

third of the family titles. My mother went almost mad with joy at saluting her grandson as "my Lord," and I felt that all my sufferings and privations were repaid by seeing this darling child advanced to such a post of honour.

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CHAPTER XIX.

*Conclusion.*

IF the world were not composed of a race of ungrateful scoundrels, who share your prosperity while it lasts, and, even when gorged with your venison and Burgundy, abuse the generous giver of the feast, I am sure I merit a good name and a high reputation: in Ireland, at least, where my generosity was unbounded, and the splendour of my mansion and entertainments unequalled by any other nobleman of my time. As long as my magnificence lasted, all the country was free to partake of it; I had hunters sufficient in my stables to mount a regiment of dragoons, and butts of wine in my cellar which would have made whole counties drunk for years. Castle Lyndon became the headquarters of scores of needy gentlemen, and I never rode a-hunting but I had a dozen young fellows of the best blood of the country riding as my squires and gentlemen of the horse. My son, little Castle Lyndon, was a prince; his breeding and manners, even at his early age, showed him to be worthy of the two noble families from whom he was descended: I don't know what high hopes I had for the boy, and indulged in a thousand fond anticipations as to his future success and figure in the world. But stern Fate had determined that I should leave none of my race behind me, and ordained that I should finish my career, as I see it closing now—poor, lonely, and childless. I may have had my faults; but no man shall dare to say of me that I was not a good and tender father. I loved that boy passionately; perhaps with a blind partiality: I denied him nothing. Gladly, gladly, I swear, would I have died that his premature doom might have been averted. I think there is not a day since I lost him but his bright face and beautiful smiles look down on me out of heaven, where he is, and that my heart does not yearn towards him. That sweet child was taken from me at the age of nine years, when he was

full of beauty and promise: and so powerful is the hold his memory has of me that I have never been able to forget him; his little spirit haunts me of nights on my restless solitary pillow; many a time, in the wildest and maddest company, as the bottle is going round, and the song and laugh roaring about, I am thinking of him. I have got a lock of his soft brown hair hanging round my breast now: it will accompany me to the dishonoured pauper's grave; where soon, no doubt, Barry Lyndon's worn-out old bones will be laid.

My Bryan was a boy of amazing high spirit (indeed how, coming from such a stock, could he be otherwise?), impatient even of my control, against which the dear little rogue would often rebel gallantly; how much more, then, of his mother's and the women's, whose attempts to direct him he would laugh to scorn. Even my own mother ("Mrs. Barry of Lyndon" the good soul now called herself, in compliment to my new family) was quite unable to check him; and hence you may fancy what a will he had of his own. If it had not been for that, he might have lived to this day: he might—but why repine? Is he not in a better place? would the heritage of a beggar do any service to him? It is best as it is—Heaven be good to us!—Alas! that I, his father, should be left to deplore him.

It was in the month of October I had been to Dublin, in order to see a lawyer and a moneyed man who had come over to Ireland to consult with me about some sales of mine and the cut of Hackton timber; of which, as I hated the place and was greatly in want of money, I was determined to cut down every stick. There had been some difficulty in the matter. It was said I had no right to touch the timber. The brute peasantry about the estate had been roused to such a pitch of hatred against me, that the rascals actually refused to lay an axe to the trees; and my agent (that scoundrel Larkins) declared that his life was in danger among them if he attempted any further despoilment (as they called it) of the property. Every article of the splendid furniture was sold by this time, as I need not say; and as for the plate, I had taken good care to bring it off to Ireland, where it now was in the best of keeping—my banker's, who had advanced six thousand pounds on it: which sum I soon had occasion for.

I went to Dublin, then, to meet the English man of business; and so far succeeded in persuading Mr. Splint, a great shipbuilder

and timber-dealer of Plymouth, of my claim to the Hackton timber, that he agreed to purchase it off-hand at about one-third of its value, and handed me over five thousand pounds: which, being pressed with debts at the time, I was fain to accept. *He* had no difficulty in getting down the wood, I warrant. He took a regiment of shipwrights and sawyers from his own and the King's yards at Plymouth, and in two months Hackton Park was as bare of trees as the Bog of Allen.

I had but ill luck with that accursed expedition and money. I lost the greater part of it in two nights' play at "Daly's," so that my debts stood just as they were before; and before the vessel sailed for Holyhead, which carried away my old sharper of a timber-merchant, all that I had left of the money he brought me was a couple of hundred pounds, with which I returned home very disconsolately: and very suddenly, too, for my Dublin tradesmen were hot upon me, hearing I had spent the loan, and two of my wine-merchants had writs out against me for some thousands of pounds.

I bought in Dublin, according to my promise, however—for when I give a promise I will keep it at any sacrifices—a little horse for my dear little Bryan; which was to be a present for his tenth birthday, that was now coming on: it was a beautiful little animal and stood me in a good sum. I never regarded money for that dear child. But the horse was very wild. He kicked off one of my horse-boys, who rode him at first, and broke the lad's leg; and, though I took the animal in hand on the journey home, it was only my weight and skill that made the brute quiet.

