

a Gothic castle, raised according to the strict rules of art, could scarcely have afforded. The declining sun threw over the pile a rich colour as Coningsby approached it, and lit up with fleeting and fanciful tints the delicate foliage of the rare shrubs and tall thin trees that clothed the acclivity on which it stood. Our young friend felt a little embarrassed when, without a servant and in a hack chaise, he drew up to the grand portal, and a crowd of retainers came forth to receive him. A superior servant inquired his name with a stately composure that disdained to be supercilious. It was not without some degree of pride and satisfaction that the guest replied, 'Mr. Coningsby.' The instantaneous effect was magical. It seemed to Coningsby that he was borne on the shoulders of the people to his apartment; each tried to carry some part of his luggage; and he only hoped his welcome from their superiors might be as hearty.

CHAPTER VI.

It appeared to Coningsby in his way to his room, that the Castle was in a state of great excitement; everywhere bustle, preparation, moving to and fro, ascending and descending of stairs, servants in every corner; orders boundlessly given, rapidly obeyed; many desires, equal gratification. All this made him rather nervous. It was quite unlike Beaumanoir. That also was a palace, but it was a home. This, though it should be one to him, seemed to have nothing of that character. Of all mysteries the social mysteries are the most appalling. Going to an assembly for the first time is more alarming than the first battle. Coningsby had never before been in a great house full of company. It seemed an overwhelming affair. The sight of the servants bewildered him; how then was he to encounter their masters?

That, however, he must do in a moment. A groom of the chambers indicates the way to him, as he proceeds with a hesitating yet hurried step through several ante-chambers and drawing-rooms; then doors are suddenly thrown open, and he is ushered into the largest and most sumptuous saloon that he had ever entered. It was full of ladies and gentlemen. Coningsby for the first time in his life was at a great party. His immediate emotion was to sink into the earth; but perceiving that no one even noticed him, and that not an eye had been attracted to his entrance, he regained his breath and in some degree his composure, and standing aside, endeavoured to make himself, as well as he could, master of the land.

Not a human being that he had ever seen before! The circumstance of not being noticed, which a few minutes since he had felt as a relief, became now a cause of annoyance. It seemed that he was the only person standing alone whom no one was addressing. He felt renewed and aggravated embarrassment, and fancied, perhaps was conscious, that he was blushing. At length his ear caught the voice of Mr. Rigby. The speaker was not visible; he was at a distance surrounded by a wondering group, whom he was severally and collectively contradicting, but Coningsby could not mistake those harsh, arrogant tones. He was not sorry indeed that Mr. Rigby did not observe him. Coningsby never loved him particularly, which was rather ungrateful, for he was a person who had been kind, and, on the whole, serviceable to him; but Coningsby writhed, especially as he grew older, under Mr. Rigby's patronising air and paternal tone. Even in old days, though attentive, Coningsby had never found him affectionate. Mr. Rigby would tell him what to do and see, but never asked him what he wished to do and see. It seemed to Coningsby that it was always contrived that he should appear the *protégé*, or poor relation, of a dependent of his family. These feelings, which the thought of Mr. Rigby had revived, caused our young friend, by an inevitable association of ideas, to remember that, unknown and un-

noticed as he might be, he was the only Coningsby in that proud Castle, except the Lord of the Castle himself; and he began to be rather ashamed of permitting a sense of his inexperience in the mere forms and fashions of society so to oppress him, and deprive him, as it were, of the spirit and carriage which became alike his character and his position. Emboldened and greatly restored to himself, Coningsby advanced into the body of the saloon.

On his legs, wearing his blue ribbon and bending his head frequently to a lady who was seated on a sofa, and continually addressed him, Coningsby recognised his grandfather. Lord Monmouth was somewhat balder than four years ago, when he had come down to Montem, and a little more portly perhaps; but otherwise unchanged. Lord Monmouth never condescended to the artifices of the toilet, and, indeed, notwithstanding his life of excess, had little need of them. Nature had done much for him, and the slow progress of decay was carried off by his consummate bearing. He looked, indeed, the chieftain of a house of whom a cadet might be proud.

For Coningsby, not only the chief of his house, but his host too. In either capacity he ought to address Lord Monmouth. To sit down to dinner without having previously paid his respects to his grandfather, to whom he was so much indebted, and whom he had not seen for so many years, struck him not only as uncourtly, but as unkind and ungrateful, and, indeed, in the highest degree absurd. But how was he to do it? Lord Monmouth seemed deeply engaged, and apparently with some very great lady. And if Coningsby advanced and bowed, in all probability he would only get a bow in return. He remembered the bow of his first interview. It had made a lasting impression on his mind. For it was more than likely Lord Monmouth would not recognise him. Four years had not sensibly altered Lord Monmouth, but four years had changed Harry Coningsby from a schoolboy into a man. Then how was he to make himself known to his grandfather? To announce himself as Coningsby, as his

Lordship's grandson, seemed somewhat ridiculous: to address his grandfather as Lord Monmouth would serve no purpose: to style Lord Monmouth 'grandfather' would make every one laugh, and seemed stiff and unnatural. What was he to do? To fall into an attitude and exclaim, 'Behold your grandchild!' or, 'Have you forgotten your Harry?'

Even to catch Lord Monmouth's glance was not an easy affair; he was much occupied on one side by the great lady, on the other were several gentlemen who occasionally joined in the conversation. But something must be done.

There ran through Coningsby's character, as we have before mentioned, a vein of simplicity which was not its least charm. It resulted, no doubt, in a great degree from the earnestness of his nature. There never was a boy so totally devoid of affectation, which was remarkable, for he had a brilliant imagination, a quality that, from its fantasies, and the vague and indefinite desires it engenders, generally makes those whose characters are not formed, affected. The Duchess, who was a fine judge of character, and who greatly regarded Coningsby, often mentioned this trait as one which, combined with his great abilities and acquirements so unusual at his age, rendered him very interesting. In the present instance it happened that, while Coningsby was watching his grandfather, he observed a gentleman advance, make his bow, say and receive a few words and retire. This little incident, however, made a momentary diversion in the immediate circle of Lord Monmouth, and before they could all resume their former talk and fall into their previous positions, an impulse sent forth Coningsby, who walked up to Lord Monmouth, and standing before him, said,

'How do you do, grandpapa?'

