

**BENJAMIN
DISRAELI**

HENRIETTA
TEMPLE: A
LOVE STORY

Benjamin Disraeli
Henrietta Temple: A Love Story

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Henrietta Temple: A Love Story:

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Earl of Beaconsfield Benjamin Disraeli Henrietta Temple: A Love Story

BOOK I

CHAPTER I

Some Account of the Family of Armine, and Especially of Sir Ferdinand and of Sir Ratcliffe.

THE family of Armine entered England with William the Norman. Ralph d'Armyn was standard-bearer of the Conqueror, and shared prodigally in the plunder, as appears by Doomsday Book. At the time of the general survey the family of Ermyn, or Armyn, possessed numerous manors in Nottinghamshire, and several in the shire of Lincoln. William D'Armyn, lord of the honour of Armyn, was one of the subscribing Barons to the Great Charter. His predecessor died in the Holy Land before Ascalon. A succession of stout barons and valiant knights maintained the high fortunes of the family; and in the course of the various

struggles with France they obtained possession of several fair castles in Guienne and Gascony. In the Wars of the Roses the Armyns sided with the house of Lancaster. Ferdinand Armyn, who shared the exile of Henry the Seventh, was knighted on Bosworth Field, and soon after created Earl of Tewkesbury. Faithful to the Church, the second Lord Tewkesbury became involved in one of those numerous risings that harassed the last years of Henry the Eighth. The rebellion was unsuccessful, Lord Tewkesbury was beheaded, his blood attainted, and his numerous estates forfeited to the Crown. A younger branch of the family, who had adopted Protestantism, married the daughter of Sir Francis Walsingham, and attracted, by his talents in negotiation, the notice of Queen Elizabeth. He was sent on a secret mission to the Low Countries, where, having greatly distinguished himself, he obtained on his return the restoration of the family estate of Armine, in Nottinghamshire, to which he retired after an eminently prosperous career, and amused the latter years of his life in the construction of a family mansion, built in that national style of architecture since described by the name of his royal mistress, at once magnificent and convenient. His son, Sir Walsingham Armine, figured in the first batch of baronets under James the First.

During the memorable struggle between the Crown and the Commons, in the reign of the unhappy Charles, the Armine family became distinguished Cavaliers. The second Sir Walsingham raised a troop of horse, and gained great credit

by charging at the head of his regiment and defeating Sir Arthur Haselrigg's Cuirassiers. It was the first time that that impenetrable band had been taught to fly; but the conqueror was covered with wounds. The same Sir Walsingham also successfully defended Armine House against the Commons, and commanded the cavalry at the battle of Newbury, where two of his brothers were slain. For these various services and sufferings Sir Walsingham was advanced to the dignity of a baron of the realm, by the title of Lord Armine, of Armine, in the county of Nottingham. He died without issue, but the baronetcy devolved on his youngest brother, Sir Ferdinando.

The Armine family, who had relapsed into popery, followed the fortunes of the second James, and the head of the house died at St. Germain. His son, however, had been prudent enough to remain in England and support the new dynasty, by which means he contrived to secure his title and estates. Roman Catholics, however, the Armines always remained, and this circumstance accounts for this once-distinguished family no longer figuring in the history of their country. So far, therefore, as the house of Armine was concerned, time flew during the next century with immemorable wing. The family led a secluded life on their estate, intermarrying only with the great Catholic families, and duly begetting baronets.

At length arose, in the person of the last Sir Ferdinand Armine, one of those extraordinary and rarely gifted beings who require only an opportunity to influence the fortunes of their

nation, and to figure as a Cæsar or an Alcibiades. Beautiful, brilliant, and ambitious, the young and restless Armine quitted, in his eighteenth year, the house of his fathers, and his stepdame of a country, and entered the Imperial service. His blood and creed gained him a flattering reception; his skill and valour soon made him distinguished. The world rang with stories of his romantic bravery, his gallantries, his eccentric manners, and his political intrigues, for he nearly contrived to be elected King of Poland. Whether it were disgust at being foiled in this high object by the influence of Austria, or whether, as was much whispered at the time, he had dared to urge his insolent and unsuccessful suit on a still more delicate subject to the Empress Queen herself, certain it is that Sir Ferdinand suddenly quitted the Imperial service, and appeared at Constantinople in person. The man whom a point of honour prevented from becoming a Protestant in his native country had no scruples about his profession of faith at Stamboul: certain it is that the English baronet soon rose high in the favour of the Sultan, assumed the Turkish dress, conformed to the Turkish customs, and finally, led against Austria a division of the Turkish army. Having gratified his pique by defeating the Imperial forces in a sanguinary engagement, and obtaining a favourable peace for the Porte, Sir Ferdinand Armine doffed his turban, and suddenly reappeared in his native country. After the sketch we have given of the last ten years of his life, it is unnecessary to observe that Sir Ferdinand Armine immediately became what is called fashionable; and, as he was

now in Protestant England, the empire of fashion was the only one in which the young Catholic could distinguish himself. Let us then charitably set down to the score of his political disabilities the fantastic dissipation and the frantic prodigality in which the liveliness of his imagination and the energy of his soul exhausted themselves. After three startling years he married the Lady Barbara Ratcliffe, whose previous divorce from her husband, the Earl of Faulconville, Sir Ferdinand had occasioned. He was, however, separated from his lady during the first year of their more hallowed union, and, retiring to Rome, Sir Ferdinand became apparently devout. At the end of a year he offered to transfer the whole of his property to the Church, provided the Pope would allow him an annuity and make him a cardinal. His Holiness not deeming it fit to consent to the proposition, Sir Ferdinand quitted his capital in a huff, and, returning to England, laid claim to the peerages of Tewkesbury and Armine. Although assured of failing in these claims, and himself perhaps as certain of ill success as his lawyers, Sir Ferdinand nevertheless expended upwards of 60,000L. in their promotion, and was amply repaid for the expenditure in the gratification of his vanity by keeping his name before the public. He was never content except when he was astonishing mankind; and while he was apparently exerting all his efforts to become a King of Poland, a Roman cardinal, or an English peer, the crown, the coronet, and the scarlet hat were in truth ever secondary points with him, compared to the sensation throughout Europe which the effort was contrived and

calculated to ensure.

On his second return to his native country Sir Ferdinand had not re-entered society. For such a man, society, with all its superficial excitement, and all the shadowy variety with which it attempts to cloud the essential monotony of its nature, was intolerably dull and commonplace. Sir Ferdinand, on the contrary, shut himself up in Armine, having previously announced to the world that he was going to write his memoirs. This history, the construction of a castle, and the prosecution of his claims before the House of Lords, apparently occupied his time to his satisfaction, for he remained quiet for several years, until, on the breaking out of the French Revolution, he hastened to Paris, became a member of the Jacobin Club, and of the National Convention. The name of Citizen Armine appears among the regicides. Perhaps in this vote he avenged the loss of the crown of Poland, and the still more mortifying repulse he may have received from the mother of Marie Antoinette. After the execution of the royal victims, however, it was discovered that Citizen Armine had made them an offer to save their lives and raise an insurrection in La Vendue, provided he was made Lieutenant-general of the kingdom. At his trial, which, from the nature of the accusation and the character of the accused, occasioned to his gratification a great sensation, he made no effort to defend himself, but seemed to glory in the chivalric crime. He was hurried to the guillotine, and met his fate with the greatest composure, assuring the public with a

mysterious air, that had he lived four-and-twenty hours longer everything would have been arranged, and the troubles which he foresaw impending for Europe prevented. So successfully had Armine played his part, that his mysterious and doubtful career occasioned a controversy, from which only the appearance of Napoleon distracted universal attention, and which, indeed, only wholly ceased within these few years. What were his intentions? Was he or was he not a sincere Jacobin? If he made the offer to the royal family, why did he vote for their death? Was he resolved, at all events, to be at the head of one of the parties? A middle course would not suit such a man; and so on. Interminable were the queries and their solutions, the pamphlets and the memoirs, which the conduct of this vain man occasioned, and which must assuredly have appeased his manes. Recently it has been discovered that the charge brought against Armine was perfectly false and purely malicious. Its victim, however, could not resist the dazzling celebrity of the imaginary crime, and he preferred the reputation of closing his career by conduct which at once perplexed and astonished mankind, to a vindication which would have deprived his name of some brilliant accessories, and spared him to a life of which he was perhaps wearied.

By the unhappy victim of his vanity and passion Sir Ferdinand Armine left one child, a son, whom he had never seen, now Sir Ratcliffe. Brought up in sadness and in seclusion, education had faithfully developed the characteristics of a reserved and melancholy mind. Pride of lineage and sentiments of religion,

which even in early youth darkened into bigotry, were not incompatible with strong affections, a stern sense of duty, and a spirit of chivalric honour. Limited in capacity, he was, however, firm in purpose. Trembling at the name of his father, and devoted to the unhappy parent whose presence he had scarcely ever quitted, a word of reproach had never escaped his lips against the chieftain of his blood, and one, too, whose career, how little soever his child could sympathise with it, still maintained, in men's mouths and minds, the name and memory of the house of Armine. At the death of his father Sir Ratcliffe had just attained his majority, and he succeeded to immense estates encumbered with mortgages, and to considerable debts, which his feelings of honour would have compelled him to discharge, had they indeed been enforced by no other claim. The estates of the family, on their restoration, had not been entailed; but, until Sir Ferdinand no head of the house had abused the confidence of his ancestors, and the vast possessions of the house of Armine had descended unimpaired; and unimpaired, so far as he was concerned, Sir Ratcliffe determined they should remain. Although, by the sale of the estates, not only the encumbrances and liabilities might have been discharged, but himself left in possession of a moderate independence, Sir Ratcliffe at once resolved to part with nothing. Fresh sums were raised for the payment of the debts, and the mortgages now consumed nearly the whole rental of the lands on which they were secured. Sir Ratcliffe obtained for himself only an annuity of three hundred per annum, which

he presented to his mother, in addition to the small portion which she had received on her first marriage; and for himself, visiting Armine Place for the first time, he roamed for a few days with sad complacency about that magnificent demesne, and then, taking down from the walls of the magnificent hall the sabre with which his father had defeated the Imperial host, he embarked for Cadiz, and shortly after his arrival obtained a commission in the Spanish service.

Although the hereditary valour of the Armines had descended to their forlorn representative, it is not probable that, under any circumstances, Sir Ratcliffe would have risen to any eminence in the country of his temporary adoption. His was not one of those minds born to command and to create; and his temper was too proud to serve and to solicit. His residence in Spain, however, was not altogether without satisfaction. It was during this sojourn that he gained the little knowledge of life and human nature he possessed; and the creed and solemn manners of the land harmonised with his faith and habits. Among these strangers, too, the proud young Englishman felt not so keenly the degradation of his house; and sometimes, though his was not the fatal gift of imagination, sometimes he indulged in day dreams of its rise. Unpractised in business, and not gifted with that intuitive quickness which supplies experience and often baffles it, Ratcliffe Armine, who had not quitted the domestic hearth even for the purposes of education, was yet fortunate enough to possess a devoted friend: and this was Glastonbury, his tutor,

and confessor to his mother. It was to him that Sir Ratcliffe intrusted the management of his affairs, with a confidence which was deserved; for Glastonbury sympathised with all his feelings, and was so wrapped up in the glory of the family, that he had no greater ambition in life than to become their historiographer, and had been for years employed in amassing materials for a great work dedicated to their celebrity.

When Ratcliffe Armine had been absent about three years his mother died. Her death was unexpected. She had not fulfilled two-thirds of the allotted period of the Psalmist, and in spite of many sorrows she was still beautiful. Glastonbury, who communicated to him the intelligence in a letter, in which he vainly attempted to suppress his own overwhelming affliction, counselled his immediate return to England, if but for a season; and the unhappy Ratcliffe followed his advice. By the death of his mother, Sir Ratcliffe Armine became possessed, for the first time, of a small but still an independent income; and having paid a visit, soon after his return to his native country, to a Catholic nobleman to whom his acquaintance had been of some use when travelling in Spain, he became enamored of one of his daughters, and his passion being returned, and not disapproved by the father, he was soon after married to Constance, the eldest daughter of Lord Grandison.

CHAPTER II

Armine Described.

AFTER his marriage Sir Ratcliffe determined to reside at Armine. In one of the largest parks in England there yet remained a fragment of a vast Elizabethan pile, that in old days bore the name of Armine Place. When Sir Ferdinand had commenced building Armine Castle, he had pulled down the old mansion, partly for the sake of its site and partly for the sake of its materials. Long lines of turreted and many-windowed walls, tall towers, and lofty arches, now rose in picturesque confusion on the green ascent where heretofore old Sir Walsingham had raised the fair and convenient dwelling, which he justly deemed might have served the purpose of a long posterity. The hall and chief staircase of the castle and a gallery alone were finished, and many a day had Sir Ferdinand passed in arranging the pictures, the armour, and choice rarities of these magnificent apartments. The rest of the building was a mere shell; nor was it in all parts even roofed in. Heaps of bricks and stone and piles of timber appeared in every direction; and traces of the sudden stoppage of a great work might be observed in the temporary saw-pits still remaining, the sheds for the workmen, and the kilns and furnaces, which never had been removed. Time, however, that had stained the neglected towers with an antique tint, and had

permitted many a generation of summer birds to build their sunny nests on all the coignes of vantage of the unfinished walls, had exercised a mellowing influence even on these rude accessories, and in the course of years they had been so drenched by the rain, and so buffeted by the wind, and had become so covered with moss and ivy, that they rather added to than detracted from the picturesque character of the whole mass.

A few hundred yards from the castle, but situate on the same verdant rising ground, and commanding, although well sheltered, an extensive view over the wide park, was the fragment of the old Place that we have noticed. The rough and undulating rent which marked the severance of the building was now thickly covered with ivy, which in its gamesome luxuriance had contrived also to climb up a remaining stack of tall chimneys, and to spread over the covering of the large oriel window. This fragment contained a set of pleasant chambers, which, having been occupied by the late baronet, were of course furnished with great taste and comfort; and there was, moreover, accommodation sufficient for a small establishment. Armine Place, before Sir Ferdinand, unfortunately for his descendants, determined in the eighteenth century on building a feudal castle, had been situate in famous pleasure-grounds, which extended at the back of the mansion over a space of some hundred acres. The grounds in the immediate vicinity of the buildings had of course suffered severely, but the far greater portion had only been neglected; and there were some indeed who deemed, as they wandered through

the arbour-walks of this enchanting wilderness, that its beauty had been enhanced even by this very neglect. It seemed like a forest in a beautiful romance; a green and bowery wilderness where Boccaccio would have loved to woo, and Watteau to paint. So artfully had the walks been planned, that they seemed interminable, nor was there a single point in the whole pleasure where the keenest eye could have detected a limit. Sometimes you wandered in those arched and winding walks dear to pensive spirits; sometimes you emerged on a plot of turf blazing in the sunshine, a small and bright savannah, and gazed with wonder on the group of black and mighty cedars that rose from its centre, with their sharp and spreading foliage. The beautiful and the vast blended together; and the moment after you had beheld with delight a bed of geraniums or of myrtles, you found yourself in an amphitheatre of Italian pines. A strange exotic perfume filled the air: you trod on the flowers of other lands; and shrubs and plants, that usually are only trusted from their conservatories, like sultanas from their jealousies, to sniff the air and recall their bloom, here learning from hardship the philosophy of endurance, had struggled successfully even against northern winters, and wantoned now in native and unpruned luxuriance. Sir Ferdinand, when he resided at Armine, was accustomed to fill these pleasure-grounds with macaws and other birds of gorgeous plumage; but these had fled away with their master, all but some swans which still floated on the surface of a lake, which marked the centre of this paradise. In the remains

of the ancient seat of his fathers, Sir Ratcliffe Armine and his bride now sought a home.

The principal chamber of Armine Place was a large irregular room, with a low but richly-carved oaken roof, studded with achievements. This apartment was lighted by the oriel window we have mentioned, the upper panes of which contained some ancient specimens of painted glass, and having been fitted up by Sir Ferdinand as a library, contained a collection of valuable books. From the library you entered through an arched door of glass into a small room, of which, it being much out of repair when the family arrived, Lady Armine had seized the opportunity of gratifying her taste in the adornment. She had hung it with some old-fashioned pea-green damask, that exhibited to a vantage several copies of Spanish paintings by herself, for she was a skilful artist. The third and remaining chamber was the dining-room, a somewhat gloomy chamber, being shadowed by a neighbouring chestnut. A portrait of Sir Ferdinand, when a youth, in a Venetian dress, was suspended over the old-fashioned fireplace; and opposite hung a fine hunting piece by Schneiders. Lady Armine was an amiable and accomplished woman. She had enjoyed the advantage of a foreign education under the inspection of a cautious parent: and a residence on the Continent, while it had afforded her many graces, had not, as unfortunately sometimes is the case, divested her of those more substantial though less showy qualities of which a husband knows the value. She was pious and dutiful:

her manners were graceful, for she had visited courts and mixed in polished circles, but she had fortunately not learnt to affect insensibility as a system, or to believe that the essence of good breeding consists in showing your fellow-creatures that you despise them. Her cheerful temper solaced the constitutional gloom of Sir Ratcliffe, and indeed had originally won his heart, even more than her remarkable beauty: and while at the same time she loved a country life, she possessed in a lettered taste, in a beautiful and highly cultivated voice, and in a scientific knowledge of music and of painting, all those resources which prevent retirement from degenerating into loneliness. Her foibles, if we must confess that she was not faultless, endeared her to her husband, for her temper reflected his own pride, and she possessed the taste for splendour which was also his native mood, although circumstances had compelled him to stifle its gratification.

Love, pure and profound, had alone prompted the union between Ratcliffe Armine and Constance Grandison Doubtless, like all of her race, she might have chosen amid the wealthiest of the Catholic nobles and gentry one who would have been proud to have mingled his life with hers; but, with a soul not insensible to the splendid accidents of existence, she yielded her heart to one who could repay the rich sacrifice only with devotion. His poverty, his pride, his dangerous and hereditary gift of beauty, his mournful life, his illustrious lineage, his reserved and romantic mind, had at once attracted her fancy and captivated

her heart. She shared all his aspirations and sympathised with all his hopes; and the old glory of the house of Armine, and its revival and restoration, were the object of her daily thoughts, and often of her nightly dreams.

With these feelings Lady Armine settled herself at her new home, scarcely with a pang that the whole of the park in which she lived was let out as grazing ground, and only trusting, as she beheld the groups of ruminating cattle, that the day might yet come for the antlered tenants of the bowers to resume their shady dwellings. The good man and his wife who hitherto had inhabited the old Place, and shown the castle and the pleasance to passing travellers, were, under the new order of affairs, promoted to the respective offices of serving-man and cook, or butler and housekeeper, as they styled themselves in the village. A maiden brought from Grandison to wait on Lady Armine completed the establishment, with her young brother, who, among numerous duties, performed the office of groom, and attended to a pair of beautiful white ponies which Sir Ratcliffe drove in a phaeton. This equipage, which was remarkable for its elegance, was the especial delight of Lady Armine, and certainly the only piece of splendour in which Sir Ratcliffe indulged. As for neighbourhood, Sir Ratcliffe, on his arrival, of course received a visit from the rector of his parish, and, by the courteous medium of this gentleman, he soon occasioned it to be generally understood that he was not anxious that the example of his rector should be followed. The intimation, in spite of much curiosity, was

of course respected. Nobody called upon the Armines. This happy couple, however, were too much engrossed with their own society to require amusement from any other sources than themselves. The honeymoon was passed in wandering in the pleasure-grounds, and in wondering at their own marvellous happiness. Then Lady Armine would sit on a green bank and sing her choicest songs, and Sir Ratcliffe repaid her for her kindness with speeches softer even than serenades. The arrangement of their dwelling occupied the second month; each day witnessed some felicitous yet economical alteration of her creative taste. The third month Lady Armine determined to make a garden.

‘I wish,’ said her affectionate husband, as he toiled with delight in her service, ‘I wish, my dear Constance, that Glastonbury was here; he was such a capital gardener.’

