

Godolphin, Volume 3.

Edward Bulwer-Lytton

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GODOLPHIN, Volume 3.
By Edward Bulwer Lytton
(Lord Lytton)

CHAPTER XXII.

THE BRIDE ALONE.--A DIALOGUE POLITICAL AND MATRIMONIAL.--CONSTANCE GENIUS FOR DIPLOMACY.--THE CHARACTER OF HER ASSSEMBLIES.--HER CONQUEST OVER LADY DELVILLE.

"Bring me that book; place that table nearer; and leave me."

The Abigail obeyed the orders, and the young Countess of Erpingham was alone. Alone! what a word for a young and beautiful bride in the first months of her marriage! Alone! and in the heart of that mighty city in which rank and wealth--and they were hers--are the idols adored by millions.

It was a room fancifully and splendidly decorated. Flowers and perfumes were, however, its chief luxury; and from the open window you might see the trees in the old Mall deepening into the rich verdure of June. That haunt, too--a classical haunt for London--was at the hour I speak of full of gay and idle life; and there was something fresh and joyous in the air, the sun, and the crowd of foot and horse that swept below.

Was the glory gone from your brow, Constance?--or the proud gladness from your eye? Alas! are not the blessings of the world like the enchanted bullets?--that which pierces our heart is united with the gift which our heart desired!

Lord Erpingham entered the room. "Well, Constance," said he, "shall you ride on horseback to-day?"

"I think not."

"Then I wish you would call on Lady Delville. You see Delville is of my party: we sit together. You should be very civil to her, and I did not think you were so the other night."

"You wish Lady Delville to support your political interest; and, if I mistake not, you think her at present lukewarm?"

"Precisely."

"Then, my dear lord, will you place confidence in my discretion? I promise you, if you will leave me undisturbed in my own plans, that Lady Delville shall be the most devoted of your party before the season is half over: but then, the means will not be those you advise."

"Why, I advised none."

"Yes--civility; a very poor policy."

"D--n it, Constance! why, you would not frown a great person like Lady Delville into affection for us?"

"Leave it to me."

"Nonsense!"

"My dear lord, only try. Three months is all I ask. You will leave the management of politics to me ever afterwards! I was born a schemer. Am I not John Vernon's daughter?"

"Well, well, do as you will," said Lord Erpingham; "but I see how it will end. However, you will call on Lady Delville to-day?"

"If you wish it, certainly."

"I do."

Lady Delville was a proud, great lady; not very much liked and not so often invited by her equals as if she had been agreeable and a flirt.

Constance knew with whom she had to treat. She called on Lady Delville that day. Lady Delville was at home: a pretty and popular Mrs. Trevor was with her.

Lady Delville received her coolly--Constance was haughtiness itself.

"You go to the Duchess of Daubigny's to-night?" said Lady Delville in the course of their broken conversation.

"Indeed I do not. I like agreeable society. It shall be my object to form a circle that not one displeasing person shall obtain access to. Will you assist me, my dear Mrs. Trevor?"--and Constance turned, with her softest smile, to the lady she addressed.

Mrs. Trevor was flattered: Lady Delville drew herself up.

"It is a small party at the duchess's," said the latter; "merely to meet the Duke and Duchess of C----."

"Ah, few people are capable of giving a suitable entertainment to the royal family."

But surely none more so than the Duchess of Daubigny--her house so large, her rank so great!"

"These are but poor ingredients towards the forming of an agreeable party," said Constance, coldly. "The mistake made by common minds is to suppose titles the only rank. Royal dukes love, above all other persons, to be amused; and amusement is the last thing generally provided for them."

The conversation fell into other channels. Constance rose to depart. She warmly pressed the hand of Mrs. Trevor, whom she had only seen once before.

"A few persons come to me to-morrow evening," said she; "_do_ waive ceremony, and join us. I can promise you that not one disagreeable person shall be present; and that the Duchess of Daubigny shall write for an invitation and be refused."

Mrs. Trevor accepted the invitation.

Lady Delville was enraged beyond measure. Never was female tongue more bitter than hers at the expense of that insolent Lady Erpingham! Yet Lady Delville was secretly in grief; for the first time in her life, she was hurt at not having been asked to a party: and being hurt because she was not going, she longed most eagerly to go.

The next evening came. Erpingham House was not large, but it was well adapted to the description of assembly its beautiful owner had invited. Statues, busts, pictures, books, scattered or arranged about the apartments, furnished matter for intellectual conversation, or gave at least an intellectual air to the meeting.

About a hundred persons were present. They were selected from the most distinguished ornaments of the time. Musicians, painters, authors, orators, fine gentlemen, dukes, princes, and beauties. One thing, however, was imperatively necessary in order to admit them--the profession of liberal opinions. No Tory, however wise, eloquent or beautiful, could, that evening, have obtained the sesame to those apartments.

Constance never seemed more lovely, and never before was she so winning. The coldness and the arrogance of her manner had wholly vanished. To every one she spoke; and to every one her voice, her manner, were kind, cordial, familiar, but familiar with a soft dignity that heightened the charm. Ambitious not only to please but to dazzle, she breathed into her conversation all the grace and culture of her mind. They who admired her the most were the most accomplished themselves.

Now exchanging with foreign nobles that brilliant trifling of the world in which there is often so much penetration, wisdom, and research into character; now with a kindling eye and animated cheek commenting, with poets and critics, on literature and the arts; now, in a more remote and quiet corner, seriously discussing, with hoary politicians, those affairs in which even they allowed her shrewdness and her grasp of intellect; and combining with every grace and every accomplishment a rare and dazzling order of beauty--we may readily imagine the sensation she created, and the sudden and novel zest which so splendid an Armida must have given to the tameness of society.

The whole of the next week, the party at Erpingham House was the theme of every conversation. Each person who had been there had met the lion he had been most anxious to see. The beauty had conversed with the poet, who had charmed her; the young debutant in science had paid homage to the great professor of its loftiest mysteries; the statesman had thanked the author who had defended his measures; the author had been delighted with the compliment of the statesman. Every one then agreed that, while the highest rank in the kingdom had been there, rank had been the least attraction; and those who before had found Constance repellent, were the very persons who now expatiated with the greatest rapture on the sweetness of her manners. Then, too, every one who had been admitted to the coterie dwelt on the rarity of the admission; and thus, all the world were dying for an introduction to Erpingham House--partly, because it was agreeable--principally, because it was difficult.

It soon became a compliment to the understanding to say of a person, "He goes to Lady Erpingham's!" They who valued themselves on their understandings moved heaven and earth to become popular with the beautiful countess. Lady Delville was not asked; Lady Delville was furious: she

affected disdain, but no one gave her credit for it. Lord Erpingham teased Constance on this point.

"You see I was right; for you have affronted Lady Delville. She has made Delville look coolly on me; in a few weeks he will be a Tory; think of that, Lady Erpingham!"

"One month more," answered Constance, with a smile, "and you shall see."

One night, Lady Delville and Lady Erpingham met at a large party. The latter seated herself by her haughty enemy; not seeming to heed Lady Delville's coolness, Constance entered into conversation with her. She dwelt upon books, pictures, music: her manner was animated, and her wit playful. Pleased, in spite of herself, Lady Delville warmed from her reserve.

"My dear Lady Delville," said Constance, suddenly turning her bright countenance on the countess with an expression of delighted surprise, "will you forgive me?--I never dreamed before that you were so charming a person! I never conceal my sentiments: and I own with regret and shame that, till this moment, I had never seen in your mind--whatever I might in your person--those claims to admiration which were constantly dinned into my ear."

Lady Delville actually coloured.

"Pray," continued Constance, "condescend to permit me to a nearer acquaintance. Will you dine with us on Thursday?--we shall have only nine persons beside yourself: but they are the nine persons whom I most esteem and admire."

Lady Delville accepted the invitation. From that hour, Lady Delville--who had at first resented, from the deepest recess of her heart, Constance Vernon's accession to rank and wealth,--who, had Constance deferred to her early acquaintance, would have always found something in her she could have affected to despise; from that hour, Lady Delville was the warmest advocate, and a little time after, the sincerest follower, of the youthful countess.

CHAPTER XXIII.

AN INSIGHT INTO THE REAL GRANDE MONDE;--BEING A SEARCH BEHIND THE ROSE-COLOURED CURTAINS.

The time we now speak of was the most brilliant the English world, during the last half century, has known. Lord Byron was in his brief and dazzling zenith; De Stael was in London; the Peace had turned the attention of rich idlers to social enjoyment and to letters. There was an excitement, and a brilliancy, and a spirituality, about our circles, which we do not recognise now. Never had a young and ambitious woman--a beauty and a genius--a finer moment for the commencement of her power. It was Constance's early and bold resolution to push to the utmost--even to exaggeration--a power existing in all polished states, but now mostly in this,--the power of fashion! This mysterious and subtle engine she was eminently skilled to move according to her will. Her intuitive penetration into character, her tact, and her grace, were exactly the talents Fashion most demands; and they were at present devoted only to that sphere. The rudeness that she mingled, at times, with the bewitching softness and ease of manner she could command at others, increased the

effect of her power. It is much to intimidate as well as to win. And her rudeness in a very little while grew popular; for it was never exercised but on those whom the world loves to see humbled. Modest merit in any rank; and even insolence, if accompanied with merit, were always safe from her satire. It was the hauteur of foolish duchesses or purse-proud roturiers that she loved, and scrupled not, to abase.

And the independence of her character was mixed with extraordinary sweetness of temper. Constance could not be in a passion: it was out of her nature. If she was stung, she could utter a sarcasm; but she could not frown or raise her voice. There was that magic in her, that she was always feminine. She did not stare young men out of countenance; she never addressed them by their Christian names; she never flirted--never coquetted: the bloom and flush of modesty was yet all virgin upon her youth. She, the founder of a new dynasty, avoided what her successors and contemporaries have deemed it necessary to incur. She was the leader of fashion; but--it is a miraculous union--she was respectable!

At this period, some new dances were brought into England. These dances found much favour in the eyes of several great ladies young enough to dance them. They met at each other's houses in the morning to practise the steps. Among these was Lady Erpingham; her house became the favourite rendezvous.

The young Marquis of Dartington was one of the little knot. Celebrated for his great fortune, his personal beauty, and his general success, he resolved to fall in love with Lady Erpingham. He devoted himself exclusively to her; he joined her in the morning in her rides--in the evening in her gaieties. He had fallen in love with her?--yes!--did he love her?--not the least. But he was excessively idle!--what else could he do?

Constance early saw the attentions and designs of Lord Dartington. There is one difficulty in repressing advances in great society--one so easily becomes ridiculous by being a prude. But Constance dismissed Lord Dartington with great dexterity. This was the occasion:--

One of the apartments in Erpingham House communicated with a conservatory. In this conservatory Constance was alone one morning, when Lord Dartington, who had entered the house with Lord Erpingham, joined her. He was not a man who could ever become sentimental; he was rather the gay lover--rather the Don Gaolor than the Amadis; but he was a little abashed before Constance. He trusted, however, to his fine eyes and his good complexion--plucked up courage; and, picking a flower from the same plant Constance was tending, said,--

"I believe there is a custom in some part of the world to express love by flowers. May I, dear Lady Erpingham, trust to this flower to express what I dare not utter?"

Constance did not blush, nor look confused, as Lord Dartington had hoped and expected. One who had been loved by Godolphin was not likely to feel much agitation at the gallantry of Lord Dartington; but she looked gravely in his face, paused a little before she answered, and then said, with a smile that abashed the suitor more than severity could possibly have done:--

"My dear Lord Dartington, do not let us mistake each other. I live in the world like other women, but I am not altogether like them. Not another

word of gallantry to me alone, as you value my friendship. In a crowded room pay me as many compliments as you like. It will flatter my vanity to have you in my train. And now, just do me the favour to take these scissors and cut the dead leaves off that plant."