Lord Monmouth beheld his grandson. His comprehensive and penetrating glance took in every point with a flash. There stood before him one of the handsomest youths he had ever seen, with a mien as graceful as his countenance was captivating; and his whole air breathing

that freshness and ingenuousness which none so much appreciates as the used man of the world. And this was his child; the only one of his blood to whom he had been kind. It would be exaggeration to say that Lord Monmouth's heart was touched; but his goodnature effervesced, and his fine taste was deeply gratified. He perceived in an instant such a relation might be a valuable adherent; an irresistible candidate for future elections: a brilliant tool to work out the Dukedom. All these impressions and ideas, and many more, passed through the quick brain of Lord Monmouth ere the sound of Coningsby's words had seemed to cease, and long before the surrounding guests had recovered from the surprise which they had occasioned them, and which did not diminish, when Lord Monmouth, advancing, placed his arms round Coningsby with a dignity of affection that would have become Louis XIV., and then, in the high manner of the old Court, kissed him on each cheek.

'Welcome to your home,' said Lord Monmouth. 'You have grown a great deal.'

Then Lord Monmouth led the agitated Coningsby to the great lady, who was a Princess and an Ambassadors, and then, placing his arm gracefully in that of his grandson, he led him across the room, and presented him in due form to some royal blood that was his guest, in the shape of a Russian Grand-duke. His Imperial Highness received our hero as graciously as the grandson of Lord Monmouth might expect; but no greeting can be imagined warmer than the one he received from the lady with whom the Grand-duke was conversing. She was a dame whose beauty was mature, but still radiant. Her figure was superb; her dark hair crowned with a tiara of curious workmanship. Her rounded arm was covered with costly bracelets, but not a jewel on her finely formed bust, and the least possible rouge on her still oval cheek. Madame Colonna retained her charms.

The party, though so considerable, principally consisted of the guests at the Castle. The suite of the Grand-duke included several counts and generals; then there were the

Russian Ambassador and his lady; and a Russian Prince and Princess, their relations. The Prince and Princess Colonna and the Princess Lucretia were also paying a visit to the Marquess; and the frequency of these visits made some straight-laced magnificoes mysteriously declare it was impossible to go to Coningsby; but as they were not asked, it did not much signify. The Marquess knew a great many very agreeable people of the highest *ton*, who took a more liberal view of human conduct, and always made it a rule to presume the best motives instead of imputing the worst. There was Lady St. Julians, for example, whose position was of the highest; no one more sought; she made it a rule to go everywhere and visit everybody, provided they had power, wealth, and fashion. She knew no crime except a woman not living with her husband; that was past pardon. So long as his presence sanctioned her conduct, however shameless, it did not signify; but if the husband were a brute, neglected his wife first, and then deserted her; then, if a breath but sullies her name she must be crushed; unless, indeed, her own family were very powerful, which makes a difference, and sometimes softens immorality into indiscretion.

Lord and Lady Gaverstock were also there, who never said an unkind thing of anybody; her ladyship was pure as snow; but her mother having been divorced, she ever fancied she was paying a kind of homage to her parent, by visiting those who might some day be in the same predicament. There were other lords and ladies of high degree; and some who, though neither lords nor ladies, were charming people, which Lord Monmouth chiefly cared about; troops of fine gentlemen who came and went; and some who were neither fine nor gentlemen, but who were very amusing or very obliging, as circumstances required, and made life easy and pleasant to others and themselves.

A new scene this for Coningsby, who watched with interest all that passed before him. The dinner was announced as served; an affectionate arm guides him at a moment of some perplexity.

'When did you arrive, Harry? We shall sit together. How is the Duchess?' inquired Mr. Rigby, who spoke as if he had seen Coningsby for the first time; but who indeed had, with that eye which nothing could escape, observed his reception by his grandfather, marked it well, and inwardly digested it.

CHAPTER VII.

THERE was to be a first appearance on the stage of Lord Monmouth's theatre to-night, the expectation of which created considerable interest in the party, and was one of the principal subjects of conversation at dinner. Villebecque, the manager of the troop, had married the actress Stella, once celebrated for her genius and her beauty; a woman who had none of the vices of her craft, for, though she was a fallen angel, there were what her countrymen style extenuating circumstances in her declension. With the whole world at her feet, she had remained unsullied. Wealth and its enjoyments could not tempt her, although she was unable to refuse her heart to one whom she deemed worthy of possessing it. She found her fate in an Englishman, who was the father of her only child, a daughter. She thought she had met in him a hero, a demi-god, a being of deep passion and original and creative mind; but he was only a voluptuary, full of violence instead of feeling, and eccentric, because he had great means with which he could gratify extravagant whims. Stella found she had made the great and irretrievable mistake. She had exchanged devotion for a passionate and evanescent fancy, prompted at first by vanity, and daily dissipating under the influence of custom and new objects. Though not stainless in conduct, Stella was pure in spirit. She required that devotion which she had yielded; and she separated herself from the being to whom she had made the most precious sacrifice. He offered her the consoling com-

pensation of a settlement, which she refused; and she returned with a broken spirit to that profession of which she was still the ornament and the pride.

The animating principle of her career was her daughter, whom she educated with a solicitude which the most virtuous mother could not surpass. To preserve her from the stage, and to secure for her an independence, were the objects of her mother's life; but nature whispered to her, that the days of that life were already numbered. The exertions of her profession had alarmingly developed an inherent tendency to pulmonary disease. Anxious that her child should not be left without some protector, Stella yielded to the repeated solicitations of one who from the first had been her silent admirer, and she married Villebecque, a clever actor, and an enterprising man who meant to be something more. Their union was not of long duration, though it was happy on the side of Villebecque, and serene on that of his wife. Stella was recalled from this world, where she had known much triumph and more suffering; and where she had exercised many virtues, which elsewhere, though not here, may perhaps be accepted as some palliation of one great error.

Villebecque acted becomingly to the young charge which Stella had bequeathed to him. He was himself, as we have intimated, a man of enterprise, a restless spirit, not content to move for ever in the sphere in which he was born. Vicissitudes are the lot of such aspirants. Villebecque became manager of a small theatre, and made money. If Villebecque without a sou had been a schemer, Villebecque with a small capital was the very Chevalier Law of theatrical managers. He took a larger theatre, and even that succeeded. Soon he was recognised as the lessee of more than one, and still he prospered. Villebecque began to dabble in opera-houses. He enthroned himself at Paris; his envoys were heard of at Milan and Naples, at Berlin and St. Petersburg. His controversies with the Conservatoire at Paris ranked among state papers. Villebecque rolled in chariots and drove cabriolets; Villebecque

gave refined suppers to great nobles, who were honoured by the invitation; Villebecque wore a red ribbon in the button-hole of his frock, and more than one cross in his gala dress.

All this time the daughter of Stella increased in years and stature, and we must add in goodness: a mild, soft-hearted girl, as yet with no decided character, but one who loved calmness and seemed little fitted for the circle in which she found herself. In that circle, however, she ever experienced kindness and consideration. No enterprise however hazardous, no management however complicated, no schemes however vast, ever for a moment induced Villebecque to forget 'La Petite.' If only for one breathless instant, hardly a day elapsed but he saw her; she was his companion in all his rapid movements, and he studied every comfort and convenience that could relieve her delicate frame in some degree from the inconvenience and exhaustion of travel. He was proud to surround her with luxury and refinement; to supply her with the most celebrated masters; to gratify every wish that she could express.

