

Fireball, Lieutenant Buffcoat, and Ensign Steele, were repeatedly sending warning letters to landlords, and murdering them if the notes were unattended to. The celebrated Captain Thunder ruled in the southern counties, and his business seemed to be to procure wives for gentlemen who had not sufficient means to please the parents of the young ladies; or, perhaps, had not time for a long and intricate courtship.

I had found my cousin Ulick at Dublin, grown very fat, and very poor; hunted up by Jews and creditors: dwelling in all sorts of queer corners, from which he issued at nightfall to the Castle, or to his card-party at his tavern; but he was always the courageous fellow: and I hinted to him the state of my affections regarding Lady Lyndon.

"The Countess of Lyndon!" said poor Ulick; "well, that is a wonder. I myself have been mightily sweet upon a young lady, one of the Kiljoys of Ballyhack, who has ten thousand pounds to her fortune, and to whom her Ladyship is guardian; but how is a poor fellow without a coat to his back to get on with an heiress in such company as that? I might as well propose for the Countess myself."

"You had better not," said I, laughing; "the man who tries runs a chance of going out of the world first." And I explained to him my own intention regarding Lady Lyndon. Honest Ulick, whose respect for me was prodigious when he saw how splendid my appearance was, and heard how wonderful my adventures and great my experience of fashionable life had been, was lost in admiration of my daring and energy, when I confided to him my intention of marrying the greatest heiress in England.

I bade Ulick go out of town on any pretext he chose, and put a letter into a post-office near Castle Lyndon, which I prepared in a feigned hand, and in which I gave a solemn warning to Lord George Poynings to quit the country; saying that the great prize was never meant for the likes of him, and that there were heiresses enough in England, without coming to rob them out of the domains of Captain Fireball. The letter was written on a dirty piece of paper, in the worst of spelling: it came to my Lord by the post-conveyance, and, being a high-spirited young man, he of course laughed at it.

As ill-luck would have it for him, he appeared in Dublin a very short time afterwards; was introduced to the Chevalier

Redmond Barry, at the Lord Lieutenant's table; adjourned with him and several other gentlemen to the club at "Daly's," and there, in a dispute about the pedigree of a horse, in which everybody said I was in the right, words arose, and a meeting was the consequence. I had had no affair in Dublin since my arrival, and people were anxious to see whether I was equal to my reputation. I make no boast about these matters, but always do them when the time comes; and poor Lord George, who had a neat hand and a quick eye enough, but was bred in the clumsy English school, only stood before my point until I had determined where I should hit him.

My sword went in under his guard, and came out at his back. When he fell, he good-naturedly extended his hand to me, and said, "*Mr. Barry, I was wrong!*" I felt not very well at ease when the poor fellow made this confession: for the dispute had been of my making, and, to tell the truth, I had never intended it should end in any other way than a meeting.

He lay on his bed for four months with the effects of that wound; and the same post which conveyed to Lady Lyndon the news of the duel, carried her a message from Captain Fireball to say, "This is NUMBER ONE!"

"You, Ulick," said I, "shall be *number two*."

"Faith," said my cousin, "one's enough:" But I had my plan regarding him, and determined at once to benefit this honest fellow, and to forward my own designs upon the widow.

CHAPTER XV.

I Pay Court to my Lady Lyndon.

As my uncle's attainder was not reversed for being out with the Pretender in 1745, it would have been inconvenient for him to accompany his nephew to the land of our ancestors; where, if not hanging, at least a tedious process of imprisonment, and a doubtful pardon, would have awaited the good old gentleman. In any important crisis of my life, his advice was always of advantage to me, and I did not fail to seek it at this juncture, and to implore his counsel as regarded my pursuit of the widow. I told him the situation of her heart, as I have described it in the last chapter; of the progress that young Poynings had made in

her affections, and of her forgetfulness of her old admirer ; and I got a letter, in reply, full of excellent suggestions, by which I did not fail to profit.

The kind Chevalier prefaced it by saying, that he was for the present boarding in the Minorite convent at Brussels ; that he had thoughts of making his *salut* there, and retiring for ever from the world, devoting himself to the severest practices of religion. Meanwhile he wrote with regard to the lovely widow : it was natural that a person of her vast wealth and not disagreeable person should have many adorers about her ; and that, as in her husband's lifetime she had shown herself not at all disinclined to receive my addresses, I must make no manner of doubt I was not the first person whom she had so favoured ; nor was I likely to be the last.