‘Let us ask him, dear Ratcliffe; and, perhaps, for such a friend we have already allowed too great a space of time to elapse without sending an invitation.’

‘Why, we are so happy,’ said Sir Ratcliffe, smiling; ‘and yet Glastonbury is the best creature in the world. I hope you will like him, dear Constance.’

‘I am sure I shall, dear Ratcliffe. Give me that geranium, love. Write to him, to-day; write to Glastonbury to-day.’

CHAPTER III

Arrival of Glastonbury.

ADRIAN GLASTONBURY was a younger son of an old but decayed English family. He had been educated at a college of Jesuits in France, and had entered at an early period of life the service of the Romish Church, whose communion his family had never quitted. At college young Glastonbury had been alike distinguished for his assiduous talents and for the extreme benevolence of his disposition. His was one of those minds to which refinement is natural, and which learning and experience never deprive of simplicity. Apparently his passions were not violent; perhaps they were restrained by his profound piety. Next to his devotion, Glastonbury was remarkable for his taste. The magnificent temples in which the mysteries of the Deity and saints he worshipped were celebrated developed the latent predisposition for the beautiful which became almost the master sentiment of his life. In the inspired and inspiring paintings that crowned the altars of the churches and the cathedrals in which he ministered, Glastonbury first studied art; and it was as he glided along the solemn shade of those Gothic aisles, gazing on the brave groining of the vaulted roofs, whose deep and sublime shadows so beautifully contrasted with the sparkling shrines and the delicate chantries below, that he first imbibed that passion

for the architecture of the Middle Ages that afterwards led him on many a pleasant pilgrimage with no better companions than a wallet and a sketch-book. Indeed, so sensible was Glastonbury of the influence of the early and constant scene of his youth on his imagination, that he was wont to trace his love of heraldry, of which he possessed a remarkable knowledge, to the emblazoned windows that perpetuated the memory and the achievements of many a pious founder.

When Glastonbury was about twenty-one years of age, he unexpectedly inherited from an uncle a sum which, though by no means considerable, was for him a sufficient independence; and as no opening in the service of the Church at this moment offered itself, which he considered it a duty to pursue, he determined to gratify that restless feeling which seems inseparable from the youth of men gifted with fine sensibilities, and which probably arises in an unconscious desire to quit the commonplace and to discover the ideal. He wandered on foot throughout the whole of Switzerland and Italy; and, after more than three years' absence, returned to England with several thousand sketches, and a complete Alpine Hortus Siccus. He was even more proud of the latter than of having kissed the Pope's toe. In the next seven years the life of Glastonbury was nearly equally divided between the duties of his sacred profession and the gratification of his simple and elegant tastes. He resided principally in Lancashire, where he became librarian to a Catholic nobleman of the highest rank, whose notice he had first attracted by publishing a

description of his Grace's residence, illustrated by his drawings. The duke, who was a man of fine taste and antiquarian pursuits, and an exceedingly benevolent person, sought Glastonbury's acquaintance in consequence of the publication, and from that moment a close and cherished intimacy subsisted between them. In the absence of the family, however, Glastonbury found time for many excursions; by means of which he at last completed drawings of all our cathedrals. There remained for him still the abbeys and the minsters of the West of England, a subject on which he was ever eloquent. Glastonbury performed all these excursions on foot, armed only with an ashen staff which he had cut in his early travels, and respecting which he was superstitious; so that he would have no more thought of journeying without this stick than most other people without their hat. Indeed, to speak truth, Glastonbury had been known to quit a house occasionally without that necessary appendage, for, from living much alone, he was not a little absent; but instead of piquing himself on such eccentricities, they ever occasioned him mortification. Yet Glastonbury was an universal favourite, and ever a welcome guest. In his journeys he had no want of hosts; for there was not a Catholic family which would not have been hurt had he passed them without a visit. He was indeed a rarely accomplished personage. An admirable scholar and profound antiquary, he possessed also a considerable practical knowledge of the less severe sciences, was a fine artist, and no contemptible musician. His pen, too, was that of a ready writer; if his sonnets be ever

published, they will rank among the finest in our literature.

Glastonbury was about thirty when he was induced by Lady Barbara Armine to quit a roof where he had passed some happy years, and to undertake the education of her son Ratcliffe, a child of eight years of age. From this time Glastonbury in a great degree withdrew himself from his former connexions, and so completely abandoned his previous mode of life, that he never quitted his new home. His pupil repaid him for his zeal rather by the goodness of his disposition and his unblemished conduct, than by any remarkable brilliancy of talents or acquirements: but Ratcliffe, and particularly his mother, were capable of appreciating Glastonbury; and certain it is, whatever might be the cause, he returned their sympathy with deep emotion, for every thought and feeling of his existence seemed dedicated to their happiness and prosperity.

So great indeed was the shock which he experienced at the unexpected death of Lady Barbara, that for some time he meditated assuming the cowl; and if the absence of his pupil prevented the accomplishment of this project, the plan was only postponed, not abandoned. The speedy marriage of Sir Ratcliffe followed. Circumstances had prevented Glastonbury from being present at the ceremony. It was impossible for him to retire to the cloister without seeing his pupil. Business, if not affection, rendered an interview between them necessary. It was equally impossible for Glastonbury to trouble a bride and bridegroom with his presence. When, however, three months had elapsed, he

began to believe that he might venture to propose a meeting to Sir Ratcliffe; but while he was yet meditating on this step, he was anticipated by the receipt of a letter containing a warm invitation to Armine.

It was a beautiful sunshiny afternoon in June. Lady Armine was seated in front of the Place looking towards the park, and busied with her work; while Sir Ratcliffe, stretched on the grass, was reading to her the last poem of Scott, which they had just received from the neighbouring town.

‘Ratcliffe, my dear,’ said Lady Armine, ‘some one approaches.’

‘A tramper, Constance?’

‘No, no, my love; rise; it is a gentleman.’

‘Who can it be?’ said Sir Ratcliffe, rising; ‘perhaps it is your brother, love. Ah! no, it is—it is Glastonbury!’

And at these words he ran forward, jumped over the iron hurdle which separated their lawn from the park, nor stopped his quick pace until he reached a middle-aged man of very prepossessing appearance, though certainly not unsullied by the dust, for assuredly the guest had travelled far and long.

‘My dear Glastonbury,’ exclaimed Sir Ratcliffe, embracing him, and speaking under the influence of an excitement in which he rarely indulged, ‘I am the happiest fellow alive. How do you do? I will introduce you to Constance directly. She is dying to know you, and quite prepared to love you as much as myself. O! my dear Glastonbury, you have no idea how happy I am. She is

a perfect angel.'

'I am sure of it,' said Glastonbury, seriously.

Sir Ratcliffe hurried his tutor along. 'Here is my best friend, Constance,' he eagerly exclaimed. Lady Armine rose and welcomed Mr. Glastonbury very cordially. 'Your presence, my dear sir, has, I assure you, been long desired by both of us,' she said, with a delightful smile.

'No compliments, believe me,' added Sir Ratcliffe; 'Constance never pays compliments. She fixed upon your own room herself. She always calls it Mr. Glastonbury's room.'

'Ah! madam,' said Mr. Glastonbury, laying his hand very gently on the shoulder of Sir Ratcliffe, and meaning to say something felicitous, 'I know this dear youth well; and I have always thought whoever could claim this heart should be counted a very fortunate woman.'

'And such the possessor esteems herself,' replied Lady Armine with a smile.

Sir Ratcliffe, after a quarter of an hour or so had passed in conversation, said: 'Come, Glastonbury, you have arrived at a good time, for dinner is at hand. Let me show you to your room. I fear you have had a hot day's journey. Thank God, we are together again. Give me your staff; I will take care of it; no fear of that. So, this way. You have seen the old Place before? Take care of that step. I say, Constance,' said Sir Ratcliffe, in a suppressed voice, and running back to his wife, 'how do you like him?'

'Very much indeed.'

‘But do you really?’

‘Really, truly.’

‘Angel!’ exclaimed the gratified Sir Ratcliffe.

CHAPTER IV

Progress of Affairs at Armine.

LIFE is adventurous. Events are perpetually occurring, even in the calmness of domestic existence, which change in an instant the whole train and tenor of our thoughts and feelings, and often materially influence our fortunes and our character. It is strange, and sometimes as profitable as it is singular, to recall our state on the eve of some acquaintance which transfigures our being; with some man whose philosophy revolutionises our mind; with some woman whose charms metamorphose our career. These retrospective meditations are fruitful of self-knowledge.

The visit of Glastonbury was one of those incidents which, from the unexpected results that they occasion, swell into events. He had not been long a guest at Armine before Sir Ratcliffe and his lady could not refrain from mutually communicating to each other the gratification they should feel could Glastonbury be induced to cast his lot among them. His benevolent and placid temper, his many accomplishments, and the entire affection which he evidently entertained for everybody that bore the name, and for everything that related to the fortunes of Armine, all pointed him out as a friend alike to be cherished and to be valued. Under his auspices the garden of the fair Constance soon flourished: his taste guided her pencil, and his voice

accompanied her lute. Sir Ratcliffe, too, thoroughly enjoyed his society: Glastonbury was with him the only link, in life, between the present and the past. They talked over old times together; and sorrowful recollections lost half their bitterness, from the tenderness of his sympathetic reminiscences. Sir Ratcliffe, too, was conscious of the value of such a companion for his gifted wife. And Glastonbury, moreover, among his many accomplishments, had the excellent quality of never being in the way. He was aware that young people, and especially young lovers, are not averse sometimes to being alone; and his friends, in his absence, never felt that he was neglected, because his pursuits were so various and his resources so numerous that they were sure he was employed and amused.

In the pleasaunce of Armine, at the termination of a long turfen avenue of purple beeches, there was a turreted gate, flanked by round towers, intended by Sir Ferdinand for one of the principal entrances of his castle. Over the gate were small but convenient chambers, to which you ascended by a winding stair-. case in one of the towers; the other was a mere shell. It was sunset; the long vista gleamed in the dying rays, that shed also a rich breadth of light over the bold and baronial arch. Our friends had been examining the chambers, and Lady Armine, who was a little wearied by the exertion, stood opposite the building, leaning on her husband and his friend.

‘A man might go far, and find a worse dwelling than that portal,’ said Glastonbury, musingly. ‘Me-thinks life might glide

away pleasantly enough in those little rooms, with one's books and drawings, and this noble avenue for a pensive stroll.'

'I wish to heaven, my dear Glastonbury, you would try the experiment,' said Sir Ratcliffe.

'Ah! do, Mr. Glastonbury,' added Lady Armine, 'take pity upon us!'

'At any rate, it is not so dull as a cloister,' added Sir Ratcliffe; 'and say what they like, there is nothing like living among friends.'

'You would find me very troublesome,' replied Glastonbury, with a smile; and then, turning the conversation, evidently more from embarrassment than distaste, he remarked the singularity of the purple beeches.

Their origin was uncertain; but one circumstance is sure: that, before another month had passed, Glastonbury was a tenant for life of the portal of Armine Castle, and all his books and collections were safely stowed and arranged in the rooms with which he had been so much pleased.

The course of time for some years flowed on happily at Armine. In the second year of their marriage Lady Armine presented her husband with a son. Their family was never afterwards increased, but the proud father was consoled by the sex of his child for the recollection that the existence of his line depended upon the precious contingency of a single life. The boy was christened Ferdinand. With the exception of an annual visit to Lord Grandison, the Armine family never quitted their

home. Necessity as well as taste induced this regularity of life. The affairs of Sir Ratcliffe did not improve. His mortgagees were more strict in their demands of interest than his tenants in payment of their rents. His man of business, who had made his fortune in the service of the family, was not wanting in accommodation to his client; but he was a man of business; he could not sympathise with the peculiar feelings and fancies of Sir Ratcliffe, and he persisted in seizing every opportunity of urging on him the advisability of selling his estates. However, by strict economy and temporary assistance from his lawyer, Sir Ratcliffe, during the first ten years of his marriage, managed to carry on affairs; and though occasional embarrassments sometimes caused him fits of gloom and despondency, the sanguine spirit of his wife, and the confidence in the destiny of their beautiful child which she regularly enforced upon him, maintained on the whole his courage. All their hopes and joys were indeed centred in the education of the little Ferdinand. At ten years of age he was one of those spirited and at the same time docile boys, who seem to combine with the wild and careless grace of childhood the thoughtfulness and self-discipline of maturer age. It was the constant and truthful boast of his parents, that, in spite of all his liveliness, he had never in the whole course of his life disobeyed them. In the village, where he was idolised, they called him 'the little prince;' he was so gentle and so generous, so kind and yet so dignified in his demeanour. His education was remarkable; for though he never quitted home, and lived in such extreme

seclusion, so richly gifted were those few persons with whom he passed his life, that it would have been difficult to have fixed upon a youth, however favoured by fortune, who enjoyed greater advantages for the cultivation of his mind and manners. From the first dawn of the intellect of the young Armine, Glastonbury had devoted himself to its culture; and the kind scholar, who had not shrunk from the painful and patient task of impregnating a young mind with the seeds of knowledge, had bedewed its budding promise with all the fertilising influence of his learning and his taste. As Ferdinand advanced in years, he had participated in the accomplishments of his mother; from her he derived not only a taste for the fine arts, but no unskilful practice. She, too, had cultivated the rich voice with which Nature had endowed him, and it was his mother who taught him not only to sing, but to dance. In more manly accomplishments, Ferdinand could not have found a more skilful instructor than his father, a consummate sportsman, and who, like all his ancestors, was remarkable for his finished horsemanship and the certainty of his aim. Under a roof, too, whose inmates were distinguished for their sincere piety and unaffected virtue, the higher duties of existence were not forgotten; and Ferdinand Armine was early and ever taught to be sincere, dutiful, charitable, and just; and to have a deep sense of the great account hereafter to be delivered to his Creator. The very foibles of his parents which he imbibed tended to the maintenance of his magnanimity. His illustrious lineage was early impressed upon him, and inasmuch as little now

was left to them but their honour, so it was doubly incumbent upon him to preserve that chief treasure, of which fortune could not deprive them, unsullied.

This much of the education of Ferdinand Armine. With great gifts of nature, with lively and highly cultivated talents, and a most affectionate and disciplined temper, he was adored by the friends who nevertheless had too much sense to spoil him. But for his character, what was that? Perhaps, with all their anxiety and all their care, and all their apparent opportunities for observation, the parent and the tutor are rarely skilful in discovering the character of their child or charge. Custom blunts the fineness of psychological study: those with whom we have lived long and early are apt to blend our essential and our accidental qualities in one bewildering association. The consequences of education and of nature are not sufficiently discriminated. Nor is it, indeed, marvellous, that for a long time temperament should be disguised and even stifled by education; for it is, as it were, a contest between a child and a man.

There were moments when Ferdinand Armine loved to be alone, when he could fly from all the fondness of his friends, and roam in solitude amid the wild and desolate pleasure-grounds, or wander for hours in the halls and galleries of the castle, gazing on the pictures of his ancestors. He ever experienced a strange satisfaction in beholding the portrait of his grandfather. He would sometimes stand abstracted for many minutes before the portrait of Sir Ferdinand in the gallery, painted by Reynolds, before his

grandfather left England, and which the child already singularly resembled. But was there any other resemblance between them than form and feature? Did the fiery imagination and the terrible passions of that extraordinary man lurk in the innocent heart and the placid mien of his young descendant? No matter now! Behold, he is a light-hearted and airy child! Thought passes over his brow like a cloud in a summer sky, or the shadow of a bird over the sunshiny earth; and he skims away from the silent hall and his momentary reverie to fly a kite or chase a butterfly!

CHAPTER V

A Domestic Scene.

YEARS glided away without any remarkable incidents in the life of young Ferdinand. He seldom quitted home, except as companion to Glastonbury in his pedestrian excursions, when he witnessed a different kind of life from that displayed in the annual visit which he paid to Grandison. The boy amused his grandfather, with whom, therefore, he became a favourite. The old Lord, indeed, would have had no objection to his grandson passing half the year with him; and he always returned home with a benediction, a letter full of his praises, and a ten-pound note. Lady Armine was quite delighted with these symptoms of affection on the part of her father towards her child, and augured from them important future results. But Sir Ratcliffe, who was not blessed with so sanguine a temperament as his amiable lady, and who, unbiassed by blood, was perhaps better qualified to form an opinion of the character of his father-in-law, never shared her transports, and seldom omitted an opportunity of restraining them.

‘It is all very well, my dear,’ he would observe, ‘for Ferdinand to visit his relations. Lord Grandison is his grandfather. It is very proper that he should visit his grandfather. I like him to be seen at Grandison. That is all very right. Grandison is a

first-rate establishment, where he is certain of meeting persons of his own class, with whom circumstances unhappily,' and here Sir Ratcliffe sighed, 'debar him from mixing; and your father, Constance, is a very good sort of man. I like your father, Constance, you know, very much. No person ever could be more courteous to me than he has ever been. I have no complaints to make of him, Constance; or your brother, or indeed of any member of your family. I like them all. Persons more kind, or more thoroughly bred, I am sure I never knew. And I think they like us. They appear to me to be always really glad to see us, and to be unaffectedly sorry when we quit them. I am sure I should be very happy if it were in my power to return their hospitality, and welcome them at Armine: but it is useless to think of that. God only knows whether we shall be able to remain here ourselves. All I want to make you feel, my love, is, that if you are building any castle in that little brain of yours on the ground of expectations from Grandison, trust me you will be disappointed, my dear, you will, indeed.' 'But, my love—'

'If your father die to-morrow, my dear, he will not leave us a shilling. And who can complain? I cannot. He has always been very frank. I remember when we were going to marry, and I was obliged to talk to him about your portion; I remember it as if it were only yesterday; I remember his saying, with the most flattering smile in the world, "I wish the 5,000L., Sir Ratcliffe, were 50,000L., for your sake; particularly as it will never be in my power to increase it."' "

‘But, my dear Ratcliffe, surely he may do something for his favourite, Ferdinand?’

‘My dear Constance, there you are again! Why *favourite*? I hate the very word. Your father is a good-natured man, a very good-natured man: he is one of the best-natured men I ever was acquainted with. He has not a single care in the world, and he thinks nobody else has; and what is more, my dear, nobody ever could persuade him that anybody else has. He has no idea of our situation; he never could form an idea of it. If I chose to attempt to make him understand it he would listen with the greatest politeness, shrug his shoulders at the end of the story, tell me to keep up my spirits, and order another bottle of Madeira in order that he might illustrate his precept by practice. He is a good-natured selfish man. He likes us to visit him because you are gay and agreeable, and because I never asked a favour of him in the whole course of our acquaintance: he likes Ferdinand to visit him because he is a handsome fine-spirited boy, and his friends congratulate him on having such a grandson. And so Ferdinand is his *favourite*; and next year I should not be surprised were he to give him a pony: and perhaps, if he die, he will leave him fifty guineas to buy a gold watch.’

‘Well, I dare say you are right, Ratcliffe; but still nothing that you can say will ever persuade me that Ferdinand is not papa’s decided favourite.’

‘Well! we shall soon see what this favour is worth,’ retorted Sir Ratcliffe, rather bitterly. ‘Regularly every visit for the last

three years your father has asked me what I intended to do with Ferdinand. I said to him last year more than I thought I ever could say to anyone. I told him that Ferdinand was now fifteen, and that I wished to get him a commission; but that I had no influence to get him a commission, and no money to pay for it if it were offered me. I think that was pretty plain; and I have been surprised ever since that I ever could have placed myself in such a degrading position as to say so much.'

'Degrading, my dear Ratcliffe!' said his wife.

'I felt it as such; and such I still feel it.'

At this moment Glastonbury, who was standing at the other end of the room examining a large folio, and who had evidently been uneasy during the whole conversation, attempted to quit the room.

'My dear Glastonbury,' said Sir Ratcliffe, with a forced smile, 'you are alarmed at our domestic broils. Pray, do not leave the room. You know we have no secrets from you.'

'No, pray do not go, Mr. Glastonbury,' added Lady Armine: 'and if indeed there be a domestic broil,' and here she rose and kissed her husband, 'at any rate witness our reconciliation.'

Sir Ratcliffe smiled, and returned his wife's embrace with much feeling.