But all this time Villebecque was dancing on a volcano. The catastrophe which inevitably occurs in the career of all great speculators, and especially theatrical ones, arrived to him. Flushed with his prosperity, and confident in his constant success, nothing would satisfy him but universal empire. He had established his despotism at Paris, his dynasties at Naples and at Milan; but the North was not to him, and he was determined to appropriate it. Berlin fell before a successful campaign, though a costly one; but St. Petersburg and London still remained. Resolute and reckless, nothing deterred Villebecque. One season all the opera-houses in Europe obeyed his nod, and at the end of it he was ruined. The crash was utter, universal, overwhelming; and under ordinary circumstances a French bed and a brasier of charcoal alone remained for Villebecque, who was equal to the occasion. But the thought of *Ia Petite* and the remembrance of his promise to Stella de-

tered him from the deed. He reviewed his position in a spirit becoming a practical philosopher. Was he worse off than before he commenced his career? Yes, because he was older; though to be sure he had his compensating reminiscences. But was he too old to do anything? At forty-five the game was not altogether up; and in a large theatre, not too much lighted, and with the artifices of a dramatic toilet, he might still be able successfully to re-assume those characters of coxcombs and muscadins, in which he was once so celebrated. Luxury had perhaps a little too much enlarged his waist, but diet and rehearsals would set all right.

Villebecque in their adversity broke to *La Petite*, that the time had unfortunately arrived when it would be wise for her to consider the most effectual means for turning her talents and accomplishments to account. He himself suggested the stage, to which otherwise there were doubtless objections, because her occupation in any other pursuit would necessarily separate them; but he impartially placed before her the relative advantages and disadvantages of every course which seemed to lie open to them, and left the preferable one to her own decision. *La Petite*, who had wept very much over Villebecque's misfortunes, and often assured him that she cared for them only for his sake, decided for the stage, solely because it would secure their not being parted; and yet, as she often assured him, she feared she had no predisposition for the career.

Villebecque had now not only to fill his own parts at the theatre at which he had obtained an engagement, but he had also to be the instructor of his ward. It was a life of toil; an addition of labour and effort that need scarcely have been made to the exciting exertion of performance, and the dull exercise of rehearsal; but he bore it all without a murmur; with a self-command and a gentle perseverance which the finest temper in the world could hardly account for; certainly not when we remember that its possessor, who had to make all these exertions and endure all this wearisome toil, had just experienced the most shatter-

ing vicissitudes of fortune, and been hurled from the possession of absolute power and illimitable self-gratification.

Lord Eskdale, who was always doing kind things to actors and actresses, had a great regard for Villebecque, with whom he had often supped. He had often been kind, too, to La Petite. Lord Eskdale had a plan for putting Villebecque, as he termed it, 'on his legs again.' It was to establish him with a French company in London at some pretty theatre; Lord Eskdale to take a private box and to make all his friends do the same. Villebecque, who was as sanguine as he was good-tempered, was ravished by this friendly scheme. He immediately believed that he should recover his great fortunes as rapidly as he had lost them. He foresaw in La Petite a genius as distinguished as that of her mother, although as yet not developed, and he was boundless in his expressions of gratitude to his patron. And indeed of all friends, a friend in need is the most delightful. Lord Eskdale had the talent of being a friend in need. Perhaps it was because he knew so many worthless persons. But it often happens that worthless persons are merely people who are worth nothing.

Lord Monmouth having written to Mr. Rigby of his intention to reside for some months at Coningsby, and having mentioned that he wished a troop of French comedians to be engaged for the summer, Mr. Rigby had immediately consulted Lord Eskdale on the subject, as the best current authority. Thinking this a good opportunity of giving a turn to poor Villebecque, and that it might serve as a capital introduction to their scheme of the London company, Lord Eskdale obtained for him the engagement.

Villebecque and his little troop had now been a month at Coningsby, and had hitherto performed three times a-week. Lord Monmouth was content; his guests much gratified; the company, on the whole, much approved of. It was, indeed, considering its limited numbers, a capital company. There was a young lady who played the old woman's parts, nothing could be more garrulous and

venerable; and a lady of maturer years who performed the heroines, gay and graceful as May. Villebecque himself was a celebrity in characters of airy insolence and careless frolic. Their old man, indeed, was rather hard, but handy; could take anything either in the high serious, or the low droll. Their sentimental lover was rather too much bewigged, and spoke too much to the audience, a fault rare with the French; but this hero had a vague idea that he was ultimately destined to run off with a princess.

In this wise, affairs had gone on for a month; very well, but not too well. The enterprising genius of Villebecque, once more a manager, prompted him to action. He felt an itching desire to announce a novelty. He fancied Lord Monmouth had yawned once or twice when the heroine came on. Villebecque wanted to make a *coup*. It was clear that La Petite must sooner or later begin. Could she find a more favourable audience, or a more fitting occasion, than were now offered? True it was she had a great repugnance to come out; but it certainly seemed more to her advantage that she should make her first appearance at a private theatre than at a public one; supported by all the encouraging patronage of Coningsby Castle, than subjected to all the cynical criticism of the stalls of St. James'.

These views and various considerations were urged and represented by Villebecque to La Petite, with all the practised powers of plausibility of which so much experience as a manager had made him master. La Petite looked infinitely distressed, but yielded, as she ever did. And the night of Coningsby's arrival at the Castle was to witness in its private theatre the first appearance of MADemoiselle FLORA.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE guests re-assembled in the great saloon before they repaired to the theatre. A lady on the arm of the Russian Prince bestowed on Coningsby a haughty, but not ungracious, bow; which he returned, unconscious of the person to whom he bent. She was, however, a striking person; not beautiful, her face, indeed, at the first glance was almost repulsive, yet it ever attracted a second gaze. A remarkable pallor distinguished her; her features had neither regularity nor expression; neither were her eyes fine; but her brow impressed you with an idea of power of no ordinary character or capacity. Her figure was as fine and commanding as her face was void of charm. Juno, in the full bloom of her immortality, could have presented nothing more majestic. Coningsby watched her as she swept along like a resistless Fate.

Servants now went round and presented to each of the guests a billet of the performance. It announced in striking characters the *début* of Mademoiselle Flora. A principal servant, bearing branch lights, came forward and bowed to the Marquess. Lord Monmouth went immediately to the Grand-duke, and notified to His Imperial Highness that the comedy was ready. The Grand-duke offered his arm to the Ambassadors; the rest were following; Coningsby was called; Madame Colonna wished him to be her beau.