"I would, my dear child," he added, "that the ugly attainer round my neck, and the resolution I have formed of retiring from a world of sin and vanity altogether, did not prevent me from coming personally to your aid in this delicate crisis of your affairs ; for, to lead them to a good end, it requires not only the indomitable courage, swagger, and audacity, which you possess beyond any young man I have ever known" (as for the "swagger," as the Chevalier calls it, I deny it *in toto*, being always most modest in my demeanour) ; "but though you have the vigour to execute, you have not the ingenuity to suggest plans of conduct for the following out of a scheme that is likely to be long and difficult of execution. Would you have ever thought of the brilliant scheme of the Countess Ida, which so nearly made you the greatest fortune in Europe, but for the advice and experience of a poor old man, now making up his accounts with the world, and about to retire from it for good and all ?

"Well, with regard to the Countess of Lyndon, your manner of winning her is quite *en l'air* at present to me ; nor can I advise day by day, as I would I could, according to circumstances as they arise. But your general scheme should be this. If I remember the letters you used to have from her during the period of the correspondence which the silly woman entertained you with, much high-flown sentiment passed between you ; and especially was written by her Ladyship herself : she is a blue-stock- ing, and fond of writing ; she used to make her griefs with her husband the continual theme of her correspondence (as women will do). I recollect several passages in her letters

bitterly deploring her fate in being united to one so unworthy of her.

"Surely, in the mass of billets you possess from her, there must be enough to compromise her. Look them well over ; select passages, and threaten to do so. Write to her at first in the undoubting tone of a lover who has every claim upon her. Then, if she is silent, remonstrate, alluding to former promises from her ; producing proofs of her former regard for you ; vowing despair, destruction, revenge, if she prove unfaithful. Frighten her—astonish her by some daring feat, which will let her see your indomitable resolution : you are the man to do it. Your sword has a reputation in Europe, and you have a character for boldness ; which was the first thing that caused my Lady Lyndon to turn her eyes upon you. Make the people talk about you at Dublin. Be as splendid, and as brave, and as odd as possible. How I wish I were near you ! You have no imagination to invent such a character as I would make for you—but why speak ; have I not had enough of the world and its vanities ?"

There was much practical good sense in this advice ; which I quote, unaccompanied with the lengthened description of his mortifications and devotions which my uncle indulged in, finishing his letter, as usual, with earnest prayers for my conversion to the true faith. But he was constant to his form of worship ; and I, as a man of honour and principle, was resolute to mine ; and have no doubt that the one, in this respect, will be as acceptable as the other.

Under these directions it was, then, I wrote to Lady Lyndon, to ask on my arrival when the most respectful of her admirers might be permitted to intrude upon her grief ? Then, as her Ladyship was silent, I demanded, Had she forgotten old times, and one whom she had favoured with her intimacy at a very happy period ? Had Calista forgotten Eugenio ? At the same time I sent down by my servant with this letter a present of a little sword for Lord Bullingdon, and a private note to his governor ; whose note of hand, by the way, I possessed for a sum—I forget what—but such as the poor fellow would have been very unwilling to pay. To this an answer came from her Ladyship's amanuensis, stating that Lady Lyndon was too much disturbed by grief at her recent dreadful calamity to see any one but her own relations ; and advices from my friend, the boy's governor, stating

that my Lord George Poynings was the young kinsman who was about to console her.

This caused the quarrel between me and the young nobleman ; whom I took care to challenge on his first arrival at Dublin.

When the news of the duel was brought to the widow at Castle Lyndon, my informant wrote me that Lady Lyndon shrieked and flung down the journal, and said, "The horrible monster ! He would not shrink from murder, I believe ;" and little Lord Bullingdon, drawing his sword—the sword I had given him, the rascal !—declared he would kill with it the man who had hurt Cousin George. On Mr. Runt telling him that I was the donor of the weapon, the little rogue still vowed that he would kill me all the same ! Indeed, in spite of my kindness to him, that boy always seemed to detest me.

Her Ladyship sent up daily couriers to inquire after the health of Lord George ; and, thinking to myself that she would probably be induced to come to Dublin if she were to hear that he was in danger, I managed to have her informed that he was in a precarious state ; that he grew worse ; that Redmond Barry had fled in consequence : of this flight I caused the *Mercury* newspaper to give notice also, but indeed it did not carry me beyond the town of Bray, where my poor mother dwelt ; and where, under the difficulties of a duel, I might be sure of having a welcome.