When we got home I sent the horse away with one of my grooms to a farmer's house, to break him thoroughly in, and told Bryan, who was all anxiety to see his little horse, that he would arrive by his birthday, when he should hunt him along with my hounds; and I promised myself no small pleasure in presenting the dear fellow to the field that day: which I hoped to see him lead some time or other in place of his fond father. Ah me! never was that gallant boy to ride a fox-chase, or to take the place amongst the gentry of his country which his birth and genius had pointed out for him!

Though I don't believe in dreams and omens, yet I can't but own that when a great calamity is hanging over a man he has frequently many strange and awful forebodings of it. I fancy

now I had many. Lady Lyndon, especially, twice dreamed of her son's death; but, as she was now grown uncommonly nervous and vapourish, I treated her fears with scorn, and my own, of course, too. And in an unguarded moment, over the bottle after dinner, I told poor Bryan, who was always questioning me about the little horse, and when it was to come, that it was arrived; that it was in Doolan's farm, where Mick the groom was breaking him in. "Promise me, Bryan," screamed his mother, "that you will not ride the horse except in company of your father." But I only said, "Pooh, madam, you are an ass!" being angry at her silly timidity, which was always showing itself in a thousand disagreeable ways now; and, turning round to Bryan, said, "I promise your Lordship a good flogging if you mount him without my leave."

I suppose the poor child did not care about paying this penalty for the pleasure he was to have, or possibly thought a fond father would remit the punishment altogether; for the next morning, when I rose rather late, having sat up drinking the night before, I found the child had been off at daybreak, having slipt through his tutor's room (this was Redmond Quin, our cousin, whom I had taken to live with me), and I had no doubt but that he was gone to Doolan's farm.

I took a great horsewhip and galloped off after him in a rage, swearing I would keep my promise. But, Heaven forgive me! I little thought of it when at three miles from home I met a sad procession coming towards me: peasants moaning and howling as our Irish do, the black horse led by the hand, and, on a door that some of the folk carried, my poor dear little boy. There he lay in his little boots and spurs, and his little coat of scarlet and gold. His dear face was quite white, and he smiled as he held a hand out to me, and said painfully, "You won't whip me, will you, papa?" I could only burst out into tears in reply. I have seen many and many a man dying, and there's a look about the eyes which you cannot mistake. There was a little drummer-boy I was fond of who was hit down before my company at Kühnersdorf; when I ran up to give him some water, he looked exactly like my dear Bryan then did—there's no mistaking that awful look of the eyes. We carried him home and scoured the country round for doctors to come and look at his hurt.

But what does a doctor avail in a contest with the grim invin-

cible enemy? Such as came could only confirm our despair by their account of the poor child's case. He had mounted his horse gallantly, sat him bravely all the time the animal plunged and kicked, and, having overcome his first spite, ran him at a hedge by the roadside. But there were loose stones at the top, and the horse's foot caught among them, and he and his brave little rider rolled over together at the other side. The people said they saw the noble little boy spring up after his fall and run to catch the horse; which had broken away from him, kicking him on the back, as it would seem, as they lay on the ground. Poor Bryan ran a few yards and then dropped down as if shot. A pallor came over his face, and they thought he was dead. But they poured whisky down his mouth, and the poor child revived: still he could not move; his spine was injured; the lower half of him was dead when they laid him in bed at home. The rest did not last long, God help me! He remained yet for two days with us; and a sad comfort it was to think he was in no pain.

During this time the dear angel's temper seemed quite to change: he asked his mother and me pardon for any act of disobedience he had been guilty of towards us; he said often he should like to see his brother Bullingdon. "Bully was better than you, papa," he said; "he used not to swear so, and he told and taught me many good things while you were away." And, taking a hand of his mother and mine in each of his little clammy ones, he begged us not to quarrel so, but love each other, so that we might meet again in heaven, where Bully told him quarrelsome people never went. His mother was very much affected by these admonitions from the poor suffering angel's mouth; and I was so too. I wish she had enabled me to keep the counsel which the dying boy gave us.

At last, after two days, he died. There he lay, the hope of my family, the pride of my manhood, the link which had kept me and my Lady Lyndon together. "Oh, Redmond," said she, kneeling by the sweet child's body, "do, do let us listen to the truth out of his blessed mouth: and do you amend your life, and treat your poor loving fond wife as her dying child bade you." And I said I would: but there are promises which it is out of a man's power to keep; especially with such a woman as her. But we drew together after that sad event, and were for several months better friends.

I won't tell you with what splendour we buried him. Of what avail are undertakers' feathers and heralds' trumpety? I went out and shot the fatal black horse that had killed him, at the door of the vault where we laid my boy. I was so wild, that I could have shot myself too. But for the crime, it would have been better that I should, perhaps; for what has my life been since that sweet flower was taken out of my bosom? A succession of miseries, wrongs, disasters, and mental and bodily sufferings which never fell to the lot of any other man in Christendom.