It was a pretty theatre; had been rapidly rubbed up and renovated here and there; the painting just touched; a little gilding on a cornice. There were no boxes, but the ground-floor, which gradually ascended, was carpeted and covered with arm-chairs, and the back of the theatre with a new and rich curtain of green velvet.

They are all seated; a great artist performs on the violin, accompanied by another great artist on the piano. The lights rise; somebody evidently crosses the stage behind the curtain. They are disposing the scene. In a moment the curtain will rise also.

‘Have you seen Lucretia?’ said the Princess to Coningsby. ‘She is so anxious to resume her acquaintance with you.’

But before he could answer the bell rang, and the curtain rose.

The old man, who had a droll part to-night, came forward and maintained a conversation with his housekeeper; not bad. The young woman who played the grave matron performed with great finish. She was a favourite, and was ever applauded. The second scene came; a saloon tastefully furnished; a table with flowers, arranged with grace; birds in cages, a lap-dog on a cushion; some books. The audience were pleased; especially the ladies; they like to recognise signs of *bon ton* in the details of the scene. A rather awful pause, and Mademoiselle Flora enters. She was greeted with even vehement approbation. Her agitation is extreme; she curtseys and bows her head, as if to hide her face. The face was pleasing, and pretty enough, soft and engaging. Her figure slight and rather graceful. Nothing could be more perfect than her costume; purely white, but the fashion consummate; a single rose her only ornament. All admitted that her hair was arranged to admiration.

At length she spoke; her voice trembled, but she had a good elocution, though her organ wanted force. The gentlemen looked at each other, and nodded approbation. There was something so unobtrusive in her mien, that she instantly became a favourite with the ladies. The scene was not long, but it was successful.

Flora did not appear in the next scene. In the fourth and final one of the act, she had to make a grand display. It was a love-scene, and rather of an impassioned character; Villebecque was her suitor. He entered first on the stage. Never had he looked so well, or performed with more spirit. You would not have given him five-and-twenty years; he seemed redolent of youth. His dress, too, was admirable. He had studied the most distinguished of his audience for the occasion, and had outdone them all. The fact is, he had

been assisted a little by a great connoisseur, a celebrated French nobleman, Count D'O——y, who had been one of the guests. The thing was perfect; and Lord Monmouth took a pinch of snuff, and tapped approbation on the top of his box.

Flora now re-appeared, received with renewed approbation. It did not seem, however, that in the interval she had gained courage; she looked agitated. She spoke, she proceeded with her part; it became impassioned. She had to speak of her feelings; to tell the secrets of her heart; to confess that she loved another; her emotion was exquisitely performed, the mournful tenderness of her tones thrilling. There was, throughout the audience, a dead silence; all were absorbed in their admiration of the unrivalled artist; all felt a new genius had visited the stage; but while they were fascinated by the actress, the woman was in torture. The emotion was the disturbance of her own soul; the mournful tenderness of her tones thrilled from the heart: suddenly she clasped her hands with all the exhaustion of woe; an expression of agony flitted over her countenance; and she burst into tears. Villebecque rushed forward, and carried, rather than led, her from the stage; the audience looking at each other, some of them suspecting that this movement was a part of the scene.

'She has talent,' said Lord Monmouth to the Russian Ambassadors, 'but wants practice. Villebecque should send her for a time to the provinces.'

At length M. Villebecque came forward to express his deep regret that the sudden and severe indisposition of Mlle. Flora rendered it impossible for the company to proceed with the piece; but that the curtain would descend to rise again for the second and last piece announced.

All this accordingly took place. The experienced performer who acted the heroines now came forward and departed most jocosely. The failure of Flora had given fresh animation to her perpetual liveliness. She seemed the very soul of elegant frolic. In the last scene she figured in male attire; and in air, fashion, and youth, beat Villebecque out

of the field. She looked younger than Coningsby when he went up to his grandpapa.

The comedy was over, the curtain fell; the audience, much amused, chattered brilliant criticism, and quitted the theatre to repair to the saloon, where they were to be diverted to-night with Russian dances. Nobody thought of the unhappy Flora; not a single message to console her in her grief, to compliment her on what she had done, to encourage her future. And yet it was a season for a word of kindness; so, at least, thought one of the audience, as he lingered behind the hurrying crowd, absorbed in their coming amusements.

Coningsby had sat very near the stage; he had observed, with great advantage and attention, the countenance and movements of Flora from the beginning. He was fully persuaded that her woe was genuine and profound. He had felt his eyes moist when she wept. He recoiled from the cruelty and the callousness that, without the slightest symptom of sympathy, could leave a young girl who had been labouring for their amusement, and who was suffering for her trial.

He got on the stage ran behind the scenes, and asked for Mlle. Flora. They pointed to a door; he requested permission to enter. Flora was sitting at a table, with her face resting on her hands. Villebecque was there, resting on the edge of the tall fender, and still in the dress in which he had performed in the last piece.

'I took the liberty,' said Coningsby, 'of inquiring after Mlle. Flora;' and then advancing to her, who had raised her head, he added, 'I am sure my grandfather must feel much indebted to you, Mademoiselle, for making such exertions when you were suffering under so much indisposition.'

'This is very amiable of you, sir,' said the young lady, looking at him with earnestness.

'Mademoiselle has too much sensibility,' said Villebecque, making an observation by way of diversion.

'And yet that must be the soul of fine acting,' said

Coningsby; I look forward, all look forward, with great interest to the next occasion on which you will favour us.'

'Never!' said La Petite, in a plaintive tone; 'oh, I hope, never!'

'Mademoiselle is not aware at this moment,' said Coningsby, 'how much her talent is appreciated. I assure you, sir,' he added, turning to Villebecque, 'I heard but one opinion, but one expression of gratification at her feeling and her fine taste.'

'The talent is hereditary,' said Villebecque.

'Indeed you have reason to say so,' said Coningsby.

'Pardon; I was not thinking of myself. My child reminded me so much of another this evening. But that is nothing. I am glad you are here, sir, to reassure Mademoiselle.'

'I came only to congratulate her, and to lament, for our sakes as well as her own, her indisposition.'

'It is not indisposition,' said La Petite, in a low tone, with her eyes cast down.

'Mademoiselle cannot overcome the nervousness incidental to a first appearance,' said Villebecque.

'A last appearance,' said La Petite; 'yes, it must be the last.' She rose gently, she approached Villebecque, she laid her head on his breast, and placed her arms round his neck, 'My father, my best father, yes, say it is the last.'

'You are the mistress of your lot, Flora,' said Villebecque; 'but with such a distinguished talent ——'

'No, no, no; no talent. You are wrong my father. I know myself. I am not of those to whom nature gives talents. I am born only for still life. I have no taste except for privacy. The convent is more suited to me than the stage.'