Lord Dartington, to use a common phrase, "hummed and hawed." He looked, too, a little angry. An artful and shrewd politician, it was not Constance's wish to cool the devotion, though she might the attachment, of a single member of her husband's party. With a kind look--but a look so superior, so queen-like, so free from the petty and coquettish condescension of the sex, that the gay lord wondered from that hour how he could ever have dreamed of Constance as of certain other ladies--she stretched her hand to him.

"We are friends, Lord Dartington?--and now we know each other, we shall be so always."

Lord Dartington bowed confusedly over the beautiful hand he touched; and Constance, walking into the drawing-room, sent for Lord Erpingham on business--Dartington took his leave.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE MARRIED STATE OF CONSTANCE.

Constance, Countess of Erpingham, was young, rich, lovely as a dream, worshipped as a goddess. Was she happy? and was her whole heart occupied with the trifles that surrounded her?

Deep within her memory was buried one fatal image that she could not exorcise. The reproaching and mournful countenance of Godolphin rose before her at all times and seasons. The charm of his presence no other human being could renew. His eloquent and noble features, living, and glorious with genius and with passion, his sweet deep voice, his conversation, so rich with mind and knowledge, and the subtle delicacy with which he applied its graces to some sentiment dedicated to her, (delicious flattery, of all flatteries the most attractive to a sensitive and intellectual woman!)--these occurred to her again and again, and rendered all she saw around her flat, wearisome, insipid. Nor was this deep-seated and tender weakness the only serpent--if I may use so confused a metaphor--in the roses of her lot.

And here I invoke the reader's graver attention. The fate of women in all the more polished circles of society is eminently unnatural and unhappy. The peasant and his dame are on terms of equality--equality even of ambition: no career is open to one and shut to the other;--equality even of hardship, and hardship is employment: no labour occupies the whole energies of the man, but leaves those of the woman unemployed. Is this the case with the wives in a higher station?--the wives of the lawyer, the merchant, the senator, the noble? There, the men have their occupations; and the women (unless, like poor Fanny, work-bags and parrots can employ them) none. They are idle. They employ the imagination and the heart. They fall in love and are wretched; or they remain virtuous, and are either wearied by an eternal monotony or they fritter away intellect, mind, character, in the minutest frivolities--frivolities being their only refuge from stagnation. Yes! there is one very curious curse for the sex which men don't consider! Once married, the more aspiring of them have no real scope for ambition: the ambition gnaws away their content, and never find elsewhere wherewithal to feed on.

This was Constance's especial misfortune. Her lofty, and restless, and soaring spirit pined for a sphere of action, and ballrooms and boudoirs met it on every side. One hope she did indeed cherish; that hope was the source of her intrigues and schemes, of her care for seeming trifles, the waste of her energies on seeming frivolities. This hope, this object, was to diminish--to crush, not only the party which had forsaken her father, but the power of that order to which she belonged herself; which she had entered only to humble. But this hope was a distant and chill vision. She was too rational to anticipate an early and effectual change in our social state, and too rich in the treasures of mind to be the creature of one idea. Satiety--the common curse of the great;--crept over her day by day. The powers within her lay stagnant--the keen intellect rusted in its sheath.

"How is it," said she to the beautiful Countess of ----, "that you seem always so gay and so animated; that with all your vivacity and tenderness, you are never at a loss for occupation? You never seem weary--ennuyee--why is this?"

"I will tell you," said the pretty countess, archly; "I change my lovers every month." Constance blushed, and asked no more.

Many women in her state, influenced by contagious example, wearied by a life in which the heart had no share; without children, without a guide; assailed and wooed on all sides, in all shapes;--many women might have ventured, if not into love, at least into coquetry. But Constance remained as bright and cold as ever--"the unshaded snow!" It might be, indeed, that the memory of Godolphin preserved her safe from all lesser dangers. The asbestos once conquered by fire can never be consumed by it; but there was also another cause in Constance's very nature--it was pride!

Oh! if men could but dream of what a proud woman endures in those caresses which humble her, they would not wonder why proud women are so difficult to subdue. This is a matter on which we all ponder much, but we dare not write honestly upon it. But imagine a young, haughty, guileless beauty, married to a man whom she neither loves nor honours; and so far from that want of love rendering her likely to fall hereafter, it is more probable that it will make her recoil from the very name of love.

About this time the Dowager Lady Erpingham died; an event sincerely mourned by Constance, and which broke the strongest tie that united the young countess to her lord. Lord Erpingham and Constance, indeed, now saw but little of each other. Like most men six feet high, with large black whiskers, the earl was vain of his person; and, like most rich noblemen, he found plenty of ladies who assured him he was irresistible. He had soon grown angry at the unadmiring and calm urbanity of Constance; and, living a great deal with single men, he formed liaisons of the same order as they do. He was, however, sensible that he had been fortunate in the choice of a wife. His political importance the wisdom of Constance had quadrupled; at the least; his house she had rendered the most brilliant in London, and his name the most courted in the lists of the peerage. Though munificent, she was not extravagant; though a beauty, she did not intrigue; neither, though his inconstancy was open, did she appear jealous; nor, whatever the errors of his conduct, did she ever disregard his interest, disobey his wishes, or waver from the smooth and continuous sweetness of her temper. Of such a wife Lord Erpingham could not complain: he esteemed her, praised her, asked her advice, and stood a little in awe of her.

Ah, Constance! had you been the daughter of a noble or a peasant--had you been the daughter of any man but John Vernon--what a treasure beyond price, without parallel, would that heart, that beauty, that genius have been!

CHAPTER XXV.

THE PLEASURE OF RETALIATING HUMILIATION.--CONSTANCE'S DEFENCE OF FASHION.--REMARKS ON FASHION.--GODOLPHIN'S WHEREABOUT.--FANNY MILLINGER'S CHARACTER OF HERSELF.--WANT OF COURAGE IN MORALISTS.

It was a proud moment for Constance when the Duchess of Winstoun and Lady Margaret Midgecombe wrote to her, worried her, beset her, for a smile, a courtesy, an invitation, or a ticket to Almack's.

They had at first thought to cry her down; to declare that she was plebeian, mad, bizarre, and a blue. It was all in vain. Constance rose every hour. They struggled against the conviction, but it would not do. The first person who confounded them with a sense of their error was the late King, then Regent; he devoted himself to Lady Erpingham for a whole evening, at a ball given by himself. From that hour they were assured they had been wrong: they accordingly called on her the next day. Constance received them with the same coldness she had always evinced; but they went away declaring they never saw any one whose manners were so improved. They then sent her an invitation! she refused it; a second! she refused; a third, begging her to fix the day!!! she fixed the day, and disappointed them. Lord bless us!--how sorry they were, how alarmed, how terrified!--their dear Lady Erpingham must be ill!--they sent every day for the next week to know how she was!

"Why," said Mrs. Trevor to Lady Erpingham,--"why do you continue so cruel to these poor people? I know they were very impertinent, and so forth, once; but it is surely wiser and more dignified now to forgive; to appear unconscious of the past: people of the world ought not to quarrel with each other."

"You are right, and yet you are mistaken," said Constance: "I do forgive, and I don't quarrel; but my opinion, my contempt, remain the same, or are rather more disdainful than ever. These people are not worth losing the luxury we all experience in expressing contempt. I continue, therefore, but quietly and without affectation, to indulge that luxury. Besides, I own to you, my dear Mrs. Trevor, I do think that the mere insolence of titles must fairly and thoroughly be put down, if we sincerely wish to render society agreeable; and where can we find a better example for punishment than the Duchess of Winstoun?"

"But, my dear Lady Erpingham, you are thought insolent: your friend, Lady ----, is called insolent, too;--are you sure the charge is not merited?"

"I allow the justice of the charge; but you will observe, ours is not the insolence of rank: we have made it a point to protect, to the utmost, the poor and unfriended of all circles. Are we ever rude to governesses or companions, or poor writers, or musicians? When a man marries below him, do we turn our backs on the poor wife? Do we not, on the contrary, lavish our attention on her, and throw round her equivocal and joyless state the protection of Fashion? No, no! our insolence is Justice! it is the chalice returned to the lips which prepared it; it is insolence to the insolent; reflect, and you will allow it."

The fashion that Constance set and fostered was of a generous order; but it was not suited to the majority; it was corrupted by her followers into a thousand basenesses. In vain do we make a law, if the general spirit is averse to the law. Constance could humble the great; could loosen the links of extrinsic rank; could undermine the power of titles; but that was all! She could abase the proud, but not elevate the general tone: for one slavery she only substituted another,—people hugged the chains of Fashion, as before they hugged those of Titular Arrogance.

Amidst the gossip of the day Constance heard much of Godolphin, and all spoke of him with interest—even those who could not comprehend his very intricate and peculiar character. Separated from her by lands and seas, there seemed no danger in allowing herself the sweet pleasure of hearing his actions and his mind discussed. She fancied she did not permit herself to love him; she was too pure not to start at such an idea; but her mind was not so regulated, so trained and educated in sacred principle, that she forbade herself the luxury to remember. Of his present mode of life she heard little. He was traced from city to city; from shore to shore; from the haughty noblesse of Vienna to the gloomy shrines of Memphis, by occasional report, and seemed to tarry long in no place. This roving and unsettled life, which secretly assured her of her power, suffused his image in all tender and remorseful dyes. Ah! where is that one person to be envied, could we read the heart?

The actress had heard incidentally from Saville of Godolphin's attachment to the beautiful countess. She longed to see her; and when, one night at the theatre, she was informed that Lady Erpingham was in the Lord Chamberlain's box close before her, she could scarcely command her self-possession sufficiently to perform with her wonted brilliancy of effect.

She was greatly struck by the singular nobleness of Lady Erpingham's face and person: and Godolphin rose in her estimation, from the justice of the homage he had rendered to so fair a shrine. What a curious trait, by the by, that is in women;—their exaggerated anxiety to see one who has been loved by the man in whom they themselves take interest: and the manner which the said man rises or falls in their estimation, according as they admire, or are disappointed in, the object of his love.

"And so," said Saville, supping one night with the actress, "you think the world does not overlaud Lady Erpingham?"

"No: she is what Medea would have been, if innocent—full of majesty, and yet of sweetness. It is the face of a queen of some three thousand years back. I could have worshipped her."

"My little Fanny, you are a strange creature. Methinks you have a dash of poetry in you."

"Nobody who has not written poetry could ever read my character," answered Fanny, with naivete, yet with truth. "Yet you have not much of the ideal about you, pretty one."

"No; because I was so early thrown on myself, that I was forced to make independence my chief good. I soon saw that if I followed my heart to and fro, wherever it led me, I should be the creature of every breath—the victim of every accident: I should have been the very soul of romance; lived on a smile; and died, perhaps, in a ditch at last. Accordingly, I

set to work with my feelings, and pared and cut them down to a convenient compass. Happy for me that I did so! What would have become of me if, years ago, when I loved Godolphin, I had thrown the whole world of my heart upon him?"

"Why, he has generosity; he would not have deserted you."

"But I should have wearied him," answered Fanny; "and that would have been quite enough for me. But I did love him well, and purely--(ah! you may smile!)--and disinterestedly. I was only fortified in my resolution not to love any one too much, by perceiving that he had affection but no sympathy for me. His nature was different from mine. I am woman in everything, and Godolphin is always sighing for a goddess!"

"I should like to sketch your character, Fanny. It is original, though not strongly marked. I never met with it in any book; yet it is true to your sex, and to the world."

"Few people could paint me exactly," answered Fanny. "The danger is that they would make too much or too little of me. But such as I am, the world ought to know what is so common, and, as you think, so undescribed."

And now, beautiful Constance, farewell for the present! I leave you surrounded by power, and pomp, and adulation. Enjoy as you may that for which you sacrificed affection!

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE VISIONARY AND HIS DAUGHTER--AN ENGLISHMAN, SUCH AS FOREIGNERS IMAGINE THE ENGLISH.