Those readers who have the sentiment of filial duty strong in their mind, will wonder that I have not yet described my interview with that kind mother whose sacrifices for me in youth had been so considerable, and for whom a man of my warm and affectionate nature could not but feel the most enduring and sincere regard.

But a man, moving in the exalted sphere of society in which I now stood, has his public duties to perform before he consults his private affections ; and so, upon my first arrival, I despatched a messenger to Mrs. Barry, stating my arrival, conveying to her my sentiments of respect and duty, and promising to pay them to her personally so soon as my business in Dublin would leave me free.

This, I need not say, was very considerable. I had my horses to buy, my establishment to arrange, my *entrée* into the genteel world to make ; and, having announced my intention to purchase horses and live in a genteel style, was in a couple of days

so pestered by visits of the nobility and gentry, and so hampered by invitations to dinners and suppers, that it became exceedingly difficult for me during some days to manage my anxiously desired visit to Mrs. Barry.

It appears that the good soul provided an entertainment as soon as she heard of my arrival, and invited all her humble acquaintances of Bray to be present ; but I was engaged subsequently to my Lord Ballyragget on the day appointed, and was, of course, obliged to break the promise that I had made to Mrs. Barry to attend her humble festival.

I endeavoured to sweeten the disappointment by sending my mother a handsome satin sack and velvet robe, which I purchased for her at the best mercers in Dublin (and indeed told her I had brought from Paris expressly for her) ; but the messenger whom I despatched with the presents brought back the parcels, with the piece of satin torn half way up the middle : and I did not need his descriptions to be aware that something had offended the good lady ; who came out, he said, and abused him at the door, and would have boxed his ears, but that she was restrained by a gentleman in black ; who I concluded, with justice, was her clerical friend Mr. Jowls.

This reception of my presents made me rather dread than hope for an interview with Mrs. Barry, and delayed my visit to her for some days further. I wrote her a dutiful and soothing letter, to which there was no answer returned ; although I mentioned that on my way to the capital I had been at Barryville, and revisited the old haunts of my youth.

I don't care to own that she is the only human being whom I am afraid to face. I can recollect her fits of anger as a child, and the reconciliations, which used to be still more violent and painful : and so, instead of going myself, I sent my factotum, Ulick Brady, to her ; who rode back, saying that he had met with a reception he would not again undergo for twenty guineas ; that he had been dismissed the house, with strict injunctions to inform me that my mother disowned me for ever. This parental anathema, as it were, affected me much, for I was always the most dutiful of sons ; and I determined to go as soon as possible, and brave what I knew must be an inevitable scene of reproach and anger, for the sake, as I hoped, of as certain a reconciliation.

I had been giving one night an entertainment to some of the

genteel company in Dublin, and was showing my Lord Marquess downstairs with a pair of wax tapers, when I found a woman in a grey coat seated at my doorsteps: to whom, taking her for a beggar, I tendered a piece of money, and whom my noble friends, who were rather hot with wine, began to joke, as my door closed and I bade them all good-night.

I was rather surprised and affected to find afterwards that the hooded woman was no other than my mother; whose pride had made her vow that she would not enter my doors, but whose natural maternal yearnings had made her long to see her son's face once again, and who had thus planted herself in disguise at my gate. Indeed, I have found in my experience that these are the only women who never deceive a man, and whose affection remains constant through all trials. Think of the hours that the kind soul must have passed, lonely in the street, listening to the din and merriment within my apartments, the clinking of the glasses, the laughing, the choruses, and the cheering.

When my affair with Lord George happened, and it became necessary to me, for the reasons I have stated, to be out of the way; now, thought I, is the time to make my peace with my good mother: she will never refuse me an asylum now that I seem in distress. So sending to her a notice that I was coming, that I had had a duel which had brought me into trouble, and required I should go into hiding, I followed my messenger half-an-hour afterwards: and, I warrant me, there was no want of a good reception, for presently, being introduced into an empty room by the barefooted maid who waited upon Mrs. Barry, the door was opened, and the poor mother flung herself into my arms with a scream, and with transports of joy which I shall not attempt to describe—they are but to be comprehended by women who have held in their arms an only child after a twelve years' absence from him.