'But you hear what this gentleman says,' said Villebecque, returning her embrace. 'He tells you that his grandfather, my Lord Marquess, I believe, sir, that every one, that ——'

'Oh, no, no, no!' said Flora, shaking her head. 'He

comes here because he is generous, because he is a gentleman; and he wished to soothe the soul that he knew was suffering. Thank him, my father, thank him for me and before me, and promise in his presence that the stage and your daughter have parted for ever.'

'Nay, Mademoiselle,' said Coningsby, advancing and venturing to take her hand, a soft hand, 'make no such resolutions to-night. M. Villebecque can have no other thought or object but your happiness; and, believe me, 'tis not I only, but all, who appreciate, and, if they were here, must respect you.'

'I prefer respect to admiration,' said Flora; but I fear that respect is not the appanage of such as I am.'

'All must respect those who respect themselves,' said Coningsby. 'Adieu, Mademoiselle; I trust to-morrow to hear that you are yourself.' He bowed to Villebecque and retired.

In the meantime affairs in the drawing-room assumed a very different character from those behind the scenes. Coningsby returned to brilliancy, groups apparently gushing with light-heartedness, universal content, and Russian dances!

'And you too, do you dance the Russian dances, Mr. Coningsby?' said Madame Colonna.

'I cannot dance at all,' said Coningsby, beginning a little to lose his pride in the want of an accomplishment which at Eton he had thought it spirited to despise.

'Ah! you cannot dance the Russian dances! Lucretia shall teach you,' said the Princess; 'nothing will please her so much.'

On the present occasion the ladies were not so experienced in the entertainment as the gentlemen; but there was amusement in being instructed. To be disciplined by a Grand-duke or a Russian Princess was all very well; but what even the good-tempered Lady Gaythorpe could not pardon was, that a certain Mrs. Guy Flouncey, whom they were all of them trying to put down and to keep down, on this, as almost on every other occasion, proved herself a

more finished performer than even the Russians themselves.

Lord Monmouth had picked up the Guy Flounceys during a Roman winter. They were people of some position in society. Mr. Guy Flouncey was a man of good estate, a sportsman, proud of his pretty wife. Mrs. Guy Flouncey was even very pretty, dressed in a style of ultra fashion. However, she could sing, dance, act, ride, and talk, and all well; and was mistress of the art of flirtation. She had amused the Marquess abroad, and had taken care to call at Monmouth House the instant the *Morning Post* apprised her he had arrived in England; the consequence was an invitation to Coningsby. She came with a wardrobe which, in point of variety, fancy, and fashion, never was surpassed, Morning and evening, every day a new dress equally striking; and a riding habit that was the talk and wonder of the whole neighbourhood. Mrs. Guy Flouncey created far more sensation in the borough when she rode down the High Street, than what the good people called the real Princesses.

At first the fine ladies never noticed her, or only stared, at her over their shoulders; everywhere sounded, in suppressed whispers, the fatal question, 'Who is she?' After dinner they formed always into polite groups, from which Mrs. Guy Flouncey was invariably excluded; and if ever the Princess Colonna, impelled partly by goodnature, and partly from having known her on the Continent, did kindly sit by her, Lady St. Julians, or some dame equally benevolent, was sure, by an adroit appeal to Her Highness on some point which could not be decided without moving, to withdraw her from her pretty and persecuted companion.

It was, indeed, rather difficult work the first few days for Mrs. Guy Flouncey, especially immediately after dinner. It is not soothing to one's self-love to find oneself sitting alone, pretending to look at prints, in a fine drawing-room, full of fine people who don't speak to you. But Mrs. Guy Flouncey, after having taken Coningsby Castle by storm, was not to be driven out of its drawing-room by the tactics

even of a Lady St. Julians. Experience convinced her that all that was required was a little patience. Mrs. Guy had confidence in herself, her quickness, her ever ready accomplishments, and her practised powers of attraction. And she was right. She was always sure of an ally the moment the gentlemen appeared. The cavalier who had sat next to her at dinner was only too happy to meet her again. More than once, too, she had caught her noble host, though a whole garrison was ever on the watch to prevent her, and he was greatly amused, and showed that he was greatly amused by her society. Then she suggested plans to him to divert his guests. In a country-house the suggestive mind is inestimable. Somehow or other, before a week was passed, Mrs. Guy Flouncey seemed the soul of everything, was always surrounded by a cluster of admirers, and with what are called 'the best men' ever ready to ride with her, dance with her, act with her, or fall at her feet. The fine ladies found it absolutely necessary to thaw: they began to ask her questions after dinner. Mrs. Guy Flouncey only wanted an opening. She was an adroit flatterer, with a temper imperturbable, and gifted with a ceaseless energy of conferring slight obligations. She lent them patterns for new fashions, in all which mysteries she was very versant; and what with some gentle glozing and some gay gossip, sugar for their tongues and salt for their tails, she contrived pretty well to catch them all.

CHAPTER IX.

Nothing could present a greater contrast than the respective interiors of Coningsby and Beaumanoir. That air of habitual habitation, which so pleasingly distinguished the Duke's family seat, was entirely wanting at Coningsby. Everything, indeed, was vast and splendid; but it seemed rather a gala-house than a dwelling; as if the grand furniture and the grand servants had all come down express

from town with the grand company, and were to disappear and to be dispersed at the same time. And truly there were manifold traces of hasty and temporary arrangement; new carpets and old hangings; old paint, new gilding; battalions of odd French chairs, squadrons of queer English tables; and large tasteless lamps and tawdry chandeliers, evidently true cockneys, and only taking the air by way of change. There was, too, throughout the drawing-rooms an absence of all those minor articles of ornamental furniture that are the offering of taste to the home we love. There were no books neither; few flowers; no pet animals; no portfolios of fine drawings by our English artists like the album of the Duchess, full of sketches by Landseer and Stanfield, and their gifted brethren; not a print even, except portfolios of H.B.'s caricatures. The modes and manners of the house were not rural; there was nothing of the sweet order of a country life. Nobody came down to breakfast; the ladies were scarcely seen until dinner-time; they rolled about in carriages together late in the afternoon as if they were in London, or led a sort of factitious boudoir life in their provincial dressing-rooms.