'My own Constance,' he said, 'you are the dearest wife in the world; and if I ever feel unhappy, believe me it is only because I do not see you in the position to which you are entitled.'

'I know no fortune to be compared to your love, Ratcliffe; and

as for our child, nothing will ever persuade me that all will not go right, and that he will not restore the fortunes of the family.'

'Amen!' said Glastonbury, closing the book with a reverberating sound. 'Nor indeed can I believe that Providence will ever desert a great and pious line!'

CHAPTER VI

Containing Another Domestic Scene.

LADY ARMINE and Glastonbury were both too much interested in the welfare of Sir Ratcliffe not to observe with deep concern that a great, although gradual, change had occurred in his character during the last five years. He had become moody and querulous, and occasionally even irritable. His constitutional melancholy, long diverted by the influence of a vigorous youth, the society of a charming woman, and the interesting feelings of a father, began to reassert its ancient and essential sway, and at times even to deepen into gloom. Sometimes whole days elapsed without his ever indulging in conversation; his nights, once tranquil, were now remarkable for their restlessness; his wife was alarmed at the sighs and agitation of his dreams. He abandoned also his field sports, and none of those innocent sources of amusement, in which it was once his boast their retirement was so rich, now interested him. In vain Lady Armine sought his society in her walks, or consulted him about her flowers. His frigid and monosyllabic replies discouraged all her efforts. No longer did he lean over her easel, or call for a repetition of his favourite song. At times these dark fits passed away, and if not cheerful, he was at least serene. But on the whole he was an altered man; and his wife could no longer resist the miserable conviction that

he was an unhappy one.

She, however, was at least spared the mortification, the bitterest that a wife can experience, of feeling that this change in his conduct was occasioned by any indifference towards her; for, averse as Sir Ratcliffe was to converse on a subject so hopeless and ungrateful as the state of his fortune, still there were times in which he could not refrain from communicating to the partner of his bosom all the causes of his misery, and these, indeed, too truly had she divined.

‘Alas!’ she would sometimes say as she tried to compose his restless pillow; ‘what is this pride to which you men sacrifice everything? For me, who am a woman, love is sufficient. Oh! my Ratcliffe, why do you not feel like your Constance? What if these estates be sold, still we are Armines! and still our dear Ferdinand is spared to us! Believe me, love, that if deference to your feelings has prompted my silence, I have long felt that it would be wiser for us at once to meet a necessary evil. For God’s sake, put an end to the torture of this life, which is destroying us both. Poverty, absolute poverty, with you and with your love, I can meet even with cheerfulness; but indeed, my Ratcliffe, I can bear our present life no longer; I shall die if you be unhappy. And oh! dearest Ratcliffe, if that were to happen, which sometimes I fear has happened, if you were no longer to love me—’

But here Sir Ratcliffe assured her of the reverse.

‘Only think,’ she would continue, ‘if when we married we had voluntarily done that which we may now be forced to do, we

really should have been almost rich people; at least we should have had quite enough to live in ease, and even elegance. And now we owe thousands to that horrible Bagster, who I am sure cheated your father out of house and home, and I dare say, after all, wants to buy Armine for himself.'

'He buy Armine! An attorney buy Armine! Never, Constance, never! I will be buried in its ruins first. There is no sacrifice that I would not sooner make—'

'But, dearest love, suppose we sell it to some one else, and suppose after paying every thing we have thirty thousand pounds left. How well we could live abroad on the interest of thirty thousand pounds?'

'There would not be thirty thousand pounds left now!'

'Well, five-and-twenty, or even twenty. I could manage on twenty. And then we could buy a commission for dear Ferdinand.'

'But to leave our child!'

'Could not he go into the Spanish service? Perhaps you could get a commission in the Spanish Guards for nothing. They must remember you there. And such a name as Armine! I have no doubt that the king would be quite proud to have another Armine in his guard. And then we could live at Madrid; and that would be so delightful, because you speak Spanish so beautifully, and I could learn it very quickly. I am very quick at learning languages, I am, indeed.'

'I think you are very quick at everything, dear Constance. I

am sure you are really a treasure of a wife; I have cause every hour to bless you; and, if it were not for my own sake, I should say that I wish you had made a happier marriage.'

'Oh! do not say that, Ratcliffe; say anything but that, Ratcliffe. If you love me I am the happiest woman that ever lived. Be sure always of that.'

'I wonder if they do remember me at Madrid!'

'To be sure they do. How could they forget you; how could they forget my Ratcliffe? I daresay you go to this day by the name of the handsome Englishman.'

'Pooh! I remember when I left England before, I had no wife then, no child, but I remembered who I was, and when I thought I was the last of our race, and that I was in all probability going to spill the little blood that was spared of us in a foreign soil, oh, Constance, I do not think I ever could forget the agony of that moment. Had it been for England, I would have met my fate without a pang. No! Constance, I am an Englishman: I am proud of being an Englishman. My fathers helped to make this country what it is; no one can deny that; and no consideration in the world shall ever induce me again to quit this island.'

'But suppose we do not quit England. Suppose we buy a small estate and live at home.'

'A small estate at home! A small, new estate! Bought of a Mr. Hopkins, a great tallow-chandler, or some stock-jobber about to make a new flight from a Lodge to a Park. Oh no! that would be too degrading.'

‘But suppose we keep one of our own manors?’

‘And be reminded every instant of every day of those we have lost; and hear of the wonderful improvements of our successors. I should go mad.’

‘But suppose we live in London?’

‘Where?’

‘I am sure I do not know; but I should think we might get a nice little house somewhere.’

‘In a suburb! a fitting lodgment for Lady Armine. No! at any rate we will have no witnesses to our fall.’

‘But could not we try some place near my father’s?’

‘And be patronised by the great family with whom I had the good fortune of being connected. No! my dear Constance, I like your father very well, but I could not stand his eleemosynary haunches of venison, and great baskets of apples and cream-cheeses sent with the housekeeper’s duty.’

‘But what shall we do, dear Ratcliffe?’

‘My love, there is no resisting fate. We must live or die at Armine, even if we starve.’

‘Perhaps something will turn up. I dreamed the other night that dear Ferdinand married an heiress. Suppose he should? What do you think?’

‘Why, even then, that he would not be as lucky as his father. Good night, love!’

CHAPTER VII

Containing an Unexpected Visit to London, and Its Consequences.

THE day after the conversation in the library to which Glastonbury had been an unwilling listener, he informed his friends that it was necessary for him to visit the metropolis; and as young Ferdinand had never yet seen London, he proposed that he should accompany him. Sir Ratcliffe and Lady Armine cheerfully assented to this proposition; and as for Ferdinand, it is difficult to describe the delight which the anticipation of his visit occasioned him. The three days that were to elapse before his departure did not seem sufficient to ensure the complete packing of his portmanteau: and his excited manner, the rapidity of his conversation, and the restlessness of his movements were very diverting.

‘Mamma! is London twenty times bigger than Nottingham? How big is it, then? Shall we travel all night? What o’clock is it now? I wonder if Thursday will ever come? I think I shall go to bed early, to finish the day sooner. Do you think my cap is good enough to travel in? I shall buy a hat in London. I shall get up early the very first morning, and buy a hat. Do you think my uncle is in London? I wish Augustus were not at Eton, perhaps he would be there. I wonder if Mr. Glastonbury will take me to see St. Paul’s! I wonder if he will take me to the play. I’d give

anything to go to the play. I should like to go to the play and St. Paul's! What fun it will be dining on the road!

It did indeed seem that Thursday would never come; yet it came at last. The travellers were obliged to rise before the sun, and drive over to Nottingham to meet their coach; so they bid their adieus the previous eve. As for Ferdinand, so fearful was he of losing the coach, that he scarcely slept, and was never convinced that he was really in time, until he found himself planted in breathless agitation outside of the Dart light-post-coach. It was the first time in his life that he had ever travelled outside of a coach. He felt all the excitement of expanding experience and advancing manhood. They whirled along: at the end of every stage Ferdinand followed the example of his fellow-travellers and dismounted, and then with sparkling eyes hurried to Glastonbury, who was inside, to inquire how he sped. 'Capital travelling, isn't it, sir? Did the ten miles within the hour. You have no idea what a fellow our coachman is; and the guard, such a fellow our guard! Don't wait here a moment. Can I get anything for you? We dine at Mill-field. What fun!'

Away whirled the dashing Dart over the rich plains of our merry midland; a quick and dazzling vision of golden corn-fields and lawny pasture land; farmhouses embowered in orchards and hamlets shaded by the straggling members of some vast and ancient forest. Then rose in the distance the dim blue towers, or the graceful spire, of some old cathedral, and soon the spreading causeways announced their approach to some provincial capital.

The coachman flanks his leaders, who break into a gallop; the guard sounds his triumphant bugle; the coach bounds over the noble bridge that spans a stream covered with craft; public buildings, guildhalls, and county gaols rise on each side. Rattling through many an inferior way they at length emerge into the High Street, the observed of all observers, and mine host of the Red Lion, or the White Hart, followed by all his waiters, advances from his portal with a smile to receive the ‘gentlemen passengers.’

‘The coach stops here half an hour, gentlemen: dinner quite ready!’

‘Tis a delightful sound. And what a dinner! What a profusion of substantial delicacies! What mighty and iris-tinted rounds of beef! What vast and marble-veined ribs! What gelatinous veal pies! What colossal hams! Those are evidently prize cheeses! And how invigorating is the perfume of those various and variegated pickles! Then the bustle emulating the plenty; the ringing of bells, the clash of thoroughfare, the summoning of ubiquitous waiters, and the all-pervading feeling of omnipotence, from the guests, who order what they please, to the landlord, who can produce and execute everything they can desire. ‘Tis a wondrous sight. Why should a man go and see the pyramids and cross the desert, when he has not beheld York Minster or travelled on the Road! Our little Ferdinand amid all this novelty heartily enjoyed himself, and did ample justice to mine host’s good cheer. They were soon again whirling along the road; but at sunset, Ferdinand, at the instance of Glastonbury, availed himself

of his inside place, and, wearied by the air and the excitement of the day, he soon fell soundly asleep.

Several hours had elapsed, when, awaking from a confused dream in which Armine and all he had lately seen were blended together, he found his fellow-travellers slumbering, and the mail dashing along through the illuminated streets of a great city. The streets were thickly thronged. Ferdinand stared at the magnificence of the shops blazing with lights, and the multitude of men and vehicles moving in all directions. The guard sounded his bugle with treble energy, and the coach suddenly turned through an arched entrance into the court-yard of an old-fashioned inn. His fellow-passengers started and rubbed their eyes.

‘So! we have arrived, I suppose,’ grumbled one of these gentlemen, taking off his night-cap.

‘Yes, gentlemen, I am happy to say our journey is finished,’ said a more polite voice; ‘and a very pleasant one I have found it. Porter, have the goodness to call me a coach.’

‘And one for me,’ added the gruff voice.

‘Mr. Glastonbury,’ whispered the awe-struck Ferdinand, ‘is this London?’

‘This is London: but we have yet two or three miles to go before we reach our quarters. I think we had better alight and look after our luggage. Gentlemen, good evening!’

Mr. Glastonbury hailed a coach, into which, having safely deposited their portmanteaus, he and Ferdinand entered; but

our young friend was so entirely overcome by his feelings and the genius of the place, that he was quite unable to make an observation. Each minute the streets seemed to grow more spacious and more brilliant, and the multitude more dense and more excited. Beautiful buildings, too, rose before him; palaces, and churches, and streets, and squares of imposing architecture; to his inexperienced eye and unsophisticated spirit their route appeared a never-ending triumph. To the hackney-coachman, however, who had no imagination, and who was quite satiated with metropolitan experience, it only appeared that he had had an exceeding good fare, and that he was jogging up from Bishopsgate Street to Charing Cross.

When Jarvis, therefore, had safely deposited his charge at Morley's Hotel, in Cockspur Street, and extorted from them an extra shilling, in consideration of their evident rustication, he bent his course towards the Opera House; for clouds were gathering, and, with the favour of Providence, there seemed a chance about midnight of picking up some helpless beau, or desperate cabless dandy, the choicest victim, in a midnight shower, of these public conveyancers.

The coffee-room at Morley's was a new scene of amusement to Ferdinand, and he watched with great diversion the two evening papers portioned out among twelve eager quidnuncs, and the evident anxiety which they endured, and the nice diplomacies to which they resorted, to obtain the envied journals. The entrance of our two travellers so alarmingly increasing the

demand over the supply, at first seemed to attract considerable and not very friendly notice; but when a malignant half-pay officer, in order to revenge himself for the restless watchfulness of his neighbour, a political doctor of divinity, offered the journal, which he had long finished, to Glastonbury, and it was declined, the general alarm visibly diminished. Poor Mr. Glastonbury had never looked into a newspaper in his life, save the County Chronicle, to which he occasionally contributed a communication, giving an account of the digging up of some old coins, signed Antiquarius; or of the exhumation of some fossil remains, to which he more boldly appended his initials.

In spite of the strange clatter in the streets, Ferdinand slept well, and the next morning, after an early breakfast, himself and his fellow-traveller set out on their peregrinations. Young and sanguine, full of health and enjoyment, innocent and happy, it was with difficulty that Ferdinand could restrain his spirits as he mingled in the bustle of the streets. It was a bright sunny morning, and although the end of June, the town was yet quite full.

‘Is this Charing Cross, sir? I wonder if we shall ever be able to get over. Is this the fullest part of the town, sir? What a fine day, sir! How lucky we are in the weather! We are lucky in everything! Whose house is that? Northumberland House! Is it the Duke of Northumberland’s? Does he live there? How I should like to see it! Is it very fine? Who is that? What is this? The Admiralty; oh! let me see the Admiralty! The Horse

Guards! Oh! where, where? Let us set our watches by the Horse Guards. The guard of our coach always sets his watch by the Horse Guards. Mr. Glastonbury, which is the best clock, the Horse Guards, or St. Paul's? Is that the Treasury? Can we go in? That is Downing Street, is it? I never heard of Downing Street. What do they do in Downing Street? Is this Charing Cross still, or is it Parliament Street? Where does Charing Cross end, and where does Parliament Street begin? By Jove, I see Westminster Abbey!

After visiting Westminster Abbey and the two Houses of Parliament, Mr. Glastonbury, looking at his watch, said it was now time to call upon a friend of his who lived in St. James's Square. This was the nobleman with whom early in life Glastonbury had been connected, and with whom and whose family he had become so great a favourite, that, notwithstanding his retired life, they had never permitted the connexion entirely to subside. During the very few visits which he had made to the metropolis, he always called in St. James's Square and his reception always assured him that his remembrance imparted pleasure.

When Glastonbury sent up his name he was instantly admitted, and ushered up stairs. The room was full, but it consisted only of a family party. The mother of the Duke, who was an interesting personage, with fine grey hair, a clear blue eye, and a soft voice, was surrounded by her great-grandchildren, who were at home for the Midsummer holidays, and who had gathered

together at her rooms this morning to consult upon amusements. Among them was the heir presumptive of the house, a youth of the age of Ferdinand, and of a prepossessing appearance. It was difficult to meet a more amiable and agreeable family, and nothing could exceed the kindness with which they all welcomed Glastonbury. The Duke himself soon appeared. 'My dear, dear Glastonbury,' he said, 'I heard you were here, and I would come. This shall be a holiday for us all. Why, man, you bury yourself alive!'

'Mr. Armine,' said the Duchess, pointing to Ferdinand.

'Mr. Armine, how do you do? Your grandfather and I were well acquainted. I am glad to know his grandson. I hope your father, Sir Ratcliffe, and Lady Armine are well. My dear Glastonbury, I hope you have come to stay a long time. You must dine with us every day. You know we are very old-fashioned people; we do not go much into the world; so you will always find us at home, and we will do what we can to amuse your young friend. Why, I should think he was about the same age as Digby? Is he at Eton? His grandfather was. I shall never forget the time he cut off old Barnard's pig-tail. He was a wonderful man, poor Sir Ferdinand! he was indeed.'

While his Grace and Glastonbury maintained their conversation, Ferdinand conducted himself with so much spirit and propriety towards the rest of the party, and gave them such a lively and graceful narrative of all his travels up to town, and the wonders he had already witnessed, that they were quite

delighted with him; and, in short, from this moment, during his visit to London he was scarcely ever out of their society, and every day became a greater favourite with them. His letters to his mother, for he wrote to her almost every day, recounted all their successful efforts for his amusement, and it seemed that he passed his mornings in a round of sight-seeing, and that he went to the play every night of his life. Perhaps there never existed a human being who at this moment more thoroughly enjoyed life than Ferdinand Armine.

In the meantime, while he thought only of amusement, Mr. Glastonbury was not inattentive to his more important interests; for the truth is that this excellent man had introduced him to the family only with the hope of interesting the feelings of the Duke in his behalf. His Grace was a man of a generous disposition. He sympathised with the recital of Glastonbury as he detailed to him the unfortunate situation of this youth, sprung from so illustrious a lineage, and yet cut off by a combination of unhappy circumstances from almost all those natural sources whence he might have expected support and countenance. And when Glastonbury, seeing that the Duke's heart was moved, added that all he required for him, Ferdinand, was a commission in the army, for which his parents were prepared to advance the money, his Grace instantly declared that he would exert all his influence to obtain their purpose.

Mr. Glastonbury was, therefore, more gratified than surprised when, a few days after the conversation which we have

mentioned, his noble friend informed him, with a smile, that he believed all might be arranged, provided his young charge could make it convenient to quit England at once. A vacancy had unexpectedly occurred in a regiment just ordered to Malta, and an ensigncy had been promised to Ferdinand Armine. Mr. Glastonbury gratefully closed with the offer. He sacrificed a fourth part of his moderate independence in the purchase of the commission and the outfit of his young friend, and had the supreme satisfaction, ere the third week of their visit was completed, of forwarding a Gazette to Armine, containing the appointment of Ferdinand Armine as Ensign in the Royal Fusiliers.

CHAPTER VIII

A Visit to Glastonbury's Chamber.

IT WAS arranged that Ferdinand should join his regiment by the next Mediterranean packet, which was not to quit Falmouth for a fortnight. Glastonbury and himself, therefore, lost no time in bidding adieu to their kind friends in London, and hastening to Armine. They arrived the day after the Gazette. They found Sir Ratcliffe waiting for them at the town, and the fond smile and cordial embrace with which he greeted Glastonbury more than repaid that good man for all his exertions. There was, notwithstanding, a perceptible degree of constraint both on the part of the baronet and his former tutor. It was evident that Sir Ratcliffe had something on his mind of which he wished to disburden himself; and it was equally apparent that Glastonbury was unwilling to afford him an opportunity. Under these rather awkward circumstances, it was perhaps fortunate that Ferdinand talked without ceasing, giving his father an account of all he had seen, done, and heard, and of all the friends he had made, from the good Duke of—to that capital fellow, the guard of the coach.

They were at the park gates: Lady Armine was there to meet them. The carriage stopped; Ferdinand jumped out and embraced his mother. She kissed him, and ran forward and extended both her hands to Mr. Glastonbury. 'Deeds, not words,

must show our feelings,' she said, and the tears glittered in her beautiful eyes; Glastonbury, with a blush, pressed her hand to his lips. After dinner, during which Ferdinand recounted all his adventures, Lady Armine invited him, when she rose, to walk with her in the garden. It was then, with an air of considerable confusion, clearing his throat, and filling his glass at the same time, that Sir Ratcliffe said to his remaining guest,

'My dear Glastonbury, you cannot suppose that I believe that the days of magic have returned. This commission, both Constance and myself feel, that is, we are certain, that you are at the bottom of it all. The commission is purchased. I could not expect the Duke, deeply as I feel his generous kindness, to purchase a commission for my son: I could not permit it. No! Glastonbury,' and here Sir Ratcliffe became more animated, '*you* could not permit it, my honour is safe in your hands?' Sir Ratcliffe paused for a reply.

'On that score my conscience is clear,' replied Glastonbury.

'It is, then,—it must be then as I suspect,' rejoined Sir Ratcliffe. 'I am your debtor for this great service.'

