its use, and perhaps its essence, by bounds and flights. This moonlight walk with my old and honoured Mentor, was the beginning of my mental adolescence. My manhood was still to come, and with a more severe instructor.

As we were passing slowly through the plantations which encircled the Castle with all the noble and profuse shelter and ornament which our ancestors loved, a distant sound of music came on the wind. I then remembered, for the first time, that my brother had, on that evening, given a ball to the county, and a sudden sense of the difference of our lots in life, came painfully over me;—the course of secure wealth and English enjoyment, contrasted with the dependence and wandering which must form the existence of myself, and so many thousands of younger brothers.

I was awakened from my reverie by the voice of my companion. His face was upturned to the cloudless sky, and he was murmuring the fine passage in the Merchant of Venice.

> "Look, how the floor of heaven
> Is thick inlaid with patines of bright gold;
> There's not the smallest orb which thou behold'st,
> But in his motion like an angel sings,
> Still quiring to the young-eyed cherubins:
> Such harmony is in immortal souls."

"Do you know, Charles," said he, "what changed the whole current of my life? what, in fact, brought me back to England?" and there was a slight pause. "What made me a Christian? It was such a night as this. As you now know the chief part of my story, I need have no further concealment on the subject. I had recovered from my wounds, and was preparing to set out for Vienna, when one night a tempest blew down our tents, and left us to trust to the open air for the hours till morning. Tempests in the south are violent, but they are generally brief, and this gale cleared the sky of every cloud. As I lay on the ground, and gazed on the unusual splendour of the stars, the thought occurred

to me, Why should doubts of a future state ever come into the mind of man? Why should he hesitate about its reality? Was it not there, before his eyes? Were not the very regions of future existence already within the reach of one of his senses? Why might they not yet be within the reach of all? Of course I do not give you all the vague thoughts which passed through my mind; but the permanence, power, and astonishing multitude of those bright worlds, impressed themselves on me with a new force. I had known all those matters before, but on this night I felt them. My next thoughts were of the power, the wisdom, and the majesty of the mighty Being by whom all this had been formed, moved, and sustained through thousands of years. I need not follow the history of my conversion—for a conversion it was. When I looked round me on the sleeping troops, I saw nothing but clods of the valley—gallant beings, but as insensible to their high inheritance as the chargers they rode. My heart moved me towards them; and perhaps, in some instances, I succeeded in giving them my own ideas. But Austria defies, at least, all human change. I was not a fanatic, and I had no wish to strive with impossibilities. I sent in my resignation; abandoned the 'pride, pomp, and circumstance' of the most tempting of all human pursuits, and returned to England to be, what you see me now."

With this man I could have no reserves, and I freely asked his advice on the plunge which I was about to make into that fathomless tide of good and ill, the world. I mentioned the Church as the profession which my mother had suggested, but for which I did not conceive either my temper or my habits suitable.

"You are right, then, in abandoning the idea altogether," was the answer; "and yet I know no profession more capable of fulfilling all the objects of a vigorous mind. I am not now talking of mitres; they can fall to but few. I speak of the prospects which it opens to all; the power of exerting the largest influence for the highest purposes; the possession of fame without its emptiness, and the indulgence of knowledge without its vanity; energy turned to the most practical and lofty uses of man; and the full feast of an ambition superior to the tinsel of the world, and alike pure in its motives, and immeasurable in its rewards."

"And, yet," said I, naming one or two of our clerical slumberers, "the profession seems not to be a very disturbing one."

"Those men, was the answer, would have been slumberers at the bar, in senates, or in the field. I may be prejudiced in favour of the choice which I made so long since, and which I have never found reason to repent. But I have not the slightest wish to prejudice any one in its favour. There is no profession which more requires a peculiar mind; contentment, with whatever consciousness of being overlooked; patience, with whatever hopelessness of success; labour, for its own sake; and learning, with few to share, few to admire, and fewer still to understand."

"If my father had lived," said I, "it was his intention to have tried my chance in diplomacy."

"Probably enough; for he had figured in that line himself. I remember him secretary of embassy at Vienna. Perhaps you will scarcely believe, that I, too, have had my experience on the subject? Accident once made me an attaché to our envoy at Naples. The life is an easy one. Idleness was never more perfectly reduced to a system, than among the half dozen functionaries to whom the interests of the British empire were entrusted in the capital of the Lazzaroni. As the Frenchman said of the Academy, 'We had nothing to do, and we did it.'"

"Italy," said I, "is the land of pleasure, and the Lazzaroni are its philosophers, but one cannot sleep like them in the face of day, and all day long. Let what will come, I have no desire to be a weed on the shore."

"No; we had our occupations; for we had the attendance on the court days—a business of as much formality, as if the fate of mankind depended on it. Then we had the attendance on the opera at night, a matter nearly as tiresome. The post from England reached Naples but once a-week, and scarcely once a month conveyed any intelligence that was worth the postage. But, if politics were out of the question, we had negotiation in abundance; for we carried on the whole diplomacy of the opera-house in London, engaged *primo tenores*, and settled the rival claims of *prima donnas*; gave

our critical opinions on the merits of dancers worthy of appearing before the British *cognoscenti*; and dispatched poets, ballet-masters, and scene-painters, to our managers, with an activity worthy of the purest patriotism. What think you of the bar?"

"I have no head for its study; and no heart for its employment."

"It leads more rapidly to rank than any other profession under the sun; profit beyond counting, and a peerage. Those are no bad things."

"Both capital, if one could be secure of them. But they take too much time for me. I never was born to sit on the woolsack. No; if I were to follow my own inclination, I should be a soldier."

I have already said that I have been, throughout life, a kind of believer in omens. I have seen such a multitude of things decided by some curious coincidence, some passing occurrence, some of those odd trifles for which it is impossible to account, but which occur at the instant when the mind is wavering on the balance; that I feel no wonder at the old superstitions of guessing our destiny from the shooting of a star, or the flight of birds. While we were rambling onward, discussing the merits and demerits of the profession of arms, we heard the winding of the mail-guard's horn. I sprang the fence, and waited in the road to enquire the last news from the metropolis. It was momentous—the Revolution had effectually broken out. Paris was in an uproar. The king's guards had taken up arms for the people. The Bastile was stormed!

If I had hesitated before, this news decided me; not that I pretend to have even dreamed of the tremendous changes which were to be produced in the world by that convulsion. But it struck me as the beginning of a time, when the lazy quietude of years was about to be broken up, and room made for all who were inclined to exert themselves. Before we had reached the level lawns and trim parterres which showed us the lights of the family festivity, I had settled all the difficulties which might impede the career of less fortunate individuals; time and chance were managed with the adroitness of a projector; and if Bellona had been one of the Nine Muses, my speculations could not have been more poetical. Somewhat to my surprise, they received no check from my venerable tutor; quite the contrary. The singular sympathy with which he listened to my most daring and dashing conceptions, would have betrayed his early history if I had still the knowledge to acquire. His very looks, as he listened to my rodomontades, recurred to me, when I read, many years after, Scott's fine description of his soldier-monk in the Lay of the Last Minstrel:—

> "Again on the knight look'd the churchman old,
> And again he sigh'd heavily,
> For he had himself been a warrior bold,
> And fought in Spain and Italy.
> And he thought on the days that were long gone by,
> When his limbs were strong, and his courage was high."