The Reverend Mr. Jowls, my mother's director, was the only person to whom the door of her habitation was opened during my sojourn; and he would take no denial. He mixed for himself a glass of rum-punch, which he seemed in the habit of drinking at my good mother's charge, groaned aloud, and forthwith began reading me a lecture upon the sinfulness of my past courses, and especially of the last horrible action I had been committing.

"Sinful!" said my mother, bristling up when her son was

attacked; "sure we're all sinners; and it's you, Mr. Jowls, who have given me the inexpressible blessing to let me know *that*. But how else would you have had the poor child behave?"

"I would have had the gentleman avoid the drink, and the quarrel, and this wicked duel altogether," answered the clergyman.

But my mother cut him short, by saying such sort of conduct might be very well in a person of his cloth and his birth, but it neither became a Brady nor a Barry. In fact, she was quite delighted with the thought that I had pinked an English marquis's son in a duel; and so, to console her, I told her of a score more in which I had been engaged, and of some of which I have already informed the reader.

As my late antagonist was in no sort of danger when I spread that report of his perilous situation, there was no particular call that my hiding should be very close. But the widow did not know the fact as well as I did: and caused her house to be barricaded, and Becky, her barefooted serving-wench, to be a perpetual sentinel to give alarm, lest the officers should be in search of me.

The only person I expected, however, was my cousin Ulick, who was to bring me the welcome intelligence of Lady Lyndon's arrival; and I own, after two days' close confinement at Bray, in which I narrated all the adventures of my life to my mother, and succeeded in making her accept the dresses she had formerly refused, and a considerable addition to her income which I was glad to make, I was very glad when I saw that reprobate Ulick Brady, as my mother called him, ride up to the door in my carriage with the welcome intelligence for my mother, that the young lord was out of danger; and for me, that the Countess of Lyndon had arrived in Dublin.

"And I wish, Redmond, that the young gentleman had been in danger a little longer," said the widow, her eyes filling with tears, "and you'd have stayed so much the more with your poor old mother." But I dried her tears, embracing her warmly, and promised to see her often; and hinted I would have, mayhap, a house of my own and a noble daughter to welcome her.

"Who is she, Redmond dear?" said the old lady.

"One of the noblest and richest women in the empire, mother," answered I. "No mere Brady this time," I added, laughing: with which hopes I left Mrs. Barry in the best of tempers.

No man can bear less malice than I do; and, when I have once carried my point, I am one of the most placable creatures in the world. I was a week in Dublin before I thought it necessary to quit that capital. I had become quite reconciled to my rival in that time; made a point of calling at his lodgings, and speedily became an intimate consoler of his bed-side. He had a gentleman to whom I did not neglect to be civil, and towards whom I ordered my people to be particular in their attentions; for I was naturally anxious to learn what my Lord George's position with the lady of Castle Lyndon had really been, whether other suitors were about the widow, and how she would bear the news of his wound.

The young nobleman himself enlightened me somewhat upon the subjects I was most desirous to inquire into.

"Chevalier," said he to me one morning when I went to pay him my compliments, "I find you are an old acquaintance with my kinswoman, the Countess of Lyndon. She writes me a page of abuse of you in a letter here; and the strange part of the story is this, that one day when there was talk about you at Castle Lyndon, and the splendid equipage you were exhibiting in Dublin, the fair widow vowed and protested she never had heard of you.

"'Oh yes, mamma,' said the little Bullingdon, 'the tall dark man at Spa with the cast in his eye, who used to make my governor tipsy and sent me the sword: his name is Mr. Barry.'

"But my Lady ordered the boy out of the room, and persisted in knowing nothing about you."

"And are you a kinsman and acquaintance of my Lady Lyndon, my Lord?" said I, in a tone of grave surprise.

"Yes, indeed," answered the young gentleman. "I left her house but to get this ugly wound from you. And it came at a most unlucky time too."

"Why more unlucky now than at another moment?"

"Why, look you, Chevalier, I think the widow was not impartial to me. I think I might have induced her to make our connection a little closer: and faith, though she is older than I am, she is the richest party now in England."

"My Lord George," said I, "will you let me ask you a frank but an odd question?—will you show me her letters?"

"Indeed I'll do no such thing," replied he, in a rage.

"Nay, don't be angry. If I show you letters of Lady Lyndon's to me, will you let me see hers to you?"

"What, in Heaven's name, do you mean, Mr. Barry?" said the young gentleman.