We must now present the reader to characters very different from those which have hitherto passed before his eye. Without the immortal city, along the Appia Via, there dwelt a singular and romantic visionary, of the name of Volkman. He was by birth a Dane; and nature had bestowed on him that frame of mind which might have won him a distinguished career, had she placed the period of his birth in the eleventh century. Volkman was essentially a man belonging to the past time: the character of his enthusiasm was weird and Gothic; with beings of the present day he had no sympathy; their loves, their hatreds, their politics, their literature, awoke no echo in his breast. He did not affect to herd with them; his life was solitude, and its occupation study--and study of that nature which every day unfitted him more and more for the purposes of existence. In a word, he was a reader of the stars; a believer in the occult and dreamy science of astrology. Bred up to the art of sculpture, he had early in life sought Rome, as the nurse of inspiration; but even then he had brought with him the dark and brooding temper of his northern tribe. The images of the classic world; the bright, and cold, and beautiful divinities, whose natures as well as shapes the marble simulation of life is so especially adapted to represent; spoke but little to Volkman's pre-occupied and gloomy imagination. Faithful to the superstitions and the warriors of the North, the loveliness and majesty of the southern creations but called forth in him the desire to apply the principles by which they were formed to the embodying those stern visions which his haggard and dim fancies only could invoke. This train of inspiration preserved him, at least, from the deadliest vice in a worshipper of the arts--commonplace. He was no servile and trite imitator; his very faults were solemn and commanding. But before he had gained that long experience which can alone perfect genius, his natural energies were directed to new

channels. In an illness which prevented his applying to his art, he had accidentally sought entertainment in a certain work upon astrology. The wild and imposing theories of the science--if science it may be called--especially charmed and invited him. The clear bright nights of his fatherland were brought back to his remembrance; he recalled the mystic and unanalysed impressions with which he had gazed upon the lights of heaven; and he imagined that the very vagueness of his feelings was a proof of the certainty of the science.

The sons of the North are pre-eminently liable to be affected by that romance of emotion which the hushed and starry aspect of night is calculated to excite. The long-broken luxurious silence that, in their frozen climate, reigns from the going down of the sun to its rise; the wandering and sudden meteors that disport, as with an impish life, along the noiseless and solemn heaven; the peculiar radiance of the stars; and even the sterile and severe features of the earth, which those stars light up with their chill and ghostly serenity, serve to deepen the effect of the wizard tales which are instilled into the ear of childhood, and to connect the less known and more visionary impulses of life with the influences, or at least with the associations, of Night and Heaven.

To Volkman, more alive than even his countrymen are wont to be, to superstitious impressions, the science on which he had chanced came with an all-absorbing interest and fascination. He surrendered himself wholly to his new pursuit. By degrees the block and the chisel were neglected, and, though he still worked from time to time, he ceased to consider the sculptor's art as the vocation of his life and the end of his ambition. Fortunately, though not rich, Volkman was not without the means of existence, nor even without the decent and proper comforts: so that he was enabled, as few men are, to indulge his ardour for unprofitable speculations, albeit to the exclusion of lucrative pursuits. It may be noted, that when a man is addicted to an occupation that withdraws him from the world, any great affliction tends to confirm, without hope of cure, his inclinations to solitude. The world, distasteful, in that it gave no pleasure, becomes irremediably hateful when it is coupled with the remembrance of pain. Volkman had married an Italian, a woman who loved him entirely, and whom he loved with that strong though uncaressing affection common to men of his peculiar temper. Of the gay and social habits and constitution of her country, the Italian was not disposed to suffer the astrologer to dwell only among the stars. She sought, playfully and kindly, to attract him towards human society; and Volkman could not always resist--as what man earth-born can do?--the influence of the fair presider over his house and hearth. It happened, that on one day in which she peculiarly wished his attendance at some one of those parties in which Englishmen think the notion of festivity strange--for it includes conversation--Volkman had foretold the menace of some great misfortune. Uncertain, from the character of the prediction, whether to wish his wife to remain at home or to go abroad, he yielded to her wish, and accompanied her to her friend's house. A young Englishman lately arrived at Rome, and already celebrated in the circles of that city for eccentricity of life and his passion for beauty, was of the party. He appeared struck with the sculptor's wife; and in his attentions, Volkman, for the first and the last time, experienced the pangs of jealousy; he hurried his wife away.

On their return home, whether or not a jewel worn by the signora had attracted the cupidity of some of the lawless race who live through gaining, and profiting by, such information, they were attacked by two robbers in the obscure and ill-lighted suburb. Though Volkman offered no resistance, the manner of their assailants was rude and violent. The

signora was fearfully alarmed; her shrieks brought a stranger to their assistance; it was the English youth who had so alarmed the jealousy of Volktman. Accustomed to danger in his profession of a gallant, the Englishman seldom, in those foreign lands, went from home at night without the protection of pistols. At the sight of firearms, the ruffians felt their courage evaporate; they fled from their prey; and the Englishman assisted Volktman in conveying the Italian to her home. But the terror of the encounter operated fatally on a delicate frame; and within three weeks from that night Volktman was a widower.

His marriage had been blessed with but one daughter, who at the time of this catastrophe was about eight years of age. His love for his child in some measure reconciled Volktman to life; and as the shock of the event subsided, he returned with a pertinacity which was now subjected to no interruption, to his beloved occupations and mysterious researches. One visitor alone found it possible to win frequent ingress to his seclusion; it was the young English man. A sentiment of remorse at the jealous feelings he had experienced, and for which his wife, though an Italian, had never given him even the shadow of a cause, had softened--into a feeling rendered kind by the associations of the deceased, and a vague desire to atone to her for an acknowledged error,--the dislike he had at first conceived against the young man. This was rapidly confirmed by the gentle and winning manners of the stranger, by his attentions to the deceased, to whom he had sent an English physician of great skill, and, as their acquaintance expanded, by the animated interest which he testified in the darling theories of the astrologer.

It happened also that Volktman's mother had been the daughter of Scotch parents. She had taught him the English tongue; and it was the only language, save his own, which he spoke as a native. This circumstance tended greatly to facilitate his intercourse with the traveller; and he found in the society of a man ardent, sensitive, melancholy, and addicted to all abstract contemplation, a pleasure which, among the keen, but uncultivated intellects of Italy, he had never enjoyed.

Frequently, then, came the young Englishman to the lone house on the Appia Via; and the mysterious and unearthly conversation of the starry visionary afforded to him, who had early learned to scrutinise the varieties of his kind, a strange delight, heightened by the contrast it presented to the worldly natures with which he usually associated, and the commonplace occupations of a life in pursuit of pleasure.

And there was one who, child as she was, watched the coming of that young and beautiful stranger with emotion beyond her years. Brought up alone; mixing, since her mother's death, with no companions of her age; catching dim and solemn glimpses of her father's wild but lofty speculations; his books, filled with strange characters and imposing "words of mighty sound," open for ever to her young and curious gaze; it can scarce be matter of wonder that something strange and unworldly mingled with the elements of character which Lucilla Volktman early developed--a character that was nature itself, yet of a nature erratic and bizarre. Her impulses she obeyed spontaneously, but none fathomed their origin. She was not of a quiet and meek order of mind; but passionate, changeful, and restless. She would laugh and weep without apparent cause; and the colour on her cheek never seemed for two minutes the same; and the most fitful changes of an April heaven were immutability itself compared with the play and lustre of expression that undulated in her features and her wild, deep, eloquent eyes.

Her person resembled her mind; it was beautiful; but the beauty struck you less than the singularity of its character. Her eyes were of a darkness that at night seemed black; but her hair was of the brightest and purest auburn; her complexion, sometimes pale, sometimes radiant even to the flush of a fever, was delicate and clear; her teeth and mouth were lovely beyond all words; her hands and feet were small to a fault; and as she grew up (for we have forestalled her age in this description) her shape, though wanting in height, was in such harmony and proportion, that the mind of the sculptor would sometimes escape from the absorption of the astrologer and Volktman would gaze upon her with the same admiration that he would have bestowed, in spite of the subject, on the goddess-forms of Phidias or Canova. But then, this beauty was accompanied with such endless variety of gesture, often so wild, though always necessarily graceful, that the eye ached for that repose requisite for prolonged admiration.

When she was spoken to, she did not often answer to the purpose, but rather appeared to reply as to some interrogatory of her own; in the midst of one occupation, she would start up to another; leave that, in turn, undone, and sit down in silence lasting for hours. Her voice, in singing, was exquisitely melodious; she had too, an intuitive talent for painting; and she read all the books that came in her way with an avidity that bespoke at once the restlessness and the genius of her mind.

This description of Lucilla must, I need scarcely repeat, be considered as applicable to her at some years distant from the time in which the young Englishman first attracted her childish but ardent imagination. To her, that face, with its regular and harmonious features, its golden hair, and soft, shy, melancholy aspect, seemed as belonging to a higher and brighter order of beings than those who, with exaggerated lineaments and swarthy hues, surrounded and displeased her. She took a strange and thrilling pleasure in creeping to his side, and looking up, when unobserved, at the countenance which, in his absence, she loved to imitate with her pencil by day; and to recall in her dreams at night. But she seldom spoke to him, and she shrank, covered with painful blushes, from his arms, whenever he attempted to bestow on her those caresses which children are wont to claim as an attention. Once, however, she summoned courage to ask him to teach her English, and he complied. She learned that language with surprising facility; and as Volktman loved its sound she grew familiar with its difficulties, by always addressing her father in a tongue which became inexpressibly dear to her. And the young stranger delighted to hear that soft and melodious voice, with its trembling, Italian accent, make music from the nervous and masculine language of his native land. Scarce accountably to himself, a certain tender and peculiar interest in the fortunes of this singular and bewitching child grew up within him--peculiar and not easily accounted for, in that it was not wholly the interest we feel in an engaging child, and yet was of no more interested nor sinister order. Were there truth in the science of the stars, I should say that they had told him her fate was to have affinity with his; and with that persuasion, something mysterious and more than ordinarily tender, entered into the affection he felt for the daughter of his friend.

The Englishman was himself of a romantic character. He had been self-taught; and his studies, irregular though often deep, had given directions to his intellect frequently enthusiastic and unsound. His imagination preponderated over his judgment; and any pursuit that attracted his imagination won his entire devotion, until his natural sagacity proved it deceitful. If at times, living as he did in that daily world which so sharpens our common sense, he smiled at the persevering

fervour of the astrologer, he more often shared it; and he became his pupil in "the poetry of heaven," with a secret but deep belief in the mysteries cultivated by his master. Carrying the delusion to its height, I fear that the enthusiast entered upon ground still more shadowy and benighted;--the old secrets of the alchemist, and perhaps even of those arcana yet more gloomy and less rational, were subjected to their serious contemplation; and night after night, they delivered themselves wholly up to that fearful and charmed fascination which the desire and effort to overleap our mortal boundaries produce even in the hardest and best regulated minds. The train of thought so long nursed by the abstruse and solitary Dane was, perhaps, a better apology for the weakness of credulity, than the youth and wandering fancy of the Englishman. But the scene around--not alluring to the one--fed to overflowing the romantic aspirations of the other.

On his way home, as the stars (which night had been spent in reading) began to wink and fade, the Englishman crossed the haunted Almo, renowned of yore for its healing virtues, and in whose stream the far-famed simulacrum, (the image of Cybele), which fell from heaven, was wont to be laved with every coming spring: and around his steps, till he gained his home, were the relics and monuments of that superstition which sheds so much beauty over all that, in harsh reasoning, it may be said to degrade; so that his mind, always peculiarly alive to external impressions, was girt, as it were, with an atmosphere favourable both to the lofty speculation and the graceful credulities of romance.

The Englishman remained at Rome, with slight intervals of absence, for nearly three years. On the night before the day in which he received intelligence of an event that recalled him to his native country, he repaired at an hour accidentally later than usual to the astrologer's abode.

CHAPTER XXVII.

A CONVERSATION LITTLE APPERTAINING TO THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.--RESEARCHES INTO HUMAN FATE._-THE PREDICTION.