The news from France produced a sensation throughout England totally indescribable at the present day. Every tongue and every heart was full of it. It offered something for every mind of the million to seize on. Like a waterspout, such as I have seen sweeping over the bosom of the Atlantic, half-descending from the skies, and half-ascending from the deep; every second man whom one met gave it credit for a different origin, some looking at the upper portion and some at the lower; while, in the mean time, the huge phenomenon was blackening, gathering, and rushing onward, threatening to turn all above into darkness and all below into storm. It made the grand subject of parliamentary eloquence, and parliament was never more eloquent; it filled the speeches of the factious, it was hailed by the shouts of the multitude, and it disturbed the fireside with fear and hope, with wishing and wonder. It must be acknowledged that a vast quantity of this excitement was absolute folly; but, at the same time, there was a sincerity in the folly which redeemed it from ridicule. Nothing could be more evident than that this French patriotism was as theatrical, in the countless majority of instances,

as the loves and sorrows of its stage. Yet, however the speeches might be got by heart, or the frippery and actors hired, the *drame* was powerfully performed; and all Europe sat by, giving it the tribute of its tears and its terrors. Even we of England, with all our more sober recollections that the heroes were ragamuffins, and the heroism imaginary, gave ourselves up to the illusion. I shall not say that I was wiser than the rest of mankind. I liked excitement, wherever it was to be found. The barriers to distinction were still too firmly closed against the youngest son of an embarrassed family, not to suggest many a wish for whatever chance might burst the gate, or blow up the rampart; and my first effort in political life was a harangue to the rabble of the next borough, conceived in the most Gallic style. Yet this act of absurdity had the effect of forwarding my views more rapidly than if I had become an aristocratic Demosthenes. My speech was so much applauded by the mob, that they began to put its theories in practice, though with rather more vigour than I had dreamed of. There were riots, and even some attempts at the seizure of arms; and the noble duke, our neighbour, had received a threatening letter, which sent him at full gallop to the Home Secretary. A note, by no means too gentle in its tone, was instantly despatched to my noble brother, enquiring why he did not contrive to keep the minor branches of his family in better order, and threatening him with the withdrawal of the county patronage. My demand of a commission in the Guards was no longer answered by the head of our house with astonishment at the loftiness of my expectations, and statements of the utter emptiness of the family exchequer. The result of his brief correspondence with Downing Street was a letter, notifying that his majesty was pleased to accept my services in the Coldstream.

I was enraptured, and my brother was enraptured, for we had both gained our objects. I had got rid of him and ennui. He had got rid of me, and the displeasure of the grand dispensers of place and pension. No time was lost in forwarding me to make my bow at the Horse Guards; and my noble brother lost as little time in making me put my hand to a paper, in which, for prompt payment, I relinquished one half of my legacy. But what cared I for money? I had obtained a profession in which money was contemptible, the only purse the military chest, and the only prize, like Nelson's, a peerage or Westminster Abbey. The ferment did not cool within the week, and within that period I had taken leave of half the county, been wished laurels and aiguillettes by a hundred or a thousand of the fairest of our country belles; and been wished a thousand miles off by the wise matrons, to whom the sight of a "younger son without house or land" is a nuisance, a kite among their family pigeons.

At that moment, however, all their dovecots were secure. I should not have spent a sigh on the Venus de Medicis had she sprung from her pedestal to enchant me. The world was open before me; and trite and trifling objects were no more to occupy my time. I felt like one who, after wandering all day through the depths of an American forest, suddenly reaches its border, and sees before him the boundless prairie, with its boundlessness still more striking, from the absence of any distinct object on which the eye could rest. What were horses, dogs, and country dinners, to the world of London and of life which now came in full, and, I will own it, extravagant vision before me? The ideas which I conceived of men and things, of my own fortunes, and the fortunate exercise of my own powers, were of an order which, in my calmer days, have often made me smile; yet what is the whole early life of man but a predisposition to fever? and I was then throbbing on the fiery verge of the disease.

I shall say but little of my first sensations on reaching London. My eyes and ears were in full activity. But the impression upon all who enter this mightiest of capitals for the first time, is nearly the same. Its perpetual multitude, its incessant movement, its variety of occupations, sights and sounds, the echo of the whole vast and sleepless machinery of national existence, have been a thousand times the subject of description, and always of wonder. Yet, I must acknowledge, that its first sight repelled me. I had lived in field and forest, my society had been among my fellows in rank; I had lived in magnificent halls, and been surrounded by bowing attendants; and now, with my mind full of the calm magnificence of English noble life, I felt myself flung into the midst of a numberless, miscellaneous, noisy rabble, all rushing on regardless of every thing but themselves, pouring through endless lines of dingy houses; and I nothing, an atom in the confusion, a grain of dust on the great chariot wheel

of society, a lonely and obscure struggler in the mighty current of human life, which rolled along the sullen channels of the most cheerless, however it might be the largest, of capitals.

For the first week, I was absolutely unable to collect my thoughts. All that I learned was, to make my way through the principal thoroughfares, and know the names of her chief buildings. In later days, I took a more practical view of matters, and regarded them only as places in which the business of the hour was to be done. But in my first view, something of the romance and revival of my forest walks clung to me. I remember that, when I first saw the Horse Guards, to which, of course, one of my earliest visits was paid, I found no slight difficulty in thinking of it as only a remarkably clownish mass of brick and stone, crowded with clerks. To me it was the very palace of war; the spot from which the thunderbolts of England were launched; the centre and the stronghold of that irresistible influence with which England sways and moulds mankind. The India House was another of my reveries. I could not think of it as but a huge pile in a vulgar outlet of the city, as a place of porters and messengers loitering in gloomy corridors, of busy clerks for ever scribbling in nooks unvisited by the sun, or even of portly directors, congregating in halls encrusted with the cobwebs of centuries. To my eyes it was invested with the mystery and dignity of Orientalism. I thought of the powers by which rajahs were raised and overthrown, of the mandates which spread war and restored peace over regions wide as Europe, and a thousand times more brilliant. I had rambling visions of armies of elephants, superb cavalry, and chieftains covered with gold and diamonds. As I traversed the dusky halls, I thought of the will which pronounced the fate of kingdoms, the fallen glories of Aurengzebe, the broken sceptre of the Mahratta, and the crushed tiara of Mysore. Round me was the moving power of an empire, the noblest that the East has ever seen, and which, in the act of assuming additional greatness, by a contradiction to all the laws of extended conquest, was hourly assuming additional stability.

And yet, and yet, are not those the true views, after all? Are the effects to be forgotten in the instruments, or is it not the result which forms the character of the whole? Are we to think of the dagger which strikes the master of a throne, as only the steel in the hand of an assassin, or as the summoner to civil war and the subversion of thrones? Is the pen which pours political frenzy through the hearts of living millions, or sheds the splendours of poetry over millions still to come, to be valued only as the feather of a bird? Or is the press itself to be remembered only as a dexterous combination of springs and screws; or to be bowed down to as the steward of all the hidden treasures of mind—as the breaker of intellectual chains, the avenger of injured rights, the moral Hercules that goes forth turning the wilderness to fertility, and smiting the monsters of the world?

But among the wonders of the time, there was one which struck me with prodigious force, which has remained on my recollection to this hour, and which still survives with undiminished vividness. It was the acting of Siddons.

The stage is now almost undone. The absurd liberalism of the day has given every corner of London a theatre, and has degraded the character of the stage in all. By scattering the ability which still exists, it has stripped the great theatres of the very means of representing dramatic excellence; while, by adopting popular contrivances to obtain temporary success, they have driven away dramatic genius in contempt or in despair. Our stage is now condemned to be fed like a felon from the dungeons, and, like the felon, to feel a stigma in every morsel which it puts between its lips. It must stoop to French frivolity, or German extravagance, and be glad to exist upon either. Yet, why should not higher names come to its aid? Why should not the State relieve the difficulties of a great institution, which might be made to repay its assistance a thousand-fold? Is there nothing that could be withdrawn from the waste of our civil lists, or the pomp of public establishments, to reunite, to purify, and even to exalt the stage? The people *will* have theatres. Good or evil, noble or degraded, the stage will be demanded by the people. Is it a thing indifferent to our rulers, to supply them with this powerful and universal excitement in its highest degree of moral influence, or in its lowest degree of impurity; to bring before

them, with all the attractions of the drama, the memory of heroes and sages, patriots and martyrs, or leave them to rake for the indulgence of eye and ear in the very kennels of crime?

"They order those things better in France."

Unquestionably. The care of Government there protects the national taste, and prevents the theatres from looking for subsistence to the history of the highway. The vices which now haunt theatres are no more necessary to their nature, than to the senate or the palace. Why should not the State interpose to prevent the sale of poison on the stage, as in the streets? Why should it not offer prizes and honours for great tragedies and comedies, as soon as it would for a voyage to the Arctic or Antarctic? But is dramatic genius dead in England? What, in England! where nothing dies—where every faculty of the heart and understanding is in the most perpetual activity—where the noblest impulses are perpetually pushing forward to the noblest ends—where human nature moves in all its vigour, from hour to hour, without disguise—where the whole anatomy of the moral frame is visible, and all its weakness, and all its wonders, are the daily spectacle of all mankind!

