

BOOK VI.

CHAPTER I.

THE knowledge that Sidonia was in Paris greatly agitated Lady Monmouth. She received the intimation indeed from Coningsby at dinner with sufficient art to conceal her emotion. Lord Monmouth himself was quite pleased at the announcement. Sidonia was his especial favourite; he knew so much, had such an excellent judgment, and was so rich. He had always something to tell you, was the best man in the world to bet on, and never wanted anything. A perfect character according to the Monmouth ethics.

In the evening of the day that Coningsby met Sidonia, Lady Monmouth made a little visit to the charming Duchess de G——t who was 'at home' every other night in her pretty hotel, with its embroidered white satin draperies, its fine old cabinets, and ancestral portraits of famous name, brave marshals and bright princesses of the olden time, on its walls. These receptions without form, yet full of elegance, are what English 'at homes' were before the Continental war, though now, by a curious perversion of terms, the easy domestic title distinguishes in England a formally-prepared and elaborately-collected assembly, in which everything and every person are careful to be as little 'homely' as possible. In France, on the contrary, 'tis on these occasions, and in this manner, that society carries on that degree and kind of intercourse which in England we attempt awkwardly to maintain by the medium of that unpopular species of visitation styled a morning call; which all complain that they have either to make or to endure.

Nowhere was this species of reception more happily conducted than at the Duchess de G——t's. The rooms, though

small, decorated with taste, brightly illumined; a handsome and gracious hostess, the Duke the very pearl of gentlemen, and sons and daughters worthy of such parents. Every moment some one came in, and some one went away. In your way from a dinner to a ball, you stopped to exchange agreeable *on dits*. It seemed that every woman was pretty, every man a wit. Sure you were to find yourself surrounded by celebrities, and men were welcomed there, if they were clever, before they were famous, which showed it was a house that regarded intellect, and did not seek merely to gratify its vanity by being surrounded by the distinguished.

Enveloped in a rich Indian shawl, and leaning back on a sofa, Lady Monmouth was engaged in conversation with the courtly and classic Count M——é, when, on casually turning her head, she observed entering the saloon, Sidonia. She just caught his form bowing to the Duchess, and instantly turned her head and replunged into her conversation with increased interest. Lady Monmouth was a person who had the power of seeing all about her, everything and everybody, without appearing to look. She was conscious that Sidonia was approaching her neighbourhood. Her heart beat in tumult; she dreaded to catch the eye of that very individual whom she was so anxious to meet. He was advancing towards the sofa. Instinctively, Lady Monmouth turned from the Count, and began speaking earnestly to her other neighbour, a young daughter of the house, innocent and beautiful, not yet quite fledged, trying her wings in society under the maternal eye. She was surprised by the extreme interest which her grand neighbour suddenly took in all her pursuits, her studies, her daily walks in the Bois de Boulogne. Sidonia, as the Marchioness had anticipated, had now reached the sofa. But no, it was to the Count, and not to Lady Monmouth that he was advancing; and they were immediately engaged in conversation. After some little time, when she had become accustomed to his voice, and found her own heart throbbing with less violence, Lucretia turned again, as if by accident,

to the Count, and met the glance of Sidonia. She meant to have received him with haughtiness, but her self-command deserted her; and slightly rising from the sofa, she welcomed him with a countenance of extreme pallor and with some awkwardness.

His manner was such as might have assisted her, even had she been more troubled. It was marked by a degree of respectful friendliness. He expressed without reserve his pleasure at meeting her again; inquired much how she had passed her time since they last parted; asked more than once after the Marquess. The Count moved away; Sidonia took his seat. His ease and homage combined greatly relieved her. She expressed to him how kind her Lord would consider his society, for the Marquess had suffered in health since Sidonia last saw him. His periodical gout had left him, which made him ill and nervous. The Marquess received his friends at dinner every day. Sidonia, particularly amiable, offered himself as a guest for the following one.

‘And do you go to the great ball to-morrow?’ inquired Lucretia, delighted with all that had occurred.

‘I always go to their balls,’ said Sidonia, ‘I have promised.’

There was a momentary pause; Lucretia happier than she had been for a long time, her face a little flushed, and truly in a secret tumult of sweet thoughts, remembered she had been long there, and offering her hand to Sidonia, bade him adieu until to-morrow, while he, as was his custom, soon repaired to the refined circle of the Countess de C—s—l—ne, a lady whose manners he always mentioned as his fair ideal, and whose house was his favourite haunt.

Before to-morrow comes, a word or two respecting two other characters of this history connected with the family of Lord Monmouth. And first of Flora. La Petite was neither very well nor very happy. Her hereditary disease developed itself; gradually, but in a manner alarming to those who loved her. She was very delicate, and suffered

so much from the weakness of her chest, that she was obliged to relinquish singing. This was really the only tie between her and the Marchioness, who, without being a petty tyrant, treated her often with unfeeling haughtiness. She was, therefore, now rarely seen in the chambers of the great. In her own apartments she found, indeed, some distraction in music, for which she had a natural predisposition, but this was a pursuit that only fed the morbid passion of her tender soul. Alone, listening only to sweet sounds, or indulging in soft dreams that never could be realised, her existence glided away like a vision, and she seemed to become every day more fair and fragile. Alas! hers was the sad and mystic destiny to love one whom she never met, and by whom, if she met him, she would scarcely, perhaps, be recognised. Yet in that passion, fanciful, almost ideal, her life was absorbed; nor for her did the world contain an existence, a thought, a sensation, beyond those that sprang from the image of the noble youth who had sympathised with her in her sorrows, and had softened the hard fortunes of dependence by his generous sensibility. Happy that, with many mortifications, it was still her lot to live under the roof of one who bore his name, and in whose veins flowed the same blood! She felt indeed for the Marquess, whom she so rarely saw, and from whom she had never received much notice, prompted, it would seem, by her fantastic passion, a degree of reverence, almost of affection, which seemed occasionally, even to herself, as something inexplicable and without reason.