Lady Lyndon, always vapourish and nervous, after our blessed boy's catastrophe became more agitated than ever, and plunged into devotion with so much fervour, that you would have fancied her almost distracted at times. She imagined she saw visions. She said an angel from heaven had told her that Bryan's death was as a punishment to her for her neglect of her first-born. Then she would declare Bullingdon was alive; she had seen him in a dream. Then again she would fall into fits of sorrow about his death, and grieve for him as violently as if he had been the last of her sons who had died, and not our darling Bryan; who, compared to Bullingdon, was what a diamond is to a vulgar stone. Her freaks were painful to witness, and difficult to control. It began to be said in the country that the Countess was going mad. My scoundrelly enemies did not fail to confirm and magnify the rumour, and would add that I was the cause of her insanity: I had driven her to distraction, I had killed Bullingdon, I had murdered my own son; I don't know what else they laid to my charge. Even in Ireland their hateful calumnies reached me: my friends fell away from me. They began to desert my hunt, as they did in England, and when I went to race or market found sudden reasons for getting out of my neighbourhood. I got the name of Wicked Barry, Devil Lyndon, which you please: the country-folk used to make marvellous legends about me: the priests said I had massacred I don't know how many German nuns in the Seven Years' War; that the ghost of the murdered Bullingdon haunted my house. Once at a fair in a town hard by, when I had a mind to buy a waistcoat for one of my people, a fellow standing by said, "'Tis a strait-waistcoat he's buying for my Lady Lyndon." And from this circumstance arose a legend of my cruelty to my wife; and many circumstantial details were narrated regarding my manner and ingenuity of torturing her.

The loss of my dear boy pressed not only on my heart as a father, but injured my individual interests in a very considerable degree; for as there was now no direct heir to the estate, and Lady Lyndon was of a weak health, and supposed to be quite unlikely to leave a family, the next in succession—that detestable family of Tiptoff—began to exert themselves in a hundred ways to annoy me, and were at the head of the party of enemies who were raising reports to my discredit. They interposed between me and my management of the property in a hundred different ways; making an outcry if I cut a stick, sunk a shaft, sold a picture, or sent a few ounces of plate to be remodelled. They harassed me with ceaseless lawsuits, got injunctions from Chancery, hampered my agents in the execution of their work; so much so that you would have fancied my own was not my own, but theirs, to do as they liked with. What is worse, as I have reason to believe, they had tamperings and dealings with my own domestics under my own roof; for I could not have a word with Lady Lyndon but it somehow got abroad, and I could not be drunk with my chaplain and friends but some sanctified rascals would get hold of the news, and reckon up all the bottles I drank and all the oaths I swore. That these were not few, I acknowledge. I am of the old school; was always a free liver and speaker; and, at least, if I did and said what I liked, was not so bad as many a canting scoundrel I know of who covers his foibles and sins, unsuspected, with a mask of holiness.

As I am making a clean breast of it, and am no hypocrite, I may as well confess now that I endeavoured to ward off the devices of my enemies by an artifice which was not, perhaps, strictly justifiable. Everything depended on my having an heir to the estate; for if Lady Lyndon, who was of weakly health, had died, the next day I was a beggar: all my sacrifices of money, &c., on the estate would not have been held in a farthing's account; all the debts would have been left on my shoulders; and my enemies would have triumphed over me: which, to a man of my honourable spirit, was "the unkindest cut of all," as some poet says.

I confess, then, it was my wish to supplant these scoundrels; and, as I could not do so without an heir to my property, *I determined to find one*. If I had him near at hand, and of my own blood too, though with the bar sinister, is not here the

question. It was then I found out the rascally machinations of my enemies; for, having broached this plan to Lady Lyndon, whom I made to be, outwardly at least, the most obedient of wives,—although I never let a letter from her or to her go or arrive without my inspection,—although I allowed her to see none but those persons who I thought, in her delicate health, would be fitting society for her; yet the infernal Tiptoffs got wind of my scheme, protested instantly against it, not only by letter, but in the shameful libellous public prints, and held me up to public odium as a "child-forged," as they called me. Of course I denied the charge—I could do no otherwise, and offered to meet any one of the Tiptoffs on the field of honour, and prove him a scoundrel and a liar: as he was; though, perhaps, not in this instance. But they contented themselves by answering me by a lawyer, and declined an invitation which any man of spirit would have accepted. My hopes of having an heir were thus blighted completely: indeed, Lady Lyndon (though, as I have said, I take her opposition for nothing) had resisted the proposal with as much energy as a woman of her weakness could manifest; and said she had committed one great crime in consequence of me, but would rather die than perform another. I could easily have brought her Ladyship to her senses, however: but my scheme had taken wind, and it was now in vain to attempt it. We might have had a dozen children in honest wedlock, and people would have said they were false.