"I mean that I passionately loved Lady Lyndon. I mean that I am a—that I rather was not indifferent to her. I mean that I love her to distraction at this present moment, and will die myself, or kill the man who possesses her before me."

"You marry the greatest heiress and the noblest blood in England?" said Lord George haughtily.

"There's no nobler blood in Europe than mine," answered I: "and I tell you I don't know whether to hope or not. But this I know, that there were days in which, poor as I am, the great heiress did not disdain to look down upon my poverty: and that any man who marries her passes over my dead body to do it. It's lucky for you," I added gloomily, "that on the occasion of my engagement with you, I did not know what were your views regarding my Lady Lyndon. My poor boy, you are a lad of courage and I love you. Mine is the first sword in Europe, and you would have been lying in a narrower bed than that you now occupy."

"Boy!" said Lord George: "I am not four years younger than you are."

"You are forty years younger than I am in experience. I have passed through every grade of life. With my own skill and daring I have made my own fortune. I have been in fourteen pitched battles as a private soldier, and have been twenty-three times on the ground, and never was touched but once; and that was by the sword of a French *maître-d'armes*, whom I killed. I started in life at seventeen, a beggar, and am now at seven-and-twenty, with twenty thousand guineas. Do you suppose a man of my courage and energy can't attain anything that he dares, and that having claims upon the widow, I will not press them?"

This speech was not exactly true to the letter (for I had multiplied my pitched battles, my duels, and my wealth somewhat); but I saw that it made the impression I desired to effect upon the young gentleman's mind, who listened to my statement with peculiar seriousness, and whom I presently left to digest it.

A couple of days afterwards I called to see him again, when I brought with me some of the letters that had passed between me

and my Lady Lyndon. "Here," said I, "look—I show it you in confidence—it is a lock of her Ladyship's hair; here are her letters signed Calista, and addressed to Eugenio. Here is a poem, 'When Sol bedecks the mead with light, And pallid Cynthia sheds her ray,' addressed by her Ladyship to your humble servant."

"Calista! Eugenio! Sol bedecks the mead with light?" cried the young lord. "Am I dreaming? Why, my dear Barry, the widow has sent me the very poem herself! 'Rejoicing in the sunshine bright, Or musing in the evening grey.'"

I could not help laughing as he made the quotation. They were, in fact, the very words *my* Calista had addressed to me. And we found, upon comparing letters, that whole passages of eloquence figured in the one correspondence which appeared in the other. See what it is to be a blue-stocking and have a love of letter-writing!

The young man put down the papers in great perturbation.

"Well, thank Heaven!" said he, after a pause of some duration,—“thank Heaven, for a good riddance! Ah, Mr. Barry, what a woman I *might* have married had these lucky papers not come in my way! I thought my Lady Lyndon had a heart, sir, I must confess, though not a very warm one; and that, at least, one could *trust* her. But marry her now! I would as lief send my servant into the street to get me a wife, as put up with such an Ephesian matron as that.”

"My Lord George," said I, "you little know the world. Remember what a bad husband Lady Lyndon had, and don't be astonished that she, on her side, should be indifferent. Nor has she, I will dare to wager, ever passed beyond the bounds of harmless gallantry, or sinned beyond the composing of a sonnet or a billet-doux."

"My wife," said the little lord, "shall write no sonnets or billets-doux; and I'm heartily glad to think I have obtained, in good time, a knowledge of the heartless vixen with whom I thought myself for a moment in love."

The wounded young nobleman was either, as I have said, very young and green in matters of the world—for to suppose that a man would give up forty thousand a year, because, forsooth, to a lady connected with it had written a few sentimental letters to a young fellow, is too absurd—or, as I am inclined to believe, he was glad of an excuse to quit the field altogether, being by no

means anxious to meet the victorious sword of Redmond Barry a second time.

When the idea of Poynings' danger, or the reproaches probably addressed by him to the widow regarding myself, had brought this exceedingly weak and feeble woman up to Dublin, as I expected, and my worthy Ulick had informed me of her arrival, I quitted my good mother, who was quite reconciled to me (indeed the duel had done that), and found the disconsolate Calista was in the habit of paying visits to the wounded swain; much to the annoyance, the servants told me, of that gentleman. The English are often absurdly high and haughty upon a point of punctilio; and, after his kinswoman's conduct, Lord Poynings swore he would have no more to do with her.