As for her fond step-father, M. Villebecque, the world fared very differently with him. His lively and enterprising genius, his ready and multiform talents, and his temper which defied disturbance, had made their way. He had become the very right hand of Lord Monmouth; his only counsellor, his only confidant; his secret agent; the minister of his will. And well did Villebecque deserve this trust, and ably did he maintain himself in the difficult position which he achieved. There was nothing which Villebecque did not know, nothing which he could not do, especially at

Paris. He was master of his subject; in all things the secret of success, and without which, however they may from accident dazzle the world, the statesman, the orator, the author, all alike feel the damning consciousness of being charlatans.

Coningsby had made a visit to M. Villebécque and Flora the day after his arrival. It was a recollection and a courtesy that evidently greatly gratified them. Villebecque talked very much and amusingly; and Flora, whom Coningsby frequently addressed, very little, though she listened with great earnestness. Coningsby told her that he thought, from all he heard, she was too much alone, and counselled her to gaiety. But nature, that had made her mild, had denied her that constitutional liveliness of being which is the graceful property of French women. She was a lily of the valley, that loved seclusion and the tranquillity of virgin glades. Almost every day, as he passed their *entresol*, Coningsby would look into Villebecque's apartments for a moment, to ask after Flora.

CHAPTER II.

SIDONIA was to dine at Lord Monmouth's the day after she met Lucretia, and afterwards they were all to meet at a ball much talked of, and to which invitations were much sought; and which was to be given that evening by the Baroness S. de R——d.

Lord Monmouth's dinners at Paris were celebrated. It was generally agreed that they had no rivals; yet there were others who had as skilful cooks, others who, for such a purpose, were equally profuse in their expenditure. What, then, was the secret spell of his success? The simplest in the world, though no one seemed aware of it. His Lordship's plates were always hot: whereas at Paris, in the best appointed houses, and at dinners which, for costly materials and admirable art in their preparation, cannot be surpassed,

the effect is always considerably lessened, and by a mode the most mortifying: by the mere circumstance that every one at a French dinner is served on a cold plate. The reason of a custom, or rather a necessity, which one would think a nation so celebrated for their gastronomical taste would recoil from, is really, it is believed, that the ordinary French porcelain is so very inferior that it cannot endure the preparatory heat for dinner. The common white pottery, for example, which is in general use, and always found at the cafés, will not bear vicinage to a brisk kitchen fire for half-an-hour. Now, if we only had that treaty of commerce with France which has been so often on the point of completion, the fabrics of our unrivalled potteries, in exchange for their capital wines, would be found throughout France. The dinners of both nations would be improved: the English would gain a delightful beverage, and the French, for the first time in their lives, would dine off hot plates. An unanswerable instance of the advantages of commercial reciprocity!

The guests at Lord Monmouth's to-day were chiefly Carlists, individuals bearing illustrious names, that animate the page of history, and are indissolubly bound up with the glorious annals of their great country. They are the phantoms of a past, but real Aristocracy; an Aristocracy that was founded on an intelligible principle; which claimed great privileges for great purposes; whose hereditary duties were such, that their possessors were perpetually in the eye of the nation, and who maintained, and, in a certain point of view justified, their pre-eminence by constant illustration.

It pleased Lord Monmouth to show great courtesies to a fallen race with whom he sympathised; whose fathers had been his friends in the days of his hot youth; whose mothers he had made love to; whose palaces had been his home; whose brilliant fêtes he remembered; whose fanciful splendour excited his early imagination; and whose magnificent and wanton luxury had developed his own predisposition for boundless enjoyment. Soubise and his suppers;

his cutlets and his mistresses ; the profuse and embarrassed De Lauragais, who sighed for 'entire ruin,' as for a strange luxury, which perpetually eluded his grasp ; these were the heroes of the olden time that Lord Monmouth worshipped ; the wisdom of our ancestors which he appreciated ; and he turned to their recollection for relief from the vulgar prudence of the degenerate days on which he had fallen : days when nobles must be richer than other men, or they cease to have any distinction.

It was impossible not to be struck by the effective appearance of Lady Monmouth as she received her guests in grand toilet preparatory to the ball ; white satin and minever, a brilliant tiara. Her fine form, her costume of a fashion as perfect as its materials were sumptuous, and her presence always commanding and distinguished, produced a general effect to which few could be insensible. It was the triumph of mien over mere beauty of countenance.

The hotel of Madame S. de R——d is not more distinguished by its profuse decoration, than by the fine taste which has guided the vast expenditure. Its halls of arabesque are almost without a rival ; there is not the slightest embellishment in which the hand and feeling of art are not recognised. The rooms were very crowded ; everybody distinguished in Paris was there : the lady of the Court, the duchess of the Faubourg, the wife of the rich financier, the constitutional Throne, the old Monarchy, the modern Bourse, were alike represented. Marshals of the Empire, Ministers of the Crown, Dukes and Marquesses, whose ancestors lounged in the *Ceil de Bœuf* ; diplomatists of all countries, eminent foreigners of all nations, deputies who led sections, members of learned and scientific academies, occasionally a stray poet ; a sea of sparkling tiaras, brilliant bouquets, glittering stars, and glowing ribbons, many beautiful faces, many famous ones : unquestionably the general air of a first-rate Parisian saloon, on a great occasion, is not easily equalled. In London there is not the variety of guests ; nor the same size and splendour of saloons. Our houses are too small for reception.

Coningsby, who had stolen away from his grandfather's before the rest of the guests, was delighted with the novelty of the splendid scene. He had been in Paris long enough to make some acquaintances, and mostly with celebrated personages. In his long fruitless endeavour to enter the saloon in which they danced, he found himself hustled against the illustrious Baron von H——t, whom he had sat next to at dinner a few days before at Count M——é's.

'It is more difficult than cutting through the Isthmus of Panama, Baron,' said Coningsby, alluding to a past conversation.

'Infinitely,' replied M. de H., smiling; 'for I would undertake to cut through the Isthmus, and I cannot engage that I shall enter this ball-room.'

Time, however, brought Coningsby into that brilliant chamber. What a blaze of light and loveliness! How coquettish are the costumes! How vivid the flowers! To sounds of stirring melody, beautiful beings move with grace. Grace, indeed, is beauty in action.

Here, where all are fair and everything is attractive, his eye is suddenly arrested by one object, a form of surpassing grace among the graceful, among the beauteous a countenance of unrivalled beauty.

She was young among the youthful; a face of sunshine amid all that artificial light; her head placed upon her finely-moulded shoulders with a queen-like grace; a coronet of white roses on her dark brown hair; her only ornament. It was the beauty of the picture-gallery.