As for raising money on annuities, I may say I had used her life interest up. There were but few of those assurance societies in my time which have since sprung up in the city of London; underwriters did the business, and my wife's life was as well known among them as, I do believe, that of any woman in Christendom. Latterly, when I wanted to get a sum against her life, the rascals had the impudence to say my treatment of her did not render it worth a year's purchase,—as if my interest lay in killing her! Had my boy lived, it would have been a different thing; he and his mother might have cut off the entail of a good part of the property between them, and my affairs have been put in better order. Now they were in a bad condition indeed. All my schemes had turned out failures; my lands, which I had purchased with borrowed money, made me no return, and I was obliged to pay ruinous interest for the sums with which I had purchased them. My income, though very large, was

saddled with hundreds of annuities, and thousands of lawyers charges; and I felt the net drawing closer and closer round me, and no means to extricate myself from its toils.

To add to all my perplexities, two years after my poor child's death, my wife, whose vagaries of temper and wayward follies I had borne with for twelve years, wanted to leave me, and absolutely made attempts at what she called escaping from my tyranny.

My mother, who was the only person that, in my misfortunes, remained faithful to me (indeed, she has always spoken of me in my true light, as a martyr to the rascality of others and a victim of my own generous and confiding temper), found out the first scheme that was going on; and of which those artful and malicious Tiptoffs were, as usual, the main promoters. Mrs. Barry, indeed, though her temper was violent and her ways singular, was an invaluable person to me in my house; which would have been at rack and ruin long before, but for her spirit of order and management, and for her excellent economy in the government of my numerous family. As for my Lady Lyndon, she, poor soul! was much too fine a lady to attend to household matters—passed her days with her doctor, or her books of piety, and never appeared among us except at my compulsion; when she and my mother would be sure to have a quarrel.

Mrs. Barry, on the contrary, had a talent for management in all matters. She kept the maids stirring, and the footmen to their duty; had an eye over the claret in the cellar, and the oats and hay in the stable; saw to the salting and pickling, the potatoes and the turf-stacking, the pig-killing and the poultry, the linen-room and the bakehouse, and the ten thousand minutæ of a great establishment. If all Irish housewives were like her, I warrant many a hall-fire would be blazing where the cobwebs only grow now, and many a park covered with sheep and fat cattle where the thistles are at present the chief occupiers. If anything could have saved me from the consequences of villainy in others, and (I confess it, for I am not above owning to my faults) my own too easy, generous, and careless nature, it would have been the admirable prudence of that worthy creature. She never went to bed until all the house was quiet and all the candles out; and you may fancy that this was a matter of some difficulty with a man of my habits, who had commonly a dozen of jovial fellows (artful scoundrels and false friends most of them

were!) to drink with me every night, and who seldom, for my part, went to bed sober. Many and many a night, when I was unconscious of her attention, has that good soul pulled my boots off, and seen me laid by my servants snug in bed, and carried off the candle herself; and been the first in the morning, too, to bring me my drink of small-beer. Mine were no milksop times, I can tell you. A gentleman thought no shame of taking his half-dozen bottles; and, as for your coffee and slops, they were left to Lady Lyndon, her doctor, and the other old women. It was my mother's pride that I could drink more than any man in the country,—as much, within a pint, as my father before me, she said.

That Lady Lyndon should detest her was quite natural. She is not the first of woman or mankind either that has hated a mother-in-law. I set my mother to keep a sharp watch over the freaks of her Ladyship; and this, you may be sure, was one of the reasons why the latter disliked her. I never minded that, however. Mrs. Barry's assistance and surveillance were invaluable to me; and, if I had paid twenty spies to watch my Lady, I should not have been half so well served as by the disinterested care and watchfulness of my excellent mother. She slept with the house-keys under her pillow, and had an eye everywhere. She followed all the Countess's movements like a shadow; she managed to know, from morning to night, everything that my Lady did. If she walked in the garden, a watchful eye was kept on the wicket; and if she chose to drive out, Mrs. Barry accompanied her, and a couple of fellows in my liveries rode alongside of the carriage to see that she came to no harm. Though she objected, and would have kept her room in sullen silence, I made a point that we should appear together at church in the coach-and-six every Sunday; and that she should attend the race-balls in my company, whenever the coast was clear of the rascally bailiffs who beset me. This gave the lie to any of those maligners who said I wished to make a prisoner of my wife. The fact is, that, knowing her levity, and seeing the insane dislike to me and mine which had now begun to supersede what, perhaps, had been an equally insane fondness for me, I was bound to be on my guard that she should not give me the slip. Had she left me, I was ruined the next day. This (which my mother knew) compelled us to keep a tight watch over her; but as for imprisoning her, I repel the imputation

with scorn. Every man imprisons his wife to a certain degree; the world would be in a pretty condition if women were allowed to quit home and return to it whenever they had a mind. In watching over my wife, Lady Lyndon, I did no more than exercise the legitimate authority which awards honour and obedience to every husband.