I had this information from his Lordship's gentleman; with whom, as I have said, I took particular care to be friends; nor was I denied admission by his porter, when I chose to call, as before.

Her Ladyship had most likely bribed that person, as I had; for she had found her way up, though denied admission; and, in fact, I had watched her from her own house to Lord George Poynings' lodgings, and seen her descend from her chair there and enter, before I myself followed her. I proposed to await her quietly in the ante-room, to make a scene there, and reproach her with infidelity, if necessary; but matters were, as it happened, arranged much more conveniently for me; and walking, unannounced, into the outer room of his Lordship's apartments, I had the felicity of hearing in the next chamber, of which the door was partially open, the voice of my Calista. She was in full cry, appealing to the poor patient, as he lay confined in his bed, and speaking in the most passionate manner. "What can lead you, George," she said, "to doubt of my faith? How can you break my heart by casting me off in this monstrous manner? Do you wish to drive your poor Calista to the grave? Well, well, I shall join there the dear departed angel."

"Who entered it three months since," said Lord George, with a sneer. "It's a wonder you have survived so long."

"Don't treat your poor Calista in this cruel cruel manner, Antonio!" cried the widow.

"Bah!" said Lord George, "my wound is bad. My doctors forbid me much talk. Suppose your Antonio tired, my dear. Can't you console yourself with somebody else?"

"Heavens, Lord George! Antonio!"

"Console yourself with Eugenio," said the young nobleman bitterly, and began ringing his bell; on which his valet, who was in an inner room, came out, and he bade him show her Ladyship downstairs.

Lady Lyndon issued from the room in the greatest flurry. She was dressed in deep weeds, with a veil over her face, and did not recognise the person waiting in the outer apartment. As she went down the stairs, I stepped lightly after her, and as her chairman opened her door, sprang forward, and took her hand to place her in the vehicle. "Dearest widow," said I, "his Lordship spoke correctly. Console yourself with Eugenio!" She was too frightened even to scream, as her chairman carried her away. She was set down at her house, and you may be sure that I was at the chair-door, as before, to help her out.

"Monstrous man!" said she, "I desire you to leave me."

"Madam, it would be against my oath," replied I; "recollect the vow Eugenio sent to Calista."

"If you do not quit me, I will call for the domestics to turn you from the door."

"What! when I am come with my Calista's letters in my pocket, to return them mayhap? You can soothe, madam, but you cannot frighten Redmond Barry."

"What is it you would have of me, sir?" said the widow, rather agitated.

"Let me come upstairs, and I will tell you all," I replied; and she condescended to give me her hand, and to permit me to lead her from her chair to her drawing-room.

When we were alone I opened my mind honourably to her.

"Dearest madam," said I, "do not let your cruelty drive a desperate slave to fatal measures. I adore you. In former days you allowed me to whisper my passion to you unrestrained; at present you drive me from your door, leave my letters unanswered, and prefer another to me. My flesh and blood cannot bear such treatment. Look upon the punishment I have been obliged to inflict; tremble at that which I may be compelled to administer to that unfortunate young man: so sure as he marries you, madam, he dies."

"I do not recognise," said the widow, "the least right you have to give the law to the Countess of Lyndon: I do not in the least understand your threats, or heed them. What has passed

between me and an Irish adventurer that should authorise this impertinent intrusion?"

"These have passed, madam," said I,—"Calista's letters to Eugenio. They may have been very innocent; but will the world believe it? You may have only intended to play with the heart of the poor artless Irish gentleman who adored and confided in you. But who will believe the stories of your innocence, against the irrefragable testimony of your own handwriting? Who will believe that you could write these letters in the mere wantonness of coquetry, and not under the influence of affection?"

"Villain!" cried my Lady Lyndon, "could you dare to construe out of those idle letters of mine any other meaning than that which they really bear?"

"I will construe anything out of them," said I; "such is the passion which animates me towards you. I have sworn it—you must and shall be mine! Did you ever know me promise to accomplish a thing and fail? Which will you prefer to have from me—a love such as woman never knew from man before, or a hatred to which there exists no parallel?"

"A woman of my rank, sir, can fear nothing from the hatred of an adventurer like yourself," replied the lady, drawing up stately.

"Look at your Poynings—was *he* of your rank? You are the cause of that young man's wound, madam; and, but that the instrument of your savage cruelty relented, would have been the author of his murder—yes, of his murder; for, if a wife is faithless, does not she arm the husband who punishes the seducer? And I look upon you, Honoria Lyndon, as my wife."