The eye of Coningsby never quitted her. When the dance ceased, he had an opportunity of seeing her nearer. He met her walking with her cavalier, and he was conscious that she observed him. Finally he remarked that she resumed a seat next to the lady whom he had mistaken for her mother, but had afterwards understood to be Lady Wallinger.

Coningsby returned to the other saloons: he witnessed the entrance and reception of Lady Monmouth, who moved on towards the ball-room. Soon after this, Sidonia arrived;

he came in with the still handsome and ever courteous Duke D——s. Observing Coningsby, he stopped to present him to the Duke. While thus conversing, the Duke, who is fond of the English, observed, 'See, here is your beautiful countrywoman that all the world are talking of. That is her uncl. He brings to me letters from one of your lords, whose name I cannot recollect.'

And Sir Joseph and his lovely niece veritabily approached. The Duke addressed them : asked them in the name of his Duchess to a concert on the next Thursday ; and, after a thousand compliments, moved on. Sidonia stopped ; Coningsby could not refrain from lingering, but stood a little apart, and was about to move away, when there was a whisper, of which, without hearing a word, he could not resist the impression that he was the subject. He felt a little embarrassed, and was retiring, when he heard Sidonia reply to an enquiry of the lady, 'The same,' and then, turning to Coningsby, said aloud, 'Coningsby, Miss Millbank says that you have forgotten her.'

Coningsby started, advanced, coloured a little, could not conceal his surprise. The lady, too, though more prepared, was not without confusion, and for an instant looked down. Coningsby recalled at that moment the long dark eyelashes, and the beautiful, bashful countenance that had so charmed him at Millbank ; but two years had otherwise effected a wonderful change in the sister of his school-day friend, and transformed the silent, embarrassed girl into a woman of surpassing beauty and of the most graceful and impressive mien.

'It is not surprising that Mr. Coningsby should not recollect my niece,' said Sir Joseph, addressing Sidonia, and wishing to cover their mutual embarrassment ; 'but it is impossible for her, or for anyone connected with her, not to be anxious at all times to express to him our sense of what we all owe him.'

Coningsby and Miss Millbank were now in full routine conversation, consisting of questions ; how long she had been at Paris ; when she had heard last from Millbank ;

how her father was ; also, how was her brother. Sidonia made an observation to Sir Joseph on a passer-by, and then himself moved on ; Coningsby accompanying his new friends, in a contrary direction, to the refreshment-room, to which they were proceeding.

‘And you have passed a winter at Rome,’ said Coningsby. ‘How I envy you! I feel that I shall never be able to travel?’

‘And why not?’

‘Life has become so stirring, that there is ever some great cause that keeps one at home.’

‘Life, on the contrary, so swift, that all may see now that of which they once could only read.’

‘The golden and silver sides of the shield,’ said Coningsby, with a smile.

‘And you, like a good knight, will maintain your own.’

‘No, I would follow yours.’

‘You have not heard lately from Oswald?’

‘Oh, yes; I think there are no such faithful correspondents as we are; I only wish we could meet.’

‘You will soon; but he is such a devotee of Oxford; quite a monk; and you, too, Mr. Coningsby, are much occupied.’

‘Yes, and at the same time as Millbank. I was in hopes, when I once paid you a visit, I might have found your brother.’

‘But that was such a rapid visit,’ said Miss Millbank.

‘I always remember it with delight,’ said Coningsby.

‘You were willing to be pleased; but Millbank, notwithstanding Rome, commands my affections, and in spite of this surrounding splendour, I could have wished to have passed my Christmas in Lancashire.’

‘Mr. Millbank has lately purchased a very beautiful place in the county. I became acquainted with Hellingsley when staying at my grandfather’s.’

‘Ah! I have never seen it; indeed, I was much surprised that papa became its purchaser, because he never will live there; and Oswald, I am sure, could never be

tempted to quit Millbank. You know what enthusiastic ideas he has of his order ?'

'Like all his ideas, sound, and high, and pure. I always duly appreciated your brother's great abilities, and, what is far more important, his lofty mind. When I recollect our Eton days, I cannot understand how more than two years have passed away without our being together. I am sure the fault is mine. I might now have been at Oxford instead of Paris. And yet,' added Coningsby, 'that would have been a sad mistake, since I should not have had the happiness of being here.'

'Oh, yes, that would have been a sad mistake,' said Miss Millbank.

'Edith,' said Sir Joseph, rejoining his niece, from whom he had been momentarily separated, 'Edith, that is Monsieur Thiers.'

In the meantime, Sidonia reached the ball-room, and sitting near the entrance was Lady Monmouth, who immediately addressed him. He was, as usual, intelligent and unimpassioned, and yet not without a delicate deference which is flattering to women, especially if not altogether unworthy of it. Sidonia always admired Lucretia, and preferred her society to that of most persons. But the Lady was in error in supposing that she had conquered or could vanquish his heart. Sidonia was one of those men, not so rare as may be supposed, who shrink, above all things, from an adventure of gallantry with a woman in a position. He had neither time nor temper for sentimental circumvolutions. He detested the diplomacy of passion: protocols, protracted negotiations, conferences, correspondence, treaties projected, ratified, violated. He had no genius for the tactics of intrigue; your reconnoiterings, and marchings, and counter-marchings, sappings and minings, assaults, sometimes surrenders, and sometimes repulses. All the solemn and studied hypocrisies were to him infinitely wearisome; and if the movements were not merely formal, they irritated him, distracted his feelings, disturbed the tenor of his mind, deranged his nervous

system. Something of the old Oriental vein influenced him in his carriage towards women. He was oftener behind the scenes of the Opera House than in his box ; he delighted, too, in the society of *ἐραται* ; Aspasia was his heroine. Obligated to appear much in what is esteemed pure society, he cultivated the acquaintance of clever women, because they interested him ; but in such saloons his feminine acquaintances were merely psychological. No lady could accuse him of trifling with her feelings, however decided might be his predilection for her conversation. He yielded at once to an admirer ; never trespassed by any chance into the domain of sentiment ; never broke, by any accident or blunder, into the irregular paces of flirtation ; was a man who notoriously would never diminish by marriage the purity of his race ; and one who always maintained that passion and polished life were quite incompatible. He liked the drawing-room, and he liked the Desert, but he would not consent that either should trench on their mutual privileges.