Such, however, is female artifice, that, in spite of all my watchfulness in guarding her, it is probable my Lady would have given me the slip, had I not had quite as acute a person as herself as my ally: for, as the proverb says that "the best way to catch one thief is to set another after him," so the best way to get the better of a woman is to engage one of her own artful sex to guard her. One would have thought that, followed as she was, all her letters read, and all her acquaintances strictly watched by me, living in a remote part of Ireland away from her family, Lady Lyndon could have had no chance of communicating with her allies, or of making her wrongs, as she was pleased to call them, public; and yet, for a while, she carried on a correspondence under my very nose, and acutely organised a conspiracy for flying from me; as shall be told.

She always had an inordinate passion for dress, and, as she was never thwarted in any whimsey she had of this kind (for I spared no money to gratify her, and among my debts are milliners' bills to the amount of many thousands), boxes used to pass continually to and fro from Dublin, with all sorts of dresses, caps, flounces, and furbelows, as her fancy dictated. With these would come letters from her milliner, in answer to numerous similar injunctions from my Lady; all of which passed through my hands, without the least suspicion, for some time. And yet in these very papers, by the easy means of sympathetic ink, were contained all her Ladyship's correspondence; and Heaven knows (for it was some time, as I have said, before I discovered the trick) what charges against me.

But clever Mrs. Barry found out that always before my lady-wife chose to write letters to her milliner, she had need of lemons to make her drink, as she said; this fact, being mentioned to me, set me a-thinking, and so I tried one of the letters before the fire, and the whole scheme of villainy was brought to light. I will give a specimen of one of the horrid artful letters of this unhappy woman. In a great hand, with wide lines, were written a set of directions to her mantua-maker, setting forth the articles

of dress for which my Lady had need, the peculiarity of their make, the stuff she selected, &c. She would make out long lists in this way, writing each article in a separate line, so as to have more space for detailing all my cruelties and her tremendous wrongs. Between these lines she kept the journal of her captivity: it would have made the fortune of a romance-writer in those days but to have got a copy of it, and to have published it under the title of the "Lovely Prisoner, or the Savage Husband," or by some name equally taking and absurd. The journal would be as follows:—

"Monday.—Yesterday I was made to go to church. My odious, monstrous, vulgar she-dragon of a mother-in-law, in a yellow satin and red ribands, taking the first place in the coach; Mr. L. riding by its side, on the horse he never paid for to Captain Hurdlestone. The wicked hypocrite led me to the pew, with hat in hand and a smiling countenance, and kissed my hand as I entered the coach after service, and patted my Italian greyhound—all that the few people collected might see. He made me come downstairs in the evening to make tea for his company; of whom three-fourths, he himself included, were, as usual, drunk. They painted the parson's face black, when his reverence had arrived at his seventh bottle; and at his usual insensible stage, they tied him on the grey mare with his face to the tail. The she-dragon read the 'Whole Duty of Man' all the evening till bedtime; when she saw me to my apartments, locked me in, and proceeded to wait upon her abominable son: whom she adores for his wickedness, I should think, as *Stycorax did Caliban*."

You should have seen my mother's fury as I read her out this passage! Indeed, I have always had a taste for a joke (that practised on the parson, as described above, is, I confess, a true bill), and used carefully to select for Mrs. Barry's hearing all the compliments that Lady Lyndon passed upon her. The dragon was the name by which she was known in this precious correspondence: or sometimes she was designated by the title of the "Irish Witch." As for me, I was denominated "my gaoler," "my tyrant," "the dark spirit which has obtained the mastery over my being," and so on; in terms always complimentary to my power, however little they might be so to my amiability. Here is another extract from her "Prison Diary," by which it will be seen that my Lady, although she pretended to be so indifferent to my goings on, had a sharp woman's eye, and could be as jealous as another:—

"Wednesday.—This day two years my last hope and pleasure in life was taken from me, and my dear child was called to heaven. Has he

joined his neglected brother there, whom I suffered to grow up unheeded by my side ; and whom the tyranny of the monster to whom I am united drove to exile, and perhaps to death ? Or is the child alive, as my fond heart sometimes deems ? Charles Bullingdon ! come to the aid of a wretched mother, who acknowledges her crimes, her coldness towards thee, and now bitterly pays for her error ! But no, he cannot live ! I am distracted ! My only hope is in you, my cousin—you whom I had once thought to salute by a *still fonder title*, my dear George Poynings ! Oh, be my knight and my preserver, the true chivalric being thou ever wert, and rescue me from the thrall of the felon caitiff who holds me captive—rescue me from him, and from Stycorax, the vile Irish witch, his mother !”

(Here follow some verses, such as her Ladyship was in the habit of composing by reams, in which she compares herself to Sabra, in the “Seven Champions,” and beseeches her George to rescue her from *the dragon*, meaning Mrs. Barry. I omit the lines, and proceed :)—

“Even my poor child, who perished untimely on this sad anniversary, the tyrant who governs me had taught to despise and dislike me. ”Twas in disobedience to my orders, my prayers, that he went on the fatal journey. What sufferings, what humiliations have I had to endure since then ! I am a prisoner in my own halls. I should fear poison, but that I know the wretch has a sordid interest in keeping me alive, and that my death would be the signal for his ruin. But I dare not stir without my odious, hideous, vulgar gaoler, the horrid Irishwoman, who pursues my every step. I am locked into my chamber at night, like a felon, and only suffered to leave it when *ordered* into the presence of my lord (*ordered* !), to be present at his orgies with his boon companions, and to hear his odious converse as he lapses into the disgusting madness of intoxication ! He has given up even the semblance of constancy—he, who swore that I alone could attach or charm him ! And now he brings his vulgar mistresses before my very eyes, and would have had me acknowledge, as heir to my own property, his child by another !