In giving these opinions of the powers of the stage, need I guard them by saying, that I contemplate a higher spirit than the drama even of Shakspeare has ever displayed—one which, to the vigour of his characters, and the splendours of his poetry, should add a moral of which his time was scarcely conscious? My idea would approach more nearly the objects of the great Greek dramas, in which the first sympathies of the people were appealed to by the most powerful recollections of historic virtue; their national victories over the Persian, the lofty conceptions of their Olympus, the glories of their national power, and the prospects of their imperishable renown. I contemplate nothing of the weakness, locality, or license, of our old drama. I think only of a rich and lofty combination of characters above the level of our time, thoughts belonging to that elevation, feelings more generous, vivid, and majestic, and exploits uniting the soaring spirit of old romance with the sustained strength of modern energy; Greece in her brightest days of intellectual lustre, Rome in her most heroic days of patriotism, and England in those days which are yet to come, and which shall fill up her inheritance of glory.

Siddons was then witching the world—witching, in its more solemn sense; for though her smile was exquisite, she might have sat for the picture of a Sybil or a Pythoness. The stage had never seen her equal, and will probably never see another so completely formed to command all its influences. Yet her beauty, her acting, even her movement, were characteristic, and their character was noble melancholy. I never saw so mournful a countenance combined with so much beauty. Her voice, though grand, was melancholy—her step, though superb, was melancholy; her very smile was melancholy; and yet there was so much of living intellect in her expression, such vast variety of passion in her look and gesture; she so deeply awoke the feelings, or so awfully impressed the mind; thus it was impossible to escape the spell, while she moved upon the stage.

In this language there is not the slightest exaggeration. I have seen a whole audience burst into tears at a single tone of her voice. Her natural conception was so fine, that the merest commonplace often received a living spirit from her lips. I have seen a single glance from her powerful eye hush an audience—I have seen her acting sometimes even startle and bewilder the actors beside her. There is perhaps a genius for every art, and hers was the genius of the stage—a faculty of instant communication between the speaker and the hearer, some unaccountable sympathy, the power to create which belongs to but one in millions, and which, where it exists, lifts its possessor to the height of the Art at once, and constitutes perfection.

It may be presumed that I saw this extraordinary being whenever it was possible. But her *chef-d'œuvre*, in my eyes, was the "wife of Macbeth." The character seemed made for her, by something of that instinct which in olden times combined the poet and the prophet in one. It had the ardour and boldness mingled with the solemnity and mystery that belonged to the character of her beauty.

Her entrance was hurried, as if she had but just glanced over the letter, and had been eager to escape from the crowd of attendants to reperuse it alone. She then read on, in a strong calm

voice, until she came to the passage which proved the preternatural character of the prediction. "They have more in them than mortal knowledge. When I burnt with desire to question them further, they made themselves into air and—*vanished*." As she was about to pronounce the last word, she paused, drew a short breath, her whole frame was disturbed, she threw her fine eyes upwards, and exclaimed "*Vanished*!" with a wild force, which showed that the whole spirit of the temptation had shrunk into her soul. The "Hail, king that shall be!" was the winding-up of the spell. It was pronounced with the grandeur of one already by anticipation a Queen.

Her solitary summons to her distant lord followed, like an invocation—

"Hie thee hither,
That I may pour my spirits in thine ear;
And chastise with the valour of my tongue
All that impedes thee from the golden round."

The murder scene was the next triumph: her acting was that of a triumphant fiend. I must follow these recollections no further; but the most admirable piece of dumb show that perhaps ever was conceived, was her "Banquet scene." That scene, from the terrible business on the stage—the entrance of Banquo's ghost, the horrors of Macbeth, stricken in the moment of his royal exultation, and the astonishment and alarm of the courtiers—is one of the most thrilling and tumultuous. Yet Siddons, sitting at the extremity of the royal hall, not having a syllable to utter, and simply occupied with courtesies to her guests, made her silence so expressive, that she more than divided the interest with the powerful action going on in front. And when at last, indignant at Macbeth's terrors, stung by conscience, and alarmed at the result of an up-breaking of the banquet with such rumours in their lips, she rushed towards her unhappy husband, and burst out with the words, still though but whispered, yet intensely poured into his passive ear—

"Are you a *man*?
This is the very painting of your fear!
This is the air-drawn dagger, which, you said,
Led you to Duncan!—
Why do you make such faces? When all's done,
You look but on a stool!"

In those accents all else was forgotten.

But her sleep-walking scene! When shall we see its "second or its similar?" Nothing so solemn, nothing so awful, was ever seen upon the stage. Yet it had one fault—it was too awful. She more resembled a majestic shade rising from the tomb than a living woman, however disturbed by wild fear and lofty passion. It is a remarkable instance of the genius of Shakspeare, that he here found the means of giving a human interest to a being whom he had almost exalted to the "bad eminence" of a magnificent fiend. In this famous soliloquy, the thoughts which once filled and fired her have totally vanished. Ambition has died; remorse lives in its place. The diadem has disappeared; she thinks only of the blood that stains her for ever. She is the queen no more, but an exhausted and unhappy woman, worn down by the stings of conscience, and with her frame dying by the disease of her soul.

But Siddons wanted the agitation, the drooping, the timidity. She looked a living statue. She spoke with the solemn tone of a voice from a shrine. She stood more the sepulchral avenger of regicide than the sufferer from its convictions. Her grand voice, her fixed and marble countenance, and her silent step, gave the impression of a supernatural being, the genius of an ancient oracle—a tremendous Nemesis.

I have seen all the great tragedians of my day, but I have never seen an equal to the sublime of this extraordinary actress. I have seen beauty, youth, touching sensibility, and powerful conception; but I never saw so complete an union of them all—and that union was the sublime. Shakspeare must have had some such form before his mind's eye, while he was creating the wife of Macbeth. Some magnificent and regal countenance, some movement of native majesty, some imaginary Siddons. He could not have gone beyond the true. She was a living Melpomene.

The business of the War-Office was not transacted in those days with the dispatch subsequently introduced by the honest Duke of York. After a delay of weeks I found myself still ungazetted, grew sad, angry, impatient; and after some consideration on the various modes of getting rid of *ennui*, which were to be found in enlisting the service of that Great Company which extended its wings from Bombay to Bengal, as Sheridan said, impudently enough, like the vulture covering his prey; or in taking the chance of fortune, in the shape of cabin-boy on board one of the thousand ships that were daily floating down the Thames, making their way to the extremities of the earth; or in finishing my feverish speculations in a cold bath at the bottom of the Thames itself; I did what I felt a severer exertion than any of them—I wrote a full and true statement of my vexations to my lordly brother.

His answer was lordly enough. He had been "so much occupied with the numberless duties devolving upon him as landlord, magistrate, lord-lieutenant, and fifty other things, that he absolutely had not been able to find a moment to think of me;" and what was rather more perplexing to my immediate sensibilities, "he had not been able to send me a shilling. However, he did all that he could, and gave me a note to a particular friend," Mr Elisha Mordecai of Moorfields.

There is nothing which quickens a man's movements like a depletion of the purse; and instead of lounging at my hotel until the morning paper brought me the scandals and pleasantries of the day before fresh for my breakfast-table, I threw myself out of bed at an hour which I should not have ventured to mention to any man with whom I walked arm-in-arm during the day, and made my way in a hackney coach, to avoid the possibility of being recognised, to the dwelling of my new patron, or rather my guide and guardian angel.

I make no attempt to describe the navigation through which I reached him; it was winding, dark, and dirty beyond all description, and gave the idea of the passages of a dungeon rather than any thing else that I could name. And in a hovel worthy to finish such a voyage of discovery, I discovered Mr Elisha Mordecai, the man of untold opulence. For a while, on being ushered into the office, where he sat pen in hand, I was utterly unable to ascertain any thing of him beyond a gaunt thin figure, who sat crouching behind a pile of papers, and beneath a small window covered with the dirt of ages. He gave me the impression in his dungeon of one of those toads which are found from time to time in blocks of coal, and have lain there unbreathing and unmoving since the deluge. However, he was a man of business, and so was I for the moment. I handed him my brother's note; and like a ray of sunshine on the torpid snake, it put him into immediate motion. He now took off his spectacles, as if to indulge himself with a view of me by the naked eye; and after a scrutinizing look, which, in another place and person, I should probably have resented as impertinent, but which here seemed part of his profession, he rose from his seat and ushered me into another apartment. This room was probably his place of reception for criminals of a more exalted order; for it was lined with foreign prints, had one or two tolerable Dutch pictures, and a bookcase. Out of his bookcase he took down a folio, examined it, compared the writing of my credentials with the signatures of a book which, as Cromwell's son said of his trunk, contained the lives and fortunes, or at least that on which depended the lives and fortunes, of half the noble *roués* of England, their "promises to pay," bonds, mortgages, and post-obits, and then performed the operation on myself. My L.2500 in prospect was mulcted of a fifth for the trouble of realizing it; of another fifth for prompt payment, and of another for expediting the affair of my commission. "Another such victory would have ruined me."