The Princess Lucretia had yielded herself to the spell of Sidonia's society at Coningsby Castle, when she knew that marriage was impossible. But she loved him ; and with an Italian spirit. Now they met again, and she was the Marchioness of Monmouth, a very great lady, very much admired, and followed, and courted, and very powerful. It is our great moralist who tells us, in the immortal page, that an affair of gallantry with a great lady is more delightful than with ladies of a lower degree. In this he contradicts the good old ballad ; but certain it is that Dr. Johnson announced to Boswell, 'Sir, in the case of a Countess the imagination is more excited.'

But Sidonia was a man on whom the conventional superiorities of life produced as little effect as a flake falling on the glaciers of the high Alps. His comprehension of the world and human nature was too vast and complete ; he understood too well the relative value of things to appreciate anything but essential excellence ; and that not too much. A charming woman was not more charming to

him because she chanced to be an empress in a particular district of one of the smallest planets ; a charming woman under any circumstances was not an unique animal. When Sidonia felt a disposition to be spell-bound, he used to review in his memory all the charming women of whom he had read in the books of all literatures, and whom he had known himself in every court and clime, and the result of his reflections ever was, that the charming woman in question was by no means the paragon, which some who had read, seen, and thought less, might be inclined to esteem her. There was, indeed, no subject on which Sidonia discoursed so felicitously as on woman, and none on which Lord Eskdale more frequently endeavoured to attract him. He would tell you Talmudical stories about our mother Eve and the Queen of Sheba, which would have astonished you. There was not a free lady of Greece, Leontium and Phryne, *Lais*, Danae, and Lamia, the Egyptian girl Thonis, respecting whom he could not tell you as many diverting tales as if they were ladies of Loretto ; not a nook of Athenæus, not an obscure scholiast, not a passage in a Greek orator, that could throw light on these personages, which was not at his command. What stories he would tell you about Marc Antony and the actress Cytheris in their chariot drawn by tigers ! What a character would he paint of that Flora who gave her gardens to the Roman people ! It would draw tears to your eyes. No man was ever so learned in the female manners of the last centuries of polytheism as Sidonia. You would have supposed that he had devoted his studies peculiarly to that period if you had not chanced to draw him to the Italian middle ages. And even these startling revelations were almost eclipsed by his anecdotes of the Court of Henry III. of France, with every character of which he was as familiar as with the brilliant groups that at this moment filled the saloons of Madame de

It—d.

CHAPTER III.

THE image of Edith Millbank was the last thought of Coningsby, as he sank into an agitated slumber. To him had hitherto in general been accorded the precious boon of dreamless sleep. Homer tells us these phantasmas come from Jove; they are rather the children of a distracted soul. Coningsby this night lived much in past years, varied by painful perplexities of the present, which he could neither subdue nor comprehend. The scene flitted from Eton to the castle of his grandfather; and then he found himself among the pictures of the Rue de Tronchet, but their owner bore the features of the senior Millbank. A beautiful countenance that was alternately the face in the mysterious picture, and then that of Edith, haunted him under all circumstances. He woke little refreshed; restless, and yet sensible of some secret joy.

He woke to think of her of whom he had dreamed. The light had dawned on his soul. Coningsby loved.

Ah! what is that ambition that haunts our youth, that thirst for power or that lust of fame that forces us from obscurity into the sunblaze of the world, what are these sentiments so high, so vehement, so ennobling? They vanish, and in an instant, before the glance of a woman!

Coningsby had scarcely quitted her side the preceding eve. He hung upon the accents of that clear sweet voice, and sought, with tremulous fascination, the gleaming splendour of those soft dark eyes. And now he sat in his chamber, with his eyes fixed upon vacancy. All thoughts and feelings, pursuits, desires, life, merge in one absorbing sentiment.

It is impossible to exist without seeing her again, and instantly. He had requested and gained permission to call on Lady Wallinger; he would not lose a moment in availing himself of it. As early as was tolerably decorous, and before, in all probability, they could quit their hotel,

Coningsby repaired to the Rue de Rivoli to pay his respects to his new friends.

As he walked along, he indulged in fanciful speculations which connected Edith and the mysterious portrait of his mother. He felt himself, as it were, near the fulfilment of some fate, and on the threshold of some critical discovery. He recalled the impatient, even alarmed, expressions of Rigby at Montem six years ago, when he proposed to invite young Millbank to his grandfather's dinner ; the vindictive feud that existed between the two families, and for which political opinion, or even party passion, could not satisfactorily account ; and he reasoned himself into a conviction, that the solution of many perplexities was at hand, and that all would be consummated to the satisfaction of every one, by his unexpected but inevitable agency.

Coningsby found Sir Joseph alone. The worthy Baronet was at any rate no participator in Mr. Millbank's vindictive feelings against Lord Monmouth. On the contrary, he had a very high respect for a Marquess, whatever might be his opinions, and no mean consideration for a Marquess' grandson. Sir Joseph had inherited a large fortune made by commerce, and had increased it by the same means. He was a middle-class Whig, had faithfully supported that party in his native town during the days they wandered in the wilderness, and had well earned his share of the milk and honey when they vanquished the promised land. In the spring-tide of Liberalism, when the world was not analytical of free opinions, and odious distinctions were not drawn between Finality men and progressive Reformers, Mr. Wallinger had been the popular leader of a powerful body of his fellow-citizens, who had returned him to the first Reformed Parliament, and where, in spite of many a menacing registration, he had contrived to remain. He had never given a Radical vote without the permission of the Secretary of the Treasury, and was not afraid of giving an unpopular one to serve his friends. He was not like that distinguished Liberal, who, after dining with the late Whig Premier, expressed his gratification and his gratitude,

by assuring his Lordship that he might count on his support on all popular questions.

'I want men who will support the government on all unpopular questions,' replied the witty statesman.

Mr. Wallinger was one of these men. His high character and strong purse were always in the front rank in the hour of danger. His support in the House was limited to his votes; but in other places equally important, at a meeting at a political club, or in Downing Street, he could find his tongue, take what is called a 'practical' view of a question, adopt what is called an 'independent tone,' reanimate confidence in ministers, check mutiny, and set a bright and bold example to the wavering. A man of his property, and high character, and sound views, so practical and so independent, this was evidently the block from which a Baronet should be cut, and in due time he figured Sir Joseph.