“No, I never will submit ! Thou, and thou only, my George, my early friend, shalt be heir to the estates of Lyndon. Why did not Fate join me to thee, instead of to the odious man who holds me under his sway, and make the poor Calista happy ?”

So the letters would run on for sheets upon sheets, in the closest cramped handwriting ; and I leave any unprejudiced reader to say whether the writer of such documents must not have been as silly and vain a creature as ever lived, and whether she did not want being taken care of ? I could copy out yards of rhapsody to Lord George Poynings, her old flame, in which she addressed him by the most affectionate names, and implored him to find a refuge for her against her oppressors ; but they would fatigue the reader to peruse, as they would me to copy. The fact is, that this unlucky lady had the knack of writing a

great deal more than she meant. She was always reading novels and trash ; putting herself into imaginary characters and flying off into heroic and sentimentalities with as little heart as any woman I ever knew ; yet showing the most violent disposition to be in love. She wrote always as if she was in a flame of passion. I have an elegy on her lap-dog, the most tender and pathetic piece she ever wrote ; and most tender notes of remonstrance to Betty, her favourite maid ; to her housekeeper, on quarrelling with her ; to half-a-dozen acquaintances, each of whom she addressed as the dearest friend in the world, and forgot the very moment she took up another fancy. As for her love for her children, the above passage will show how much she was capable of true maternal feeling : the very sentence in which she records the death of one child serves to betray her egotisms, and to wreak her spleen against myself ; and she only wishes to recall another from the grave, in order that he may be of some personal advantage to her. If I *did* deal severely with this woman, keeping her from her flatterers who would have bred discord between us, and locking her up out of mischief, who shall say that I was wrong. If any woman deserved a strait-waistcoat, it was my Lady Lyndon ; and I have known people in my time manacled, and with their heads shaved, in the straw, who had not committed half the follies of that foolish, vain, infatuated creature.

My mother was so enraged by the charges against me and herself which these letters contained, that it was with the utmost difficulty I could keep her from discovering our knowledge of them to Lady Lyndon ; whom it was, of course, my object to keep in ignorance of our knowledge of her designs : for I was anxious to know how far they went, and to what pitch of artifice she would go. The letters increased in interest (as they say of the novels) as they proceeded. Pictures were drawn of my treatment of her which would make your heart throb. I don't know of what monstrosities she did not accuse me, and what miseries and starvation she did not profess herself to undergo ; all the while she was living exceedingly fat and contented, to outward appearances, at our house at Castle Lyndon. Novel-reading and vanity had turned her brain. I could not say a rough word to her (and she merited many thousands a day, I can tell you), but she declared I was putting her to the torture ; and my mother could not remonstrate with her but she went off

into a fit of hysterics, of which she would declare the worthy old lady was the cause.

At last she began to threaten to kill herself; and though I by no means kept the cutlery out of the way, did not stint her in garters, and left her doctor's shop at her entire service,—knowing her character full well, and that there was no woman in Christendom less likely to lay hands on her precious life than herself; yet these threats had an effect, evidently, in the quarter to which they were addressed; for the milliner's packets now began to arrive with great frequency, and the bills sent to her contained assurances of coming aid. The chivalrous Lord George Poynings was coming to his cousin's rescue, and did me the compliment to say that he hoped to free his dear cousin from the clutches of the most atrocious villain that ever disgraced humanity; and that, when she was free, measures should be taken for a divorce, on the ground of cruelty and every species of ill-usage on my part.

I had copies of all these precious documents on one side and the other carefully made, by my before-mentioned relative, godson, and secretary, Mr. Redmond Quin, at present the *worthy* agent of the Castle Lyndon property. This was a son of my old flame Nora, whom I had taken from her in a fit of generosity; promising to care for his education at Trinity College, and provide for him through life. But after the lad had been for a year at the University, the tutors would not admit him to commons or lectures until his college bills were paid; and, offended by this insolent manner of demanding the paltry sum due, I withdrew my patronage from the place, and ordered my gentleman to Castle Lyndon; where I made him useful to me in a hundred ways. In my dear little boy's lifetime, he tutored the poor child as far as his high spirit would let him; but I promise you it was small trouble poor dear Bryan ever gave the books. Then he kept Mrs. Barry's accounts; copied my own interminable correspondence with my lawyers and the agents of all my various property; took a hand at piquet or backgammon of evenings with me and my mother; or, being an ingenious lad enough (though of a mean boorish spirit, as became the son of such a father), accompanied my Lady Lyndon's spinet with his flageolet; or read French and Italian with her: in both of which languages her Ladyship was a fine scholar, and with which he also became conversant. It would make my watchful old mother very angry.

to hear them conversing in these languages; for, not understanding a word of either of them, Mrs. Barry was furious when they were spoken, and always said it was some scheming they were after. It was Lady Lyndon's constant way of annoying the old lady, when the three were alone together, to address Quin in one or other of these tongues.