However, I bore the torture well. In truth, I had so little regard for any object but the grand one of wearing a sword and epaulette, that if Mordecai had demanded the whole sum in fifths, I should

have scarcely winced. But my philosophy stood me in good part, for it won a grim smile from the torturer, and even a little of his confidence.

"This," said he, running his finger down a list which looked endless, "I call my peerage book." Turning to another of equal dimensions, "there lies my House of Commons. Not quite as many words wasted in it as in the Honourable House, but rather to the purpose."

Mordecai grew facetious; the feeling that he had made a handsome morning's work of it put him into spirits, and he let me into some of the secrets of high life, with the air of a looker-on who sees the whole game, and intends to pocket the stakes of the fools on both sides. "Money, Mr Marston," said my hook-nosed and keen-eyed enlightener, "is the true business of man. It is philosophy, science, and patriotism in one; or, at least, without it the whole three are of but little service. Your philosopher dies in a garret, your man of science hawks telescopes, and your patriot starves in the streets, or gets himself hanged in honour of the 'Rights of Man.' I have known all these things, for I was born a German, and bred among the illustrissimi of a German university. But I determined not to live a beggar, or at least not to die one. I left Gottingen behind on a May morning, and trudged, fought, and begged, 'borrowed' my way to London. What I am now, you see."

Probably, the glance which I involuntarily gave round the room, did not exhibit much admiration.

"Ha," said he with a half smile, which, on his gigantic and sullen features, looked like a smile on one of the sculptures of a mausoleum, "you are young—you judge by appearances. Let me give you one piece of advice: If the Italian said, 'distrust words, they are fit only to disguise thoughts,' take a Londoner's warning, and distrust your eyes—they are only fit to pretend to see." He paused a moment, and turned over some memorandums. "I find," said he, "by these papers, that I shall have occasion to leave town in the beginning of next week. You shall then see how I live. If I am to be found in this den, it is not for want of a liking for light and air. I am a German. I have seen plains and mountains in my time. If I had been a fool, there I should have remained a bear-shooter; if I were a fool here, I should act like others of the breed, and be a fox-hunter. But I had other game in view, and now I could sell half the estates in England, call half the 'Honourable House' to my levee, brush down an old loan, buy up a new one, and shake the credit of every thing but the Bank of England."

This was bold speaking, and at another time I should have laughed at it; but the times were bold, the language of the streets was bold, the country was bold, and I, too, was bold. There was something singular in the man; even the hovel round him had a look which added to his influence. I listened to the Jew as one might listen to a revealer of those secrets which find an echo in every bosom, when they are once discovered, and on which still deeper secrets seem to depend. My acquiescence, not the less effective for its being expressed more in looks than words, warmed even the stern spirit of the Israelite towards me, and he actually went the length of ordering some refreshments to be put on the table. We eat and drank together; a new source of cordiality. Our conversation continued long. I shall have more to say of him, and must now proceed to other things; but it ended in my acceptance of his invitation to his villa at Brighton, which he termed "a small thing, simply for a week's change of air," and where he promised to give me some curious explanations of his theory—that money was the master of all things, men, manners, and opinions.

On one of the finest mornings of autumn, I was on the box of the Royal Sussex Stage.

I had full leisure to admire the country, for our progress occupied nearly the whole day. We now laugh at our slow-moving forefathers, but is not the time coming when our thirty miles an hour will be laughed at as much as their five? when our passage from Calais to Dover will be made by the turn of a winch, and Paris will be within the penny-post delivery? when the balloon will carry our letters and ourselves; until that still more rapid period, when we shall ride on cannon-shot, and make but a stage from London to Pekin?

On the roof of the coach I found a strong-featured and closely wrapped-up man, who, by degrees, performed the part of my cicerone. His knowledge of the localities was perfect; "every bush

and bosky dell," every creek and winding, as the shore came in sight, was so familiar to him, that I should have set him down at once for a smuggler, but for a superiority of tone in his language, and still more from the evident deference to him by the coachman, in those days a leading authority with all the passengers. His occupation is now nearly o'er. Fire and water have swept him away. His broad back, his broad grin, and his broad buttons, are now but recollections.

My new acquaintance exhibited as perfect a knowledge of the country residents as of its map, and nothing could be more unhesitating than his opinions of them all, from the prince and his set, as he termed them, to Mordecai himself. Of my Jew friend, he said, with a laugh, "There is not a better friend to the King's Bench in all England. If you have any thing to lose, he will strip you on the spot. If you have nothing, you may escape, unless he can make something by having you hanged." I begged of him to spare my new friend. "Why," said he, "he is one of my oldest friends, and one of the cleverest fellows alive. I speak tenderly of him, from admiration of his talents. I have a liking for the perfection of a rogue. He is a superb fellow. You will find his 'Hermitage,' as he calls it, a pond of gold fish. But all this you will soon learn for yourself." The coach now stopped on a rising ground, which showed the little fishing village beneath us, basking in the glow of sunset. My cicerone got down, and bade me farewell. On enquiring his name from my fellow-travellers, a group of Sussex farmers, I found a general disinclination to touch on the subject. Even the coachman, the established source of information on all topics, exhibited no wish to discuss the stranger; his official loquacity was almost dumb. "He merely believed that he was something in the navy, or in the army, or in something or other; but he was often in those parts, and generally travelled to London by the Royal Sussex Stage."

No country in Europe has changed its appearance more than the greater part of England during the last fifty years. Sussex was then as wild as the wildest heath of Yorkshire. The population, too, looked as wild as the landscape. This was once the very land of the bold smuggler; the haunt of the dashing defier of the customhouse officer, who in those days generally knew his antagonist too well to interfere with his days or nights, the run between every port of the west of France and the coasts of the Channel, being, in fact, as familiar to both as the lounger in Bond Street to the beau of the day.

We passed groups of men, who, when they had not the sailor's dress, had the sailor's look; some trudging along the road-side, evidently not in idleness; others mounted on the short rough horse of the country, and all knowing and known by our coachman.

On our passing one group, leaning with their backs against one of the low walls which seemed the only enclosure of this rugged region, I, half-laughingly, hinted to one of my neighbours, a giant of a rough-headed farmer, that "perhaps a meeting with such a party, at a late hour, might be inconvenient, especially if the traveller had a full purse." The fellow turned on me a countenance of ridicule. "What?" said he, "do you take them for robbers? Heaven bless you, my lad, they could buy the stage, horses, passengers, and all. I'll warrant you, they will have news from over there," and he pointed towards France, "before it gets into the newspapers, long enough. They are the richest fellows in the county."

"Are they smugglers?" I asked, with sufficient want of tact.

"Why, no," was the answer, with a leer. "We have nothing of that breed among us; we are all honest men. But what if a man has an acquaintance abroad, and gets a commission to sell a cargo of tea or brandy, or perhaps a present from a friend—what shall hinder him from going to bring it? I'm sure, not I."

It was evidently not the "etiquette" on the roof of the Royal Sussex to think much on the subject, and before my curiosity could reach the length of actual imprudence, the coachman pulled up, and informed me that I had reached the nearest turn to "the Hermitage." My valise was lowered down, a peasant was found to carry it, and I plunged into the depth of a lane as primitive as if it had been a path in Siberia.

It was brief, however, and in a few minutes I was within sight of the villa. Here I at once discovered that Mordecai was a man of taste; perhaps the very roughness of the Sussex jungle, through

which I had just come, had been suffered to remain for the sake of contrast. A small lodge, covered with late blooming roses, let me into a narrow avenue of all kinds of odorous shrubs; the evening sun was still strong enough to show me glimpses of the grounds on either side, and they had all the dressed smoothness of a parterre. The scene was so different from all that I had been wearied of during the day, that I felt it with double enjoyment; and the utter solitude and silence, after the rough voices of my companions in the journey, were so soothing, that I involuntarily paused before I approached the house, to refresh not more my senses than my mind. As I stood leaning against a tree, and baring my hot brain and bosom to the breeze, that rose with delicious coolness, I heard music. It was a sweet voice, accompanied at intervals by some skilful touches of a harp; and, from the solemnity of the measure, I supposed it to be a hymn. Who was the minstrel? Mordecai had never mentioned to me either wife or daughter. Well, at all events, the song was sweet. The minstrel was a woman, and the Jew's household promised me more amusement than I could have expected from the man of Moorfields. The song ceased, the spell was broken, and I moved on, fully convinced that I had entered on a scene where I might expect at least novelty; and the expectation was then enough to have led me to the cannon's mouth or the antipodes.