The Marquess sent for Coningsby the morning after his arrival and asked him to breakfast with him in his private rooms. Nothing could be more kind or more agreeable than his grandfather. He appeared to be interested in his grandson's progress, was glad to find Coningsby had distinguished himself at Eton, solemnly adjured him not to neglect his French. A classical education, he said, was a very admirable thing, and one which all gentlemen should enjoy; but Coningsby would find some day that there were two educations, one which his position required, and another which was demanded by the world. 'French, my dear Harry,' he continued, 'is the key to this second education. In a couple of years or so you will enter the world; it is a different thing to what you read about. It is a masquerade; a motley, sparkling multitude, in which you may mark all forms and colours, and listen to all sentiments and opinions; but where all you see and hear has only one

object, plunder. When you get into this crowd you will find that Greek and Latin are not so much diffused as you imagine. I was glad to hear you speaking French yesterday. Study your accent. There are a good many foreigners here with whom you may try your wing a little; don't talk to any of them too much. Be very careful of intimacies. All the people here are good acquaintance; at least pretty well. Now, here,' said the Marquess, taking up a letter and then throwing it on the table again, 'now here is a man whom I should like you to know, Sidonia. He will be here in a few days. Lay yourself out for him if you have the opportunity. He is a man of rare capacity, and enormously rich. No one knows the world like Sidonia. I never met his equal; and 'tis so pleasant to talk with one that can want nothing of you.

Lord Monmouth had invited Coningsby to take a drive with him in the afternoon. The Marquess wished to show a part of his domain to the Ambassadors. Only Lucretia, he said, would be with them, and there was a place for him. This invitation was readily accepted by Coningsby, who was not yet sufficiently established in the habits of the house exactly to know how to pass his morning. His friend and patron, Mr. Rigby, was entirely taken up with the Grand-duke, whom he was accompanying all over the neighbourhood, in visits to manufactures, many of which Rigby himself saw for the first time, but all of which he fluently explained to his Imperial Highness. In return for this, he extracted much information from the Grand-duke on Russian plans and projects, materials for a 'slashing' article against the Russophobia that he was preparing, and in which he was to prove that Muscovite aggression was an English interest, and entirely to be explained by the want of sea-coast, which drove the Czar, for the pure purposes of commerce, to the Baltic and the Euxine.

When the hour for the drive arrived, Coningsby found Lucretia, a young girl when he had first seen her only four years back, and still his junior, in that majestic dame who had conceded a superb recognition to him the preceding

evo. She really looked older than Madame Colonna ; who, very beautiful, very young-looking, and mistress of the real arts of the toilet, those that cannot be detected, was not in the least altered since she first so cordially saluted Coningsby as her dear young friend at Monmouth House.

The day was delightful, the park extensive and picturesque, the Ambassadors sparkling with anecdote, and occasionally, in a low voice, breathing a diplomatic hint to Lord Monmouth, who bowed his graceful consciousness of her distinguished confidence. Coningsby occasionally took advantage of one of those moments, when the conversation ceased to be general, to address Lucretia, who replied in calm, fine smiles, and in affable monosyllables. She indeed generally succeeded in conveying an impression to those she addressed, that she had never seen them before, did not care to see them now, and never wished to see them again. And all this, too, with an air of great courtesy.

They arrived at the brink of a wooded bank ; at their feet flowed a fine river, deep and rushing, though not broad ; its opposite bank the boundary of a richly-timbered park.

'Ah! this is beautiful!' exclaimed the Ambassador. And is that yours, Lord Monmouth ?'

'Not yet,' said the Marquess. 'That is Hellingsley ; it is one of the finest places in the county, with a splendid estate ; not so considerable as Coningsby, but very great. It belongs to an old, a very old man, without a relative in the world. It is known that the estate will be sold at his death, which may be almost daily expected. Then it is mine. No one can offer for it what I can afford. For it gives me this division of the county, Princess. To possess Hellingsley is one of my objects.' The Marquess spoke with an animation unusual with him, almost with a degree of excitement.

The wind met them as they returned, the breeze blew rather freshly. Lucretia all of a sudden seemed touched with unusual emotion. She was alarmed lest Lord Monmouth should catch cold ; she took a kerchief from her own

well-turned throat to tie round his neck. He feebly resisted, evidently much pleased.

The Princess Lucretia was highly accomplished. In the evening, having refused several distinguished guests, but instantly yielding to the request of Lord Monmouth, she sang. It was impossible to conceive a contralto of more thrilling power, or an execution more worthy of the voice. Coningsby, who was not experienced in fine singing, listened as if to a supernatural lay, but all agreed it was of the highest class of nature and of art; and the Grand-duke was in raptures. Lucretia received even his Highness' compliments with a graceful indifference. Indeed, to those who watched her demeanour, it might be remarked that she seemed to yield to none, although all bowed before her.

Madame Colonna, who was always kind to Coningsby, expressed to him her gratification from the party of the morning. It must have been delightful, she assured Coningsby, for Lord Monmouth to have had both Lucretia and his grandson with him; and Lucretia too, she added, must have been so pleased.

Coningsby could not make out why Madame Colonna was always intimating to him that the Princess Lucretia took such great interest in his existence, looked forward with such gratification to his society, remembered with so much pleasure the past, anticipated so much happiness from the future. It appeared to him that he was to Lucretia, if not an object of repugnance, as he sometimes fancied, certainly one only of absolute indifference; but he said nothing. He had already lived long enough to know that it is unwise to wish everything explained.

In the meantime his life was agreeable. Every day, he found, added to his acquaintance. He was never without a companion to ride or to shoot with; and of riding Coningsby was very fond. His grandfather, too, was continually giving him goodnatured turns, and making him of consequence in the Castle: so that all the guests were fully impressed with the importance of Lord Monmouth's grandson. Lady St. Julians pronounced him distinguished; the

Ambassadress thought diplomacy should be his part, as he had a fine person and a clear brain; Madame Colonna spoke of him always as if she took intense interest in his career, and declared that she liked him almost as much as Lucretia did; the Russians persisted in always styling him 'the young Marquess,' notwithstanding the Ambassador's explanations; Mrs. Guy Flouncey made a dashing attack on him; but Coningsby remembered a lesson which Lady Everingham had graciously bestowed on him. He was not to be caught again easily. Besides, Mrs. Guy Flouncey laughed a little too much, and talked a little too loud.

As time flow on, there were changes of visitors, chiefly among the single men. At the end of the first week after Coningsby's arrival, Lord Eskdale appeared, bringing with him Lucian Gay; and soon after followed the Marquess of Beauvoir and Mr. Melton. These were all heroes who, in their way, interested the ladies, and whose advent was hailed with general satisfaction. Even Lucretia would relax a little to Lord Eskdale. He was one of her oldest friends, and with a simplicity of manner which amounted almost to plainness, and with rather a cynical nonchalance in his carriage towards men, Lord Eskdale was invariably a favourite with women. To be sure his station was eminent; he was noble, and very rich, and very powerful, and these are qualities which tell as much with the softer as the harsher sex; but there are individuals with all these qualities who are nevertheless unpopular with women. Lord Eskdale was easy, knew the world thoroughly, had no prejudices, and, above all, had a reputation for success. A reputation for success has as much influence with women as a reputation for wealth has with men. Both reputations may be, and often are, unjust; but we see persons daily make good fortunes by them all the same. Lord Eskdale was not an impostor; and though he might not have been so successful a man had he not been Lord Eskdale, still, thrown over by a revolution, he would have lighted on his legs.