'It is easy to count your obligations to me,' said Glastonbury, 'but mine to you and yours are incalculable.'

'My dear Glastonbury,' said Sir Ratcliffe, pushing his glass away as he rose from his seat and walked up and down the room, 'I may be proud, but I have no pride for you, I owe you too much; indeed, my dear friend, there is nothing that I would not accept from you, were it in your power to grant what you would desire.'

It is not pride, my dear Glastonbury; do not mistake me; it is not pride that prompts this explanation; but—but—had I your command of language I would explain myself more readily; but the truth is, I—I—I cannot permit that you should suffer for us, Glastonbury, I cannot indeed.'

Mr. Glastonbury looked at Sir Ratcliffe steadily; then rising from his seat he took the baronet's arm, and without saying a word walked slowly towards the gates of the castle where he lodged, and which we have before described. When he had reached the steps of the tower he withdrew his arm, and saying, 'Let me be pioneer,' invited Sir Ratcliffe to follow him. They accordingly entered his chamber.

It was a small room lined with shelves of books, except in one spot, where was suspended a portrait of Lady Barbara, which she had bequeathed him in her will. The floor was covered with so many boxes and cases that it was not very easy to steer a course when you had entered. Glastonbury, however, beckoned to his companion to seat himself in one of his two chairs, while he unlocked a small cabinet, from a drawer of which he brought forth a paper.

'It is my will,' said Glastonbury, handing it to Sir Ratcliffe, who laid it down on the table.

'Nay, I wish you, my dear friend, to peruse it, for it concerns yourself.'

'I would rather learn its contents from yourself, if you positively desire me,' replied Sir Ratcliffe.

‘I have left everything to our child,’ said Glastonbury; for thus, when speaking to the father alone, he would often style the son.

‘May it be long before he enjoys the ‘bequest,’ said Sir Ratcliffe, brushing away a tear; ‘long, very long.’

‘As the Almighty pleases,’ said Glastonbury, crossing himself. ‘But living or dead, I look upon all as Ferdinand’s, and hold myself but the steward of his inheritance, which I will never abuse.’

‘O! Glastonbury, no more of this I pray; you have wasted a precious life upon our forlorn race. Alas! how often and how keenly do I feel, that had it not been for the name of Armine your great talents and goodness might have gained for you an enviable portion of earthly felicity; yes, Glastonbury, you have sacrificed yourself to us.’

‘Would that I could!’ said the old man, with brightening eyes and an unaccustomed energy of manner. ‘Would that I could! would that any act of mine, I care not what, could revive the fortunes of the house of Armine. Honoured for ever be the name, which with me is associated with all that is great and glorious in man, and [here his voice faltered, and he turned away his face] exquisite and enchanting in woman!’

‘No, Ratcliffe,’ he resumed, ‘by the memory of one I cannot name, by that blessed and saintly being from whom you derive your life, you will not, you cannot deny this last favour I ask, I entreat, I supplicate you to accord me: me, who have ever eaten of your bread, and whom your roof hath ever shrouded!’

‘My friend, I cannot speak,’ said Sir Ratcliffe, throwing himself back in the chair and covering his face with his right hand; ‘I know not what to say; I know not what to feel.’

Glastonbury advanced, and gently took his other hand. ‘Dear Sir Ratcliffe,’ he observed, in his usual calm, sweet voice, ‘if I have erred you will pardon me. I did believe that, after my long and intimate connection with your house; after having for nearly forty years sympathised as deeply with all your fortunes as if, indeed, your noble blood flowed in these old veins; after having been honoured on your side with a friendship which has been the consolation and charm of my existence; indeed, too great a blessing; I did believe, more especially when I reminded myself of the unrestrained manner in which I had availed myself of the advantages of that friendship, I did believe, actuated by feelings which perhaps I cannot describe, and thoughts to which I cannot now give utterance, that I might venture, without offence, upon this slight service: ay, that the offering might be made in the spirit of most respectful affection, and not altogether be devoid of favour in your sight.’

‘Excellent, kind-hearted man!’ said Sir Ratcliffe, pressing the hand of Glastonbury in his own; ‘I accept your offering in the spirit of perfect love. Believe me, dearest friend, it was no feeling of false pride that for a moment influenced me; I only felt-’

‘That in venturing upon this humble service I deprived myself of some portion of my means of livelihood: you are mistaken. When I cast my lot at Armine I sank a portion of my capital

on my life; so slender are my wants here, and so little does your dear lady permit me to desire, that, believe me, I have never yet expended upon myself this apportioned income; and as for the rest, it is, as you have seen, destined for our Ferdinand. Yet a little time and Adrian Glastonbury must be gathered to his fathers. Why, then, deprive him of the greatest gratification of his remaining years? the consciousness that, to be really serviceable to those he loves, it is not necessary for him to cease to exist.'

'May you never repent your devotion to our house!' said Sir Ratcliffe, rising from his seat. 'Time was we could give them who served us something better than thanks; but, at any rate, these come from the heart.'

CHAPTER IX

The Last Day and the Last Night.

IN THE meantime, the approaching I departure of Ferdinand was the great topic of interest at Armine, It was settled that his father should accompany him to Falmouth, where he was to embark; and that they should pay a visit on their way to his grandfather, whose seat was situate in the west of England. This separation, now so near at hand, occasioned Lady Armine the deepest affliction; but she struggled to suppress her emotion. Yet often, while apparently busied with the common occupations of the day, the tears trickled down her cheek; and often she rose from her restless seat, while surrounded by those she loved, to seek the solitude of her chamber and indulge her overwhelming sorrow. Nor was Ferdinand less sensible of the bitterness of this separation. With all the excitement of his new prospects, and the feeling of approaching adventure and fancied independence, so flattering to inexperienced youth, he could not forget that his had been a very happy home. Nearly seventeen years of an innocent existence had passed, undisturbed by a single bad passion, and unsullied by a single action that he could regret. The river of his life had glided along, reflecting only a cloudless sky. But if he had been dutiful and happy, if at this moment of severe examination his conscience were serene, he could not but feel

how much this enviable state of mind was to be attributed to those who had, as it were, imbued his life with love; whose never-varying affection had developed all the kindly feelings of his nature, had anticipated all his wants, and listened to all his wishes; had assisted him in difficulty and guided him in doubt, had invited confidence by kindness, and deserved it by sympathy; had robbed instruction of all its labour, and discipline of all its harshness.

It was the last day; on the morrow he was to quit Armine. He strolled about among the mouldering chambers of the castle, and a host of thoughts and passions, like clouds in a stormy sky, coursed over his hitherto serene and light-hearted breast. In this first great struggle of his soul some symptoms of his latent nature developed themselves, and, amid the rifts of the mental tempest, occasionally he caught some glimpses of self-knowledge. Nature, that had endowed him with a fiery imagination and a reckless courage, had tempered those dangerous, and, hitherto, those undeveloped and untried gifts, with a heart of infinite sensibility. Ferdinand Armine was, in truth, a singular blending of the daring and the soft; and now, as he looked around him and thought of his illustrious and fallen race, and especially of that extraordinary man, of whose splendid and ruinous career, that man's own creation, the surrounding pile, seemed a fitting emblem, he asked himself if he had not inherited the energies with the name of his grandsire, and if their exertion might not yet revive the glories of his line. He felt within him alike the power and the

will; and while he indulged in magnificent reveries of fame and glory and heroic action, of which career, indeed, his approaching departure was to be the commencement, the association of ideas led his recollection to those beings from whom he was about to depart. His fancy dropped like a bird of paradise in full wing, tumbling exhausted in the sky: he thought of his innocent and happy boyhood, of his father's thoughtful benevolence, his sweet mother's gentle assiduities, and Glastonbury's devotion; and he demanded aloud, in a voice of anguish, whether Fate could indeed supply a lot more exquisite than to pass existence in these calm and beauteous bowers with such beloved companions.

His name was called: it was his mother's voice. He dashed away a desperate tear, and came forth with a smiling face. His mother and father were walking together at a little distance.

'Ferdinand,' said Lady Armine, with an air of affected gaiety, 'we have just been settling that you are to send me a gazelle from Malta.' And in this strain, speaking of slight things, yet all in some degree touching upon the mournful incident of the morrow, did Lady Armine for some time converse, as if she were all this time trying the fortitude of her mind, and accustoming herself to a catastrophe which she was resolved to meet with fortitude.

While they were walking together, Glastonbury, who was hurrying from his rooms to the Place, for the dinner hour was at hand, joined them, and they entered their home together. It was singular at dinner, too, in what excellent spirits everybody determined to be. The dinner also, generally a simple repast,

was almost as elaborate as the demeanour of the guests, and, although no one felt inclined to eat, consisted of every dish and delicacy which was supposed to be a favourite with Ferdinand. Sir Ratcliffe, in general so grave, was to-day quite joyous, and produced a magnum of claret which he had himself discovered in the old cellars, and of which even Glastonbury, an habitual water-drinker, ventured to partake. As for Lady Armine, she scarcely ever ceased talking; she found a jest in every sentence, and seemed only uneasy when there was silence. Ferdinand, of course, yielded himself to the apparent spirit of the party; and, had a stranger been present, he could only have supposed that they were celebrating some anniversary of domestic joy. It seemed rather a birth-day feast than the last social meeting of those who had lived together so long, and loved each other so dearly.

But as the evening drew on their hearts began to grow heavy, and every one was glad that the early departure of the travellers on the morrow was an excuse for speedily retiring.

‘No adieu to-night!’ said Lady Armine with a gay air, as she scarcely returned the habitual embrace of her son. ‘We shall be all up to-morrow.’

So wishing his last good night with a charged heart and faltering tongue, Ferdinand Armine took up his candle and retired to his chamber. He could not refrain from exercising an unusual scrutiny when he had entered the room. He held up the light to the old accustomed walls, and threw a parting glance

of affection at the curtains. There was the glass vase which his mother had never omitted each day to fill with fresh flowers, and the counterpane that was her own handiwork. He kissed it; and, flinging off his clothes, was glad when he was surrounded with darkness and buried in his bed.

There was a gentle tap at his door. He started.

‘Are you in bed, my Ferdinand?’ inquired his mother’s voice.

Ere he could reply he heard the door open, and observed a tall white figure approaching him.

Lady Armine, without speaking, knelt down by his bedside and took him in her arms. She buried her face in his breast. He felt her tears upon his heart. He could not move; he could not speak. At length he sobbed aloud.

‘May our Father that is in heaven bless you, my darling child; may He guard over you; may He preserve you!’ Very weak was her still, solemn voice. ‘I would have spared you this, my darling. For you, not for myself, have I controlled my feelings. But I knew not the strength of a mother’s love. Alas! what mother has a child like thee? O! Ferdinand, my first, my only-born: child of love and joy and happiness, that never cost me a thought of sorrow; so kind, so gentle, and so dutiful! must we, oh! must we indeed part?’

‘It is too cruel,’ continued Lady Armine, kissing with a thousand kisses her weeping child. ‘What have I done to deserve such misery as this? Ferdinand, beloved Ferdinand, I shall die.’

‘I will not go, mother, I will not go,’ wildly exclaimed the boy,

disengaging himself from her embrace and starting up in his bed. 'Mother, I cannot go. No, no, it never can be good to leave a home like this.'

'Hush! hush! my darling. What words are these? How unkind, how wicked it is of me to say all this! Would that I had not come! I only meant to listen at your door a minute, and hear you move, perhaps to hear you speak, and like a fool,—how naughty of me! never, never shall I forgive myself—like a miserable fool I entered.'

'My own, own mother, what shall I say? what shall I do? I love you, mother, with all my heart and soul and spirit's strength: I love you, mother. There is no mother loved as you are loved!'

'Tis that that makes me mad. I know it. Oh! why are you not like other children, Ferdinand? When your uncle left us, my father said, "Good-bye," and shook his hand; and he—he scarcely kissed us, he was so glad to leave his home; but you—tomorrow; no, not to-morrow. Can it be to-morrow?'

'Mother, let me get up and call my father, and tell him I will not go.'

'Good God! what words are these? Not go! 'Tis all your hope to go; all ours, dear child. What would your father say were he to hear me speak thus? Oh! that I had not entered! What a fool I am!'

'Dearest, dearest mother, believe me we shall soon meet.'

'Shall we soon meet? God! how joyous will be the day.'

'And I—I will write to you by every ship.'

'Oh! never fail, Ferdinand, never fail.'

‘And send you a gazelle, and you shall call it by my name, dear mother.’

‘Darling child!’

‘You know I have often stayed a month at grand-papa’s, and once six weeks. Why! eight times six weeks, and I shall be home again.’

‘Home! home again! eight times six weeks; a year, nearly a year! It seems eternity. Winter, and spring, and summer, and winter again, all to pass away. And for seventeen years he has scarcely been out of my sight. Oh! my idol, my beloved, my darling Ferdinand, I cannot believe it; I cannot believe that we are to part.’

‘Mother, dearest mother, think of my father; think how much his hopes are placed on me; think, dearest mother, how much I have to do. All now depends on me, you know. I must restore our house.’

‘O! Ferdinand, I dare not express the thoughts that rise upon me; yet I would say that, had I but my child, I could live in peace; how, or where, I care not.’

‘Dearest mother, you unman me.’

‘It is very wicked. I am a fool. I never, no! never shall pardon myself for this night, Ferdinand.’

‘Sweet mother, I beseech you calm yourself. Believe me we shall indeed meet very soon, and somehow or other a little bird whispers to me we shall yet be very happy.’

‘But will you be the same Ferdinand to me as before? Ay!’

There it is, my child. You will be a man when you come back, and be ashamed to love your mother. Promise me now,' said Lady Armine, with extraordinary energy, 'promise me, Ferdinand, you will always love me. Do not let them make you ashamed of loving me. They will joke, and jest, and ridicule all home affections. You are very young, sweet love, very, very young, and very inexperienced and susceptible. Do not let them spoil your frank and beautiful nature. Do not let them lead you astray. Remember Armine, dear, dear Armine, and those who live there. Trust me, oh! yes, indeed believe me, darling, you will never find friends in this world like those you leave at Armine.'

'I know it,' exclaimed Ferdinand, with streaming eyes; 'God be my witness how deeply I feel that truth. If I forget thee and them, dear mother, may God indeed forget me.'

'My Ferdinand,' said Lady Armine, in a calm tone, 'I am better now. I hardly am sorry that I did come now. It will be a consolation to me in your absence to remember all you have said. Good night, my beloved child; my darling child, good night. I shall not come down to-morrow, dear. We will not meet again; I will say good-bye to you from the window. Be happy, my dear Ferdinand, and as you say indeed, we shall soon meet again. Eight-and-forty weeks! Why what are eight-and-forty weeks? It is not quite a year. Courage, my sweet boy! let us keep up each other's spirits. Who knows what may yet come from this your first venture into the world? I am full of hope. I trust you will find all that you want. I packed up everything myself. Whenever

you want anything write to your mother. Mind, you have eight packages; I have written them down on a card and placed it on the hall table. And take the greatest care of old Sir Ferdinand's sword. I am very superstitious about that sword, and while you have it I am sure you will succeed. I have ever thought that had he taken it with him to France all would have gone right with him. God bless, God Almighty bless you, child. Be of good heart. I will write you everything that takes place, and, as you say, we shall soon meet. Indeed, after to-night,' she added in a more mournful tone, 'we have naught else to think of but of meeting. I fear it is very late. Your father will be surprised at my absence.' She rose from his bed and walked up and down the room several times in silence; then again approaching him, she folded him in her arms and quitted the chamber without again speaking.

CHAPTER X

The Advantage of Being a Favourite Grandson.

THE exhausted Ferdinand found consolation in sleep. When he woke the dawn was just breaking. He dressed and went forth to look, for the last time, on his hereditary woods. The air was cold, but the sky was perfectly clear, and the beams of the rising sun soon spread over the blue heaven. How fresh, and glad, and sparkling was the surrounding scene! With what enjoyment did he inhale the soft and renovating breeze! The dew quivered on the grass, and the carol of the wakening birds, roused from their slumbers by the spreading warmth, resounded from the groves. From the green knoll on which he stood he beheld the clustering village of Armine, a little agricultural settlement formed of the peasants alone who lived on the estate. The smoke began to rise in blue curls from the cottage chimneys, and the church clock struck the hour of five. It seemed to Ferdinand that those labourers were far happier than he, since the setting sun would find them still at Armine: happy, happy Armine!

The sound of carriage wheels roused him from his reverie. The fatal moment had arrived. He hastened to the gate according to his promise, to bid farewell to Glastonbury. The good old man was up. He pressed his pupil to his bosom, and blessed him with a choking voice.

‘Dearest and kindest friend!’ murmured Ferdinand. Glastonbury placed round his neck a small golden crucifix that had belonged to Lady Barbara. ‘Wear it next your heart, my child,’ said he; ‘it will remind you of your God, and of us all.’ Ferdinand quitted the tower with a thousand blessings.

When he came in sight of the Place he saw his father standing by the carriage, which was already packed. Ferdinand ran into the house to get the card which had been left on the hall table for him by his mother. He ran over the list with the old and faithful domestic, and shook hands with him. Nothing now remained. All was ready. His father was seated. Ferdinand stood a moment in thought. ‘Let me run up to my mother, sir?’ ‘You had better not, my child,’ replied Sir Ratcliffe, ‘she does not expect you. Come, come along.’ So he slowly seated himself, with his eyes fixed on the window of his mother’s chamber; and as the carriage drove off the window opened, and a hand waved a white handkerchief. He saw no more; but as he saw it he clenched his hand in agony.

How different was this journey to London from his last! He scarcely spoke a word. Nothing interested him but his own feelings. The guard and the coachman, and the bustle of the inn, and the passing spectacles of the road, appeared a collection of impertinences. All of a sudden it seemed that his boyish feelings had deserted him. He was glad when they arrived in London, and glad that they were to stay in it only a single day. Sir Ratcliffe and his son called upon the Duke; but, as they had anticipated, the family had quitted town. Our travellers put up

at Hatchett's, and the following night started for Exeter in the Devonport mail. Ferdinand arrived at the western metropolis having interchanged with his father scarcely a hundred sentences. At Exeter, after a night of most welcome rest, they took a post-chaise and proceeded by a cross-road to Grandison.

When Lord Grandison, who as yet was perfectly unacquainted with the revolutions in the Armine family, had clearly comprehended that his grandson had obtained a commission without either troubling him for his interest, or putting him in the disagreeable predicament of refusing his money, there were no bounds to the extravagant testimonials of his affection, both towards his son-in-law and his grandson. He seemed quite proud of such relations; he patted Sir Ratcliffe on his back, asked a thousand questions about his darling Constance, and hugged and slobbered over Ferdinand as if he were a child of five years old. He informed all his guests daily (and the house was full) that Lady Armine was his favourite daughter, and Sir Ratcliffe his favourite son-in-law, and Ferdinand especially his favourite grandchild. He insisted upon Sir Ratcliffe always sitting at the head of his table, and always placed Ferdinand on his own right hand. He asked his butler aloud at dinner why he had not given a particular kind of Burgundy, because Sir Ratcliffe Armine was here.

'Darbois,' said the old nobleman, 'have not I told you that Clos de Vougeot is always to be kept for Sir Ratcliffe Armine? It is his favourite wine. Clos de Vougeot directly to Sir Ratcliffe

Armine. I do not think, my dear madam [turning to a fair neighbour], that I have yet had the pleasure of introducing you to my son-in-law, my favourite son-in-law, Sir Ratcliffe Armine. He married my daughter Constance, my favourite daughter, Constance. Only here for a few days, a very, very few days indeed. Quite a flying visit. I wish I could see the whole family oftener and longer. Passing through to Falmouth with his son, this young gentleman on my right, my grandson, my favourite grandson, Ferdinand. Just got his commission. Ordered for Malta immediately. He is in the Fusileers, the Royal Fusileers. Very difficult, my dear madam, in these days to obtain a commission, especially a commission in the Royal Fusileers. Very great interest required, very great interest, indeed. But the Armines are a most ancient family, very highly connected, very highly connected; and, between you and me, the Duke of—would do anything for them.

Come, come, Captain Armine, take a glass of wine with your old grandfather.’