On entering the apartment he found Lucilla seated on a low stool beside the astrologer. She looked up when she heard his footsteps; but her countenance seemed so dejected, that he turned involuntarily to that of Volkman for explanation. Volkman met his gaze with a steadfast and mournful aspect.

"What has happened?" asked the Englishman: "you seem sad,--you do not greet me as usual."

"I have been with the stars," replied the visionary.

"They seem but poor company," rejoined the Englishman; "and do not appear to have much heightened your spirits."

"Jest not, my friend," said Volkman; it was for the loss of thee I looked sorrowful. I perceive that thou wilt take a journey soon, and that it will be of no pleasant nature."

"Indeed!" answered the Englishman, smilingly. "I ask leave to question the fact: you know better than any man how often, through an error in our calculations, through haste, even through an over-attention, astrological predictions are exposed to falsification; and at present I foresee so

little chance of my quitting Rome, that I prefer the earthly probabilities to the celestial."

"My schemes are just, and the Heavens wrote their decrees in their clearest language," answered the astrologer. "Thou art on the eve of quitting Rome."

"On what occasion?"

The astrologer hesitated--the young visitor pressed the question.

"The lord of the fourth house," said Voltman, reluctantly, "is located in the eleventh house. Thou knowest to whom the position portends disaster."

"My father!" said the Englishman, anxiously, and turning pale; "I think that position would relate to him."

"It doth," said the astrologer, slowly.

"Impossible! I heard from him to-day; he is well--let me see the figures."

The young man looked over the mystic hieroglyphics of the art, inscribed on a paper that was placed before the visionary, with deep and scrutinising attention. Without bewildering the reader with those words and figures of weird sound and import which perplex the uninitiated, and entangle the disciple of astrology, I shall merely observe that there was one point in which the judgment appeared to admit doubt as to the signification. The Englishman insisted on the doubt; and a very learned and edifying debate was carried on between pupil and master, in the heat of which all recollection of the point in dispute (as is usual in such cases) evaporated.

"I know not how it is," said the Englishman, "that I should give any credence to a faith which (craving your forgiveness) most men out of Bedlam concur, at this day, in condemning as wholly idle and absurd. For it may be presumed that men only incline to some unpopular theory in proportion as it flatters or favours them; and as for this theory of yours--of ours, if you will--it has foretold me nothing but misfortune."

"Thy horoscope," replied the astrologer, "is indeed singular and ominous: but, like my daughter, the exact minute (within almost a whole hour) of thy birth seems unknown; and however ingeniously we, following the ancients, have contrived means for correcting nativities, our predictions (so long as the exact period of birth is not ascertained) remain, in my mind, always liable to some uncertainty. Indeed, the surest method of reducing the supposed time to the true--that of 'Accidents,' is but partially given, as in thy case; for, with a negligence that cannot be too severely blamed or too deeply lamented, thou hast omitted to mark down, or remember, the days on which accidents--fevers, broken limbs, &c.--occurred to thee; and this omission leaves a cloud over the bright chapters of fate----"

"Which," interrupted the young man, "is so much the happier for me, in that it allows me some loophole for hope."

"Yet," renewed the astrologer, as if resolved to deny his friend any consolation, "thy character, and the bias of thy habits, as well as the peculiarities of thy person--nay even the moles upon thy skin--accord with

thy proposed horoscope."

"Be it so!" said the Englishman, gaily. "You grant me, at least, the fairest of earthly gifts--the happiness of pleasing that sex which alone sweetens our human misfortunes. That gift I would sooner have, even accompanied as it is, than all the benign influences without it."

"Yet," said the astrologer, "shalt thou even there be met with affliction; for Saturn had the power to thwart the star Venus, that was disposed to favour thee, and evil may be the result of the love thou inspirest. There is one thing remarkable in our science, which is especially worthy of notice in thy lot. The ancients, unacquainted with the star of Herschel, seem also scarcely acquainted with the character which the influence of that wayward and melancholy orb creates. Thus, the aspect of Herschel neutralises, in great measure, the boldness and ambition, and pride of heart, thou wouldst otherwise have drawn from the felicitous configuration of the stars around the Moon and Mercury at thy birth. That yearning for something beyond the narrow bounds of the world, that love for reverie, that passionate romance, yea, thy very leaning, despite thy worldly sense, to these occult and starry mysteries;--all are bestowed on thee by this new and potential planet."

"And hence, I suppose," said the Englishman, interested (as the astrologer had declared) in spite of himself, "hence that opposition in my nature of the worldly and romantic; hence, with you, I am the dreaming enthusiast; but the instant I regain the living and motley crowd, I shake off the influence with ease, and become the gay pursuer of social pleasures."

"Never _at heart gay,_" muttered the astrologer; "Saturn and Herschel make not sincere mirth-makers." The Englishman did not hear or seem to hear him.

"No," resumed the young man, musingly, "no! it is true that there is some counteraction of what, at times, I should have called my natural bent. Thus, I am bold enough, and covetous of knowledge, and not deaf to vanity; and yet I have no ambition. The desire to rise seems to me wholly unalluring; I scorn and contemn it as a weakness. But what matters it? so much the happier for me if, as you predict, my life be short. But how, if so unambitious and so quiet of habit, how can I imagine that my death will be violent as well as premature?"

It was as he spoke that the young Lucilla, who, with fixed eyes and lips apart, had been drinking in their conversation suddenly rose and left the room. They were used to her comings in and her goings out without cause or speech, and continued their conversation.

"Alas!" said the visionary; "can tranquillity of life, or care, or prudence, preserve us from our destiny? No sign is more deadly, whether by accident or murder, than that which couples Hyleg with Orion and Saturn. Yet, thou mayest pass the year in which that danger is foretold thee; and, beyond that time, peace, honour, good fortune, await thee. Better to have the menace of ill in early life than in its decline. Youth bears up against misfortune; but it withers the heart, and crushes the soul of age!"

"After all," said the young guest, haughtily, "we must do our best to contradict the starry evils by our own internal philosophy. We can make ourselves independent of fate; that independence is better than prosperity!" Then, changing his tone, he added,--"But you imagine that,

by the power of other arts, we may control and counteract the prophecies of the stars----"

"How meanest thou?" said the astrologer, hastily. "Thou dost not suppose that alchymy, which is the servant of the heavenly host, is their opponent?"

"Nay," answered the disciple, "but you allow that we may be enabled to ward off evils, and to cure diseases, otherwise fatal to us, by the gift of Uriel and the charm of the Cabala?"

"Surely," replied the visionary; "but then I opine that the discovery of these precious secrets was foretold to us by the Omniscient Book at our nativity; and, therefore, though the menace of evils be held out to us, so also is the probability of their correction or our escape. And I must own (pursued the enthusiast) that, to me, the very culture of those divine arts hath given a consolation amidst the evils to which I have been fated; so true seems it, that it is not in the outer nature, in the great elements, and in the bowels of the earth, but also within ourselves that we must look for the preparations whereby we are to achieve the wisdom of Zoroaster and Hermes. We must abstract ourselves from passion and earthly desires. Lapped in a celestial reverie, we must work out, by contemplation, the essence from the matter of things: nor can we dart into the soul of the Mystic World until we ourselves have forgotten the body; and by fast, by purity, and by thought, have become, in the flesh itself, a living soul."

Much more, and with an equal wildness of metaphysical eloquence, did the astrologer declare in praise of those arts condemned by the old Church; and it doth indeed appear from reference to the numerous works of the alchymists and magians yet extant, somewhat hastily and unjustly. For those books all unite in dwelling on the necessity of virtue, subdued passions and a clear mind, in order to become a fortunate and accomplished cabalist--a precept, by the way, not without its policy; for, if the disciple failed, the failure might be attributed to his own fleshly imperfections, not to any deficiency in the truth of the science.

The young man listened to the visionary with an earnest and fascinated attention. Independent of the dark interest always attached to discourses of supernatural things more especially, we must allow, in the mouth of a fervent and rapt believer, there was that in the language and very person of the astrologer which inexpressibly enhanced the effect of the theme. Like most men acquainted with the literature of a country, but not accustomed to daily conversation with its natives, the English words and fashion of periods that occurred to Volkman were rather those used in books than in colloquy; and a certain solemnity and slowness of tone accompanied with the frequent, almost constant use of the pronoun singular--the thou and the thee, gave a strangeness and unfamiliar majesty to his dialect that suited well with the subjects on which he so loved to dwell. He himself was lean, gaunt, and wan; his cheeks were drawn and hollow; and thin locks, prematurely bleached to grey, fell in disorder round high, bare temples, in which the thought that is not of this world had paled the hue and furrowed the surface. But, as may be noted in many imaginative men, the life that seemed faint and chill in the rest of the frame, collected itself, as in a citadel, within the eye. Bright, wild, and deep, the expression of those blue large orbs told the intense enthusiasm of the mind within; and, even somewhat thrillingly, communicated a part of that emotion to those on whom they dwelt. No painter could have devised, nor even Volkman himself, in the fulness of

his northern phantasy, have sculptured forth a better image of those pale and unearthly students who, in the darker ages, applied life and learning to one unhallowed vigil, the Hermes or the Gebir of the alchymist's empty science--dreamers, and the martyrs of their dreams.

In the discussion of mysteries which to detail would only weary while it perplexed the reader, the enthusiasts passed the greater portion of the night; and when at length the Englishman rose to depart, it cannot be denied that a solemn and boding emotion agitated his breast.

"We have talked," said he, attempting a smile, "of things above this nether life; and here we are lost, uncertain. On one thing, however, we can decide; life itself is encompassed with gloom; sorrow and anxiety await even those upon whom the stars shed their most golden influence. We know not one day what the next shall bring!--no; I repeat it; no--in spite of your scheme, and your ephemeris, and your election of happy moments. But, come what will, Volkman, come all that you foretell to me; crosses in my love, disappointment in my life, melancholy in my blood, and a violent death in the very flush of my manhood,--Me: at least, Me! my soul, my heart, my better part, you shall never cast down, nor darken, nor deject. I move in a certain and serene circle; ambition cannot tempt me above it, nor misfortune cast me below!"

Volkman looked at the speaker with surprise and admiration; the enthusiasm of a brave mind is the only fire broader and brighter than that of a fanatical one.

"Alas! my young friend," he said, as he clashed the hand of his guest, "I would to Heaven that my predictions may be wrong: often and often they have been erroneous," added he bowing his head humbly; "they may be so in their reference to thee. So young, so brilliant, so beautiful too; so brave, yet so romantic of heart, I feel for all that may happen to thee--ay, far, far more deeply than aught which may be fated to myself; for I am an old man now, and long inured to disappointment; all the greenness of my life is gone: even could I attain to the Grand Secret the knowledge methinks would be too late. And, at my birth, my lot was portioned out unto me in characters so clear, that, while I have had time to acquiesce in it, I have had no hope to correct and change it. For Jupiter in Cancer, removed from the Ascendant, and not impeded of any other star, betokened me indeed some expertness in science, but a life of seclusion, and one that should bring not forth the fruits that its labour deserved. But there is so much in thy fate that ought to be bright and glorious, that it will be no common destiny marred, should the evil influences and the ominous seasons prevail against thee. But thou speakest boldly--boldly, and as one of a high soul, though it be sometimes clouded and led astray. And I, therefore, again and again impress upon thee, it is from thine own self, thine own character, thine own habits, that all evil, save that of death, will come. Wear, then, I implore thee, wear in thy memory, as a jewel, the first great maxim of alchymist and magian:--'Search thyself--correct thyself--subdue thyself:' it is only through the lamp of crystal that the light will shine duly out."

"It is more likely that the stars should err," returned the Englishman, "than that the human heart should correct itself of error: adieu!"

He left the room, and proceeded along a passage that led to the outer door. Ere he reached it, another door opened suddenly, and the face of Lucilla broke forth upon him. She held a light in her hand; and as she gazed on the Englishman, he saw that her face was very pale, and that she

had been weeping. She looked at him long and earnestly, and the look affected him strangely; he broke silence, which at first it appeared to him difficult to do.