The arrival of this nobleman was the occasion of giving

a good turn to poor Flora. He went immediately to see his friend Villebecque and his troop. Indeed it was a sort of society which pleased Lord Eskdale more than that which is deemed more refined. He was very sorry about 'La Petite;' but thought that everything would come right in the long run; and told Villebecque that he was glad to hear him well spoken of here, especially by the Marquess, who seemed to take to him. As for Flora, he was entirely against her attempting the stage again, at least for the present, but as she was a good musician, he suggested to the Princess Lucretia one night, that the subordinate aid of Flora might be of service to her, and permit her to favour her friends with some pieces which otherwise she must deny to them. This suggestion was successful; Flora was introduced occasionally, soon often, to their parties in the evening, and her performances were in every respect satisfactory. There was nothing to excite the jealousy of Lucretia either in her style or her person. And yet she sang well enough, and was a quiet, refined, retiring, by no means disagreeable person. She was the companion of Lucretia very often in the morning as well as in the illumined saloon; for the Princess was devoted to the art in which she excelled. This connexion on the whole contributed to the happiness of poor Flora. True it was, in the evening she often found herself sitting or standing alone and no one noticing her; she had no dazzling quality to attract men of fashion, who themselves love to worship ever the fashionable. Even their goddesses must be *à la mode*. But Coningsby never omitted an opportunity to show Flora some kindness under these circumstances. He always came and talked to her, and praised her singing, and would sometimes hand her refreshments and give her his arm if necessary. These slight attentions coming from the grandson of Lord Monmouth were for the world redoubled in their value, though Flora thought only of their essential kindness; all in character with that first visit which dwelt on the poor girl's memory, though it had long ago escaped that of her visitor. For in truth

Coningsby had no other impulse for his conduct but kind-heartedness.

Thus we have attempted to give some faint idea how life glided away at the Castle the first fortnight that Coningsby passed there. Perhaps we ought not to omit that Mrs. Guy Flouncey, to the infinite disgust of Lady St. Julians, who had a daughter with her, successfully entrapped the devoted attentions of the young Marquess of Beaumanoir, who was never very backward if a lady would take trouble enough; while his friend, Mr. Melton, whose barren homage Lady St. Julians wished her daughter ever particularly to shun, employed all his gaiety, good-humour, frivolity, and fashion in amusing that young lady, and with irresistible effect. For the rest, they continued, though they had only partridges to shoot, to pass the morning without weariness. The weather was fine; the stud numerous; all might be mounted. The Grand-duke and his suite, guided by Mr. Rigby, had always some objects to visit, and railroads returned them just in time for the banquet with an appetite which they had earned, and during which Rigby recounted their achievements, and his own opinions.

The dinner was always first-rate; the evening never failed; music, dancing, and the theatre offered great resources independently of the soul-subduing sentiment harshly called flirtation, and which is the spell of a country house. Lord Monmouth was satisfied, for he had scarcely ever felt wearied. All that he required in life was to be amused; perhaps that was not all he required, but it was indispensable. Nor was it wonderful that on the present occasion he obtained his purpose, for there were half a hundred of the brightest eyes and quickest brains ever on the watch or the whirl to secure him distraction. The only circumstance that annoyed him was the non-arrival of Sidonia. Lord Monmouth could not bear to be disappointed. He could not refrain from saying, notwithstanding all the resources and all the exertions of his guests,

'I cannot understand why Sidonia does not come. I wish Sidonia were here.'

'So do I,' said Lord Eskdale; 'Sidonia is the only man who tells one anything new.'

'We saw Sidonia at Lord Studcaster's,' said Lord Beaumanoir. 'He told Melton he was coming here.'

'You know he has bought all Studcaster's horses,' said Mr. Melton.

'I wonder he does not buy Studcaster himself,' said Lord Monmouth; 'I would if I were he; Sidonia can buy anything,' he turned to Mrs. Guy Flouncey.

'I wonder who Sidonia is,' thought Mrs. Guy Flouncey, but she was determined no one should suppose she did not know.

At length one day Coningsby met Madame Colonna in the vestibule before dinner.

'Milor is in such good temper, Mr. Coningsby,' she said; 'Monsieur de Sidonia has arrived.'

About ten minutes before dinner there was a stir in the chamber. Coningsby looked round. He saw the Grand-duke advancing, and holding out his hand in a manner the most gracious. A gentleman, of distinguished air, but with his back turned to Coningsby, was bowing as he received his Highness' greeting. There was a general pause in the room. Several came forward: even the Marquess seemed a little moved. Coningsby could not resist the impulse of curiosity to see this individual of whom he had heard so much. He glided round the room, and caught the countenance of his companion in the forest inn; he who announced to him, that 'the Age of Ruins was past.'

CHAPTER X.

SIDONIA was descended from a very ancient and noble family of Arragon, that, in the course of ages, had given to the state many distinguished citizens. In the priesthood its members had been peculiarly eminent. Besides several prelates, they counted among their number an Archbishop of Toledo; and a Sidonia, in a season of great danger and difficulty, had exercised for a series of years the paramount office of Grand Inquisitor.

Yet, strange as it may sound, it is nevertheless a fact, of which there is no lack of evidence, that this illustrious family during all this period, in common with two-thirds of the Arragonese nobility, secretly adhered to the ancient faith and ceremonies of their fathers; a belief in the unity of the God of Sinai, and the rights and observances of the laws of Moses.

Whence came those Mosaic Arabs whose passages across the strait from Africa to Europe long preceded the invasion of the Mohammedan Arabs, it is now impossible to ascertain. Their traditions tell us that from time immemorial they had sojourned in Africa; and it is not improbable that they may have been the descendants of some of the earlier dispersions; like those Hebrew colonies that we find in China, and who probably emigrated from Persia in the days of the great monarchies. Whatever may have been their origin in Africa, their fortunes in Southern Europe are not difficult to trace, though the annals of no race in any age can detail a history of such strange vicissitudes, or one rife with more touching and romantic incident. Their unexampled prosperity in the Spanish Peninsula, and especially in the south, where they had become the principal cultivators of the soil, excited the jealousy of the Goths; and the Councils of Toledo during the sixth and seventh centuries attempted, by a series of decrees worthy of the barbarians who promulgated them, to root the Jewish Arabs out of the land. There is no

doubt the Council of Toledo led, as directly as the lust of Roderick, to the invasion of Spain by the Moslem Arabs. The Jewish population, suffering under the most sanguinary and atrocious persecution, looked to their sympathising brethren of the Crescent, whose camps already gleamed on the opposite shore. The overthrow of the Gothic kingdoms was as much achieved by the superior information which the Saracens received from their suffering kinsmen, as by the resistless valour of the Desert. The Saracen kingdoms were established. That fair and unrivalled civilisation arose which preserved for Europe arts and letters when Christendom was plunged in darkness. The children of Ishmael rewarded the children of Israel with equal rights and privileges with themselves. During these halcyon centuries, it is difficult to distinguish the follower of Moses from the votary of Mahomet. Both alike built palaces, gardens, and fountains; filled equally the highest offices of the state, competed in an extensive and enlightened commerce, and rivalled each other in renowned universities.