‘How attached the old gentleman appears to be to his grandson!’ whispered the lady to her neighbour.

‘Delightful! yes!’ was the reply, ‘I believe he is the favourite grandson.’

In short, the old gentleman at last got so excited by the universal admiration lavished on his favourite grandson, that he finally insisted on seeing the young hero in his regimentals; and when Ferdinand took his leave, after a great many whimpering

blessings, his domestic feelings were worked up to such a pitch of enthusiasm, that he absolutely presented his grandson with a hundred-pound note.

‘Thank you, my dear grandpapa,’ said the astonished Ferdinand, who really did not expect more than fifty, perhaps even a moiety of that more moderate sum; ‘thank you, my dear grandpapa; I am very much obliged to you, indeed.’

‘I wish I could do more for you; I do, indeed,’ said Lord Grandison; ‘but nobody ever thinks of paying his rent now. You are my grandson, my favourite grandson, my dear favourite daughter’s only child. And you are an officer in his Majesty’s service, an officer in the Royal Fusiliers, only think of that! It is the most unexpected thing that ever happened to me. To see you so well and so unexpectedly provided for, my dear child, has taken a very great load off my mind; it has indeed. You have no idea of a parent’s anxiety in these matters, especially of a grandfather. You will some day, I warrant you,’ continued the noble grandfather, with an expression between a giggle and a leer; ‘but do not be wild, my dear Ferdinand, do not be too wild at least. Young blood must have its way; but be cautious; now, do; be cautious, my dear child. Do not get into any scrapes; at least, do not get into any serious scrapes; and whatever happens to you,’ and here his lordship assumed even a solemn tone, ‘remember you have friends; remember, my dear boy, you have a grandfather, and that you, my dear Ferdinand, are his favourite grandson.’

This passing visit to Grandison rather rallied the spirits of our travellers. When they arrived at Falmouth, they found, however, that the packet, which waited for government despatches, was not yet to sail. Sir Ratcliffe scarcely knew whether he ought to grieve or to rejoice at the reprieve; but he determined to be gay. So Ferdinand and himself passed their mornings in visiting the mines, Pendennis Castle, and the other lions of the neighbourhood; and returned in the evening to their cheerful hotel, with good appetites for their agreeable banquet, the mutton of Dartmoor and the cream of Devon.

At length, however, the hour of separation approached; a message awaited them at the inn, on their return from one of their rambles, that Ferdinand must be on board at an early hour on the morrow. That evening the conversation between Sir Ratcliffe and his son was of a graver nature than they usually indulged in. He spoke to him in confidence of his affairs. Dark hints, indeed, had before reached Ferdinand; nor, although his parents had ever spared his feelings, could his intelligent mind have altogether refrained from guessing much that had never been formally communicated. Yet the truth was worse even than he had anticipated. Ferdinand, however, was young and sanguine. He encouraged his father with his hopes, and supported him by his sympathy. He expressed to Sir Ratcliffe his confidence that the generosity of his grandfather would prevent him at present from becoming a burden to his own parent, and he inwardly resolved that no possible circumstance should ever induce him

to abuse the benevolence of Sir Ratcliffe.

The moment of separation arrived. Sir Ratcliffe pressed to his bosom his only, his loving, and his beloved child. He poured over Ferdinand the deepest, the most fervid blessing that a father ever granted to a son. But, with all this pious consolation, it was a moment of agony.

BOOK II

CHAPTER I

Partly Retrospective, yet Very Necessary to be Perused.

EARLY five years had elapsed between the event which formed the subject of our last chapter and the recall to England of the regiment in which Captain Armine now commanded a company. This period of time had passed away not unfruitful of events in the experience of that family, in whose fate and feelings I have attempted to interest the reader. In this interval Ferdinand Armine had paid one short visit to his native land; a visit which had certainly been accelerated, if not absolutely occasioned, by the untimely death of his cousin Augustus, the presumptive heir of Grandison. This unforeseen event produced a great revolution in the prospects of the family of Armine; for although the title and an entailed estate devolved to a distant branch, the absolute property of the old lord was of great amount; and, as he had no male heir now living, conjectures as to its probable disposition were now rife among all those who could possibly become interested in it. Whatever arrangement the old lord might decide upon, it seemed nearly certain that the Armine family must be greatly benefited. Some persons even went so far as to express

their conviction that everything would be left to Mr. Armine, who everybody now discovered to have always been a particular favourite with his grandfather. At all events, Sir Ratcliffe, who ever maintained upon the subject a becoming silence, thought it as well that his son should remind his grandfather personally of his existence; and it was at his father's suggestion that Ferdinand had obtained a short leave of absence, at the first opportunity, to pay a hurried visit to Grandison and his grandfather.

The old lord yielded him a reception which might have flattered the most daring hopes. He embraced Ferdinand, and pressed him to his heart a thousand times; he gave him his blessing in the most formal manner every morning and evening; and assured everybody that he now was not only his favourite but his only grandson. He did not even hesitate to affect a growing dislike for his own seat, because it was not in his power to leave it to Ferdinand; and he endeavoured to console that fortunate youth for his indispensable deprivation by mysterious intimations that he would, perhaps, find quite enough to do with his money in completing Armine Castle, and maintaining its becoming splendour. The sanguine Ferdinand returned to Malta with the conviction that he was his grandfather's heir; and even Sir Ratcliffe was almost disposed to believe that his son's expectations were not without some show of probability, when he found that Lord Grandison had absolutely furnished him with the funds for the purchase of his company.

Ferdinand was fond of his profession. He had entered it

under favourable circumstances. He had joined a crack regiment in a crack garrison. Malta is certainly a delightful station. Its city, Valetta, equals in its noble architecture, if it even do not excel, any capital in Europe; and although it must be confessed that the surrounding region is little better than a rock, the vicinity, nevertheless, of Barbary, of Italy, and of Sicily, presents exhaustless resources to the lovers of the highest order of natural beauty. If that fair Valetta, with its streets of palaces, its picturesque forts and magnificent church, only crowned some green and azure island of the Ionian Sea, Corfu for instance, I really think that the ideal of landscape would be realised.

To Ferdinand, who was inexperienced in the world, the dissipation of Malta, too, was delightful. It must be confessed that, under all circumstances, the first burst of emancipation from domestic routine hath in it something fascinating. However you may be indulged at home, it is impossible to break the chain of childish associations; it is impossible to escape from the feeling of dependence and the habit of submission. Charming hour when you first order your own servants, and ride your own horses, instead of your father's! It is delightful even to kick about your own furniture; and there is something manly and magnanimous in paying our own taxes. Young, lively, kind, accomplished, good-looking, and well-bred, Ferdinand Armine had in him all the elements of popularity; and the novelty of popularity quite intoxicated a youth who had passed his life in a rural seclusion, where he had been appreciated, but not huzzaed.

Ferdinand was not only popular, but proud of being popular. He was popular with the Governor, he was popular with his Colonel, he was popular with his mess, he was popular throughout the garrison. Never was a person so popular as Ferdinand Armine. He was the best rider among them, and the deadliest shot; and he soon became an oracle at the billiard-table, and a hero in the racquet-court. His refined education, however, fortunately preserved him from the fate of many other lively youths: he did not degenerate into a mere hero of sports and brawls, the genius of male revels, the arbiter of roistering suppers, and the Comus of a club. His boyish feelings had their play; he soon exuded the wanton heat of which a public school would have served as a safety-valve. He returned to his books, his music, and his pencil. He became more quiet, but he was not less liked. If he lost some companions, he gained many friends; and, on the whole, the most boisterous wassailers were proud of the accomplishments of their comrade; and often an invitation to a mess dinner was accompanied by a hint that Armine dined there, and that there was a chance of hearing him sing. Ferdinand now became as popular with the Governor's lady as with the Governor himself, was idolised by his Colonel's wife, while not a party throughout the island was considered perfect without the presence of Mr. Armine.

Excited by his situation, Ferdinand was soon tempted to incur expenses which his income did not justify. The facility of credit afforded him not a moment to pause; everything he wanted was

furnished him; and until the regiment quitted the garrison he was well aware that a settlement of accounts was never even desired. Amid this imprudence he was firm, however, in his resolution never to trespass on the resources of his father. It was with difficulty that he even brought himself to draw for the allowance which Sir Ratcliffe insisted on making him; and he would gladly have saved his father from making even this advance, by vague intimations of the bounty of Lord Grandison, had he not feared this conduct might have led to suspicious and disagreeable enquiries. It cannot be denied that his debts occasionally caused him anxiety, but they were not considerable; he quieted his conscience by the belief that, if he were pressed, his grandfather could scarcely refuse to discharge a few hundred pounds for his favourite grandson; and, at all events, he felt that the ultimate resource of selling his commission was still reserved for him. If these vague prospects did not drive away compunction, the qualms of conscience were generally allayed in the evening assembly, in which his vanity was gratified. At length he paid his first visit to England. That was a happy meeting. His kind father, his dear, dear mother, and the faithful Glastonbury, experienced some of the most transporting moments of their existence, when they beheld, with admiring gaze, the hero who returned to them. Their eyes were never satiated with beholding him; they hung upon his accents. Then came the triumphant visit to Grandison; and then Ferdinand returned to Malta, in the full conviction that he was the heir to fifteen thousand a year.

Among many other, there is one characteristic of capitals in which Valetta is not deficient: the facility with which young heirs apparent, presumptive, or expectant, can obtain any accommodation they desire. The terms; never mind the terms, who ever thinks of them? As for Ferdinand Armine, who, as the only son of an old baronet, and the supposed future inheritor of Armine Park, had always been looked upon by tradesmen with a gracious eye, he found that his popularity in this respect was not at all diminished by his visit to England, and its supposed consequences; slight expressions, uttered on his return in the confidence of convivial companionship, were repeated, misrepresented, exaggerated, and circulated in all quarters. We like those whom we love to be fortunate. Everybody rejoices in the good luck of a popular character; and soon it was generally understood that Ferdinand Armine had become next in the entail to thirty thousand a year and a peerage. Moreover, he was not long to wait for his inheritance. The usurers pricked up their ears, and such numerous proffers of accommodation and assistance were made to the fortunate Mr. Armine, that he really found it quite impossible to refuse them, or to reject the loans that were almost forced on his acceptance.

Ferdinand Armine had passed the Rubicon. He was in debt. If youth but knew the fatal misery that they are entailing on themselves the moment they accept a pecuniary credit to which they are not entitled, how they would start in their career! how pale they would turn! how they would tremble, and clasp their

hands in agony at the precipice on which they are disporting! Debt is the prolific mother of folly and of crime; it taints the course of life in all its dreams. Hence so many unhappy marriages, so many prostituted pens, and venal politicians! It hath a small beginning, but a giant's growth and strength. When we make the monster we make our master, who haunts us at all hours, and shakes his whip of scorpions for ever in our sight. The slave hath no overseer so severe. Faustus, when he signed the bond with blood, did not secure a doom more terrific. But when we are young we must enjoy ourselves. True; and there are few things more gloomy than the recollection of a youth that has not been enjoyed. What prosperity of manhood, what splendour of old age, can compensate for it? Wealth is power; and in youth, of all seasons of life, we require power, because we can enjoy everything that we can command. What, then, is to be done? I leave the question to the schoolmen, because I am convinced that to moralise with the inexperienced availeth nothing.

The conduct of men depends upon their temperament, not upon a bunch of musty maxims. No one had been educated with more care than Ferdinand Armine; in no heart had stricter precepts of moral conduct ever been instilled. But he was lively and impetuous, with a fiery imagination, violent passions, and a daring soul. Sanguine he was as the day; he could not believe in the night of sorrow, and the impenetrable gloom that attends a career that has failed. The world was all before him; and he dashed at it like a young charger in his first strife, confident that

he must rush to victory, and never dreaming of death.

Thus would I attempt to account for the extreme imprudence of his conduct on his return from England. He was confident in his future fortunes; he was excited by the applause of the men, and the admiration of the women; he determined to gratify, even to satiety, his restless vanity; he broke into profuse expenditure; he purchased a yacht; he engaged a villa; his racing-horses and his servants exceeded all other establishments, except the Governor's, in breeding, in splendour, and in number. Occasionally wearied with the monotony of Malta, he obtained a short leave of absence, and passed a few weeks at Naples, Palermo, and Rome, where he glittered in brilliant circles, and whence he returned laden with choice specimens of art and luxury, and followed by the report of strange and flattering adventures. Finally, he was the prime patron of the Maltese opera, and brought over a celebrated Prima Donna from San Carlo in his own vessel.

In the midst of his career, Ferdinand received intelligence of the death of Lord Grandison. Fortunately, when he received it he was alone; there was no one, therefore, to witness his blank dismay when he discovered that, after all, he was not his grandfather's heir! After a vast number of trifling legacies to his daughters, and their husbands, and their children, and all his favourite friends, Lord Grandison left the whole of his property to his grand-daughter Katherine, the only remaining child of his son, who had died early in life, and the sister of the lately

deceased Augustus.

What was to be done now? His mother's sanguine mind, for Lady Armine broke to him the fatal intelligence, already seemed to anticipate the only remedy for this 'unjust will.' It was a remedy delicately intimated, but the intention fell upon a fine and ready ear. Yes! he must marry; he must marry his cousin; he must marry Katherine Grandison. Ferdinand looked around him at his magnificent rooms; the damask hangings of Tunis, the tall mirrors from Marseilles, the inlaid tables, the marble statues, and the alabaster vases that he had purchased at Florence and at Rome, and the delicate mats that he had himself imported from Algiers. He looked around and he shrugged his shoulders: 'All this must be paid for,' thought he; 'and, alas! how much more!' And then came across his mind a recollection of his father and his cares, and innocent Armine, and dear Glastonbury, and his sacrifice. Ferdinand shook his head and sighed.

'How have I repaid them,' thought he. 'Thank God, they know nothing. Thank God, they have only to bear their own disappointments and their own privations; but it is in vain to moralise. The future, not the past, must be my motto. To retreat is impossible; I may yet advance and conquer. Katherine Grandison: only think of my little cousin Kate for a wife! They say that it is not the easiest task in the world to fan a lively flame in the bosom of a cousin. The love of cousins is proverbially not of a very romantic character. 'Tis well I have not seen her much in my life, and very little of late. Familiarity breeds

contempt, they say. Will she dare to despise me?' He glanced at the mirror. The inspection was not unsatisfactory. Plunged in profound meditation, he paced the room.

CHAPTER II

In Which Captain Armine Achieves with Rapidity a Result Which Always Requires Great Deliberation.

It so happened that the regiment in which Captain Armine had the honour of commanding a company was at this time under orders of immediate recall to England; and within a month of his receipt of the fatal intelligence of his being, as he styled it, disinherited, he was on his way to his native land, This speedy departure was fortunate, because it permitted him to retire before the death of Lord Grandison became generally known, and consequently commented upon and enquired into. Previous to quitting the garrison, Ferdinand had settled his affairs for the time without the slightest difficulty, as he was still able to raise any money that he required.

On arriving at Falmouth, Ferdinand learnt that his father and mother were at Bath, on a visit to his maiden aunt, Miss Grandison, with whom his cousin now resided. As the regiment was quartered at Exeter, he was enabled in a very few days to obtain leave of absence and join them. In the first rapture of meeting all disappointment was forgotten, and in the course of a day or two, when this sentiment had somewhat subsided, Ferdinand perceived that the shock which his parents must have necessarily experienced was already considerably softened by the prospect in which they secretly indulged, and which various

circumstances combined in inducing them to believe was by no means a visionary one.

His cousin Katherine was about his own age; mild, elegant, and pretty. Being fair, she looked extremely well in her deep mourning. She was not remarkable for the liveliness of her mind, yet not devoid of observation, although easily influenced by those whom she loved, and with whom she lived. Her maiden aunt evidently exercised a powerful control over her conduct and opinions; and Lady Armine was a favourite sister of this maiden aunt. Without, therefore, apparently directing her will, there was no lack of effort from this quarter to predispose Katherine in favour of her cousin. She heard so much of her cousin Ferdinand, of his beauty, and his goodness, and his accomplishments, that she had looked forward to his arrival with feelings of no ordinary interest. And, indeed, if the opinions and sentiments of those with whom she lived could influence, there was no need of any artifice to predispose her in favour of her cousin. Sir Ratcliffe and Lady Armine were wrapped up in their son. They seemed scarcely to have another idea, feeling, or thought in the world, but his existence and his felicity; and although their good sense had ever preserved them from the silly habit of uttering his panegyric in his presence, they amply compensated for this painful restraint when he was away. Then he was ever, the handsomest, the cleverest, the most accomplished, and the most kind-hearted and virtuous of his sex. Fortunate the parents blessed with such a son! thrice fortunate the wife blessed with such a husband!

It was therefore with no ordinary emotion that Katherine Grandison heard that this perfect cousin Ferdinand had at length arrived. She had seen little of him even in his boyish days, and even then he was rather a hero in their Lilliputian circle.

Ferdinand Armine was always looked up to at Grandison, and always spoken of by her grandfather as a very fine fellow indeed; a wonderfully fine fellow, his favourite grandson, Ferdinand Armine: and now he had arrived. His knock was heard at the door, his step was on the stairs, the door opened, and certainly his first appearance did not disappoint his cousin Kate. So handsome, so easy, so gentle, and so cordial; they were all the best friends in a moment. Then he embraced his father with such fervour, and kissed his mother with such fondness: it was evident that he had an excellent heart. His arrival indeed, was a revolution. Their mourning days seemed at once to disappear; and although they of course entered society very little, and never frequented any public amusement, it seemed to Katherine that all of a sudden she lived in a round of delightful gaiety. Ferdinand was so amusing and so accomplished! He sang with her, he played with her; he was always projecting long summer rides and long summer walks. Then his conversation was so different from everything to which she had ever listened. He had seen so many things and so many persons; everything that was strange, and everybody that was famous. His opinions were so original, his illustrations so apt and lively, his anecdotes so inexhaustible and sparkling! Poor inexperienced, innocent Katherine! Her cousin

in four-and-twenty hours found it quite impossible to fall in love with her; and so he determined to make her fall in love with him. He quite succeeded. She adored him. She did not believe that there was anyone in the world so handsome, so good, and so clever. No one, indeed, who knew Ferdinand Armine could deny that he was a rare being; but, had there been any acute and unprejudiced observers who had known him in his younger and happier hours, they would perhaps have remarked some difference in his character and conduct, and not a favourable one. He was indeed more brilliant, but not quite so interesting as in old days; far more dazzling, but not quite so apt to charm. No one could deny his lively talents and his perfect breeding, but there was a restlessness about him, an excited and exaggerated style, which might have made some suspect that his demeanour was an effort, and that under a superficial glitter, by which so many are deceived, there was no little deficiency of the genuine and sincere. Katherine Grandison, however, was not one of those profound observers. She was easily captivated. Ferdinand, who really did not feel sufficient emotion to venture upon a scene, made his proposals to her when they were riding in a green lane: the sun just setting, and the evening star glittering through a vista. The lady blushed, and wept, and sobbed, and hid her fair and streaming face; but the result was as satisfactory as our hero could desire. The young equestrians kept their friends in the crescent at least two hours for dinner, and then had no appetite for the repast when they had arrived.

Nevertheless the maiden aunt, although a very particular personage, made this day no complaint, and was evidently far from being dissatisfied with anybody or anything. As for Ferdinand, he called for a tumbler of champagne, and secretly drank his own health, as the luckiest fellow of his acquaintance, with a pretty, amiable, and high-bred wife, with all his debts paid, and the house of Armine restored.

CHAPTER III

Which Ferdinand Returns to Armine.

IT WAS settled that a year must elapse from the death of Lord Grandison before the young couple could be united: a reprieve which did not occasion Ferdinand acute grief. In the meantime the Grandisons were to pass at least the autumn at Armine, and thither the united families proposed soon to direct their progress. Ferdinand, who had been nearly two months at Bath, and was a little wearied of courtship, contrived to quit that city before his friends, on the plea of visiting London, to arrange about selling his commission; for it was agreed that he should quit the army.