I was perfectly at ease with regard to his fidelity, for I had bred the lad, and loaded him with benefits; and, besides, had had various proofs of his trustworthiness. He it was who brought me three of Lord George's letters, in reply to some of my Lady's complaints; which were concealed between the leather and the boards of a book which was sent from the circulating library for her Ladyship's perusal. He and my Lady too had frequent quarrels. She mimicked his gait in her pleasanter moments; in her haughty moods, she would not sit down to table with a tailor's grandson. "Send me anything for company but that odious Quin," she would say, when I proposed that he should go and amuse her with his books and his flute; for, quarrelsome as we were, it must not be supposed we were always at it: I was occasionally attentive to her. We would be friends for a month together, sometimes; then we would quarrel for a fortnight; then she would keep her apartments for a month: all of which domestic circumstances were noted down, in her Ladyship's peculiar way, in her journal of captivity, as she called it; and a pretty document it is! Sometimes she writes, "My monster has been almost kind to-day;" or, "My ruffian has deigned to smile." Then she will break out into expressions of savage hate; but for my poor mother it was *always* hatred. It was, "The she-dragon is sick to-day; I wish to Heaven she would die!" or, "The hideous old Irish basketwoman has been treating me to some of her Billingsgate to-day," and so forth: all which expressions, read to Mrs. Barry, or translated from the French and Italian, in which many of them were written, did not fail to keep the old lady in a perpetual fury against her charge: and so I had my watch-dog, as I called her, always on the alert. In translating these languages, young Quin was of great service to me; for I had a smattering of French—and High Dutch, when I was in the army, of course, I knew well—but Italian I knew nothing of, and was glad of the services of so faithful and cheap an interpreter.

This cheap and faithful interpreter, this godson and kinsman,



on whom and on whose family I had piled up benefits, was actually trying to betray me; and for several months, at least, was in league with the enemy against me. I believe that the reason why they did not move earlier was the want of the great mover of all treasons—money: of which, in all parts of my establishment, there was a woful scarcity; but of this they also managed to get a supply through my rascal of a godson, who could come and go quite unsuspected: the whole scheme was arranged under our very noses, and the post-chaise ordered, and the means of escape actually got ready; while I never suspected their design.

A mere accident made me acquainted with their plan. One of my colliers had a pretty daughter; and this pretty lass had for her bachelor, as they call them in Ireland, a certain lad, who brought the letter-bag for Castle Lyndon (and many a dunning letter for me was there in it, God wot!): this letter-boy told his sweetheart how he brought a bag of money from the town for Master Quin; and how that Tim the post-boy had told him that he was to bring a chaise down to the water at a certain hour. Miss Rooney, who had no secrets from me, blurted out the whole story; asked me what scheming I was after, and what poor unlucky girl I was going to carry away with the chaise I had ordered, and bribe with the money I had got from town?

Then the whole secret flashed upon me, that the man I had cherished in my bosom was going to betray me. I thought at one time of catching the couple in the act of escape, half-drowning them in the ferry which they had to cross to get to their chaise, and of pistolling the young traitor before Lady Lyndon's eyes; but, on second thoughts, it was quite clear that the news of the escape would make a noise through the country, and rouse the confounded justice's people about my ears, and bring me no good in the end. So I was obliged to smother my just indignation, and to content myself by crushing the foul conspiracy, just at the moment it was about to be hatched.

I went home, and in half-an-hour, and with a few of my terrible looks, I had Lady Lyndon on her knees, begging me to forgive her; confessing all and everything; ready to vow and swear she would never make such an attempt again; and declaring that she was fifty times on the point of owning everything to me, but that she feared my wrath against the poor

young lad her accomplice: who was indeed the author and inventor of all the mischief. This—though I knew how entirely false the statement was—I was fain to pretend to believe; so I begged her to write to her cousin, Lord George, who had supplied her with money, as she admitted, and with whom the plan had been arranged, stating, briefly, that she had altered her mind as to the trip to the country proposed; and that, as her dear husband was rather in delicate health, she preferred to stay at home and nurse him. I added a dry postscript, in which I stated that it would give me great pleasure if his Lordship would come and visit us at Castle Lyndon, and that I longed to renew an acquaintance which in former times gave me so much satisfaction. "I should seek him out," I added, "so soon as ever I was in his neighbourhood, and eagerly anticipated the pleasure of a meeting with him." I think he must have understood my meaning perfectly well; which was, that I would run him through the body on the very first occasion I could come at him.