THE VIGIL OF VENUS

TRANSLATED FROM THE LATIN

This old poem, which commemorates the festivities with which ancient Rome hailed the returning brightness of spring, may, perhaps, awaken in our readers some melancholy reflections on the bygone delights of the same season in our own country. To the Romans, it would seem, this period of the year never ceased to bring rejoicing holidays. There is good reason to suppose that this poem was written in the declining times of the empire; if so, it seems that, amidst the public misfortunes that followed one another during that age, the people were not woe-worn and distressed; that they were able to forget, in social pleasures, the gradual decay of their ancient glory. Rome "smiled in death." England is still great and powerful, but she is no longer Merry England.

Most people have heard of the Floralia, and have learned to deduce the frolics of Maid Marian and her comrades from the Roman observances on that festive occasion. But few are aware of the close similarity which this poem shows to have existed between the customs of the Romans and those of our fathers. In the denunciations of the latter by the acrid Puritans of the 17th century, we might almost imagine that the tirade was expressly levelled against the vigils described in the *Pervigilium Veneris*. If the poem had ever fallen into the hands of those worthies, it would have afforded them an additional handle for invective against the foul ethnic superstitions which the May-games were denounced as representing. Hear Master Stubbes, in his *Anatomie of Abuses*, published in 1585:—

> "Against May, Whitsonday, or other time, all the yung men and maides, old men and wives, run gadding over the night to the woods, groves, hils, and mountains, where they spend all the night in pleasant pastimes, and in the morning they return, bringing with them birch and branches of trees, to deck their assemblies withall; and no meruaile, for there is a great Lord present amongst them as superintendent and Lord of their sports, namely, Sathan prince of hel. But the chiefest jewel they bring from thence is their May-pole, (say rather their stinking poole,) which they bring home with great veneration."

Who does not remember Lysander's appointment with Hermia:

> ——"in that wood, a league without the town,
> Where I did meet thee once with Helena,
> To do observance to a morn of May,
> There will I stay for thee."

These passages point us to the time when man and nature met to rejoice together on May-day: to the time before the days of the workhouse and factory; when the length and breadth of the land rung to the joyaunce and glee of the holiday-rejoicing nation, and the gay sounds careered on fresh breezes even where now the dense atmosphere of Manchester or Ashton glooms over the dens of torture in which withered and debauched children are forced to their labour, and the foul haunts under the shelter of which desperate men hatch plots of rapine and slaughter.

The poem shows that the Romans, like the English of those days, celebrated the season by betaking themselves to the woods throughout the night, where they kept a vigil in honour of Venus, to whose guardianship the month of April was assigned, as being the universal generating and producing power, and more especially to be adored as such by the Romans, from having been, through her son Æneas, the author of their race. The poem seems to have been composed with a view to its being

sung by a choir of maidens in their nocturnal rambles beneath the soft light of an Italian moon. The delicious balm of that voluptuous climate breathes through every line of it, and vividly presents to the reader's imagination the scene of the festivity; but whether we can claim these celebrations for our own May-day, is a doubtful point; for Wernsdorf, who has included the Pervigilium Veneris in his edition of *Poetæ Latini Minores*, vol. iii., maintains that it is to be referred to the Veneralia, or feast of Venus, on the 1st of April. The Kalendar of Constantius marks the 3d day of April as Natalis Quirini. If, then, the morrow spoken of in the poem is to be taken to mean this birthday of Romulus, we must suppose the vigil of three nights to have begun on the night of the last day of March. But perhaps our readers will agree with us, that there are quite as good grounds for attributing this vigil to the Floralia, which commenced on the 27th of April, and ended on the first of May. For although the rites of the Floralia were in honour of Flora, yet we may easily conceive the principle by which the worship of Venus, the spirit of beauty, and love, and production, would come to be intermingled with the homage paid to the flower-goddess. And then the three nights would denote the nights of the Floralia already past, if we suppose the hymn to have been sung on the night before the 1st of May. This seems more natural, as coinciding with the known length of the festival, than Wernsdorf's hypothesis, which makes the vigil commence before the month of Venus had opened. As regards the time of year, too, May is far more suited than April, even in Italy, for outwatching the Bear on woodland lawns.

The question regarding the author of the Pervigilium Veneris is still a *lis sub judice*. Aldus, Erasmus, and Meursius, attributed it to Catullus; but subsequent editors have, with much more probability, contended that its age is considerably later. We may notice a scholastic and philosophical spirit about it, which is ill-suited to the Bard of Verona. Lipsius claimed it for the Augustan age, in consequence of the mention of Cæsar which is introduced. But we think we may safely assume, that the observance of this vigil grew into custom after the time of Ovid, otherwise it is difficult to account for the total absence of all allusion, in his Fasti, to a subject so perfectly adapted to his verse. But we will not enter any further into a discussion which Salmasius and Scaliger could not settle, but shall at once present our readers with the following translation of the Pervigilium Veneris:—

He that never loved before,
Let him love to-morrow!
He that hath loved o'er and o'er,
Let him love to-morrow!

Spring, young Spring, with song and mirth,
Spring is on the newborn earth.
Spring is here, the time of love—
The merry birds pair in the grove,
And the green trees hang their tresses,
Loosen'd by the rain's caresses.
To-morrow sees the dawn of May,
When Venus will her sceptre sway,
Glorious, in her justice-hall:
There where woodland shadows fall,
On bowers of myrtle intertwined,
Many a band of love she'll bind.
He that never, &c.

To-morrow is the day when first
From the foam-world of Ocean burst,
Like one of his own waves, the bright

Dione, queen of love and light,
Amid the sea-gods' azure train,
'Mid the strange horses of the main.
He that never, &c.

She it is that lends the Hours
Their crimson glow, their jewel-flowers:
At her command the buds are seen,
Where the west-wind's breath hath been,
To swell within their dwellings green.
She abroad those dewdrops flings,
Dew that night's cool softness brings;
How the bright tears hang declining,
And glisten with a tremulous shining,
Almost of weight to drop away,
And yet too light to leave the spray.
Hence the tender plants are bold
Their blushing petals to unfold:
'Tis that dew, which through the air
Falls from heaven when night is fair,
That unbinds the moist green vest
From the floweret's maiden breast.
'Tis Venus' will, when morning glows,
'Twill be the bridal of each rose.
Then the bride-flower shall reveal,
What her veil cloth now conceal,
The blush divinest, which of yore
She caught from Venus' trickling gore,
With Love's kisses mix'd, I trow,
With blaze of fire, and rubies' glow,
And with many a crimson ray
Stolen from the birth of day.
He that never, &c.

All the nymphs the Queen of Love
Summons to the myrtle-grove;
And see ye, how her wanton boy
Comes with them to share our joy?
Yet, if Love be arm'd, they say,
Love can scarce keep holiday:
Love without his bow is straying!
Come, ye nymphs, Love goes a Maying.
His torch, his shafts, are laid aside—
From them no harm shall you betide.
Yet, I rede ye, nymphs, beware,
For your foe is passing fair;
Love is mighty, ye'll confess,
Mighty e'en in nakedness;
And most panoplied for fight

When his charms are bared to sight.
He that never, &c.

Dian, a petition we,
By Venus sent, prefer to thee:
Virgin envoys, it is meet,
Should the Virgin huntress greet:
Quit the grove, nor it profane
With the blood of quarry slain.
She would ask thee, might she dare
Hope a maiden's thought to share—
She would bid thee join us now,
Might cold maids our sport allow.
Now three nights thou may'st have seen,
Wandering through thine alleys green,
Troops of joyous friends, with flowers
Crown'd, amidst their myrtle bowers.
Ceres and Bacchus us attend,
And great Apollo is our friend;
All night we must our Vigil keep—
Night by song redeem'd from sleep.
Let Venus in the woods bear sway,
Dian, quit the grove, we pray.
He that never, &c.