A Spanish gentleman of ample means, and of a good Catalan family, flying during a political convulsion to England, arrived with his two daughters at Liverpool, and bore letters of introduction to the house of Wallinger. Some little time after this, by one of those stormy vicissitudes of political fortune, of late years not unusual in the Peninsula, he returned to his native country, and left his children, and the management of that portion of his fortune that he had succeeded in bringing with him, under the guardianship of the father of the present Sir Joseph. This gentleman was about again to become an exile, when he met with an untimely end in one of those terrible tumults of which Barcelona is the frequent scene.

The younger Wallinger was touched by the charms of one of his father's wards. Her beauty of a character to which he was unaccustomed, her accomplishments of society, and the refinement of her manners, conspicuous in the circle in which he lived, captivated him; and though they had no heir, the union had been one of great felicity. Sir Joseph was proud of his wife; he secretly considered himself, though his 'tone' was as liberal and independent

as in old days, to be on the threshold of aristocracy, and was conscious that Lady Wallinger played her part not unworthily in the elevated circles in which they now frequently found themselves. Sir Joseph was fond of great people, and not averse to travel; because, bearing a title, and being a member of the British Parliament, and always moving with the appendages of wealth, servants, carriages, and couriers, and fortified with no lack of letters from the Foreign Office, he was everywhere acknowledged, and received, and treated as a personage; was invited to court-balls, dined with ambassadors, and found himself and his lady at every festival of distinction.

The elder Millbank had been Joseph Wallinger's youthful friend. Different as were their dispositions and the rate of their abilities, their political opinions were the same; and commerce habitually connected their interests. During a visit to Liverpool, Millbank had made the acquaintance of the sister of Lady Wallinger, and had been a successful suitor for her hand. This lady was the mother of Edith and of the schoolfellow of Coningsby. It was only within a very few years that she had died; she had scarcely lived long enough to complete the education of her daughter, to whom she was devoted, and on whom she lavished the many accomplishments that she possessed. Lady Wallinger having no children, and being very fond of her niece, had watched over Edith with infinite solicitude, and finally had persuaded Mr. Millbank, that it would be well that his daughter should accompany them in their somewhat extensive travels. It was not, therefore, only that nature had developed a beautiful woman out of a bashful girl since Coningsby's visit to Millbank; but really, every means and every opportunity that could contribute to render an individual capable of adorning the most accomplished circles of life, had naturally, and without effort, fallen to the fortunate lot of the manufacturer's daughter. Edith possessed an intelligence equal to those occasions. Without losing the native simplicity of her character, which sprang from the heart, and which the strong and original bent of her

father's mind had fostered, she had imbibed all the refinement and facility of the polished circles in which she moved. She had a clear head, a fine taste, and a generous spirit; had received so much admiration, that, though by no means insensible to homage, her heart was free; was strongly attached to her family; and, notwithstanding all the splendour of Rome, and the brilliancy of Paris, her thoughts were often in her Saxon valley, amid the green hills and busy factories of Millbank.

Sir Joseph, finding himself alone with the grandson of Lord Monmouth, was not very anxious that the ladies should immediately appear. He thought this a good opportunity of getting at what are called 'the real feelings of the Tory party;' and he began to pump with a seductive semblance of frankness. For his part, he had never doubted that a Conservative government was ultimately inevitable; had told Lord John so two years ago, and, between themselves, Lord John was of the same opinion. The present position of the Whigs was the necessary fate of all progressive parties; could not see exactly how it would end; thought sometimes it must end in a fusion of parties; but could not well see how that could be brought about, at least at present. For his part, should be happy to witness an union of the best men of all parties, for the preservation of peace and order, without any reference to any particular opinions. And, in that sense of the word, it was not at all impossible he might find it his duty some day to support a Conservative government.

Sir Joseph was much astonished when Coningsby, who being somewhat impatient for the entrance of the ladies was rather more abrupt than his wont, told the worthy Baronet that he looked upon a government without distinct principles of policy as only a stop-gap to a wide-spread and demoralising anarchy; that he for one could not comprehend how a free government could endure without national opinions to uphold it; and that governments for the preservation of peace and order, and nothing else, had better be sought in China, or among the Austrians,

the Chinese of Europe. As for Conservative government, the natural question was, What do you mean to conserve? Do you mean to conserve things or only names, realities or merely appearances? Or, do you mean to continue the system commenced in 1834, and, with a hypocritical reverence for the principles, and a superstitious adhesion to the forms, of the old exclusive constitution, carry on your policy by latitudinarian practice?

Sir Joseph stared; it was the first time that any inkling of the views of the New Generation had caught his ear. They were strange and unaccustomed accents. He was extremely perplexed; could by no means make out what his companion was driving at; at length, with a rather knowing smile, expressive as much of compassion as comprehension, he remarked,

‘Ah! I see; you are a regular Orangeman.’

‘I look upon an Orangeman,’ said Coningsby, ‘as a pure Whig; the only professor and practiser of unadulterated Whiggism.’

This was too much for Sir Joseph, whose political knowledge did not reach much further back than the ministry of the Mediocrities; hardly touched the times of the Corresponding Society. But he was a cautious man, and never replied in haste. He was about feeling his way, when he experienced the golden advantage of gaining time, for the ladies entered.

The heart of Coningsby throbbed as Edith appeared. She extended to him her hand; her face radiant with kind expression. Lady Wallinger seemed gratified also by his visit. She had much elegance in her manner; a calm, soft address; and she spoke English with a sweet Doric irregularity. They all sat down, talked of the last night’s ball, of a thousand things. There was something animating in the frank, cheerful spirit of Edith. She had a quick eye both for the beautiful and the ridiculous, and threw out her observations in terse and vivid phrases. An hour, and more than an hour, passed away, and Coningsby still found some excuse not to depart. It seemed that on this morn-

ing they were about to make an expedition into the antique city of Paris, to visit some old hotels which retained their character; especially they had heard much of the hotel of the Archbishop of Sens, with its fortified courtyard. Coningsby expressed great interest in the subject, and showed some knowledge. Sir Joseph invited him to join the party, which of all things in the world was what he most desired.