Then I had a scene with my perfidious rascal of a nephew; in which the young reprobate showed an audacity and a spirit for which I was quite unprepared. When I taxed him with ingratitude, "What do I owe you?" said he. "I have to led for you as no man ever did for another, and worked without a penny of wages. It was you yourself who set me against you, by giving me a task against which my soul revolted,—by making me a spy over your unfortunate wife, whose weakness is as pitiable as are her misfortunes and your rascally treatment of her. Flesh and blood could not bear to see the manner in which you used her. I tried to help her to escape from you; and I would do it again, if the opportunity offered, and so I tell you to your teeth!" When I offered to blow his brains out for his insolence, "Pooh!" said he,—"kill the man who saved your poor boy's life once, and who was endeavouring to keep him out of the ruin and perdition into which a wicked father was leading him, when a Merciful Power interposed, and withdrew him from this house of crime? I would have left you months ago, but I hoped for some chance of rescuing this unhappy lady. I swore I would try, the day I saw you strike her. Kill me, you woman's bully! You would if you dared; but you have not the heart. Your very servants like me better than you. Touch me, and they will rise and send you to the gallows you merit!"

I interrupted this neat speech by sending a water-bottle at the young gentleman's head, which felled him to the ground ; and then I went to meditate upon what he had said to me. It was true the fellow had saved poor little Bryan's life, and the boy to his dying day was tenderly attached to him. "Be good to Redmond, papa," were almost the last words he spoke ; and I promised the poor child, on his death-bed, that I would do as he asked. It was also true, that rough usage of him would be little liked by my people, with whom he had managed to become a great favourite : for, somehow, though I got drunk with the rascals often, and was much more familiar with them than a man of my rank commonly is, yet I knew I was by no means liked by them ; and the scoundrels were murmuring against me perpetually.

But I might have spared myself the trouble of debating what his fate should be, for the young gentleman took the disposal of it out of my hands in the simplest way in the world : viz. by washing and binding up his head so soon as he came to himself : by taking his horse from the stables ; and, as he was quite free to go in and out of the house and park as he liked, he disappeared without the least let or hindrance ; and leaving the horse behind him at the ferry, went off in the very post-chaise which was waiting for Lady Lyndon. I saw and heard no more of him for a considerable time ; and now that he was out of the house, did not consider him a very troublesome enemy.

But the cunning artifice of woman is such that, I think, in the long run, no man, were he Machiavel himself, could escape from it ; and though I had ample proofs in the above transaction (in which my wife's perfidious designs were frustrated by my foresight), and under her own handwriting, of the deceitfulness of her character and her hatred for me, yet she actually managed to deceive me, in spite of all my precautions and the vigilance of my mother in my behalf. Had I followed that good lady's advice, who scented the danger from afar off, as it were, I should never have fallen into the snare prepared for me ; and which was laid in a way that was as successful as it was simple.

My Lady Lyndon's relation with me was a singular one. Her life was passed in a crack-brained sort of alternation between love and hatred for me. If I was in a good-humour with her (as occurred sometimes) there was nothing she would not do to

propitiate me further ; and she would be as absurd and violent in her expressions of fondness as, at other moments, she would be in her demonstrations of hatred. It is not your feeble easy husbands who are loved best in the world ; according to my experience of it. I do think the women like a little violence of temper, and think no worse of a husband who exercises his authority pretty smartly. I had got my Lady into such a terror about me, that when I smiled, it was quite an era of happiness to her ; and if I beckoned to her, she would come fawning up to me like a dog. I recollect how, for the few days I was at school, the cowardly mean-spirited fellows would laugh if ever our schoolmaster made a joke. It was the same in the regiment whenever the bully of a sergeant was disposed to be jocular—not a recruit but was on the broad grin. Well, a wise and determined husband will get his wife into this condition of discipline ; and I brought my high-born wife to kiss my hand, to pull off my boots, to fetch and carry for me like a servant, and always to make it a holiday, too, when I was in good-humour. I confided perhaps too much in the duration of this disciplined obedience, and forgot that the very hypocrisy which forms a part of it (all timid people are liars in their hearts) may be exerted in a way that may be far from agreeable, in order to deceive you.

After the ill-success of her last adventure, which gave me endless opportunities to banter her, one would have thought I might have been on my guard as to what her real intentions were ; but she managed to mislead me with an art of dissimulation quite admirable, and lulled me into a fatal security with regard to her intentions : for, one day, as I was joking her, and asking her whether she would take the water again, whether she had found another lover, and so forth, she suddenly burst into tears, and, seizing hold of my hand, cried passionately out,—

"Ah, Barry, you know well enough that I have never loved but you ! Was I ever so wretched that a kind word from you did not make me happy ! ever so angry, but the least offer of goodwill on your part did not bring me to your side ? Did I not give a sufficient proof of my affection for you, in bestowing one of the first fortunes in England upon you ? Have I repined or rebuked you for the way you have wasted it ? No, I loved you too much and too fondly ; I have always loved you. From the first moment I saw you, I felt irresistibly attracted towards you. I saw your bad qualities, and trembled at your violence ;