Of Hybla's flowers, so Venus will'd,
Venus' judgment-seat we build.
She is judge supreme; the Graces,
As assessors, take their places.
Hybla, render all thy store
All the season sheds thee o'er,
Till a hill of bloom be found
Wide as Enna's flowery ground.
Attendant nymphs shall here be seen,
Those who delight in forest green,
Those who on mountain-top abide,
And those whom sparkling fountains hide.
All these the Queen of joy and sport
Summons to attend her court,
And bids them all of Love beware,
Although the guise of peace he wear.
He that never, &c.

Fresh be your coronals of flowers,
And green your overarching bowers,
To-morrow brings us the return
Of Ether's primal marriage-morn.
In amorous showers of rain he came
T' embrace his bride's mysterious frame,

To generate the blooming year,
And all the produce Earth does bear.
Venus still through vein and soul
Bids the genial current roll;
Still she guides its secret course
With interpenetrating force,
And breathes through heaven, and earth, and sea,
A reproductive energy.
He that never, &c.

She old Troy's extinguish'd glory
Revived in Latium's later story,
When, by her auspices, her son
Laurentia's royal damsel won.
She vestal Rhea's spotless charms
Surrender'd to the War-god's arms;
She for Romulus that day
The Sabine daughters bore away;
Thence sprung the Rhamnes' lofty name,
Thence the old Quirites came;
And thence the stock of high renown,
The blood of Romulus, handed down
Through many an age of glory pass'd,
To blaze in Cæsar's at last.
He that never, &c.

All rural nature feels the glow
Of quickening passion through it flow.
Love, in rural scenes of yore,
They say, his goddess-mother bore;
Received on Earth's sustaining breast,
Th' ambrosial infant sunk to rest;
And him the wild-flowers, o'er his head
Bending, with sweetest kisses fed.
He that never, &c.

On yellow broom out yonder, see,
The mighty bulls lie peacefully.
Each animal of field or grove
Owns faithfully the bond of love.
The flocks of ewes, beneath the shade,
Around their gallant rams are laid;
And Venus bids the birds awake
To pour their song through plain and brake.
Hark! the noisy pools reply
To the swan's hoarse harmony;
And Philomel is vocal now,
Perch'd upon a poplar-bough.
Thou scarce would'st think that dying fall

Could ought but love's sweet griefs recall;
Thou scarce would'st gather from her song
The tale of brother's barbarous wrong.
She sings, but I must silent be:—
When will the spring-tide come for me?
When, like the swallow, spring's own bird,
Shall my faint twittering notes be heard?
Alas! the muse, while silent I
Remain'd, hath gone and pass'd me by,
Nor Phœbus listens to my cry.
And thus forgotten, I await,
By silence lost, Amyclæ's fate.

CHAPTERS OF TURKISH HISTORY. RISE OF THE KIUPRILI FAMILY—SIEGE OF CANDIA

NO. IX

The restraint which the ferocious energy of Sultan Mourad-Ghazi, during the latter years of his reign, had succeeded in imposing on the turbulence of the Janissaries,[1] vanished at his death; and for many years subsequently, the domestic annals of the Ottoman capital are filled with the details of the intrigues of women and eunuchs within the palace, and the sanguinary feuds and excesses of the soldiery without. The Sultan Ibrahim, the only surviving brother and successor of Mourad, was in his twenty-fifth year at the time of his accession; but he had been closely immured in the seraglio from the moment of his birth; and the dulness of his temperament (to which he probably owed his escape from the bowstring, by which the lives of his three brothers had been terminated by order of Mourad) had never been improved by cultivation. Destitute alike of capacity and inclination for the toils of government, he remained constantly immersed in the pleasures of the harem; while his mother, the Sultana-Walidah Kiosem, (surnamed *Mah-peiker*, or the *Moon-face*,) who had been the favourite of the harem under Ahmed I., and was a woman of extraordinary beauty and masculine understanding, kept the administration of the state almost wholly in her own hands. The talents of this princess, aided by the ministers of her selection, for some time prevented the incompetency of the sultan from publicly manifesting itself; but Ibrahim at last shook off the control of his mother, and speedily excited the indignant murmurs of the troops and the people by the publicity with which he abandoned himself to the most degrading sensuality. The sanctity of the harem and of the bath had hitherto been held inviolate by even the most despotic of the Ottoman sovereigns; but this sacred barrier was broken through by the unbridled passions of Ibrahim, who at length ventured to seize in the public baths the daughter of the mufti, and, after detaining her for some days in the palace, sent her back with ignominy to her father. This unheard-of outrage at once kindled the smouldering discontent into a flame; the Moslem population rose in instant and universal revolt; and a scene ensued almost without parallel in history—the deposition of an absolute sovereign by form of law. The grand-vizir Ahmed, and other panders to the vices of the sultan, were seized and put to death on the place of public execution; while an immense crowd of soldiers, citizens, and janissaries, assembling before the palace of the mufti early on the morning of August 8, 1648, received from him a *fetwa*, or decree, to the effect that the sultan (designated as "Ibrahim Abdul-Rahman Effendi") had, by his habitual immorality and disregard of law, forfeited all claim to be considered as a true believer, and was therefore incapable of reigning over the Faithful. The execution of this sentence was entrusted to the Aga of the Janissaries, the Silihdar or grand sword-bearer, and the Kadhi-asker or chief judge of Anatolia, who, repairing to the seraglio, attended by a multitude of military officers and the *ulemah*, proceeded without ceremony to announce to Ibrahim that his rule was at an end. His furious remonstrances were drowned by the rude voice of the Kadhi Abdul-Aziz Effendi,[2] who boldly reproached him with his vices. "Thou hast gone astray," said he, "from the paths in which thy glorious ancestors walked, and hast trampled under foot both law and religion, and thou art no longer the padishah of the Moslems!" He was at last conducted to the same apartment whence he had been taken to ascend the throne, and where, ten days later, his existence was terminated by

[1] See "Chapters of Turkish History," No. III., November 1840.

[2] He was afterwards, in 1651, mufti for a few months; but is better known as an historian, (under the appellation of Kara-Tchelibi-Zadah,) and as having been tutor to Ahmed-Kiuprili.

the bowstring; while the Sultana-Walidah, (whose acquiescence in this extraordinary revolution had been previously secured,) led into the *salamlik* (hall of audience) her eldest grandson Mohammed,[3] an infant scarcely seven years old, who was forthwith seated on the imperial sofa, and received the homage of the dignitaries of the realm.

Sultan Mohammed IV., afterwards surnamed *Avadji*, or the Hunter, who was destined to fill the throne of the Ottoman Empire during one of the most eventful periods of its history, possessed qualifications which, if his education had not been interrupted by his early accession to supreme power, might have entitled him to a high place among the monarchs of his line. Unlike most of the imperial family, he was of a spare sinewy form, and lofty stature; and his features are said by Evliya to have been remarkably handsome, though his forehead was disfigured by a deep scar which he had received in his infancy, by being thrown by his father, in an access of brutal passion, into a cistern in the gardens of the seraglio; and a contemporary Venetian chronicler says that his dark complexion and vivid restless eye gave him rather the aspect of a *Zigano*, or gipsy, than an Osmanli. In the first years of his reign, his grandmother, the Walidah Kiosem, acted as regent; but the rule of a woman and a child was little able to curb the turbulent soldiery of the capital; and the old feuds between the spahis and janissaries, which had been dormant since the death of Abaza, broke out afresh with redoubled violence. The war in Crete, which had been commenced under Ibrahim, languished for want of troops and supplies; while the rival military factions fought, sword in hand, in front of the imperial palace, and filled Constantinople with pillage and massacre. The janissaries, who were supported by Kiosem, for some time maintained the ascendency; but this ambitious princess was at length cut off by an intrigue, in the interior of the harem, fomented by the mother of Mohammed, who suspected her of a design to prolong her own sway by the removal of the sultan, in favour of a still younger son of Ibrahim. Seized in the midst of the night of September 3, 1651, by the eunuchs whom her rival had gained, Kiosem was strangled (according to a report preserved by Evliya) with the braids of her own long hair; and the sultan was exhibited at daybreak by the grand-vizir Siawush-Pasha to the people, who thronged round the palace on the rumour of this domestic tragedy, to assure them of the personal safety of their youthful sovereign.