On his arrival in London, having spoken to his agent, and finding town quite empty, he set off immediately for Armine, in order that he might have the pleasure of being there a few days without the society of his intended; celebrate the impending first of September; and, especially, embrace his dear Glastonbury. For it must not be supposed that Ferdinand had forgotten for a moment this invaluable friend; on the contrary, he had written to him several times since his arrival: always assuring him that nothing but important business could prevent him from instantly paying him his respects.

It was with feelings of no common emotion, even of agitation, that Ferdinand beheld the woods of his ancient home rise in

the distance, and soon the towers and turrets of Armine Castle. Those venerable bowers, that proud and lordly house, were not then to pass away from their old and famous line? He had redeemed the heritage of his great ancestry; he looked with unmingled complacency on the magnificent landscape, once to him a source of as much anxiety as affection. What a change in the destiny of the Armines! Their glory restored; his own devoted and domestic hearth, once the prey of so much care and gloom, crowned with ease and happiness and joy; on all sides a career of splendour and felicity. And *he* had done all this! What a prophet was his mother! She had ever indulged the fond conviction that her beloved, son would be their restorer. How wise and pious was the undeviating confidence of kind old Glastonbury in their fate! With what pure, what heart-felt delight, would that faithful friend listen to his extraordinary communication!

His carriage dashed through the park gates as if the driver were sensible of his master's pride and exultation. Glastonbury was ready to welcome him, standing in the flower-garden, which he had made so rich and beautiful, and which had been the charm and consolation of many of their humbler hours.

'My dear, dear father!' exclaimed Ferdinand, embracing him, for thus he ever styled his old tutor.

But Glastonbury could not speak; the tears quivered in his eyes and trickled down his faded cheek. Ferdinand led him into the house.

'How well you look, dear father!' continued Ferdinand; 'you

really look younger and heartier than ever. You received all my letters, I am sure; and yours, how kind of you to remember and to write to me! I never forgot you, my dear, dear friend. I never could forget you. Do you know I am the happiest fellow in the world? I have the greatest news in the world to tell my Glastonbury—and we owe everything to you, everything. What would Sir Ratcliffe have been without you? what should I have been? Fancy the best news you can, dear friend, and it is not so good as I have got to tell. You will rejoice, you will be delighted! We shall furnish a castle! by Jove we shall furnish a castle! We shall indeed, and you shall build it! No more gloom; no more care. The Armines shall hold their heads up again, by Jove they shall! Dearest of men, I dare say you think me mad. I am mad with joy. How that Virginian creeper has grown! I have brought you so many plants, my father! a complete Sicilian Hortus Siccus. Ah, John, good John, how is your wife? Take care of my pistol-case. Ask Louis; he knows all about everything. Well, dear Glastonbury, and how have you been? How is the old tower? How are the old books, and the old staff, and the old arms, and the old everything? Dear, dear Glastonbury!

While the carriage was unpacking, and the dinner-table prepared, the friends walked in the garden, and from thence strolled towards the tower, where they remained some time pacing up and down the beechen avenue. It was evident, on their return, that Ferdinand had communicated his great intelligence. The countenance of Glastonbury was radiant with delight.

Indeed, although he had dined, he accepted with readiness Ferdinand's invitation to repeat the ceremony; nay, he quaffed more than one glass of wine; and, I believe, even drank the health of every member of the united families of Armine and Grandison. It was late before the companions parted, and retired for the night; and I think, before they bade each other good night, they must have talked over every circumstance that had occurred in their experience since the birth of Ferdinand.

CHAPTER IV

In Which Some Light Is Thrown on the Title of This Work.

HOW delicious after a long absence to wake on a sunny morning and find ourselves at home! Ferdinand could scarcely credit that he was really again at Armine. He started up in his bed, and rubbed his eyes and stared at the unaccustomed, yet familiar sights, and for a moment Malta and the Royal Fusiliers, Bath and his betrothed, were all a dream; and then he remembered the visit of his dear mother to this very room on the eve of his first departure. He had returned; in safety had he returned, and in happiness, to accomplish all her hopes and to reward her for all her solicitude. Never felt anyone more content than Ferdinand Armine, more content and more grateful.

He rose and opened the casement; a rich and exhilarating perfume filled the chamber; he looked with a feeling of delight and pride over the broad and beautiful park; the tall trees rising and flinging their taller shadows over the bright and dewy turf, and the last mists clearing away from the distant woods and blending with the spotless sky. Everything was sweet and still, save, indeed, the carol of the birds, or the tinkle of some restless bellwether. It was a rich autumnal morn. And yet with all the excitement of his new views in life, and the blissful consciousness of the happiness of those he loved, he could not but feel that a

great change had come over his spirit since the days he was wont to ramble in this old haunt of his boyhood. His innocence was gone. Life was no longer that deep unbroken trance of duty and of love from which he had been roused to so much care; and if not remorse, at least to so much compunction. He had no secrets then. Existence was not then a subterfuge, but a calm and candid state of serene enjoyment. Feelings then were not compromised for interests; and then it was the excellent that was studied, not the expedient. 'Yet such I suppose is life,' murmured Ferdinand; 'we moralise when it is too late; nor is there anything more silly than to regret. One event makes another: what we anticipate seldom occurs; what we least expected generally happens; and time can only prove which is most for our advantage. And surely I am the last person who should look grave. Our ancient house rises from its ruins; the beings I love most in the world are not only happy, but indebted to me for their happiness; and I, I myself, with every gift of fortune suddenly thrown at my feet, what more can I desire? Am I not satisfied? Why do I even ask the question? I am sure I know not. It rises like a devil in my thoughts, and spoils everything. The girl is young, noble, and fair, and loves me. And her? I love her, at least I suppose I love her. I love her at any rate as much as I love, or ever did love, woman. There is no great sacrifice, then, on my part; there should be none; there is none; unless indeed it be that a man does not like to give up without a struggle all his chance of romance and rapture.

'I know not how it is, but there are moments I almost wish that

I had no father and no mother; ay! not a single friend or relative in the world, and that Armine were sunk into the very centre of the earth. If I stood alone in the world methinks I might find the place that suits me; now everything seems ordained for me, as it were, beforehand. My spirit has had no play. Something whispers me that, with all its flush prosperity, this is neither wise nor well. God knows I am not heartless, and would be grateful; and yet if life can afford me no deeper sympathy than I have yet experienced, I cannot but hold it, even with all its sweet reflections, as little better than a dull delusion.'

While Ferdinand was thus moralising at the casement, Glastonbury appeared beneath; and his appearance dissipated this gathering gloom. 'Let us breakfast together,' proposed Ferdinand. 'I have breakfasted these two hours,' replied the hermit of the gate. 'I hope that on the first night of your return to Armine you have proved auspicious dreams.'

'My bed and I are old companions,' said Ferdinand, 'and we agreed very well. I tell you what, my dear Glastonbury, we will have a stroll together this morning and talk over our plans of last night. Go into the library and look over my sketch-books: you will find them on my pistol-case, and I will be with you anon.'

In due time the friends commenced their ramble. Ferdinand soon became excited by Glastonbury's various suggestions for the completion of the castle; and as for the old man himself, between his architectural creation and the restoration of the family to which he had been so long devoted, he was in a rapture

of enthusiasm, which afforded an amusing contrast to his usual meek and subdued demeanour.

‘Your grandfather was a great man,’ said Glastonbury, who in old days seldom ventured to mention the name of the famous Sir Ferdinand: ‘there is no doubt he was a very great man. He had great ideas. How he would glory in our present prospects! ‘Tis strange what a strong confidence I have ever had in the destiny of your house. I felt sure that Providence would not desert us. There is no doubt we must have a portcullis.’

‘Decidedly, a portcullis,’ said Ferdinand; ‘you shall make all the drawings yourself, my dear Glastonbury, and supervise everything. We will not have a single anachronism. It shall be perfect.’

‘Perfect,’ echoed Glastonbury; ‘really perfect. It shall be a perfect Gothic castle. I have such treasures for the work. All the labours of my life have tended to this object. I have all the emblazonings of your house since the Conquest. There shall be three hundred shields in the hall. I will paint them myself. Oh! there is no place in the world like Armine!’

‘Nothing,’ said Ferdinand; ‘I have seen a great deal, but after all there is nothing like Armine.’

‘Had we been born to this splendour,’ said Glastonbury, ‘we should have thought little of it. We have been mildly and wisely chastened. I cannot sufficiently admire the wisdom of Providence, which has tempered, by such a wise dispensation, the too-eager blood of your race.’

‘I should be sorry to pull down the old place,’ said Ferdinand.

‘It must not be,’ said Glastonbury; ‘we have lived there happily, though humbly.’

‘I would we could move it to another part of the park, like the house of Loretto,’ said Ferdinand with a smile.

‘We can cover it with ivy,’ observed Glastonbury, looking somewhat grave.

The morning stole away in these agreeable plans and prospects. At length the friends parted, agreeing to meet again at dinner. Glastonbury repaired to his tower, and Ferdinand, taking his gun, sauntered into the surrounding wilderness.

But he felt no inclination for sport. The conversation with Glastonbury had raised a thousand thoughts over which he longed to brood. His life had been a scene of such constant excitement since his return to England, that he had enjoyed little opportunity of indulging in calm self-communion; and now that he was at Armine, and alone, the contrast between his past and his present situation struck him so forcibly that he could not refrain from falling into a reverie upon his fortunes. It was wonderful, all wonderful, very, very wonderful. There seemed indeed, as Glastonbury affirmed, a providential dispensation in the whole transaction. The fall of his family, the heroic, and, as it now appeared, prescient firmness with which his father had clung, in all their deprivations, to his unproductive patrimony, his own education, the extinction of his mother’s house, his very follies, once to him a cause of so much unhappiness, but

which it now seemed were all the time compelling him, as it were, to his prosperity; all these and a thousand other traits and circumstances flitted over his mind, and were each in turn the subject of his manifold meditation. Willing was he to credit that destiny had reserved for him the character of restorer; that duty indeed he had accepted, and yet—

He looked around him as if to see what devil was whispering in his ear. He was alone. No one was there or near. Around him rose the silent bowers, and scarcely the voice of a bird or the hum of an insect disturbed the deep tranquillity. But a cloud seemed to rest on the fair and pensive brow of Ferdinand Armine. He threw himself on the turf, leaning his head on one hand, and with the other plucking the wild flowers, which he as hastily, almost as fretfully, flung away.

‘Conceal it as I will,’ he exclaimed, ‘I am a victim; disguise them as I may, all the considerations are worldly. There is, there must be, something better in this world than power and wealth and rank; and surely there must be felicity more rapturous even than securing the happiness of a parent. Ah! dreams in which I have so oft and so fondly indulged, are ye, indeed, after all, but fantastical and airy visions? Is love indeed a delusion, or am I marked out from men alone to be exempted from its delicious bondage? It must be a delusion. All laugh at it, all jest about it, all agree in stigmatising it the vanity of vanities. And does my experience contradict this harsh but common fame? Alas! what have I seen or known to give the lie to this ill report? No one,

nothing. Some women I have met more beautiful, assuredly, than Kate, and many, many less fair; and some have crossed my path with a wild and brilliant grace, that has for a moment dazzled my sight, and perhaps for a moment lured me from my way. But these shooting stars have but glittered transiently in my heaven, and only made me, by their evanescent brilliancy, more sensible of its gloom. Let me believe then, oh! let me of all men then believe, that the forms that inspire the sculptor and the painter have no models in nature; that that combination of beauty and grace, of fascinating intelligence and fond devotion, over which men brood in the soft hours of their young loneliness, is but the promise of a better world, and not the charm of this one.

‘But, what terror in that truth! what despair! what madness! Yes! at this moment of severest scrutiny, how profoundly I feel that life without love is worse than death! How vain and void, how flat and fruitless, appear all those splendid accidents of existence for which men struggle, without this essential and pervading charm! What a world without a sun! Yes! without this transcendent sympathy, riches and rank, and even power and fame, seem to me at best but jewels set in a coronet of lead!

‘And who knows whether that extraordinary being, of whose magnificent yet ruinous career this castle is in truth a fitting emblem—I say, who knows whether the secret of his wild and restless course is not hidden in this same sad lack of love? Perhaps while the world, the silly, superficial world, marvelled and moralised at his wanton life, and poured forth its anathemas

against his heartless selfishness, perchance he all the time was sighing for some soft bosom whereon to pour his overwhelming passion, even as I am!

‘O Nature! why art thou beautiful? My heart requires not, imagination cannot paint, a sweeter or a fairer scene than these surrounding bowers. This azure vault of heaven, this golden sunshine, this deep and blending shade, these rare and fragrant shrubs, yon grove of green and tallest pines, and the bright gliding of this swan-crowned lake; my soul is charmed with all this beauty and this sweetness; I feel no disappointment here; my mind does not here outrun reality; here there is no cause to mourn over ungratified hopes and fanciful desires. Is it then my destiny that I am to be baffled only in the dearest desires of my heart?’

At this moment the loud and agitated barking of his dogs at some little distance roused Ferdinand from his reverie. He called them to him, and soon one of them obeyed his summons, but instantly returned to his companion with such significant gestures, panting and yelping, that Ferdinand supposed that Basto was caught, perhaps, in some trap: so, taking up his gun, he proceeded to the dog’s rescue.

To his surprise, as he was about to emerge from a berceau on to a plot of turf, in the centre of which grew a large cedar, he beheld a lady in a riding-habit standing before the tree, and evidently admiring its beautiful proportions.

Her countenance was raised and motionless. It seemed to him that it was more radiant than the sunshine. He gazed with

rapture on the dazzling brilliancy of her complexion, the delicate regularity of her features, and the large violet-tinted eyes, fringed with the longest and the darkest lashes that he had ever beheld. From her position her hat had fallen back, revealing her lofty and pellucid brow, and the dark and lustrous locks that were braided over her temples. The whole countenance combined that brilliant health and that classic beauty which we associate with the idea of some nymph tripping over the dew-bespangled meads of Ida, or glancing amid the hallowed groves of Greece. Although the lady could scarcely have seen eighteen summers, her stature was above the common height; but language cannot describe the startling symmetry of her superb figure.

There is no love but love at first sight. This is the transcendent and surpassing offspring of sheer and unpolluted sympathy. All other is the illegitimate result of observation, of reflection, of compromise, of comparison, of expediency. The passions that endure flash like the lightning: they scorch the soul, but it is warmed for ever. Miserable man whose love rises by degrees upon the frigid morning of his mind! Some hours indeed of warmth and lustre may perchance fall to his lot; some moments of meridian splendour, in which he basks in what he deems eternal sunshine. But then how often overcast by the clouds of care, how often dusked by the blight of misery and misfortune! And certain as the gradual rise of such affection is its gradual decline and melancholy setting. Then, in the chill, dim twilight of his soul, he execrates custom; because he has madly expected

that feelings could be habitual that were not homogeneous, and because he has been guided by the observation of sense, and not by the inspiration of sympathy.

Amid the gloom and travail of existence suddenly to behold a beautiful being, and as instantaneously to feel an overwhelming conviction that with that fair form for ever our destiny must be entwined; that there is no more joy but in her joy, no sorrow but when she grieves; that in her sigh of love, in her smile of fondness, hereafter all is bliss; to feel our flaunty ambition fade away like a shrivelled gourd before her vision; to feel fame a juggle and posterity a lie; and to be prepared at once, for this great object, to forfeit and fling away all former hopes, ties, schemes, views; to violate in her favour every duty of society; this is a lover, and this is love! Magnificent, sublime, divine sentiment! An immortal flame burns in the breast of that man who adores and is adored. He is an ethereal being. The accidents of earth touch him not. Revolutions of empire, changes of creed, mutations of opinion, are to him but the clouds and meteors of a stormy sky. The schemes and struggles of mankind are, in his thinking, but the anxieties of pigmies and the fantastical achievements of apes. Nothing can subdue him. He laughs alike at loss of fortune, loss of friends, loss of character. The deeds and thoughts of men are to him equally indifferent. He does not mingle in their paths of callous bustle, or hold himself responsible to the airy impostures before which they bow down. He is a mariner who, on the sea of life, keeps his gaze fixedly on a single star; and if that do not

shine, he lets go the rudder, and glories when his barque descends into the bottomless gulf.

Yes! it was this mighty passion that now raged in the heart of Ferdinand Armine, as, pale and trembling, he withdrew a few paces from the overwhelming spectacle, and leant against a tree in a chaos of emotion. What had he seen? What ravishing vision had risen upon his sight? What did he feel? What wild, what delicious, what maddening impulse now pervaded his frame? A storm seemed raging in his soul, a mighty wind dispelling in its course the sullen clouds and vapours of long years. Silent he was indeed, for he was speechless; though the big drop that quivered on his brow and the slight foam that played upon his lip proved the difficult triumph of passion over expression. But, as the wind clears the heaven, passion eventually tranquillises the soul. The tumult of his mind gradually subsided; the flitting memories, the scudding thoughts, that for a moment had coursed about in such wild order, vanished and melted away, and a feeling of bright serenity succeeded, a sense of beauty and of joy, and of hovering and circumambient happiness.

He advanced, and gazed again; the lady was still there. Changed indeed her position; she had gathered a flower and was examining its beauty.

‘Henrietta!’ exclaimed a manly voice from the adjoining wood. Before she could answer, a stranger came forward, a man of middle age but of an appearance remarkably prepossessing. He was tall and dignified, fair, with an aquiline nose. One of

Ferdinand's dogs followed him barking.

'I cannot find the gardener anywhere,' said the stranger; 'I think we had better remount.'

'Ah, me! what a pity!' exclaimed the lady.

'Let me be your guide,' said Ferdinand, advancing.

The lady rather started; the gentleman, not at all discomposed, courteously welcomed Ferdinand, and said, 'I feel that we are intruders, sir. But we were informed by the woman at the lodge that the family were not here at present, and that we should find her husband in the grounds.'

'The family are not at Armine,' replied Ferdinand; 'I am sure, however, Sir Ratcliffe would be most happy for you to walk about the grounds as much as you please; and as I am well acquainted with them, I should feel delighted to be your guide.'

'You are really too courteous, sir,' replied the gentleman; and his beautiful companion rewarded Ferdinand with a smile like a sunbeam, that played about her countenance till it finally settled into two exquisite dimples, and revealed to him teeth that, for a moment, he believed to be even the most beautiful feature of that surpassing visage.

They sauntered along, every step developing new beauties in their progress and eliciting from his companions renewed expressions of rapture. The dim bowers, the shining glades, the tall rare trees, the luxuriant shrubs, the silent and sequestered lake, in turn enchanted them, until at length, Ferdinand, who had led them with experienced taste through all the most striking

points of the pleasance, brought them before the walls of the castle.

‘And here is Armine Castle,’ he said; ‘it is little better than a shell, and yet contains something which you might like to see.’

‘Oh! by all means,’ exclaimed the lady.

‘But we are spoiling your sport,’ suggested the gentleman.

‘I can always kill partridges,’ replied Ferdinand, laying down his gun; ‘but I cannot always find agreeable companions.’

So saying, he opened the massy portal of the castle and they entered the hall. It was a lofty chamber, of dimensions large enough to feast a thousand vassals, with a dais and a rich Gothic screen, and a gallery for the musicians. The walls were hung with arms and armour admirably arranged; but the parti-coloured marble floor was so covered with piled-up cases of furniture that the general effect of the scene, was not only greatly marred, but it was even difficult in some parts to trace a path.

‘Here,’ said Ferdinand, jumping upon a huge case and running to the wall, ‘here is the standard of Ralph d’Ermyn, who came over with the Conqueror, and founded the family in England. Here is the sword of William d’Armyn, who signed Magna Carta. Here is the complete coat armour of the second Ralph, who died before Ascalon. This case contains a diamond-hilted sword, given by the Empress to the great Sir Ferdinand for defeating the Turks; and here is a Mameluke sabre, given to the same Sir Ferdinand by the Sultan for defeating the Empress.’

‘Oh! I have heard so much of that great Sir Ferdinand,’ said

the lady. 'He must have been the most interesting character.'

'He was a marvellous being,' answered her guide, with a peculiar look, 'and yet I know not whether his descendants have not cause to rue his genius.'