CHAPTER IV.

NOR a day elapsed without Coningsby being in the company of Edith. Time was precious for him, for the spires and pinnacles of Cambridge already began to loom in the distance, and he resolved to make the most determined efforts not to lose a day of his liberty. And yet to call every morning in the Rue de Rivoli was an exploit which surpassed even the audacity of love! More than once, making the attempt, his courage failed him, and he turned into the gardens of the Tuileries, and only watched the windows of the house. Circumstances, however, favoured him: he received a letter from Oswald Millbank; he was bound to communicate in person this evidence of his friend's existence; and when he had to reply to the letter, he must necessarily inquire whether his friend's relatives had any message to transmit to him. These, however, were only slight advantages. What assisted Coningsby in his plans and wishes was the great pleasure which Sidonia, with whom he passed a great deal of his time, took in the society of the Wallingers and their niece. Sidonia presented Lady Wallinger with his opera-box during her stay at Paris; invited them frequently to his agreeable dinner-parties; and announced his determination to give a ball, which Lady Wallinger esteemed a delicate attention to Edith; while Lady Monmouth flattered herself that the

festival sprang from the desire she had expressed of seeing the celebrated hotel of Sidonia to advantage.

Coningsby was very happy. His morning visits to the Rue de Rivoli seemed always welcome, and seldom an evening elapsed in which he did not find himself in the society of Edith. She seemed not to wish to conceal that his presence gave her pleasure, and though she had many admirers, and had an airy graciousness for all of them, Coningsby sometimes indulged the exquisite suspicion that there was a flattering distinction in her carriage to himself. Under the influence of these feelings, he began daily to be more conscious that separation would be an intolerable calamity; he began to meditate upon the feasibility of keeping a half term, and of postponing his departure to Cambridge to a period nearer the time when Edith would probably return to England.

In the meanwhile, the Parisian world talked much of the grand fête which was about to be given by Sidonia. Coningsby heard much of it one day when dining at his grandfather's. Lady Monmouth seemed very intent on the occasion. Even Lord Monmouth half talked of going, though, for his part, he wished people would come to him, and never ask him to their houses. That was his idea of society. He liked the world, but he liked to find it under his own roof. He grudged them nothing, so that they would not insist upon the reciprocity of cold-catching, and would eat his good dinners instead of insisting on his eating their bad ones.

'But Monsieur Sidonia's cook is a gem, they say,' observed an Attaché of an embassy.

'I have no doubt of it; Sidonia is a man of sense, almost the only man of sense I know. I never caught him tripping. He never makes a false move. Sidonia is exactly the sort of man I like; you know you cannot deceive him, and that he does not want to deceive you. I wish he liked a rubber more. Then he would be perfect.'

'They say he is going to be married,' said the Attaché.

'Poh!' said Lord Monmouth.

'Married!' exclaimed Lady Monmouth. 'To whom?'

'To your beautiful countrywoman, "la belle Anglaise," that all the world talks of,' said the Attaché.

'And who may she be, pray?' said the Marquess. 'I have so many beautiful countrywomen.'

'Mademoiselle Millbank,' said the Attaché.

'Millbank!' said the Marquess, with a lowering brow. 'There are so many Millbanks. Do you know what Millbank this is, Harry?' he inquired of his grandson, who had listened to the conversation with a rather embarrassed and even agitated spirit.

'What, sir; yes, Millbank?' said Coningsby.

'I say, do you know who this Millbank is?'

'Oh! Miss Millbank: yes, I believe, that is, I know a daughter of the, the gentleman who purchased some property near you.'

'Oh! that fellow! Has he got a daughter here?'

'The most beautiful girl in Paris,' said the Attaché.

'Lady Monmouth, have you seen this beauty, that Sidonia is going to marry?' he added, with a fiendish laugh.

'I have seen the young lady,' said Lady Monmouth; 'but I had not heard that Monsieur Sidonia was about to marry her.'

'Is she so very beautiful?' inquired another gentleman.

'Yes,' said Lady Monmouth, calm, but pale.

'Poh!' said the Marquess again.

'I assure you that it is a fact,' said the Attaché, 'not at least an *ou-dit*. I have it from a quarter that could not well be mistaken.'

Behold a little snatch of ordinary dinner gossip that left a very painful impression on the minds of three individuals who were present.

The name of Millbank revived in Lord Monmouth's mind a sense of defeat, discomfiture, and disgust; Hellingsley, lost elections, and Mr. Rigby; three subjects which Lord Monmouth had succeeded for a time in expelling from his sensations. His lordship thought that, in all probability,

this beauty of whom they spoke so highly was not really the daughter of his foe ; that it was some confusion which had arisen from the similarity of names : nor did he believe that Sidonia was going to marry her, whoever she might be ; but a variety of things had been said at dinner, and a number of images had been raised in his mind that touched his spleen. He took his wine freely, and, the usual consequence of that proceeding with Lord Monmouth, became silent and sullen. As for Lady Monmouth, she had learnt that Sidonia, whatever might be the result, was paying very marked attention to another woman, for whom undoubtedly he was giving that very ball which she had flattered herself was a homage to her wishes, and for which she had projected a new dress of eclipsing splendour.

Coningsby felt quite sure that the story of Sidonia's marriage with Edith was the most ridiculous idea that ever entered into the imagination of man ; at least he thought he felt quite sure. But the idlest and wildest report that the woman you love is about to marry another is not comfortable. Besides, he could not conceal from himself that, between the Wallingers and Sidonia there existed a remarkable intimacy, fully extended to their niece. He had seen her certainly on more than one occasion in lengthened and apparently earnest conversation with Sidonia, who, by-the-bye, spoke with her often in Spanish, and never concealed his admiration of her charms or the interest he found in her society. And Edith ; what, after all, had passed between Edith and himself which should at all gainsay this report, which he had been particularly assured was not a mere report, but came from a quarter that could not well be mistaken ? She had received him with kindness. And how should she receive one who was the friend and preserver of her only brother, and apparently the intimate and cherished acquaintance of her future husband ? Coningsby felt that sickness of the heart that accompanies one's first misfortune. The illusions of life seemed to dissipate and disappear. He was miserable ; he had no confidence in himself, in his future. After all,

what was he? A dependent on a man of very absolute will and passions. Could he forget the glance with which Lord Monmouth caught the name of Millbank, and received the intimation of Hellingsley? It was a glance for a Spagnoletto or a Caravaggio to catch and immortalise. Why, if Edith were not going to marry Sidonia, how was he ever to marry her, even if she cared for him? Oh! what a future of unbroken, continuous, interminable misery awaited him! Was there ever yet born a being with a destiny so dark and dismal? He was the most forlorn of men, utterly wretched! He had entirely mistaken his own character. He had no energy, no abilities, not a single eminent quality. All was over!