The supreme power was now lodged in the hands of the young Sultana Walidah, and her confidant the Kislar-Aga; but their inexperience was little qualified to encounter the task which had wellnigh baffled the energies of Kiosem; and the expedient of frequently changing the grand-vizir, in obedience to the requisition of which ever party was for the time in the ascendant, prevented the measures of government from acquiring even a shadow of consistence or stability. Twelve vizirs, within eight years from the deposition of Ibrahim, had successively held the reins of power for short periods; and not less than six had been raised to, and deposed from, that precarious dignity, within the last ten months, while the audacity of the troops, and the helplessness of the executive, had reached an unparalleled climax. In a memorable insurrection, arising from the depreciation of the coinage, which marked the spring of 1656, the revolters, not contented with their usual license of plunder and bloodshed, forced their way into the palace, and exacted from the young sultan the surrender of two of his favourite domestics, who were instantly slaughtered before his eyes; while various obnoxious public functionaries were dragged to the At-meidan, and summarily hanged on the branches of a large plane-tree;[4] and for several weeks this proscription was continued, till the cry of "Take him to the plane-tree!" became a watchword of as well-known and fearful import, as that of "A la lanterne!" in later times. In this emergency, when the fabric of government seemed on the verge of dissolution, an

[3] His name, according to Evliya, was originally Yusuf, but was changed to Mohammed on the entreaty of the ladies of the seraglio, who said that Yusuf was the name of a slave.

[4] The Turkish historian, Naima, fancifully compares this plane to the fabulous tree in the islands of Wak-Wak, the fruit of which consisted of human heads, as is fully detailed in the romance of Hatem Tai, besides various passages of the Thousand and One Nights. Under this same plane, by a singular instance of retribution, the heads of the janissaries massacred in the At-meidan in 1826, were piled by order of Sultan Mahmood.

ancient Anatolian pasha, Mohammed-Kiuprili, who had lately repaired to the capital, was named by her confidential advisers to the Sultana-Walidah as a man whose eminent discernment and sagacity, not less than his fearless intrepidity, rendered him especially fitted for the task of stilling the troubled waters. In opposition to these views it was contended, that the poverty of the proposed premier would prevent his securing the adherence of the troops by the largesses which they had been accustomed to receive, and the project was apparently abandoned; but the incapacity and unpopularity of the grand-vizir, Mohammed-Pasha, (surnamed *Egri*, or the Crooked,) soon made it obvious that a fresh change alone could prevent another convulsion. On the 15th September 1656, therefore, in a fortunate[5] hour for the distracted empire, Kiuprili was summoned to the presence of the sultan, who had now, nominally at least, assumed the direction of affairs, and received from his hands the seals of office.

Such were the circumstances of the elevation of this most celebrated of Ottoman ministers, whose name stands pre-eminent, not only from his own abilities and good fortune, but as the founder of the only family which ever continued to enjoy, during several generations, the highest honours of the empire. He was the son of an Arnaut[6] soldier, who had settled in Anatolia, on receiving a *timar* or fief in the district of Amasia, near the town of Kiupri, ('the bridge:') from which (since distinguished from other places of the same name as *Vizir*-Kiupri) his descendants derived the surname under which they are generally mentioned in history. He commenced his career as a page in the imperial seraglio; which he left for a post in the household of Khosroo, afterwards grand-vizir, who was then aga of janissaries. Passing through various gradations of rank, he held several governments in Syria, and was raised to the grade of pasha of three tails: till, at an advanced age, he obtained permission to exchange these honours for the post of *sandjak* of his native district, to which he accordingly withdrew. But his retirement was disturbed, in 1648, by the insurrection of Varvar-Ali, pasha of Siwas, who, rather than surrender a beautiful daughter, the affianced bride of his neighbour Ipshir, pasha of Tokat, to the panders of the imperial harem, had raised the standard of revolt, and had been joined by the pasha of Erzroom, Gourdji-Mohammed, (to whose suite the annalist Evliya was then attached,) and by many of the Turkman clans of Anatolia. The Sultana-Walidah herself, who was then at variance with her degenerate son, secretly encouraged the insurgents, who endeavoured to gain over Kiuprili to their party; but as they failed in all their efforts to shake his loyalty, Varvar suddenly marched against him, routed the troops which he had collected, and made him prisoner, with two beglerbegs whom he had summoned to his aid. "I saw these three pashas" (says Evliya, who had come to the rebel camp on a mission from Gourdji-Mohammed) "stripped of their robes and turbans, and fastened by chains round their necks to stakes in front of the tent of Varvar-Ali, while the seghbans, and even the surridjis" (irregular horse) "brandished their sabres before their faces, threatening them with instant death. Thus we see the changes of fortune, that those who were the drivers become in their turn the driven," (like cattle.)

Evliya, who seems to feel a malicious pleasure in relating this mishap of the future grand-vizir, confesses to having himself received a horse and a slave out of his spoils; but even before his departure from the camp, the rebellion was crushed, and Kiuprili released, by the base treachery of Ipshir-Pasha,[7] for whose sake alone Varvar-Ali had taken up arms. Won by the emissaries of the Porte, by the promise of the rich pashalic of Aleppo, he suddenly assailed the troops of his father-in-law, and seizing his person, cut off his head, and sent it with those of his principal followers to

[5] The Turkish annalists do not fail to remark, that Kiuprili crossed the imperial threshold at the moment when the call to noon prayers was resounding from the minarets—an evident token of the Divine protection extended to him!

[6] In a narrative by a writer named Chassipol, (Paris, 1676,) professing to be the biography of the two first Kiuprili vizirs, Mohammed is said to have been the son of a French emigrant, and this romance has been copied by most European authors. But the testimony of Evliya, Kara-Tchelibi, and all contemporary Turkish writers, is decisive on the point of his Albanian origin.

[7] Ipshir Mustapha Pasha was originally a Circassian slave, and said to have been a tribesman and near relation of the famous Abaza. During the revolutions which distracted the minority of Mohammed, he became grand-vizir for a few months, (Oct. 1654–May 1655,) but was cut off by an unanimous insurrection of the spahis and janissaries, who forgot their feuds for the sake of vengeance on the common enemy.

Constantinople—an act of perfidious ingratitude, which, even among the frequent breaches of faith staining the Ottoman annals, has earned for its perpetrator the sobriquet of *Khain*, or the traitor, *par excellence*. After this unlucky adventure, we hear no more of Kiuprili in his Anatolian sandjak, till, in the spring of 1656, we find him accompanying Egri-Mohammed on his way to the Porte to assume the vizirat: from which, in less than four months, he was removed to make way for his quondam *protégé*, in whose elevation he had thus been an involuntary instrument.

Mohamned Kiuprili was at this period nearly eighty years of age, and so wholly illiterate that he could neither read nor write; yet such was the general estimation of his wisdom and abilities, that the young sultan, on entrusting to him the ensigns of office, voluntarily pledged himself to leave entirely at his discretion the regulation of the foreign and domestic relations of the empire, as well as the disposal of all offices of state—thus virtually delegating to him the functions of sovereignty. The measures of Kiuprili soon showed that these extraordinary powers would not be suffered to remain dormant. The impatience of the troops at the strict discipline which he enforced, erelong announced the approach of a fresh tumult; and the ringleaders, in the confidence of long-continued impunity, openly boasted that "the plane-tree would soon bear another crop"—when on the night of Jan. 5, 1657, the grand-vizir, accompanied by the aga of the janissaries, and fortified by a fetwa from the mufti, legalizing whatever he might do, made the round of the barracks with his guards, and seized several hundreds of all ranks in the various corps, whose bodies, found floating the next day in the Bosphorus, revealed their fate to their dismayed accomplices. The Greek patriarch, on suspicion of having endeavoured to engage the Vaivode of Wallachia in a plot for a general rising of the Christians, was summoned to the Porte, and forthwith bowstrung in the presence of Kiuprili; and in the course of a few weeks, not fewer than 4000 of those who had been implicated in the previous disorders perished under the hands of the executioner: "for as in medicine," remarks a Turkish historian, "it is necessary to employ remedies which are analogous to the disease, so by bloodshed alone could the state be purified from these lawless shedders of blood!"