"Good night, my pretty friend," said he: "shall I bring you some flowers to-morrow?"

Lucilla burst into a wild elritch laugh; and abruptly closing the door, left him in darkness.

The cool air of the breaking dawn came freshly to the cheek of our countryman; yet, still, an unpleasant and heavy sensation sat at his heart. His nerves, previously weakened by his long commune with the visionary, and the effect it had produced, yet tingled and thrilled with the abrupt laugh and meaning countenance of that strange girl, who differed so widely from all others of her years. The stars were growing pale and ghostly, and there was a mournful and dim haze around the moon.

"Ye look ominously upon me," said he, half aloud, as his eyes fixed their gaze above; and the excitement of his spirit spread to his language: "ye on whom, if our lore be faithful, the Most High hath written the letters of our mortal doom. And if ye rule the tides of the great deep, and the changes of the rolling year, what is there out of reason or nature in our belief that ye hold the same sympathetic and unseen influence over the blood and heart, which are the character (and the character makes the conduct) of man?" Pursuing his soliloquy of thought, and finding reasons for a credulity that afforded to him but little cause for pleasure or hope, the Englishman took his way to St. Sebastian's gate.

There was, in truth, much in the traveller's character that corresponded with that which was attributed and destined to one to whom the heavens had given a horoscope answering to his own; and it was this conviction rather than any accidental coincidence in events, which had first led him to pore with a deep attention over the vain but imposing prophecies of judicial astrology. Possessed of all the powers that enable men to rise; ardent, yet ordinarily shrewd; eloquent, witty, brave, and, though not what may be termed versatile, possessing that rare art of concentrating the faculties which enables the possessor rapidly and thoroughly to master whatsoever once arrests the attention, he yet despised all that would have brought these endowments into full and legitimate display. He lived only for enjoyment. A passionate lover of women, music, letters, and the arts, it was society, not the world, which made the sphere and end of his existence. Yet was he no vulgar and commonplace epicurean: he lived for enjoyment; but that enjoyment was mainly formed from elements wearisome to more ordinary natures. Reverie, contemplation, loneliness, were at times dearer to him than the softer and more Aristippean delights. His energies were called forth in society, but he was scarcely social. Trained from his early boyhood to solitude, he was seldom weary of being alone. He sought the crowd, not to amuse himself, but to observe others. The world to him was less as a theatre on which he was to play a part, than as a book in which he loved to decipher the enigmas of wisdom. He observed all that passed around him. No sprightly cavalier at any time; the charm that he exercised at will over his companions was that of softness, not vivacity. But amidst that silken blandness of demeanour, the lynx eye of Remark never slept. He penetrated character at a glance, but he seldom made use of his knowledge. He found a pleasure in reading men, but a fatigue in governing them. And thus, consummately skilled as he was in the science du monde, he often allowed himself to appear ignorant of its practice. Forming in his mind a beau ideal of friendship and of love, he

never found enough in the realities long to engage his affection. Thus, with women he was considered fickle, and with men he had no intimate companionship. This trait of character is common with persons of genius; and, owing to too large an overflow of heart, they are frequently considered heartless. There is always, however, danger that a character of this kind should become with years what it seems; what it soon learns to despise. Nothing steels the affections like contempt.

The next morning an express from England reached the young traveller. His father was dangerously ill; nor was it expected that the utmost diligence would enable the young man to receive his last blessing. The Englishman, appalled and terror-stricken, recalled his interview with the astrologer. Nothing so effectually dismays us, as to feel a confirmation of some idea of supernatural dread that has already found entrance within our reason; and of all supernatural belief, that of being compelled by a predecree, and thus being the mere tools and puppets of a dark and relentless fate, seems the most fraught at once with abasement and with horror.

The Englishman left Rome that morning, and sent only a verbal and hasty message to the astrologer, announcing the cause of his departure. Volkman was a man of excellent heart; but one would scarcely like to inquire whether exultation at the triumph of his prediction was not with him a far more powerful sentiment than grief at the misfortune to his friend!

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE YOUTH OF LUCILLA VOLKTMAN.--A MYSTERIOUS CONVERSATION.--THE RETURN OF ONE UNLOOKED FOR.

Time went slowly on, and Lucilla grew up in beauty. The stranger traits of her character increased in strength, but perhaps in the natural bashfulness of maidenhood they became more latent. At the age of fifteen, her elastic shape had grown round and full, and the wild girl had already ripened to the woman. An expression of thought, when the play of her features was in repose, that dwelt upon her lip and forehead, gave her the appearance of being two or three years older than she was; but again, when her natural vivacity returned,--when the clear and buoyant music of her gay laugh rang out, or when the cool air and bright sky of morning sent the blood to her cheek and the zephyr to her step, her face became as the face of childhood, and contrasted with a singular and dangerous loveliness the rich development of her form.

And still was Lucilla Volkman a stranger to all that savoured of the world; the company of others of her sex and age never drew forth her emotions from their resting-place:--

"And Nature said, a lovelier flower
On earth was never sown
* * * * *

Myself will to my darling be
Both law and impulse; and with me
The girl, in rock and plain,
In earth and heaven, in glade and bower,
Shall feel an overseeing power
To kindle or restrain.

The stars of midnight shall be dear
To her; and she shall lean her ear

In many a secret place;
Where rivulets dance their wayward round,
And beauty, born of murmuring sound,
Shall pass into her face."

WORDSWORTH.

These lines have occurred to me again and again, as I looked on the face of her to whom I have applied them. And, remembering as I do its radiance and glory in her happier moments, I can scarcely persuade myself to notice the faults and heats of temper which at times dashed away all its lustre and gladness. Unrestrained and fervid, she gave way to the irritation of grief of the moment with a violence that would have terrified any one who beheld her at such times. But it rarely happened that the scene had its witness even in her father, for she fled to the loneliest spot she could find to indulge these emotions; and perhaps even the agony they occasioned--an agony convulsing the heart and whole of her impassioned frame--took a sort of luxury from the solitary and unchecked nature of its indulgence.

Voltzman continued his pursuits with an ardour that increased--as do all species of monomania--with increasing years; and in the accidental truth of some of his predictions, he forgot the erroneous result of the rest. He corresponded at times with the Englishman, who, after a short sojourn in England, had returned to the Continent, and was now making a prolonged tour through its northern capitals.

Very different, indeed, from the astrologer's occupations were those of the wanderer; and time, dissipation, and a maturer intellect had cured the latter of his boyish tendency to studies so idle and so vain. Yet he always looked back with an undefined and unconquered interest to the period of his acquaintance with the astrologer; to their long and thrilling watches in the night season; to the contagious fervour of faith breathing from the visionary; his dark and restless excursions into that remote science associated with the legends of elddest time, and of

"The crew, who, under names of old renown,
Osiris, Isis, Orus, and their train,
With monstrous shapes and sorceries, abused
Fanatic Egypt and her priests."

One night, four years after the last scene we have described in the astrologer's house, Voltzman was sitting alone in his favourite room. Before him was a calculation on which the ink was scarcely dry. His face leant on his breast, and he seemed buried in thought. His health had been of late gradually declining; and it might be seen upon his worn brow and attenuated frame, that death was already preparing to withdraw the visionary from a world whose substantial enjoyments he had so sparingly tasted.

Lucilla had been banished from his chamber during the day. She now knew that his occupation was over, and entered the room with his evening repast; that frugal meal, common with the Italians--the polenta (made of Indian corn), the bread and the fruits, which after the fashion of students he devoured unconsciously, and would not have remembered one hour after whether or not it had been tasted!

"Sit thee down, child," said he to Lucilla, kindly;--"sit thee down."

Lucilla obeyed, and took her seat upon the very stool on which she had been seated the last night on which the Englishman had seen her.

"I have been thinking," said Volkman, as he placed his hand on his daughter's head, "that I shall soon leave thee; and I should like to see thee protected by another before my own departure."

"Ah, father," said Lucilla, as the tears rushed to her eyes, "do not talk thus! indeed, indeed, you must not indulge in this perpetual gloom and seclusion of life. You promised to take me with you, some day this week, to the Vatican. Do let it be to-morrow; the weather has been so fine lately; and who knows how long it may last?"

"True," said Volkman; "and to-morrow will not, I think, be unfavourable to our stirring abroad, for the moon will be of the same age as at my birth--an accident that thou wilt note, my child, to be especially auspicious towards any enterprise."

The poor astrologer so rarely stirred from his home, that he did well to consider a walk of a mile or two in the light of an enterprise.--"I have wished," continued he, after a pause, "that I might see our English friend once more--that is, ere long. For, to tell thee the truth, Lucilla, certain events happening unto him do, strangely enough, occur about the same time as that in which events, equally boding, will befall thee. This coincidence it was which contributed to make me assume so warm an interest in the lot of a stranger. I would I might see him soon."

Lucilla's beautiful breast heaved, and her face was covered with blushes: these were symptoms of a disorder that never occurred to the recluse.

"Thou rememberest the foreigner?" asked Volkman, after a pause.

"Yes," said Lucilla, half inaudibly.

"I have not heard from him of late: I will make question concerning him ere the cock crow."

"Nay my father!" said Lucilla, quickly: "not tonight: you want rest, your eyes are heavy."

"Girl," said the mystic, "the soul sleepeth not, nor wanteth sleep: even as the stars, to which (as the Arabian saith) there is also a soul, wherewith an intent passion of our own doth make a union--so that we, by an unslumbering diligence, do constitute ourselves a part of the heaven itself!--even, I say, as the stars may vanish from the human eye, nor be seen in the common day--though all the while their course is stopped not, nor their voices dumb--even so doth the soul of man retire, as it were, into a seeming sleep and torpor, yet it worketh all the same--and perhaps with a less impeded power, in that it is more free from common obstruction and trivial hindrance. And if I purpose to confer this night with the 'Intelligence' that ruleth earth and earth's beings, concerning this stranger, it will not be by the vigil and the scheme, but by the very sleep which thou imaginest, in thy mental darkness, would deprive me of the resources of my art."

"Can you really, then, my father," said Lucilla, in a tone half anxious, half timid,--"can you really, at will, conjure up in your dreams the persons you wish to see; or draw, from sleep, any oracle concerning their present state?"

"Of a surety," answered the astrologer; "it is one of the great--though not perchance the most gifted--of our endowments."

"Can you teach me the method?" asked Lucilla, gravely.

"All that relates to the art I can," rejoined the mystic: "but the chief and main power rests with thyself. For know, my daughter, that one who seeks the wisdom that is above the earth must cultivate and excite, with long labour and deep thought, his least earthly faculty."

Here the visionary, observing that the countenance of Lucilla was stamped with a fixed attention, which she did not often bestow upon his metaphysical exordiums; paused for a moment; and then pursued the theme with the tone of one desirous of making himself at once as clear and impressive as the nature of an abstruse science would allow.

"There are two things in the outer creation, which, according to the great Hermes, suffice for the operation of all that is wonderful and glorious--Fire and Earth. Even so, my child, there are in the human mind two powers that affect all of which our nature is capable--reason and imagination. Now mankind,--less wise in themselves than in the outer world--have cultivated, for the most part, but one of these faculties; and that the inferior and more passive, reason. They have tilled the earth of the human heart, but suffered its fire to remain dormant, or waste itself in chance and frivolous directions. Hence the insufficiency of human knowledge. Inventions founded only on reason move within a circle from which their escape is momentary and trivial. When some few, endowed with a just instinct, have had recourse to the diviner element, imagination, thou wilt observe, that they have used it only in the service of the lighter arts, and those chiefly disconnected from reason. Such is poetry and music, and other delicious fabrications of genius, that amuse men, soften men, but _advance_ them not. They have--with but rare exceptions--left this glorious and winged faculty utterly passive in the service of Philosophy. There, reason alone has been admitted, and imagination hath been carefully banished, as an erratic and deceitful meteor. Now mark me, child: I, noting this our error in early youth, did resolve to see what might be effected by the culture of this renounced and maltreated element; and finding, as I proceeded in the studies that grew from this desire, by the occult yet guiding writings of the great philosophers of old, that they had forestalled me in this discovery, I resolved to learn, from their experience, by what means the imagination is best fostered, and, as it were, sublimed.