CHAPTER V.

It was fated that Lady Monmouth should not be present at that ball, the anticipation of which had occasioned her so much pleasure and some pangs.

On the morning after that slight conversation, which had so disturbed the souls, though unconsciously to each other, of herself and Coningsby, the Marquess was driving Lucretia up the avenue Marigny in his phaeton. About the centre of the avenue the horses took fright, and started off at a wild pace. The Marquess was an experienced whip, calm, and with exertion still very powerful. He would have soon mastered the horses, had not one of the reins unhappily broken. The horses swerved; the Marquess kept his seat; Lucretia, alarmed, sprang up, the carriage was dashed against the trunk of a tree, and she was thrown out of it, at the very instant that one of the outriders had succeeded in heading the equipage and checking the horses.

The Marchioness was senseless. Lord Monmouth had descended from the phaeton; several passengers had assembled; the door of a contiguous house was opened;

there were offers of service, sympathy, inquiries, a babble of tongues, great confusion.

'Get surgeons and send for her maid,' said Lord Monmouth to one of his servants.

In the midst of this distressing tumult, Sidonia, on horseback, followed by a groom, came up the avenue from the Champs Elysées. The empty phaeton, reins broken, horses held by strangers, all the appearances of a misadventure, attracted him. He recognised the livery. He instantly dismounted. Moving aside the crowd, he perceived Lady Monmouth senseless and prostrate, and her husband, without assistance, restraining the injudicious efforts of the bystanders.

'Let us carry her in, Lord Monmouth,' said Sidonia, exchanging a recognition as he took Lucretia in his arms, and bore her into the dwelling that was at hand. Those who were standing at the door assisted him. The woman of the house and Lord Monmouth only were present.

'I would hope there is no fracture,' said Sidonia, placing her on a sofa, 'nor does it appear to me that the percussion of the head, though considerable, could have been fatally violent. I have caught her pulse. Keep her in a horizontal position, and she will soon come to herself.'

The Marquess seated himself in a chair by the side of the sofa, which Sidonia had advanced to the middle of the room. Lord Monmouth was silent and very serious. Sidonia opened the window, and touched the brow of Lucretia with water. At this moment M. Villebecque and a surgeon entered the chamber.

'The brain cannot be affected, with that pulse,' said the surgeon; 'there is no fracture.'

'How pale she is!' said Lord Monmouth, as if he were examining a picture.

'The colour seems to me to return,' said Sidonia.

The surgeon applied some restoratives which he had brought with him. The face of the Marchioness showed signs of life; she stirred.

'She revives,' said the surgeon

The Marchioness breathed with some force; again; then half-opened her eyes, and then instantly closed them.

'If I could but get her to take this draught,' said the surgeon.

'Stop! moisten her lips first,' said Sidonia.

They placed the draught to her mouth; in a moment she put forth her hand as if to repress them, then opened her eyes again, and sighed.

'She is herself,' said the surgeon.

'Lucretia!' said the Marquess.

'Sidonia!' said the Marchioness.

Lord Monmouth looked round to invite his friend to come forward.

'Lady Monmouth!' said Sidonia, in a gentle voice.

She started, rose a little on the sofa, stared around her.

'Where am I?' she exclaimed.

'With me,' said the Marquess; and he bent forward to her, and took her hand.

'Sidonia!' she again exclaimed, in a voice of inquiry.

'Is here,' said Lord Monmouth. 'He carried you in after our accident.'

'Accident! Why is he going to marry?'

The Marquess took a pinch of snuff.

There was an awkward pause in the chamber.

'I think now,' said Sidonia to the surgeon, 'that Lady Monmouth would take the draught.'

She refused it.

'Try you, Sidonia,' said the Marquess, rather drily.

'You feel yourself again?' said Sidonia, advancing.

'Would I did not!' said the Marchioness, with an air of stupor. 'What has happened? Why am I here? Are you married?'

'She wanders a little,' said Sidonia.

The Marquess took another pinch of snuff.

'I could have borne even repulsion,' said Lady Monmouth, in a voice of desolation, 'but not for another!'

'M. Villebecque!' said the Marquess.

'My Lord?'

Lord Monmouth looked at him with that irresistible scrutiny which would daunt a galley-slave; and then, after a short pause, said, 'The carriage should have arrived by this time. Let us get home.'

CHAPTER VI.

AFTER the conversation at dinner which we have noticed, the restless and disquieted Coningsby wandered about Paris, vainly seeking in the distraction of a great city some relief from the excitement of his mind. His first resolution was immediately to depart for England; but when, on reflection, he was mindful that, after all, the assertion which had so agitated him might really be without foundation, in spite of many circumstances that to his regardful fancy seemed to accredit it, his firm resolution began to waver.

These were the first pangs of jealousy that Coningsby had ever experienced, and they revealed to him the immensity of the stake which he was hazarding on a most uncertain die.

The next morning he called in the Rue Rivoli, and was informed that the family were not at home. He was returning under the arcades, towards the Rue St. Florentin, when Sidonia passed him in an opposite direction, on horseback, and at a rapid rate. Coningsby, who was not observed by him, could not resist a strange temptation to watch for a moment his progress. He saw him enter the court of the hotel where the Wallinger family were staying. Would he come forth immediately? No. Coningsby stood still and pale. Minute followed minute. Coningsby flattered himself that Sidonia was only speaking to the porter. Then he would fain believe Sidonia was writing a note. Then, crossing the street, he mounted by some steps the terrace of the Tuileries, nearly opposite the Hotel of the Minister of Finance, and watched the house. A quarter of an hour elapsed; Sidonia did not come forth.