'Oh! never, never!' said the lady; 'what is wealth to genius? How much prouder, were I an Armine, should I be of such an ancestor than of a thousand others, even if they had left me this castle as complete as he wished it to be!'

'Well, as to that,' replied Ferdinand, 'I believe I am somewhat of your opinion; though I fear he lived in too late an age for such order of minds. It would have been better for him perhaps if he had succeeded in becoming King of Poland.'

'I hope there is a portrait of him,' said the lady; 'there is nothing I long so much to see.'

'I rather think there is a portrait,' replied her companion, somewhat drily. 'We will try to find it out. Do not you think I make not a bad cicerone?'

'Indeed, most excellent,' replied the lady.

'I perceive you are a master of your subject,' replied the gentleman, thus affording Ferdinand an easy opportunity of telling them who he was. The hint, however, was not accepted.

'And now,' said Ferdinand, 'we will ascend the staircase.'

Accordingly they mounted a large spiral staircase which filled the space of a round tower, and was lighted from the top by a lantern of rich, coloured glass on which were emblazoned the arms of the family. Then they entered the vestibule, an apartment

spacious enough for a salon; which, however, was not fitted up in the Gothic style, but of which the painted ceiling, the gilded panels, and inlaid floor were more suitable to a French palace. The brilliant doors of this vestibule opened in many directions upon long suites of state chambers, which indeed merited the description of shells. They were nothing more; of many the flooring was not even laid down; the walls of all were rough and plastered.

‘Ah!’ said the lady, ‘what a pity it is not finished!’

‘It is indeed desolate,’ observed Ferdinand; ‘but here perhaps is something more to your taste.’ So saying, he opened another door and ushered them into the picture gallery.

It was a superb chamber nearly two hundred feet in length, and contained only portraits of the family, or pictures of their achievements. It was of a pale green colour, lighted from the top; and the floor, of oak and ebony, was partially covered with a single Persian carpet, of fanciful pattern and brilliant dye, a present from the Sultan to the great Sir Ferdinand. The earlier annals of the family were illustrated by a series of paintings by modern masters, representing the battle of Hastings, the siege of Ascalon, the meeting at Runnymede, the various invasions of France, and some of the most striking incidents in the Wars of the Roses, in all of which a valiant Armynt prominently figured. At length they stood before the first contemporary portrait of the Armynt family, one of Cardinal Stephen Armynt, by an Italian master. This great dignitary was legate of the Pope in the time of

the seventh Henry, and in his scarlet robes and ivory chair looked a papal Jupiter, not unworthy himself of wielding the thunder of the Vatican. From him the series of family portraits was unbroken; and it was very interesting to trace, in this excellently arranged collection, the history of national costume. Holbein had commemorated the Lords Tewkesbury, rich in velvet, and golden chains, and jewels. The statesmen of Elizabeth and James, and their beautiful and gorgeous dames, followed; and then came many a gallant cavalier, by Vandyke. One admirable picture contained Lord Armine and his brave brothers, seated together in a tent round a drum, on which his lordship was apparently planning the operations of the campaign. Then followed a long series of un-memorable baronets, and their more interesting wives and daughters, touched by the pencil of Kneller, of Lely, or of Hudson; squires in wigs and scarlet jackets, and powdered dames in hoops and farthingales.

They stood before the crowning effort of the gallery, the masterpiece of Reynolds. It represented a full-length portrait of a young man, apparently just past his minority. The side of the figure was alone exhibited, and the face glanced at the spectator over the shoulder, in a favourite attitude of Vandyke. It was a countenance of ideal beauty. A profusion of dark brown curls was dashed aside from a lofty forehead of dazzling brilliancy. The face was perfectly oval; the nose, though small was high and aquiline, and exhibited a remarkable dilation of the nostril; the curling lip was shaded by a very delicate mustache; and the

general expression, indeed, of the mouth and of the large grey eyes would have been perhaps arrogant and imperious, had not the extraordinary beauty of the whole countenance rendered it fascinating.

It was indeed a picture to gaze upon and to return to; one of those visages which, after having once beheld, haunt us at all hours and flit across our mind's eye unexpected and unbidden. So great was the effect that it produced upon the present visitors to the gallery, that they stood before it for some minutes in silence; the scrutinising glance of the gentleman was more than once diverted from the portrait to the countenance of his conductor, and the silence was eventually broken by our hero.

'And what think you,' he enquired, 'of the famous Sir Ferdinand?'

The lady started, looked at him, withdrew her glance, and appeared somewhat confused. Her companion replied, 'I think, sir, I cannot err in believing that I am indebted for much courtesy to his descendant?'

'I believe,' said Ferdinand, 'that I should not have much trouble in proving my pedigree. I am generally considered an ugly likeness of my grandfather.'

The gentleman smiled, and then said, 'I hardly know whether I can style myself your neighbour, for I live nearly ten miles distant. It would, however, afford me sincere gratification to see you at Ducie Bower. I cannot welcome you in a castle. My name is Temple,' he continued, offering his card to Ferdinand. 'I need

not now introduce you to my daughter. I was not unaware that Sir Ratcliffe Armine had a son, but I had understood he was abroad.'

'I have returned to England within these two months,' replied Ferdinand, 'and to Armine within these two days. I deem it fortunate that my return has afforded me an opportunity of welcoming you and Miss Temple. But you must not talk of our castle, for that you know is our folly. Pray come now and visit our older and humbler dwelling, and take some refreshment after your long ride.'

This offer was declined, but with great courtesy. They quitted the castle, and Mr. Temple was about to direct his steps towards the lodge, where he had left his own and his daughter's horses; but Ferdinand persuaded them to return through the park, which he proved to them very satisfactorily must be the nearest way. He even asked permission to accompany them; and while his groom was saddling his horse he led them to the old Place and the flower-garden.

'You must be very fatigued, Miss Temple. I wish that I could persuade you to enter and rest yourself.'

'Indeed, no: I love flowers too much to leave them.'

'Here is one that has the recommendation of novelty as well as beauty,' said Ferdinand, plucking a strange rose, and presenting it to her. 'I sent it to my mother from Barbary.'

'You live amidst beauty.'

'I think that I never remember Armine looking so well as to-day.'

‘A sylvan scene requires sunshine,’ replied Miss Temple. ‘We have been most fortunate in our visit.’

‘It is something brighter than the sunshine that makes it so fair,’ replied Ferdinand; but at this moment the horses appeared.

CHAPTER V

In Which Captain Armine Is Very Absent during Dinner.

YOU are well mounted,' said Mr. Temple to Ferdinand.

'Tis a barb. I brought it over with me.'

'Tis a beautiful creature,' said Miss Temple.

'Hear that, Selim,' said Ferdinand; 'prick up thine ears, my steed. I perceive that you are an accomplished horsewoman, Miss Temple. You know our country, I dare say, well?'

'I wish to know it better. This is only the second summer that we have passed at Ducie.'

'By-the-bye, I suppose you know my landlord, Captain Armine?' said Mr. Temple.

'No,' said Ferdinand; 'I do not know a single person in the county. I have myself scarcely been at Armine for these five years, and my father and mother do not visit anyone.'

'What a beautiful oak!' exclaimed Miss Temple, desirous of turning the conversation.

'It has the reputation of being planted by Sir Francis Walsingham,' said Ferdinand. 'An ancestor of mine married his daughter. He was the father of Sir Walsingham, the portrait in the gallery with the white stick. You remember it?'

'Perfectly: that beautiful portrait! It must be, at all events, a very old tree.'

‘There are few things more pleasing to me than an ancient place,’ said Mr. Temple.

‘Doubly pleasing when in the possession of an ancient family,’ added his daughter.

‘I fear such feelings are fast wearing away,’ said Ferdinand.

‘There will be a reaction,’ said Mr. Temple.

‘They cannot destroy the poetry of time,’ said the lady.

‘I hope I have no very inveterate prejudices,’ said Ferdinand; ‘but I should be sorry to see Armine in any other hands than our own, I confess.’

‘I never would enter the park again,’ said Miss Temple.

‘So far as worldly considerations are concerned,’ continued Ferdinand, ‘it would perhaps be much better for us if we were to part with it.’

‘It must, indeed, be a costly place to keep up,’ said Mr. Temple.

‘Why, as for that,’ said Ferdinand, ‘we let the kine rove and the sheep browse where our fathers hunted the stag and flew their falcons. I think if they were to rise from their graves they would be ashamed of us.’

‘Nay!’ said Miss Temple, ‘I think yonder cattle are very picturesque. But the truth is, anything would look well in such a park as this. There is such a variety of prospect.’

The park of Armine indeed differed materially from those vamped-up sheep-walks and ambitious paddocks which are now honoured with the title. It was, in truth, the old chase, and

little shorn of its original proportions. It was many miles in circumference, abounding in hill and dale, and offering much variety of appearance. Sometimes it was studded with ancient timber, single trees of extraordinary growth, and rich clumps that seemed coeval with the foundation of the family. Tracts of wild champaign succeeded these, covered with gorse and fern. Then came stately avenues of sycamore or Spanish chestnut, fragments of stately woods, that in old days doubtless reached the vicinity of the mansion house; and these were in turn succeeded by modern coverts.

At length our party reached the gate whence Ferdinand had calculated that they should quit the park. He would willingly have accompanied them. He bade them farewell with regret, which was softened by the hope expressed by all of a speedy meeting.

‘I wish, Captain Armine,’ said Miss Temple, ‘we had your turf to canter home upon.’

‘By-the-bye, Captain Armine,’ said Mr. Temple, ‘ceremony should scarcely subsist between country neighbours, and certainly we have given you no cause to complain of our reserve. As you are alone at Armine, perhaps you would come over and dine with us to-morrow. If you can manage to come early, we will see whether we may not contrive to kill a bird together; and pray remember we can give you a bed, which I think, all things considered, it would be but wise to accept.’

‘I accept everything,’ said Ferdinand, smiling; ‘all your offers. Good morning, my dearest sir; good morning, Miss Temple.’

‘Miss Temple, indeed!’ exclaimed Ferdinand, when he had watched them out of sight. ‘Exquisite, enchanting, adored being! Without thee what is existence? How dull, how blank does everything even now seem! It is as if the sun had just set! Oh! that form! that radiant countenance! that musical and thrilling voice! Those tones still vibrate on my ear, or I should deem it all a vision! Will to-morrow ever come? Oh! that I could express to you my love, my overwhelming, my absorbing, my burning passion! Beautiful Henrietta! Thou hast a name, methinks, I ever loved. Where am I? what do I say? what wild, what maddening words are these? Am I not Ferdinand Armine, the betrothed, the victim? Even now, methinks, I hear the chariot-wheels of my bride. God! if she be there; if she indeed be at Armine on my return: I’ll not see her; I’ll not speak to them; I’ll fly. I’ll cast to the winds all ties and duties; I will not be dragged to the altar, a miserable sacrifice, to redeem, by my forfeited felicity, the worldly fortunes of my race. O Armine, Armine! she would not enter thy walls again if other blood but mine swayed thy fair demesne: and I, shall I give thee another mistress, Armine? It would indeed be treason! Without her I cannot live. Without her form bounds over this turf and glances in these arbours I never wish to view them. All the inducements to make the wretched sacrifice once meditated then vanish; for Armine, without her, is a desert, a tomb, a hell. I am free, then. Excellent logician! But this woman: I am bound to her. Bound? The word makes me tremble. I shiver: I hear the clank of my fetters. Am I indeed

bound? Ay! in honour. Honour and love! A contest! Pah! The Idol must yield to the Divinity!

With these wild words and wilder thoughts bursting from his lips and dashing through his mind; his course as irregular and as reckless as his fancies; now fiercely galloping, now pulling up into a sudden halt, Ferdinand at length arrived home; and his quick eye perceived in a moment that the dreaded arrival had not taken place. Glastonbury was in the flower-garden on one knee before a vase, over which he was training a creeper. He looked up as he heard the approach of Ferdinand. His presence and benignant smile in some degree stilled the fierce emotions of his pupil. Ferdinand felt that the system of dissimulation must now commence; besides, he was always careful to be most kind to Glastonbury. He would not allow that any attack of spleen, or even illness, could ever justify a careless look or expression to that dear friend.

‘I hope, my dear father,’ said Ferdinand, ‘I am punctual to our hour?’

‘The sun-dial tells me,’ said Glastonbury, ‘that you have arrived to the moment; and I rather think that yonder approaches a summons to our repast. I hope you have passed your morning agreeably?’

‘If all days would pass as sweet, my father, I should indeed be blessed.’

‘I, too, have had a fine morning of it. You must come to-morrow and see my grand emblazonry of the Ratcliffe and

Armine coats; I mean it for the gallery.’ With these words they entered the Place.

‘You do not eat, my child,’ said Glastonbury to his companion.

‘I have taken too long a ride, perhaps,’ said Ferdinand: who indeed was much too excited to have an appetite, and so abstracted that anyone but Glastonbury would have long before detected his absence.

‘I have changed my hour to-day,’ continued Glastonbury, ‘for the pleasure of dining with you, and I think to-morrow you had better change your hour and dine with me.’

‘By-the-bye, my dear father, you, who know everything, do you happen to know a gentleman of the name of Temple in this neighbourhood?’

‘I think I heard that Mr. Ducie had let the Bower to a gentleman of that name.’

‘Do you know who he is?’

‘I never asked; for I feel no interest except about proprietors, because they enter into my County History. But I think I once heard that this Mr. Temple had been our minister at some foreign court. You give me a fine dinner and eat nothing yourself. This pigeon is savoury.’

‘I will trouble you. I think there once was a Henrietta Armine, my father?’

‘The beautiful creature!’ said Glastonbury, laying down his knife and fork; ‘she died young. She was a daughter of Lord Armine; and the Queen, Henrietta Maria, was her godmother. It

grieves me much that we have no portrait of her. She was very fair, her eyes of a sweet light blue.'

'Oh! no; dark, my father; dark and deep as the violet.'

'My child, the letter-writer, who mentions her death, describes them as light blue. I know of no other record of her beauty.'

'I wish they had been dark,' said Ferdinand recovering himself; 'however, I am glad there was a Henrietta Armine; 'tis a beautiful name.'

'I think that Armine makes any name sound well,' said Glastonbury. 'No more wine indeed, my child. Nay! if I must,' continued he, with a most benevolent smile, 'I will drink to the health of Miss Grandison!'

'Ah!' exclaimed Ferdinand.

'My child, what is the matter?' inquired Glastonbury.

'A gnat, a fly, a wasp! something stung me,' said Ferdinand.

'Let me fetch my oil of lilies,' said Glastonbury; 'tis a specific'

'Oh, no! 'tis nothing, only a fly: sharp at the moment; nothing more.'

The dinner was over; they retired to the library. Ferdinand walked about the room restless and moody; at length he bethought himself of the piano, and, affecting an anxiety to hear some old favourite compositions of Glastonbury, he contrived to occupy his companion. In time, however, his old tutor invited him to take his violoncello and join him in a concerto. Ferdinand of course complied with his invitation, but the result was not satisfactory. After a series of blunders, which were the natural

result of his thoughts being occupied on other subjects, he was obliged to plead a headache, and was glad when he could escape to his chamber.

Rest, however, no longer awaited him on his old pillow. It was at first delightful to escape from the restraint upon his reverie which he had lately experienced. He leant for an hour over his empty fireplace in mute abstraction. The cold, however, in time drove him to bed, but he could not sleep; his eyes indeed were closed, but the vision of Henrietta Temple was not less apparent to him. He recalled every feature of her countenance, every trait of her conduct, every word that she had expressed. The whole series of her observations, from the moment he had first seen her until the moment they had parted, were accurately repeated, her very tones considered, and her very attitudes pondered over. Many were the hours that he heard strike; he grew restless and feverish. Sleep would not be commanded; he jumped out of bed, he opened the casement, he beheld in the moonlight the Barbary rose-tree of which he had presented her a flower. This consoling spectacle assured him that he had not been, as he had almost imagined, the victim of a dream. He knelt down and invoked all heavenly and earthly blessings on Henrietta Temple and his love. The night air and the earnest invocation together cooled his brain, and Nature soon delivered him, exhausted, to repose.

CHAPTER VI

In Which Captain Armine Pays His First Visit to Ducie.

YES! it is the morning. Is it possible? Shall he again behold her? That form of surpassing beauty: that bright, that dazzling countenance; again are they to bless his entranced vision? Shall he speak to her again? That musical and thrilling voice, shall it again sound and echo in his enraptured ear?

Ferdinand had reached Armine so many days before his calculated arrival, that he did not expect his family and the Grandisons to arrive for at least a week. What a respite did he not now feel this delay! if ever he could venture to think of the subject at all. He drove it indeed from his thoughts; the fascinating present completely engrossed his existence. He waited until the post arrived; it brought no letters, letters now so dreaded! He jumped upon his horse and galloped towards Ducie.

Mr. Temple was the younger son of a younger branch of a noble family. Inheriting no patrimony, he had been educated for the diplomatic service, and the influence of his family had early obtained him distinguished appointments. He was envoy to a German court when a change of ministry occasioned his recall, and he retired, after a long career of able and assiduous service, comforted by a pension and glorified by a privy-councillorship. He was an acute and accomplished man, practised in the world,

with great self-control, yet devoted to his daughter, the only offspring of a wife whom he had lost early and loved much.

Deprived at a tender age of that parent of whom she would have become peculiarly the charge, Henrietta Temple found in the devotion of her father all that consolation of which her forlorn state was susceptible. She was not delivered over to the custody of a governess, or to the even less sympathetic supervision of relations. Mr. Temple never permitted his daughter to be separated from him; he cherished her life, and he directed her education. Resident in a city which arrogates to itself, not without justice, the title of the German Athens, his pupil availed herself of all those advantages which were offered to her by the instruction of the most skilful professors. Few persons were more accomplished than Henrietta Temple even at an early age; but her rare accomplishments were not her most remarkable characteristics. Nature, which had accorded to her that extraordinary beauty we have attempted to describe, had endowed her with great talents and a soul of sublime temper.

It was often remarked of Henrietta Temple (and the circumstance may doubtless be in some degree accounted for by the little interference and influence of women in her education) that she never was a girl. She expanded at once from a charming child into a magnificent woman. She had entered life very early, and had presided at her father's table for a year before his recall from his mission. Few women in so short a period had received so much homage; but she listened to compliments

with a careless though courteous ear, and received more ardent aspirations with a smile. The men, who were puzzled, voted her cold and heartless; but men should remember that fineness of taste, as well as apathy of temperament, may account for an unsuccessful suit. Assuredly Henrietta Temple was not deficient in feeling; she entertained for her father sentiments almost of idolatry, and those more intimate or dependent acquaintances best qualified to form an opinion of her character spoke of her always as a soul of infinite tenderness.

Notwithstanding their mutual devotion to each other, there were not many points of resemblance between the characters of Mr. Temple and his daughter; she was remarkable for a frankness of demeanour and a simplicity yet strength of thought which contrasted with the artificial manners and the conventional opinions and conversation of her sire. A mind at once thoughtful and energetic permitted Henrietta Temple to form her own judgments; and an artless candour, which her father never could eradicate from her habit, generally impelled her to express them. It was indeed impossible even for him long to find fault with these ebullitions, however the diplomatist might deplore them; for Nature had so imbued the existence of this being with that indefinable charm which we call grace, that it was not in your power to behold her a moment without being enchanted. A glance, a movement, a sunny smile, a word of thrilling music, and all that was left to you was to adore. There was indeed in Henrietta Temple that rare and extraordinary combination

of intellectual strength and physical softness which marks out the woman capable of exercising an irresistible influence over mankind. In the good old days she might have occasioned a siege of Troy or a battle of Actium. She was one of those women who make nations mad, and for whom a man of genius would willingly peril the empire of the world.