"Anxiously following their precepts--the truth of which soon appeared--I found that solitude, fast, intense reverie upon the one theme on which we desired knowledge, were the true elements and purifiers of this glorious faculty. It was by these means, and by this power, that men so far behind us in lesser lore achieved, on the mooned plains of Chaldea and by the dark waters of Egypt, their penetration into the womb of Event;--by these means, and this power, the solitaries of the Gothic time not only attained to the most intricate arcana of the stars, but to the empire of the spirits about, above, and beneath the earth; a power, indeed, disputed by the presumptuous sophists of the present time, but of which their writings yet contain ample proof. Nay, by the constant feeding, and impressing and moulding, and refining, and heightening, the imaginative power, I do conceive that even the false prophets and the evil practitioners of the blacker cabala clomb into the power seemingly inconceivable--the power of accomplishing miracles and prodigies, and to appearance belie, but in

truth verify, the course of nature. By this spirit within the flesh, we grow _from_ the flesh, and may see, and at length invoke, the souls of the dead, and receive warnings, and hear omens, and girdle our sleep with dreams.

"Not unto me," continued the cabalist, in a lowlier tone, "have been vouchsafed all these gifts; for I began the art when the first fire of youth was dim within me; and it was therefore with duller and already earth-clogged pinions that I sought to rise. Something, however, I have won as a recompense for austere abstinence and much labour; and this power over the land of dreams is at least within my command."

"Then," said Lucilla, in a disappointed tone, "it is only by a long course of indulgence to the fervour of the imagination, and not by spell or charm, that one can gain a similar power?"

"Not wholly so, my daughter," replied the mystic; "they who do so excite, and have so raised the diviner faculty, can alone possess the certain and invariable power over dreams, even without charms and talismans; but the most dull or idle may hope to do so with just confidence (though not certainty) by help of skill, and by directing the full force of their half-roused fancy towards the person or object they wish to see reflected in the glass of Sleep."

"And what means should the uninitiated employ?" asked Lucilla, in a tone betokening her interest.

"I will tell thee," answered the astrologer. "Thou must inscribe on a white parchment an image of the sun."

"As how?" interrupted Lucilla.

"Thus!" said the astrologer, drawing from among his papers one inscribed with the figure of a man asleep on the bosom of an angel. "This was made at the potential and appointed time, when the sun was in the Ninth of the Celestial Houses, and the Lion shook his bright mane as he ascended the blue mount. Observe, that on the figure must be written thy desire--the name of the person thou wishest to see, or the thing thou wouldst have foreshown: then having prepared and brought the mind to a faith in the effect--for without faith the imagination lies inert and lifeless--this image will be placed under the head of the invoker, and when the moon goeth through the sign which was in the Ninth House of his nativity, the Dream will glide into him, and his soul walk with the spirit of the vision."

"Give me the image," said Lucilla, eagerly.

The mystic hesitated--"No, Lucilla," said he, at length; "no, it is a dark and comfortless path, that of prescience and unearthly knowledge, save to the few that walk it with a gifted light and a fearless soul. It is not for women or children--nay, for few amongst men: it withers up the sap of life, and makes the hair grey before its time. No, no; take the broad sunshine, and the brief but sweet flowers of earth; they are better for thee, my child, and for thy years than the fever and hope of the night-dream and the planetary influence."

So saying, the astrologer replaced the image within the leaves of one of his books; and with prudence not common to him, thrust the volume into a drawer, which he locked. The fair face of Lucilla became clouded, but the

ill health of her father imposed a restraint on her wild temper.

Just at that moment the door slowly opened, and the Englishman stood before the daughter and sire. They did not note him at first. The solitary servant of the sage had admitted him; he had proceeded, without ceremony, to the well-remembered apartment.

As he now stood gazing on the pair, he observed with an inward smile, how exactly their present attitudes (as well as the old aspect of the scene) resembled those in which he had broken upon them on the last evening he had visited that chamber; the father bending over the old, worn, quaint, table; and the daughter seated beside him on the same low stool. The character of their countenances struck him, too, as wearing the same ominous expression as when those countenances had chilled him on that evening. For Volkman's features were impressed with the sadness that breathed from, and caused, his prohibition to his daughter; and that prohibition had given to her features an abstraction and shadow similar to the dejection they had worn on the night we recur to.

This remembered coincidence did not cheer the spirits of the young traveller; he muttered to himself; and then, as if anxious to break the silence, moved forward with a heavy step.

Volkman started at the sound; and looking up, seemed literally electrified by this sudden apparition of one whom he had so lately expressed his desire to see. His lips muttered the intruder's name, one well known to the reader (it was the name of Godolphin) and then closed; but Lucilla sprang from her seat, and, clasping her hands joyously together, darted forward till she came within a foot of the unexpected visitor. There she abruptly arrested herself, blushed deeply, and stood before him humbled, agitated, but all vivid with delight.

"What, is this Lucilla?" said Godolphin admiringly: "how beautiful she is grown!" and advancing, he saluted, with a light and fraternal kiss, her

girlish and damask cheek: then, without heeding her confusion, he turned to the astrologer, who by this time had a little recovered from his amaze.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE EFFECT OF YEARS AND EXPERIENCE.--THE ITALIAN CHARACTER.

Godolphin now came almost daily to the astrologer's abode. He was shocked to perceive the physical alteration four years had wrought in his singular friend; and, with the warmth of a heart naturally kind, he sought to contribute to the comfort and enjoyment of a life that was evidently drawing to a close.

Godolphin's company seemed to give Volkman a pleasure which nothing else could afford him. He loved to converse on the various incidents that had occurred to each since they met; and, in whatsoever Godolphin communicated to him, the mystic sought to impress upon his friend's attention the fulfilment of an astrological prediction.

Godolphin, though no longer impressed with a belief in the visionary's science, did not affect to combat his assertions. He had not, in his progress through life, found much to shake his habitual indolence in ordinary affairs; and it was no easy matter to provoke one of his quiet temper and self-indulging wisdom into conversational dispute. Besides,

who argues with fanaticism?

Since the young idealist had left England, the elements of his character had been slowly performing the ordination of time, and working their due change in its general aspect. The warm fountains of youth flowed not so freely as before the selfishness that always comes, sooner or later, to solitary men of the world, had gradually mingled itself with all the channels of his heart. The brooding and thoughtful disposition of his faculties having turned from romance to what he deemed philosophy, that which once was enthusiasm had hardened into wisdom. He neither hated men nor loved them with a sanguine philanthropy; he viewed them with cool and discerning eyes. He did not think it within the power of governments to make the mass, in any country, much happier or more elevated than they are. Republics, he was wont to say, favoured aristocratic virtues, and despotisms extinguished them: but, whether in a monarchy or republic, the hewers of wood and the drawers of the water, the multitude, still remained intrinsically the same.

This theory heightened his indifference to ambition. The watchwords of party appeared to him ridiculous; and politics in general--what a great moralist termed one question in particular--a shuttlecock kept up by the contention of noisy children. His mind thus rested as to all public matters in a state of quietude, and covered over with the mantle of a most false, a most perilous philosophy. His appetites to pleasure had grown somewhat dulled by experience, but he was as yet neither sated nor discontented. One feeling at his breast still remained scarcely diminished of its effect, when the string was touched--his tender remembrance of Constance; and this had prevented any subsequent but momentary attachment deepening into love. Thus, at the age of seven and twenty, Percy Godolphin reappears on our stage.

There was a great deal in the Italian character that our traveller liked: its love of ease, reduced into a system; its courtesy; its content with the world as it is; its moral apathy as regards all that agitates life, save one passion--and the universal tenderness, ardour, and delicacy which, in that passion, it ennobles itself in displaying. The commonest peasant of Rome or Naples, though not perhaps in the freer land of Tuscany, can comprehend all the romance and mystery of the most subtle species of love; all that it requires in England the idle habits of aristocracy, or the sensitive fibre of genius, even to conceive. And what is yet stranger, the worn-out debauches, sage with an experience and variety of licentiousness, which come not within the compass of a northern profligacy, remains alive to the earliest and most innocent sentiments of the passion. And if Platonism in its coldest purity exist on earth, it is among the Aretins of southern Italy.

This unworldly refinement, amidst so much worldly callousness, was a peculiarity that afforded perpetual amusement to the nice eye and subtle judgment of Godolphin. He loved not to note the common elements of character; whatever was most abstract and difficult to analyse, pleased him most. He mixed then much with the Romans, and was a favourite amongst them; but, during his present visit to the Immortal City, he did not, how distantly soever, associate with the English. His carelessness of show, and the independence of a single man from burdensome connexions, rendered his income fully competent to his wants; but, like many proud men, he was not willing to make it seem even to himself, as a comparative poverty, beside the lavish expenses of his ostentatious countrymen. Travel, moreover, had augmented those stores of reflection which rob solitude of ennui.

CHAPTER XXX.

MAGNETISM.--SYMPATHY.--THE RETURN OF ELEMENTS TO ELEMENTS.

Daily did the health of Volkman decline; Lucilla was the only one ignorant of his danger. She had never seen the gradual approaches of death: her mother's abrupt and rapid illness made the whole of her experience of disease. Physicians and dark rooms were necessarily coupled in her mind with all graver maladies; and as the astrologer, wrapt in his calculations, altered not any of his habits, and was insensible to pain, she fondly attributed his occasional complaints to the melancholy induced by seclusion. With sedentary men, diseases being often those connected with the Organisation of the heart, do not usually terminate suddenly: it was so with Volkman.

One day he was alone with Godolphin, and their conversation turned upon one of the doctrines of the old Magnetism, a doctrine which, depending as it does so much upon a seeming reference to experience, survived the rest of its associates, and is still not wholly out of repute among the wild imaginations of Germany.

"One of the most remarkable and abstruse points in what students call metaphysics," said Volkman, "is sympathy! the first principle, according to some, of all human virtue. It is this, say they, which makes men just, humane, charitable. When one who has never heard of the duty of assisting his neighbour, sees another drowning, he plunges into the water and saves him. Why? because involuntarily, and at once, his imagination places himself in the situation of the stranger: the pain he would experience in the watery death glances across him: from this pain he hastens,--without analysing its cause, to deliver himself.

"Humanity is thus taught him by sympathy: where is this sympathy placed?--in the nerves: the nerves are the communicants with outward nature; the more delicate the nerves, the finer the sympathies; hence, women and children are more alive to sympathy than men. Well, mark me: do not these nerves have attraction and sympathy---not only with human suffering, but with the powers of what is falsely termed inanimate nature? Do not the wind, the influences of the weather and the seasons, act confessedly upon them? and if one part of nature, why not another, inseparably connected too with that part? If the weather and seasons have sympathy with the nerves, why not the moon and the stars, by which the weather and the seasons are influenced and changed? Ye of the schools may allow that sympathy originates some of our actions; I say it governs the whole world--the whole creation! Before the child is born, it is this secret affinity which can mark and stamp him with the witness of his mother's terror or his mother's desire."

"Yet," said Godolphin, "you would scarcely, in your zeal for sympathy, advocate the same cause as Edricius Mohynnus, who cured wounds by a powder, not applied to the wound, but to the towel that had been dipped in its blood?"

"No," answered Volkman: "it is these quacks and pretenders that have wronged all sciences, by clamouring for false deductions. But I do believe of sympathy, that it has a power to transport ourselves out of the body and reunite us with the absent. Hence, trances, and raptures, in which the patient, being sincere, will tell thee, in grave earnestness, and with minute detail, of all that he saw, and heard, and encountered,

afar off, in other parts of the earth, or even above the earth. As thou knowest the accredited story of the youth, who, being transported with a vehement and long-nursed desire to see his mother, did, through that same desire, become as it were rapt, and beheld her, being at the distance of many miles, and giving and exchanging signs of their real and bodily conference."