They were at home to him; only to him. Sick at heart, infinitely wretched, scarcely able to guide his steps, dreading even to meet an acquaintance, and almost feeling that his tongue would refuse the office of conversation, he contrived to reach his grandfather's hotel, and was about to bury himself in his chamber, when on the staircase he met Flora.

Coningsby had not seen her for the last fortnight. Seeing her now, his heart smote him for his neglect, excusable as it really was. Any one else at this time he would have hurried by without recognition, but the gentle and suffering Flora was too meek to be rudely treated by so kind a heart as Coningsby's.

He looked at her; she was pale and agitated. Her step trembled, while she still hastened on.

'What is the matter?' inquired Coningsby.

'My Lord, the Marchioness, are in danger, thrown from their carriage.' Briefly she detailed to Coningsby all that had occurred; that M. Villebecque had already repaired to them; that she herself only this moment had learned the intelligence that seemed to agitate her to the centre. Coningsby instantly turned with her; but they had scarcely emerged from the courtyard when the carriage approached that brought Lord and Lady Monmouth home. They followed it into the court. They were immediately at its door.

'All is right, Harry,' said the Marquess, calm and grave.

Coningsby pressed his grandfather's hand. Then he assisted Lucretia to alight.

'I am quite well,' she said, 'now.'

'But you must lean on me, dearest Lady Monmouth, Coningsby said in a tone of tenderness, as he felt Lucretia almost sinking from him. And he supported her into the hall of the hotel.

Lord Monmouth had lingered behind. Flora crept up to him, and with unwonted boldness offered her arm to the Marquess. He looked at her with a glance of surprise, and then a softer expression, one indeed of an almost

winning sweetness, which, though rare, was not a stranger to his countenance, melted his features, and taking the arm so humbly presented, he said,

‘Ma Petite, you look more frightened than any of us. Poor child!’

He had reached the top of the flight of steps; he withdrew his arm from Flora, and thanked her with all his courtesy.

‘You are not hurt, then, sir?’ she ventured to ask with a look that expressed the infinite solicitude which her tongue did not venture to convey.

‘By no means, my good little girl;’ and he extended his hand to her, which she reverently bent over and embraced.

CHAPTER VII.

WHEN Coningsby had returned to his grandfather’s hotel that morning, it was with a determination to leave Paris the next day for England; but the accident to Lady Monmouth, though, as it ultimately appeared, accompanied by no very serious consequences, quite dissipated this intention. It was impossible to quit them so crudely at such a moment. So he remained another day, and that was the day preceding Sidonia’s fête, which he particularly resolved not to attend. He felt it quite impossible that he could again endure the sight of either Sidonia or Edith. He looked upon them as persons who had deeply injured him; though they really were individuals who had treated him with invariable kindness. But he felt their existence was a source of mortification and misery to him. With these feelings, sauntering away the last hours at Paris, disquieted, uneasy; no present, no future; no enjoyment, no hope; really, positively, undeniably unhappy; unhappy too for the first time in his life; the first unhappiness; what a companion piece for the first love! Coningsby, of all places in the world, in the gardens of the Luxembourg, encountered Sir Joseph Wallinger and Edith.

To avoid them was impossible; they met face to face; and Sir Joseph stopped, and immediately reminded him that it was three days since they had seen him, as if to reproach him for so unprecedented a neglect. And it seemed that Edith, though she said not as much, felt the same. And Coningsby turned round and walked with them. He told them he was going to leave Paris on the morrow.

'And miss Monsieur de Sidonia's fête, of which we have all talked so much!' said Edith, with unaffected surprise, and an expression of disappointment which she in vain attempted to conceal.

'The festival will not be less gay for my absence,' said Coningsby, with that plaintive moroseness not unusual to despairing lovers.

'If we were all to argue from the same premises, and act accordingly,' said Edith, 'the saloons would be empty. But if any person's absence would be remarked, I should really have thought it would be yours. I thought you were one of Monsieur de Sidonia's great friends?'

'He has no friends,' said Coningsby. 'No wise man has. What are friends? Traitors.'

Edith looked much astonished. And then she said,

'I am sure you have not quarrelled with Monsieur de Sidonia, for we have just parted with him.'

'I have no doubt you have,' thought Coningsby.

'And it is impossible to speak of another in higher terms than he spoke of you.' Sir Joseph observed how unusual it was for Monsieur de Sidonia to express himself so warmly.

'Sidonia is a great man, and carries everything before him,' said Coningsby. 'I am nothing; I cannot cope with him; I retire from the field.'

'What field?' inquired Sir Joseph, who did not clearly catch the drift of these observations. 'It appears to me that a field for action is exactly what Sidonia wants. There is no vent for his abilities and intelligence. He wastes his energy in travelling from capital to capital like a King's messenger. The morning after his fête he is going to Madrid.'

This brought some reference to their mutual movements. Edith spoke of her return to Lancashire, of her hope that Mr. Coningsby would soon see Oswald; but Mr. Coningsby informed her that though he was going to leave Paris, he had no intention of returning to England; that he had not yet quite made up his mind whither he should go; but thought that he should travel direct to St. Petersburg. He wished to travel overland to Astrachan. That was the place he was particularly anxious to visit.

After this incomprehensible announcement, they walked on for some minutes in silence, broken only by occasional monosyllables, with which Coningsby responded at hazard to the sound remarks of Sir Joseph. As they approached the Palace a party of English who were visiting the Chamber of Peers, and who were acquainted with the companions of Coningsby, encountered them. Amid the mutual recognitions, Coningsby was about to take his leave somewhat ceremoniously, but Edith held forth her hand, and said,

‘Is this indeed farewell?’

His heart was agitated, his countenance changed; he retained her hand amid the chattering tourists, too full of their criticisms and their egotistical commonplaces to notice what was passing. A sentimental ebullition seemed to be on the point of taking place. Their eyes met. The look of Edith was mournful and inquiring.

‘We will say farewell at the ball,’ said Coningsby, and she rewarded him with a radiant smile.

CHAPTER VIII.

SIDONIA lived in the Faubourg St. Germain, in a large hotel that, in old days, had belonged to the Crillons; but it had received at his hands such extensive alterations, that nothing of the original decoration, and little of its arrangement, remained.