So at least deemed Ferdinand Armine, as he cantered through the park, talking to himself, apostrophising the woods, and shouting his passion to the winds. It was scarcely noon when he reached Ducie Bower. This was a Palladian pavilion, situated in the midst of beautiful gardens, and surrounded by green hills. The sun shone brightly, the sky was without a cloud; it appeared to him that he had never beheld a more graceful scene. It was a temple worthy of the divinity it enshrined. A façade of four Ionic columns fronted an octagon hall, adorned with statues, which led into a salon of considerable size and fine proportion. Ferdinand thought that he had never in his life entered so brilliant a chamber. The lofty walls were covered with an Indian paper of vivid fancy, and adorned with several pictures which his practised eye assured him were of great merit. The room, without being inconveniently crowded, was amply stored with furniture, every article of which bespoke a refined and luxurious taste: easy chairs of all descriptions, most inviting couches, cabinets of choice inlay, and grotesque tables covered with articles of vertu; all those charming infinite nothings, which a person of taste might some time back have easily collected during a long residence

on the continent. A large lamp of Dresden china was suspended from the painted and gilded ceiling. The three tall windows opened on the gardens, and admitted a perfume so rich and various, that Ferdinand could easily believe the fair mistress, as she told him, was indeed a lover of flowers. A light bridge in the distant wood, that bounded the furthest lawn, indicated that a stream was at hand. What with the beauty of the chamber, the richness of the exterior scene, and the bright sun that painted every object with its magical colouring, and made everything appear even more fair and brilliant, Ferdinand stood for some moments quite entranced. A door opened, and Mr. Temple came forward and welcomed him with cordiality.

After they had passed a half-hour in looking at the pictures and in conversation to which they gave rise, Mr. Temple, proposing an adjournment to luncheon, conducted Ferdinand into a dining-room, of which the suitable decorations wonderfully pleased his taste. A subdued tint pervaded every part of the chamber: the ceiling was painted in grey tinted frescoes of a classical and festive character, and the side table, which stood in a recess supported by four magnificent columns, was adorned with choice Etruscan vases. The air of repose and stillness which distinguished this apartment was heightened by the vast conservatory into which it led, blazing with light and beauty, groups of exotic trees, plants of radiant tint, the sound of a fountain, and gorgeous forms of tropic birds.

‘How beautiful!’ exclaimed Ferdinand.

‘Tis pretty,’ said Mr. Temple, carving a pasty, ‘but we are very humble people, and cannot vie with the lords of Gothic castles.’

‘It appears to me,’ said Ferdinand, ‘that Ducie Bower is the most exquisite place I ever beheld.’

‘If you had seen it two years ago you would have thought differently,’ said Mr. Temple; ‘I assure you I dreaded becoming its tenant. Henrietta is entitled to all the praise, as she took upon herself the whole responsibility. There is not on the banks of the Brenta a more dingy and desolate villa than Ducie appeared when we first came; and as for the gardens, they were a perfect wilderness. She made everything. It was one vast, desolate, and neglected lawn, used as a sheep-walk when we arrived. As for the ceilings, I was almost tempted to whitewash them, and yet you see they have cleaned wonderfully; and, after all, it only required a little taste and labour. I have not laid out much money here. I built the conservatory, to be sure. Henrietta could not live without a conservatory.’

‘Miss Temple is quite right,’ pronounced Ferdinand. ‘It is impossible to live without a conservatory.’

At this moment the heroine of their conversation entered the room, and Ferdinand turned pale. She extended to him her hand with a graceful smile; as he touched it, he trembled from head to foot.

‘You were not fatigued, I hope, by your ride, Miss Temple?’ at length he contrived to say.

‘Not in the least! I am an experienced horsewoman. Papa and

I take very long rides together.’

As for eating, with Henrietta Temple in the room, Ferdinand found that quite impossible. The moment she appeared, his appetite vanished. Anxious to speak, yet deprived of his accustomed fluency, he began to praise Ducie.

‘You must see it,’ said Miss Temple: ‘shall we walk round the grounds?’

‘My dear Henrietta,’ said her father, ‘I dare say Captain Armine is at this moment sufficiently tired; besides, when he moves, he will like perhaps to take his gun; you forget he is a sportsman, and that he cannot waste his morning in talking to ladies and picking flowers.’

‘Indeed, sir, I assure you,’ said Ferdinand, ‘there is nothing I like so much as talking to ladies and picking flowers; that is to say, when the ladies have as fine taste as Miss Temple, and the flowers are as beautiful as those at Ducie.’

‘Well, you shall see my conservatory, Captain Armine,’ said Miss Temple, ‘and you shall go and kill partridges afterwards.’ So saying, she entered the conservatory, and Ferdinand followed her, leaving Mr. Temple to his pasty.

‘These orange groves remind me of Palmero,’ said Ferdinand. ‘Ah!’ said Miss Temple, ‘I have never been in the sweet south.’ ‘You seem to me a person born to live in a Sicilian palace,’ said Ferdinand, ‘to wander in perfumed groves, and to glance in a moonlight warmer than this sun.’

‘I see you pay compliments,’ said Miss Temple, looking at him

archly, and meeting a glance serious and soft.

‘Believe me, not to you.’

‘What do you think of this flower?’ said Miss Temple, turning away rather quickly and pointing to a strange plant. ‘It is the most singular thing in the world: but if it be tended by any other person than myself it withers. Is it not droll?’

‘I think not,’ said Ferdinand.

‘I excuse you for your incredulity; no one does believe it; no one can; and yet it is quite true. Our gardener gave it up in despair. I wonder what it can be.’

‘I think it must be some enchanted prince,’ said Ferdinand.

‘If I thought so, how I should long for a wand to emancipate him!’ said Miss Temple.

‘I would break your wand, if you had one,’ said Ferdinand.

‘Why?’ said Miss Temple.

‘Oh! I don’t know,’ said Ferdinand; ‘I suppose because I believe you are sufficiently enchanting without one.’

‘I am bound to consider that most excellent logic,’ said Miss Temple.

‘Do you admire my fountain and my birds?’ she continued, after a short pause. ‘After Armine, Ducie appears a little tawdry toy.’

‘Ducie is Paradise,’ said Ferdinand. ‘I should like to pass my life in this conservatory.’

‘As an enchanted prince, I suppose?’ said Miss Temple.

‘Exactly,’ said Captain Armine; ‘I would willingly this instant

become a flower, if I were sure that Miss Temple would cherish my existence.'

'Cut off your tendrils and drown you with a watering-pot,' said Miss Temple; 'you really are very Sicilian in your conversation, Captain Armine.'

'Come,' said Mr. Temple, who now joined them, 'if you really should like to take a stroll round the grounds, I will order the keeper to meet us at the cottage.'

'A very good proposition,' said Miss Temple.

'But you must get a bonnet, Henrietta; I must forbid your going out uncovered.'

'No, papa, this will do,' said Miss Temple, taking a handkerchief, twisting it round her head, and tying it under her chin.

'You look like an old woman, Henrietta,' said her father, smiling.

'I shall not say what you look like, Miss Temple,' said Captain Armine, with a glance of admiration, 'lest you should think that I was this time even talking Sicilian.'

'I reward you for your forbearance with a rose,' said Miss Temple, plucking a flower. 'It is a return for your beautiful present of yesterday.'

Ferdinand pressed the gift to his lips.

They went forth; they stepped into a Paradise, where the sweetest flowers seemed grouped in every combination of the choicest forms; baskets, and vases, and beds of infinite fancy. A

thousand bees and butterflies filled the air with their glancing shapes and cheerful music, and the birds from the neighbouring groves joined in the chorus of melody. The wood walks through which they now rambled admitted at intervals glimpses of the ornate landscape, and occasionally the view extended beyond the enclosed limits, and exhibited the clustering and embowered roofs of the neighbouring village, or some woody hill studded with a farmhouse, or a distant spire. As for Ferdinand, he strolled along, full of beautiful thoughts and thrilling fancies, in a dreamy state which had banished all recollection or consciousness but of the present. He was happy; positively, perfectly, supremely happy. He was happy for the first time in his life, He had no conception that life could afford such bliss as now filled his being. What a chain of miserable, tame, factitious sensations seemed the whole course of his past existence. Even the joys of yesterday were nothing to these; Armine was associated with too much of the commonplace and the gloomy to realise the ideal in which he now revelled. But now all circumstances contributed to enchant him. The novelty, the beauty of the scene, harmoniously blended with his passion. The sun seemed to him a more brilliant sun than the orb that illumined Armine; the sky more clear, more pure, more odorous. There seemed a magic sympathy in the trees, and every flower reminded him of his mistress. And then he looked around and beheld her. Was he positively awake? Was he in England? Was he in the same globe in which he had hitherto moved and acted? What was this entrancing form that

moved before him? Was it indeed a woman?

O dea certã!'

That voice, too, now wilder than the wildest bird, now low and hushed, yet always sweet; where was he, what did he listen to, what did he behold, what did he feel? The presence of her father alone restrained him from falling on his knees and expressing to her his adoration.

At length our friends arrived at a picturesque and ivy-grown cottage, where the keeper, with their guns and dogs, awaited Mr. Temple and his guest. Ferdinand, although a keen sportsman, beheld the spectacle with dismay. He execrated, at the same time, the existence of partridges and the invention of gunpowder. To resist his fate, however, was impossible; he took his gun and turned to bid his hostess adieu.

'I do not like to quit Paradise at all,' he said in a low voice: 'must I go?'

'Oh! certainly,' said Miss Temple. 'It will do you a great deal of good.'

Never did anyone at first shoot more wildly. In time, however, Ferdinand sufficiently rallied to recover his reputation with the keeper, who, from his first observation, began to wink his eye to his son, an attendant bush-beater, and occasionally even thrust his tongue inside his cheek, a significant gesture perfectly understood by the imp. 'For the life of me, Sam,' he afterwards profoundly observed, 'I couldn't make out this here Captain by no manner of means whatsoever. At first I thought as how he

was going to put the muzzle to his shoulder. Hang me if ever I see sich a gentleman. He missed everything; and at last if he didn't hit the longest flying shots without taking aim. Hang me if ever I see sich a gentleman. He hit everything. That ere Captain puzzled me, surely.'

The party at dinner was increased by a neighbouring squire and his wife, and the rector of the parish. Ferdinand was placed at the right hand of Miss Temple. The more he beheld her the more beautiful she seemed. He detected every moment some charm before unobserved. It seemed to him that he never was in such agreeable society, though, sooth to say, the conversation was not of a very brilliant character. Mr. Temple recounted the sport of the morning to the squire, whose ears kindled at a congenial subject, and every preserve in the county was then discussed, with some episodes on poaching. The rector, an old gentleman, who had dined in old days at Armine Place, reminded Ferdinand of the agreeable circumstance, sanguine perhaps that the invitation might lead to a renewal of his acquaintance with that hospitable board. He was painfully profuse in his description of the public days of the famous Sir Ferdinand. From the service of plate to the thirty servants in livery, nothing was omitted.

'Our friend deals in Arabian tales,' whispered Ferdinand to Miss Temple; 'you can be a witness that we live quietly enough now.'

'I shall certainly never forget my visit to Armine,' replied Miss Temple; 'it was one of the agreeable days of life.'

‘And that is saying a great deal, for I think your life must have abounded in agreeable days.’

‘I cannot indeed lay any claim to that misery which makes many people interesting,’ said Miss Temple; ‘I am a very commonplace person, for I have been always happy.’

When the ladies withdrew there appeared but little inclination on the part of the squire and the rector to follow their example; and Captain Armine, therefore, soon left Mr. Temple to his fate, and escaped to the drawing-room. He glided to a seat on an ottoman, by the side of his hostess, and listened in silence to the conversation. What a conversation! At any other time, under any other circumstances, Ferdinand would have been teased and wearied with its commonplace current: all the dull detail of county tattle, in which the squire’s lady was a proficient, and with which Miss Temple was too highly bred not to appear to sympathise; and yet the conversation, to Ferdinand, appeared quite charming. Every accent of Henrietta’s sounded like wit; and when she bent her head in assent to her companion’s obvious deductions, there was about each movement a grace so ineffable, that Ferdinand could have sat in silence and listened, entranced, for ever: and occasionally, too, she turned to Captain Armine, and appealed on some point to his knowledge or his taste. It seemed to him that he had never listened to sounds so sweetly thrilling as her voice. It was a birdlike burst of music, that well became the sparkling sunshine of her violet eyes.

His late companions entered. Ferdinand rose from his seat; the

windows of the salon were open; he stepped forth into the garden. He felt the necessity of being a moment alone. He proceeded a few paces beyond the ken of man, and then leaning on a statue, and burying his face in his arm, he gave way to irresistible emotion. What wild thoughts dashed through his impetuous soul at that instant, it is difficult to conjecture. Perhaps it was passion that inspired that convulsive reverie; perchance it might have been remorse. Did he abandon himself to those novel sentiments which in a few brief hours had changed all his aspirations and coloured his whole existence; or was he tortured by that dark and perplexing future, from which his imagination in vain struggled to extricate him?

He was roused from his reverie, brief but tumultuous, by the note of music, and then by the sound of a human voice. The stag detecting the huntsman's horn could not have started with more wild emotion. But one fair organ could send forth that voice. He approached, he listened; the voice of Henrietta Temple floated to him on the air, breathing with a thousand odours. In a moment he was at her side, the squire's lady was standing by her; the gentlemen, for a moment arrested from a political discussion, formed a group in a distant part of the room, the rector occasionally venturing in a practised whisper to enforce a disturbed argument. Ferdinand glided in unobserved by the fair performer. Miss Temple not only possessed a voice of rare tone and compass, but this delightful gift of nature had been cultivated with refined art. Ferdinand, himself a musician, and passionately

devoted to vocal melody, listened with unexaggerated rapture.

‘Oh! beautiful!’ exclaimed he, as the songstress ceased.

‘Captain Armine!’ cried Miss Temple, looking round with a wild, bewitching smile. ‘I thought you were meditating in the twilight.’

‘Your voice summoned me.’

‘You care for music?’

‘For little else.’

‘You sing?’

‘I hum.’

‘Try this.’

‘With you?’

Ferdinand Armine was not unworthy of singing with Henrietta Temple. His mother had been his able instructress in the art even in his childhood, and his frequent residence at Naples and other parts of the south had afforded him ample opportunities of perfecting a talent thus early cultivated. But to-night the love of something beyond his art inspired the voice of Ferdinand. Singing with Henrietta Temple, he poured forth to her in safety all the passion which raged in his soul. The squire’s lady looked confused; Henrietta herself grew pale; the politicians ceased even to whisper, and advanced from their corner to the instrument; and when the duet was terminated, Mr. Temple offered his sincere congratulations to his guest. Henrietta also turned with some words of commendation to Ferdinand; but the words were faint and confused, and finally requesting Captain Armine to favour

them by singing alone, she rose and vacated her seat.

Ferdinand took up the guitar, and accompanied himself to a Neapolitan air. It was gay and festive, a *Ritornella* which might summon your mistress to dance in the moonlight. And then, amid many congratulations, he offered the guitar to Miss Temple.

‘No one will listen to a simple melody after anything so brilliant,’ said Miss Temple, as she touched a string, and, after a slight prelude, sang these words:—

THE DESERTED

I

Yes, weeping is madness,
Away with this tear,
Let no sign of sadness
Betray the wild anguish I fear.
When we meet him to-night,
Be mute then my heart!
And my smile be as bright,
As if we were never to part.

II

Girl! give me the mirror
That said I was fair;
Alas! fatal error,
This picture reveals my despair.
Smiles no longer can pass
O'er this faded brow,
And I shiver this glass,
Like his love and his fragile vow!

‘The music,’ said Ferdinand, full of enthusiasm, ‘is—’
‘Henrietta’s,’ replied her father.

‘And the words?’

‘Were found in my canary’s cage,’ said Henrietta Temple,
rising and putting an end to the conversation.

CHAPTER VII

In Which Captain Armine Indulges in a Reverie.

THE squire's carriage was announced, and then came his lady's shawl. How happy was Ferdinand when he recollected that he was to remain at Ducie. Remain at Ducie!

Remain under the same roof as Henrietta Temple. What bliss! what ravishing bliss! All his life, and his had not been a monotonous one; it seemed that all his life could not afford a situation so adventurous and so sweet as this. Now they have gone. The squire and his lady, and the worthy rector who recollected Armine so well; they have all departed, all the adieus are uttered; after this little and unavoidable bustle, silence reigns in the salon of Ducie. Ferdinand walked to the window. The moon was up; the air was sweet and hushed; the landscape clear, though soft. Oh! what would he not have given to have strolled in that garden with Henrietta Temple, to have poured forth his whole soul to her, to have told her how wondrous fair she was, how wildly bewitching, and how he loved her, how he sighed to bind his fate with hers, and live for ever in the brilliant atmosphere of her grace and beauty.

'Good night, Captain Armine,' said Henrietta Temple.

He turned hastily round, he blushed, he grew pale. There she stood, in one hand a light, the other extended to her father's

guest. He pressed her hand, he sighed, he looked confused; then suddenly letting go her hand, he walked quickly towards the door of the salon, which he opened that she might retire.

‘The happiest day of my life has ended,’ he muttered.

‘You are so easily content then, that I think you must always be happy.’

‘I fear I am not so easily content as you imagine.’

She has gone. Hours, many and long hours, must elapse before he sees her again, before he again listens to that music, watches that airy grace, and meets the bright flashing of that fascinating eye. What misery was there in this idea? How little had he seemed hitherto to prize the joy of being her companion. He cursed the hours which had been wasted away from her in the morning’s sport; he blamed himself that he had not even sooner quitted the dining-room, or that he had left the salon for a moment, to commune with his own thoughts in the garden. With difficulty he restrained himself from reopening the door, to listen for the distant sound of her footsteps, or catch, perhaps, along some corridor, the fading echo of her voice. But Ferdinand was not alone; Mr. Temple still remained. That gentleman raised his face from the newspaper as Captain Armine advanced to him; and, after some observations about the day’s sport, and a hope that he would repeat his trial of the manor to-morrow, proposed their retirement. Ferdinand of course assented, and in a moment he was ascending with his host the noble and Italian staircase: and he then was ushered from the vestibule into his room.

His previous visit to the chamber had been so hurried, that he had only made a general observation on its appearance. Little inclined to slumber, he now examined it more critically. In a recess was a French bed of simple furniture. On the walls, which were covered with a rustic paper, were suspended several drawings, representing views in the Saxon Switzerland. They were so bold and spirited that they arrested attention; but the quick eye of Ferdinand instantly detected the initials of the artist in the corner. They were letters that made his heart tremble, as he gazed with admiring fondness on her performances. Before a sofa, covered with a chintz of a corresponding pattern with the paper of the walls, was placed a small French table, on which were writing materials; and his toilet-table and his mantelpiece were profusely ornamented with rare flowers; on all sides were symptoms of female taste and feminine consideration.

Ferdinand carefully withdrew from his coat the flower that Henrietta had given him in the morning, and which he had worn the whole day. He kissed it, he kissed it more than once; he pressed its somewhat faded form to his lips with cautious delicacy; then tending it with the utmost care, he placed it in a vase of water, which holding in his hand, he threw himself into an easy chair, with his eyes fixed on the gift he most valued in the world.

An hour passed, and Ferdinand Armine remained fixed in the same position. But no one who beheld that beautiful and pensive countenance, and the dreamy softness of that large grey

eye, could for a moment conceive that his thoughts were less sweet than the object on which they appeared to gaze. No distant recollections disturbed him now, no memory of the past, no fear of the future. The delicious present monopolised his existence. The ties of duty, the claims of domestic affection, the worldly considerations that by a cruel dispensation had seemed, as it were, to taint even his innocent and careless boyhood, even the urgent appeals of his critical and perilous situation; all, all were forgotten in one intense delirium of absorbing love.

Anon he rose from his seat, and paced his room for some minutes, with his eyes fixed on the ground. Then throwing off his clothes, and taking the flower from the vase, which he had previously placed on the table, he deposited it in his bosom. 'Beautiful, beloved flower,' exclaimed he; 'thus, thus will I win and wear your mistress!'

CHAPTER VIII

A Strange Dream.

RESTLESS are the dreams of the lover that is young. Ferdinand Armine started awake from the agony of a terrible slumber. He had been walking in a garden with Henrietta Temple, her hand was clasped in his, her eyes fixed on the ground, as he whispered delicious words. His face was flushed, his speech panting and low. Gently he wound his vacant arm round her graceful form; she looked up, her speaking eyes met his, and their trembling lips seemed about to cling into a—

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