Godolphin turned aside to conceal an involuntary smile at this grave affirmation; but the mystic, perhaps perceiving it, continued yet more eagerly:--

"Nay, I myself, at times, have experienced such trance, if trance it be; and have conversed with them who have passed from the outward earth--with my father and my wife. And," continued he, after a moment's pause, "I do believe that we may, by means of this power of attraction--this elementary and all-penetrative sympathy, pass away, in our last moments, at once into the bosom of those we love. For, by the intent and rapt longing to behold the Blest and to be amongst them, we may be drawn insensibly into their presence, and the hour being come when the affinity between the spirit and the body shall be dissolved, the mind and desire, being so drawn upward, can return to earth no more. And this sympathy, refined and extended, will make, I imagine, our powers, our very being, in a future state. Our sympathy being only, then, with what is immortal, we shall partake necessarily of that nature which attracts us; and the body no longer clogging the intenseness of our desires, we shall be able by a wish to transport ourselves wheresoever we please,--from star to star, from glory to glory, charioted and winged by our wishes."

Godolphin did not reply, for he was struck with the growing paleness of the mystic, and with a dreaming and intent fixedness that seemed creeping over his eyes, which were usually bright and restless. The day was now fast declining, Lucilla entered the room, and came caressingly to her father's side.

"Is the evening warm, my child?" said the astrologer.

"Very mild and warm," answered Lucilla.

"Give me your arm then," said he; "I will sit a little while without the threshold."

The Romans live in flats, as at Edinburgh, and with a common stair. Volkman's abode was in the secondo piano. He descended the stairs with a step lighter than it had been of late; and sinking into a seat without the house, seemed silently and gratefully to inhale the soft and purple air of an Italian sunset.

By and by the sun had entirely vanished: and that most brief but most delicious twilight, common to the clime, had succeeded. Veil-like and soft, the mist that floats at that hour between earth and heaven, lent its transparent shadow to the scene around them: it seemed to tremble as for a moment, and then was gone. The moon arose, and cast its light over Volkman's earnest countenance,--over the rich bloom and watchful eye of Lucilla,--over the contemplative brow and motionless figure of Godolphin. It was a group of indefinable interest: the Earth was so still, that the visionary might well have fancied it had hushed itself, to drink within its quiet heart the voices of that Heaven in whose oracles he believed. Not one of the group spoke,--the astrologer's mind and gaze were riveted above; and neither of his companions wished to break the meditations of

the old and dreaming man.

Godolphin, with folded arms and downcast eyes, was pursuing his own thoughts; and Lucilla, to whom Godolphin's presence was a subtle and subduing intoxication, looked indeed upward to the soft and tender heavens, but with the soul of the loving daughter of earth.

Slowly, nor marked by his companions, the gaze of the mystic deepened and deepened in its fixedness.

The minutes went on; and the evening waned, till a chill breeze, floating down from the Latian Hills, recalled Lucilla's attention to her father. She covered him tenderly with her own mantle, and whispered gently in his ear her admonition to shun the coldness of the coming night. He did not answer; and on raising her voice a little higher, with the same result, she looked appealingly to Godolphin. He laid his hand on Volkman's shoulder; and, bending forward to address him,--was struck dumb by the glazed and fixed expression of the mystic's eyes. The certainty flashed across him; he hastily felt Volkman's pulse--it was still. There was no doubt left on his mind; and yet the daughter, looking at him all the while, did not even dream of this sudden and awful stroke. In silence, and unconsciously, the strange and solitary spirit of the mystic had passed from its home--in what exact instant of time, or by what last contest of nature, was not known.

CHAPTER XXXI.

A SCENE.--LUCILLA'S STRANGE CONDUCT-GODOLPHIN PASSES THROUGH A SEVERE ORDEAL.--EGERIA'S GROTTO, AND WHAT THERE HAPPENS.

Let us pass over Godolphin's most painful task. What Lucilla's feelings were, the reader may imagine; and yet, her wayward and unanalysed temper mocked at once imagination and expression to depict its sufferings or its joys.

The brother of Volkman's wife was sent for: he and his wife took possession of the abode of death. This, if possible, heightened Lucilla's anguish. The apathetic and vain character of the middle classes in Rome, which her relations shared, stung her heart by contrasting its own desolate abandonment to grief. Above all, she was revolted by the unnatural ceremonies of a Roman funeral. The corpse exposed--the cheeks painted--the parading procession, all shocked the delicacy of her real and reckless affliction. But when this was over--when the rite of death was done, and when, in the house wherein her sire had presided, and she herself had been left to a liberty wholly unrestricted, she saw strangers (for such comparatively her relatives were to her) settling themselves down, with vacant countenances and light words, to the common occupations of life,--when she saw them move, alter (nay, talk calmly, and sometimes with jests, of selling), those little household articles of furniture which, homely and worn as they were, were hallowed to her by a thousand dear, and infantine, and filial recollections;--when, too, she found herself treated as a child, and, in some measure, as a dependant,--when she, the wild, the free, saw herself subjected to restraint--nay, heard the commonest actions of her life chidden and reprov'd,--when she saw the trite and mean natures which thus presumed to lord it over her, and assume empire in the house of one, of whose wild and lofty, though erring speculations--of whose generous though abstract elements of character, she could comprehend enough to respect, while what she did not comprehend heightened the respect into awe;--then, the more vehement and indignant

passions of her mind broke forth! her flashing eye, her scornful gesture, her mysterious threat, and her open defiance, astonished always, sometimes amused, but more often terrified, the apathetic and superstitious Italians.

Godolphin, moved by interest and pity for the daughter of his friend, called once or twice after the funeral at the house; and commended, with promises and gifts, the desolate girl to the tenderness and commiseration of her relations. There is nothing an Italian will not promise, nothing he will not sell; and Godolphin thus purchased, in reality, a forbearance to Lucilla's strange temper (as it was considered) which otherwise, assuredly, would not have been displayed.

More than a month had elapsed since the astrologer's decease; and, the season of the malaria verging to its commencement, Godolphin meditated a removal to Naples. He strolled, two days prior to his departure, to the house on the Appia Via, in order to take leave of Lucilla, and bequeath to her relations his parting injunctions.

It was a strange and harsh face that peered forth on him through the iron grating of the door before he obtained admittance; and when he entered, he heard the sound of voices in loud altercation. Among the rest, the naturally dulcet and silver tones of Lucilla were strained beyond their wonted key, and breathed the accents of passion and disdain.

He entered the room whence the sounds of dispute proceeded, and the first face that presented itself to him was that of Lucilla. It was flushed with anger; the veins in the smooth forehead were swelled; the short lip breathed beautiful contempt. She stood at some little distance from the rest of the inmates of the room, who were seated; and her posture was erect and even stately, though in wrath: her arms were folded upon her bosom, and the composed excitement of her figure contrasted with the play, and fire, and energy of her features.

At Godolphin's appearance, a sudden silence fell upon the conclave; the uncle and the aunt (the latter of whom had seemed the noisiest) subsided into apologetic respect to the rich (he was rich to them) young Englishman; and Lucilla sank into a seat, covered her face with her small and beautiful hands, and--humbled from her anger and her vehemence--burst into tears.

"And what is this?" said Godolphin, pityingly.

The Italians hastened to inform him. Lucilla had chosen to absent herself from home every evening; she had been seen, the last night on the Corso,--crowded as that street was with the young, the profligate, and the idle. They could not but reprove "the dear girl" for this indiscretion (Italians, indifferent as to the conduct of the married, are generally attentive to that of their single, women); and she announced her resolution to persevere in it.

"Is this true, my pupil?" said Godolphin, turning to Lucilla: the poor girl sobbed on, but returned no answer. "Leave me to reprimand and admonish her," said he to the aunt and uncle; and they, without appearing to notice the incongruity of reprimand in the mouth of a man of seven-and-twenty to a girl of fifteen, chattered forth a Babel of conciliation and left the apartment.

Godolphin, young as he might be, was not unfitted for his task. There was

a great deal of quiet dignity mingled with the kindness of his manner; and his affection for Lucilla had hitherto been so pure, that he felt no embarrassment in addressing her as a brother. He approached the corner of the room in which she sat; he drew a chair near to her; and took her reluctant and trembling hand with a gentleness that made her weep with a yet wilder vehemence.

"My dear Lucilla," said he, "you know your father honoured me with his regard: let me presume on that regard, and on my long acquaintance with yourself, to address you as your friend--as your brother." Lucilla drew away her hand; but again, as if ashamed of the impulse, extended it towards him.

"You cannot know the world as I do, dear Lucilla," continued Godolphin; "for experience in its affairs is bought at some little expense, which I pray that it may never cost you. In all countries, Lucilla, an unmarried female is exposed to dangers which, without any actual fault of her own, may embitter her future life. One of the greatest of these dangers lies in deviating from custom. With the woman who does this, every man thinks himself entitled to give his thoughts--his words--nay, even his actions, a license which you cannot but dread to incur. Your uncle and aunt, therefore, do right to advise your not going alone, to the public streets of Rome more especially, except in the broad daylight; and though their advice be irksomely intruded, and ungracefully couched, it is good in its principle, and--yes, dearest Lucilla, even necessary for you to follow."

"But," said Lucilla, through her tears, "you cannot guess what insults, what unkindness, I have been forced to submit to from them. I, who never knew, till now, what insult and unkindness were! I, who----" here sobs checked her utterance.

"But how, my young and fair friend, how can you mend their manners by destroying their esteem for you? Respect yourself, Lucilla, if you wish others to respect you. But, perhaps,"--and such a thought for the first time flashed across Godolphin--"perhaps you did not seek the Corso for the crowd but for one; perhaps you went there to meet--dare I guess the fact?--an admirer, a lover."

"Now you insult me!" cried Lucilla, angrily.

"I thank you for your anger; I accept it as a contradiction," said Godolphin. "But listen yet a while, and for give frankness. If there be any one, among the throng of Italian youths, whom you have seen, and could be happy with; one who loves you and whom you do not hate;--remember that I am your father's friend; that I am rich; that I can----"

"Cruel, cruel!" interrupted Lucilla and withdrawing herself from Godolphin, she walked to and fro with great and struggling agitation.

"Is it not so, then?" said Godolphin, doubtfully.

"No, sir: no!"

"Lucilla Volkman," said Godolphin, with a colder gravity than he had yet called forth, "I claim some attention from you, some confidence, nay, some esteem;--for the sake of your father--for the sake of your early years, when I assisted to teach you my native tongue, and loved you as a brother. Promise me that you will not commit this indiscretion any more--at least till we meet again; nay, that you will not stir abroad, save with one of

your relations."

"Impossible! impossible!" cried Lucilla, vehemently; "it were to take away the only solace I have: it were to make life a privation--a curse."

"Not so, Lucilla; it is to make life respectable and safe. I, on the other hand, will engage that all within these walls shall behave to you with indulgence and kindness."

"I care not for their kindness!--for the kindness of any one; save----"

"Whom?" asked Godolphin, perceiving she would not proceed: but as she was still silent, he did not press the question. "Come!" said he, persuasively: "come, promise, and be friends with me; do not let us part angrily: I am about to take my leave of you for many months."

"Part!--you!--months!--O God, do not say so!"

With these words, she was by his side; and gazing on him with her large and pleading eyes, wherein was stamped a wildness, a terror, the cause of which he did not as yet decipher.

"No, no," said she, with a faint smile: "no! you mean to frighten me, to extort my promise. You are not going to desert me!"

"But, Lucilla, I will not leave you to unkindness; they shall not--they dare not wound you again."

"Say to me that you are not going from Rome--speak; quick!"

"I go in two days."

"Then let me die!" said Lucilla, in a tone of such deep despair, that it chilled and appalled Godolphin, who did not, however, attribute her grief (the grief of this mere child--a child so wayward and eccentric) to any other cause than that feeling of abandonment which the young so bitterly experience at being left utterly alone with persons unfamiliar to their habits and opposed to their liking.