These terrible severities broke the spirit of insubordination in the capital; and the irregularity of their pay, which had been one of the chief grievances of the janissaries, was remedied by the good order which Kiuprili had from the first introduced in the finances. "He proportioned the expenditure of the empire," says Evliya, "to its revenues, which he also greatly enlarged, so that he gained the name of *Sahib-Kharj*," (master of finance.) The Venetians, who had availed themselves of the anarchy reigning at Constantinople to occupy Tenedos and Lemnos, so as to blockade the Dardanelles, were dislodged by the activity of the vizir, who directed the sieges in person, bestowing honours and rewards on the soldiers most distinguished for their bravery; and though the Turkish fleet was defeated (July 17, 1657) at the entrance of the straits, the Venetians sustained an irreparable loss in their valiant admiral Mocenigo, who was blown up with his ship by a well-aimed shot from one of the batteries on shore. But though the janissaries were thus reduced to order and obedience, the flame of disaffection was still smouldering among the spahis of Asia Minor, and broke out, in the course of the ensuing year, into a formidable and widely-organized rebellion. Not fewer than forty pashas and sandjaks followed the banner of the insurgent leader Abaza-Hassan, pasha of Aleppo, who advanced towards the Bosphorus at the head of 70,000 men, assuming the state of a monarch, and demanding the heads of Kiuprili and his principal adherents as the price of his submission. Morteza-Pasha, governor of Diarbekr, who attempted to oppose him in the field, was routed with the loss of nearly his whole army; and though the emissaries who attempted to seduce the troops in Constantinople from their allegiance were detected and put to death by the vigilance of Kiuprili, the revolt spread throughout Anatolia and Syria, and the sultan was preparing to take the field in person, when treachery succeeded in accomplishing what force had failed to effect. It has been an uniform maxim of the Ottoman domestic policy, which singularly contrasts with their scrupulous observance of the treaties entered into with foreign powers, that no faith is to be kept with *fermanlis*, or traitors to the Padishah; and in the assured belief, confirmed by hostages and solemn oaths, that the sultan was willing to accede

to his demands, Abaza-Hassan suffered himself to be drawn from his headquarters at Aintab, with thirty of his officers, to a conference with Morteza at Aleppo: but, in the midst of the banquet which followed this interview, Abaza and his comrades found themselves in the grasp of the executioners —while their followers, dispersed through the town, were slaughtered without mercy on the signal of a gun fired from the castle; and the army, panic-stricken at the fate of its leaders, quickly melted away. But no sooner was the semblance of tranquillity restored, than the Kaimakam Ismail Pasha, an unscrupulous agent of the merciless decrees of the vizir, was sent into Asia under the new title of Moufetish, or inquisitor; and an unsparing proscription almost utterly exterminated all the remaining partizans of Abaza-Hassan, without distinction of rank; while the suppression of numerous *timars* or fiefs, and the removal of the occupants of others from their ancient abodes to remote districts, so effectually loosened the bands which had hitherto united the spahis, like the janissaries, into a compact fraternity, that this once powerful body was divided and broken; and they no longer occupy, as a separate faction, their former conspicuous place in the troubled scene of Ottoman history.

The termination of this great revolt freed Kiuprili from the apprehension of military sedition, and left him in the enjoyment of more absolute and undivided authority than had ever been possessed by any of his predecessors in office. The sultan, from whose mind the impression of the bloody scenes witnessed in his youth had never been effaced, rarely visited Constantinople; devoting himself to the pleasures of the chase in the forests and hills of Roumelia, and repairing only at intervals to the ancient palace of his ancestors at Adrianople, whither his harem and household had been transferred from the capital. The uncontrolled administration of the state was left in the hands of the vizir, but his implacable severity towards all who failed in implicit devotion to his will, continued unabated. "He was unacquainted" (says his contemporary, Rycaut) "with mercy, and never pardoned any who were either guilty of a fault, or suspected for it;" and neither rank nor services afforded protection to those who had incurred his jealousy or resentment. Among the numerous victims of his suspicious cruelty, the fate of Delhi-Hussein-Pasha was long remembered in Constantinople. Originally a *battadji* or lictor in the seraglio, he had attracted the notice of Sultan Mourad-Ghazi by his strength and address in bending a bow sent as a challenge by the Shah of Persia, and which had baffled the efforts of all the *pelhwans* or champions of the Ottoman court. His first advancement to the post of equerry was only a prelude to the attainment of higher honours, and he became successively governor of Buda and of Egypt, capitan-pasha and serasker in Candia. His exploits in the latter capacity had endeared him to the troops, while his noble figure and frank bearing made him equally the idol of the citizens, but his unbounded popularity led Kiuprili to foresee a future rival in this favourite hero, and the fate of Delhi-Hussein was sealed. In an interview with the vizir, he was graciously received, and invested with a robe of honour; but as he quitted the Porte he was arrested and carried to the Seven Towers, where, two days after, (in spite of the intercession of the Sultana-Walidah, and the refusal of the mufti to ratify the unjust doom,) he was bowstrung in his cell, as the murmurs of the troops prevented the vizir from risking a public execution.

But though thus inexorable to all whose popularity or pretensions might interfere with his own supremacy, and haughty even beyond all former precedent in his intercourse with the representatives of the Christian powers,[8] Kiuprili deserved, by the merits of his domestic administration, the high place which has been assigned to him by the unanimous voice of the Ottoman historians. The exact regularity which he enforced both in the payment and disbursement of the revenue, relieved the people from the irregular imposts to which they had been subject, in order to make up the deficiencies arising from the interception, by the pashas, of the tributes of distant provinces, and the peculation which had long reigned unchecked at the seat of government—while the sums thus rendered disposable were laid

[8] De la Haye, the French ambassador, was imprisoned in 1658, and his son bastinadoed in the presence of Kiuprili, for being unable or unwilling to give a key to some letters in cipher from the Venetians; and some years later, the envoy of the Czar, Alexis Mikhailowitz, was driven, with blows and violence, from the presence of the sultan, who was irritated by the incompetency of the interpreter to translate the Czar's letter! This latter outrage, however, was not till after the death of the elder Kiuprili.

out chiefly in improving the internal communications, and strengthening the defences, of the empire. The Dardanelles, hitherto guarded only by Mohammed II.'s two castles of Europe and Asia, was made almost impregnable by the construction of the formidable line of sea defences still existing; the necessity for which had been demonstrated by the recent attack of the Venetians; and fortified posts were established along the line of the Dnieper and Dniester, to keep in cheek the predatory Cossacks between these rivers, who were at this time engaged in a furious civil contest with the king of Poland, the ally of the Porte. The Hungarian fortresses were also repaired, and vast warlike preparations made along the Danube, as the peace which for fifty years had subsisted with the empire appeared on the verge of inevitable rupture. The succession to the principality of Transylvania, the suzerainté of which had long been a point of dispute between the Porte and Austria, was now contested between Kemény and Michael Abaffi—the latter being the nominee of the sultan, while Kemény was supported by the emperor, to whom the late Prince Racoczy had transferred his allegiance a short time before his death in battle against the Turks, in 1660. The Imperialists and Turks had more than once encountered each other as auxiliaries of the rival candidates, and Kiuprili was on the point of repairing in person to the scene of action, when he died at Adrianople of dropsy, (Oct. 31, 1661,) in the eighty-sixth year of his age, and was buried in a splendid mausoleum, which he had erected for himself, near the Tauk-bazar (poultry market) at Constantinople—the vault of which, during his life, he had daily filled with corn, which was then distributed to the poor to purchase their prayers! "Thus," says a Turkish annalist, "died Kiuprili-Mohammed, who was most zealous and active in the cause of the faith! Enjoying absolute power, and being anxious to purify the Ottoman empire, he slew in Anatolia 400,000[9] rebels, including seventeen vizirs or pashas of three tails, forty-one of two tails, seventy sandjak-beys, three mallahs, and a Moghrabiu sheikh. May God be merciful to him!"

The genius of the Ottoman institutions is so directly opposed to any thing like the perpetuation of offices in a family, which might tend to endanger the despotism of the throne by the creation of an hereditary aristocracy, that even in the inferior ranks, an instance had hitherto scarcely been known of a son succeeding his father. The immediate appointment, therefore, of Fazil-Ahmed, the eldest son of the deceased minister, to the vizirat, was so complete a departure from all established usages, as at once demonstrated to the expectant courtiers that the influence of the crafty old vizir had survived him, and that "the star of the house of Kiuprili" (in the words of a Turkish writer) "had only set in the west to rise again with fresh splendour in the east." Ahmed-Kiuprili was now thirty-two years of age, and joined to an intellect not less naturally vigorous than that of his father, those advantages of education in which the latter had been deficient. At an early age he had been placed under the historian, Abdul-Aziz Effendi, as a student of divinity and law, in the *medressah*

[9] This monstrous exaggeration is reduced by Rycaut to the more credible, but still enormous number of 36,000 victims during the five years of his ministry.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.