"Husband? wife, sir!" cried the widow, quite astonished.

"Yes, wife! husband! I am not one of those poor souls with whom coquettes can play, and who may afterwards throw them aside. You would forget what passed between us at Spa: Calista would forget Eugenio; but I will not let you forget me. You thought to trifle with my heart, did you? When once moved, Honoria, it is moved for ever. I love you—love as passionately now as I did when my passion was hopeless; and, now that I can win you, do you think I will forego you? Cruel cruel Calista! you little know the power of your own charms if you think their effect is so easily obliterated—you little know the constancy of this pure and noble heart if you think that, having once loved, it

can ever cease to adore you. No! I swear by your cruelty that I will revenge it; by your wonderful beauty that I will win it, and be worthy to win it. Lovely, fascinating, fickle, cruel woman! you shall be mine—I swear it! Your wealth may be great; but am I not of a generous nature enough to use it worthily? Your rank is lofty; but not so lofty as my ambition. You threw yourself away once on a cold and spiritless debauchee: give yourself now, Honoria, to a *man*; and one who, however lofty your rank may be, will enhance it and become it!"

As I poured words to this effect on the astonished widow, I stood over her, and fascinated her with the glance of my eye; saw her turn red and pale with fear and wonder; saw that my praise of her charms and the exposition of my passion were not unwelcome to her, and witnessed with triumphant composure the mastery I was gaining over her. Terror, be sure of that, is not a bad ingredient of love. A man who wills fiercely to win the heart of a weak and vapourish woman *must* succeed, if he have opportunity enough.

"Terrible man!" said Lady Lyndon, shrinking from me as soon as I had done speaking (indeed, I was at a loss for words, and thinking of another speech to make to her)—"terrible man! leave me."

I saw that I had made an impression on her, from those very words. "If she lets me into the house to-morrow," said I, "she is mine."

As I went downstairs I put ten guineas into the hand of the hall-porter, who looked quite astonished at such a gift.

"It is to repay you for the trouble of opening the door to me," said I; "you will have to do so often."

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CHAPTER XVI.

*I Provide nobly for my Family, and Attain the Height of my
(seeming) Good Fortune.*

THE next day when I went back, my fears were realised: the door was refused to me—my Lady was not at home. This I knew to be false: I had watched the door the whole morning from a lodging I took at a house opposite.

"Your lady is not out," said I: "she has denied me, and I

can't, of course, force my way to her. But listen: you are an Englishman?"

"That I am," said the fellow, with an air of the utmost superiority. "Your honour could tell that by my *haccent*."

I knew he was, and might therefore offer him a bribe. An Irish family servant in rags, and though his wages were never paid him, would probably fling the money in your face.

"Listen, then," said I. "Your lady's letters pass through your hands, don't they? A crown for every one that you bring me to read. There is a whisky-shop in the next street; bring them there when you go to drink, and call for me by the name of Dermot."

"I recollect your honour at *Spar*," says the fellow, grinning: "seven's the main, hey?" and being exceedingly proud of this reminiscence, I bade my inferior adieu.

I do not defend this practice of letter-opening in private life, except in cases of the most urgent necessity: when we must follow the examples of our betters, the statesmen of all Europe, and, for the sake of a great good, infringe a little matter of ceremony. My Lady Lyndon's letters were none the worse for being opened, and a great deal the better; the knowledge obtained from the perusal of some of her multifarious epistles enabling me to become intimate with her character in a hundred ways, and obtain a power over her by which I was not slow to profit. By the aid of the letters and of my English friend, whom I always regaled with the best of liquor, and satisfied with presents of money still more agreeable (I used to put on a livery in order to meet him, and a red wig, in which it was impossible to know the dashing and elegant Redmond Barry), I got such an insight into the widow's movements as astonished her. I knew beforehand to what public places she would go; they were, on account of her widowhood, but few: and wherever she appeared, at church or in the park, I was always ready to offer her her book, or to canter on horseback by the side of her chariot.

Many of her Ladyship's letters were the most whimsical rodomontades that ever blue-stocking penned. She was a woman who took up and threw off a greater number of dear friends than any one I ever knew. To some of these female darlings she began presently to write about my unworthy self, and it was with a sentiment of extreme satisfaction I found at length that the widow was growing dreadfully afraid of me; calling me her