He sought to soothe her, but she repelled him. Her features worked convulsively: she walked twice across the room; then stopped opposite to him, and a certain strained composure on her brow seemed to denote that she had arrived at some sudden resolution.

"Wouldst thou ask me," she said, "what cause took me into the streets as the shadows darkened, and enabled me lightly to bear threats at home and risk abroad?"

"Ay, Lucilla: will you tell me?"

"Thou wast the cause!" she said, in a low voice, trembling with emotion, and the next moment sank on her knees before him.

With a confusion that ill became so practised and favoured a gallant, Godolphin sought to raise her. "No! no!" she said; "you will despise me now: let me lie here, and die thinking of thee. Yes!" she continued, with an inward but rapid voice, as he lifted her reluctant frame from the earth, and hung over her with a cold and uncaressing attention: "yes! you I loved--I adored--from my very childhood. When you were by, life seemed

changed to me; when absent, I longed for night, that I might dream of you. The spot you had touched I marked out in silence, that I might kiss it and address it when you were gone. You left us; four years passed away: and the recollection of you made and shaped my very nature. I loved solitude; for in solitude I saw you--in imagination I spoke to you--and methought you answered and did not chide. You returned--and--and--but no matter: to see you, at the hour you usually leave home; to see you, I wandered forth with the evening. I tracked you, myself unseen; I followed you at a distance: I marked you disappear within some of the proud palaces that never know what love is. I returned home weeping, but happy. And do you think--do you dare to think--that I should have told you this, had you not driven me mad!--had you not left me reckless of what henceforth was thought of me--became of me! What will life be to me when you are gone? And now I have said all! Go! You do not love me: I know it: but do not say so. Go--leave me; why do you not leave me?"

Does there live one man who can hear a woman, young and beautiful, confess attachment to him, and not catch the contagion? Affected, flattered, and almost melted into love himself, Godolphin felt all the danger of the moment but this young, inexperienced girl--the daughter of his friend--no! her he could not--loving, willing as she was, betray.

Yet it was some moments before he could command himself sufficiently to answer her:--"Listen to me calmly," at length he said; "we are at least to each other dear friends nay, listen, I beseech you. I, Lucilla, am a man whose heart is forestalled--exhausted before its time; I have loved, deeply, and passionately: that love is over, but it has unfitted me for any species of love resembling itself--any which I could offer to you. Dearest Lucilla, I will not disguise the truth from you. Were I to love you, it would be--not in the eyes of _your_ countrymen (with whom such connexions are common), but in the eyes of mine--it would be dishonour. Shall I confer even this partial dishonour on you? No! Lucilla, this feeling of yours towards me is (pardon me) but a young and childish phantasy: you will smile at it some years hence. I am not worthy of so pure and fresh a heart: but at least" (here he spoke in a lower voice, and as to himself)--"at least I am not so unworthy as to wrong it."

"Go!" said Lucilla; "go, I implore you." She spoke, and stood hueless and motionless, as if the life (life's life was indeed gone!) had departed from her. Her features were set and rigid; the tears that stole in large drops down her cheeks were unfelt; a slight quivering of her lips only bespoke what passed within her.

"Ah!" cried Godolphin, stung from his usual calm--stung from the quiet kindness he had sought, from principle, to assume--"can I withstand this trial?--I, whose dream of life has been the love that I might now find! I, who have never before known an obstacle to a wish which I have not contended against, if not conquered: and, weakened as I am with the habitual indulgence to temptation, which has never been so strong as now;--but no! I will--I will deserve this attachment by self-restraint, self-sacrifice."

He moved away; and then returning, dropped on his knee before Lucilla.

"Spare me!" said he in an agitated voice, which brought back all the blood to that young and transparent cheek, which was now half averted from him--"spare me--spare yourself! Look around, when I am gone, for some one to replace my image: thousands younger, fairer, warmer of heart, will aspire to your love; that love for them will be exposed to no peril--no

shame: forget me; select another; be happy and respected. Permit me alone to fill the place of your friend--your brother. I will provide for your comforts, your liberty: you shall be restrained, offended no more. God bless you, dear, dear Lucilla; and believe," (he said almost in a whisper), "that, in thus flying you, I have acted generously, and with an effort worthy of your loveliness and your love."

He said, and hurried from the apartment. Lucilla turned slowly round as the door closed and then fell motionless on the ground.

Meanwhile Godolphin, mastering his emotion, sought the host and hostess; and begging them to visit his lodging that evening, to receive certain directions and rewards, hastily left the house.

But instead of returning home, the desire for a brief solitude and self-commune, which usually follows strong excitement, (and which, in all less ordinary events, suggested his sole counsellors or monitors to the musing Godolphin), led his steps in an opposite direction. Scarcely conscious whither he was wandering, he did not pause till he found himself in that green and still valley in which the pilgrim beholds the grotto of Egeria.

It was noon, and the day warm, but not overpowering. The leaf slept on the old trees that are scattered about that little valley; and amidst the soft and rich turf the wanderer's step disturbed the lizard, basking its brilliant hues in the noontide, and glancing rapidly through the herbage as it retreated. And from the trees, and through the air, the occasional song of the birds (for in Italy their voices are rare) floated with a peculiar clearness, and even noisiness of music, along the deserted haunts of the Nymph.

The scene, rife with its beautiful associations, recalled Godolphin from his reverie. "And here," thought he, "Fable has thrown its most lovely enduring enchantment: here, every one who has tasted the loves of earth, and sickened for the love that is ideal, finds a spell more attractive to his steps--more fraught with contemplation to his spirit, than aught raised by the palace of the Caesars or the tomb of the Scipios."

Thus meditating, and softened by the late scene with Lucilla, (to which his thoughts again recurred), he sauntered onward to the steep side of the bank, in which faith and tradition have hollowed out the grotto of the goddess. He entered the silent cavern, and bathed his temples in the delicious waters of the fountain.

It was perhaps well that it was not at that moment Lucilla made to him her strange and unlooked-for confession: again and again he said to himself (as if seeking for a justification of his self-sacrifice), "Her father was not Italian, and possessed feeling and honour: let me not forget that he loved me!" In truth, the avowal of this wild girl; an avowal made indeed with the ardour--but also breathing of the innocence, the inexperience--of her character--had opened to his fancy new and not undelicious prospects. He had never loved her, save with a lukewarm kindness, before that last hour; but now, in recalling her beauty, her tears, her passionate abandonment can we wonder that he felt a strange beating at his heart, and that he indulged that dissolved and luxurious vein of tender meditation which is the prelude to all love? We must recall, too, the recollection of his own temper, so constantly yearning for the unhackneyed, the untasted; and his deep and soft order of imagination, by which he involuntarily conjured up the delight of living with one, watching one, so

different from the rest of the world, and whose thoughts and passions (wild as they might be) were all devoted to him!

And in what spot were these imaginings fed and coloured? In a spot which in the nature of its divine fascination could be found only beneath one sky, that sky the most balmy and loving upon earth! Who could think of love within the haunt and temple of

"That Nympholepsy of some fond despair,"

and not feel that love enhanced, deepened, modulated, into at once a dream and a desire?

It was long that Godolphin indulged himself in recalling the image of Lucilla; but nerved at length and gradually, by harder, and we may hope better, sentiments than those of a love which he could scarcely indulge without criminality on the one hand, or, what must have appeared to the man of the world, derogatory folly on the other; he turned his thoughts into a less voluptuous channel, and prepared, though with a reluctant step, to depart homewards. But what was his amaze, his confusion, when, on reaching the mouth of the cave, he saw within a few steps of him Lucilla herself!

She was walking alone and slowly, her eyes bent upon the ground, and did not perceive him. According to a common custom with the middle classes of Rome, her rich hair, save by a single band, was uncovered; and as her slight and exquisite form moved along the velvet sod, so beautiful a shape, and a face so rare in its character, and delicate in its expression, were in harmony with the sweet superstition of the spot, and seemed almost to restore to the deserted cave and the mourning stream their living Egeria.

Godolphin stood transfixed to the earth; and Lucilla, who was walking in the direction of the grotto, did not perceive, till she was almost immediately before him. She gave a faint scream as she lifted her eyes; and the first and most natural sentiment of the woman breaking forth involuntarily,--she attempted to falter out her disavowal of all expectation of meeting him there.

"Indeed, indeed, I did not know--that is--I--I--" she could achieve no more.

"Is this a favourite spot with you?" said he, with the vague embarrassment of one at a loss for words.

"Yes," said Lucilla, faintly.

And so, in truth, it was: for its vicinity to her home, the beauty of the little valley, and the interest attached to it--an interest not the less to her in that she was but imperfectly acquainted with the true legend of the Nymph and her royal lover--had made it, even from her childhood, a chosen and beloved retreat, especially in that dangerous summer time, which drives the visitor from the spot, and leaves the scene, in great measure, to the solitude which befits it. Associated as the place was with the recollection of her earlier griefs, it was thither that her first instinct made her fly from the rude contact and displeasing companionship of her relations, to give vent to the various and conflicting passions which the late scene with Godolphin had called forth.

They now stood for a few moments silent and embarrassed, till Godolphin, resolved to end a scene which he began to feel was dangerous, said in a hurried tone:--

"Farewell, my sweet pupil!--farewell!--May God bless you!"

He extended his hand, Lucilla seized it, as if by impulse; and conveying it suddenly to her lips, bathed it with tears. "I feel," said this wild and unregulated girl, "I feel, from your manner, that I ought to be grateful to you: yet I scarcely know why: you confessed you cannot love me, that my affection distresses you--you fly--you desert me. Ah, if you felt one particle even of friendship for me, could you do so?"

"Lucilla, what can I say?--I cannot marry you."

"Do I wish it?--I ask thee but to let me go with thee wherever thou goest."

"Poor child!" said Godolphin, gazing on her; "art thou not aware that thou askest thine own dishonour?"

Lucilla seemed surprised:--"Is it dishonour to love? They do not think so in Italy. It is wrong for a maiden to confess it; but that thou hast forgiven me. And if to follow thee--to sit with thee--to be near thee--bring aught of evil to myself, not thee,--let me incur the evil: it can be nothing compared to the agony of thy absence!"

She looked up timidly as she spoke, and saw, with a sort of terror, that his face worked with emotions which seemed to choke his answer. "If," she cried passionately, "if I have said what pains thee--if I have asked what would give dishonour, as thou callest it, or harm, to thyself, for give me--I knew it not--and leave me. But if it were not of thyself that thou didst speak, believe that thou hast done me but a cruel mercy. Let me go with thee, I implore! I have no friend here: no one loves me. I hate the faces I gaze upon; I loathe the voices I hear. And, were it for nothing else, thou remindest me of him who is gone:--thou art familiar to me--every look of thee breathes of my home, of my household recollections. Take me with thee, beloved stranger!--or leave me to die--I will not survive thy loss!"

"You speak of your father: know you that, were I to grant what you, in your childish innocence, so unthinkingly request, he might curse me from his grave?"

"O God, not so!--mine is the prayer--be mine the guilt, if guilt there be. But is it not unkind in thee to desert his daughter than to protect her?"

There was a great, a terrible struggle in Godolphin's breast. "What," said he, scarcely knowing what he said,--"what will the world think of you if you fly with a stranger?"

"There is no world to me but thee!"

"What will your uncle--your relations say?"

"I care not; for I shall not hear them."

"No, no; this must not be!" said Godolphin proudly, and once more

conquering himself. "Lucilla, I would give up every other dream or hope in life to feel that I might requite this devotion by passing my life with thee: to feel that I might grant what thou askest without wronging thy innocence; but--but--"

"You love me then! You love me!" cried Lucilla, joyously, and alive to no other interpretation of his words. Godolphin was transported beyond himself; and clasping Lucilla in his arms he covered her cheeks, her lips, with impassioned and burning kisses; then suddenly, as if stung by some irresistible impulse, he tore himself away; and fled from the spot.

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