Even after the fall of the principal Moorish kingdoms, the Jews of Spain were still treated by the conquering Goths with tenderness and consideration. Their numbers, their wealth, the fact that, in Arragon especially, they were the proprietors of the soil, and surrounded by warlike and devoted followers, secured for them an usage which, for a considerable period, made them little sensible of the change of dynasties and religions. But the tempest gradually gathered. As the Goths grew stronger, persecution became more bold. Where the Jewish population was scanty they were deprived of their privileges, or obliged to conform under the title of 'Nuevos Christianos.' At length the union of the two crowns under Ferdinand and Isabella, and the fall of the last Moorish kingdom, brought the crisis of their fate both to the New Christian and the nonconforming Hebrew. The Inquisition appeared, the Institution that had exterminated the Albigenes and had desolated Languedoc, and which, it should ever be remembered, was established in the Spanish kingdoms against the

protests of the Cortes and amid the terror of the populace. The Dominicans opened their first tribunal at Seville, and it is curious that the first individuals they summoned before them were the Duke of Medina Sidonia, the Marquess of Cadiz, and the Count of Arcos; three of the most considerable personages in Spain. How many were burned alive at Seville during the first year, how many imprisoned for life, what countless thousands were visited with severe though lighter punishments, need not be recorded here. In nothing was the Holy Office more happy than in multi-form and subtle means by which they tested the sincerity of the New Christians.

At length the Inquisition was to be extended to Arragon. The high-spirited nobles of that kingdom knew that its institution was for them a matter of life or death. The Cortes of Arragon appealed to the King and to the Pope; they organised an extensive conspiracy; the chief Inquisitor was assassinated in the cathedral of Saragossa. Alas! it was fated that in this, one of the many, and continual, and continuing struggles between the rival organisations of the North and the South, the children of the sun should fall. The fagot and the San Benito were the doom of the nobles of Arragon. Those who were convicted of secret Judaism, and this scarcely three centuries ago, were dragged to the stake; the sons of the noblest houses, in whose veins the Hebrew taint could be traced, had to walk in solemn procession, singing psalms, and confessing their faith in the religion of the fell Torquemada.

This triumph in Arragon, the almost simultaneous fall of the last Moorish kingdom, raised the hopes of the pure Christians to the highest pitch. Having purged the new Christians, they next turned their attention to the old Hebrews. Ferdinand was resolved that the delicious air of Spain should be breathed no longer by any one who did not profess the Catholic faith. Baptism or exile was the alternative. More than six hundred thousand individuals, some authorities greatly increase the amount, the most industrious, the most intelligent, and the most enlightened

of Spanish subjects, would not desert the religion of their fathers. For this they gave up the delightful land wherein they had lived for centuries, the beautiful cities they had raised, the universities from which Christendom drew for ages its most precious lore, the tombs of their ancestors, the temples where they had worshipped the God for whom they had made this sacrifice. They had but four months to prepare for eternal exile, after a residence of as many centuries; during which brief period forced sales and glutted markets virtually confiscated their property. It is a calamity that the scattered nation still ranks with the desolations of Nebuchadnezzar and of Titus. Who after this should say the Jews are by nature a sordid people? But the Spanish Goth, then so cruel and so haughty, where is he? A despised suppliant to the very race which he banished, for some miserable portion of the treasure which their habits of industry have again accumulated. Where is that tribunal that summoned Medina Sidonia and Cadiz to its dark inquisition? Where is Spain? Its fall, its unparalleled and its irremediable fall, is mainly to be attributed to the expulsion of that large portion of its subjects, the most industrious and intelligent, who traced their origin to the Mosaic and Mohammedan Arabs.

The Sidonias of Arragon were Nuevos Christianos. Some of them, no doubt, were burned alive at the end of the fifteenth century, under the system of Torquemada; many of them, doubtless, wore the San Benito; but they kept their titles and estates, and in time reached those great offices to which we have referred.

During the long disorders of the Peninsular war, when so many openings were offered to talent, and so many opportunities seized by the adventurous, a cadet of a younger branch of this family made a large fortune by military contracts, and supplying the commissariat of the different armies. At the peace, prescient of the great financial future of Europe, confident in the fertility of his own genius, in his original views of fiscal subjects, and his knowledge of national resources, this Sidonia, feeling that

Madrid, or even Cadiz, could never be a base on which the monetary transactions of the world could be regulated, resolved to emigrate to England, with which he had, in the course of years, formed considerable commercial connections. He arrived here after the peace of Paris, with his large capital. He staked all that he was worth on the Waterloo loan; and the event made him one of the greatest capitalists in Europe.

No sooner was Sidonia established in England than he professed Judaism; which Torquemada flattered himself, with the fagot and the San Benito, he had drained out of the veins of his family more than three centuries ago. He sent over, also, for several of his brothers, who were as good Catholics in Spain as Ferdinand and Isabella could have possibly desired, but who made an offering in the synagogue, in gratitude for their safe voyage, on their arrival in England.

Sidonia had foreseen in Spain that, after the exhaustion of a war of twenty-five years, Europe must require capital to carry on peace. He reaped the due reward of his sagacity. Europe did require money, and Sidonia was ready to lend it to Europe. France wanted some; Austria more; Prussia a little; Russia a few millions. Sidonia could furnish them all. The only country which he avoided was Spain; he was too well acquainted with its resources. Nothing, too, would ever tempt him to lend anything to the revolted colonies of Spain. Prudence saved him from being a creditor of the mother-country; his Spanish pride recoiled from the rebellion of her children.

It is not difficult to conceive that, after having pursued the career we have intimated for about ten years, Sidonia had become one of the most considerable personages in Europe. He had established a brother, or a near relative, in whom he could confide, in most of the principal capitals. He was lord and master of the money-market of the world, and of course virtually lord and master of everything else. He literally held the revenues of Southern Italy in pawn; and monarchs and ministers of all countries courted his advice

and were guided by his suggestions. He was still in the vigour of life, and was not a mere money-making machine. He had a general intelligence equal to his position, and looked forward to the period when some relaxation from his vast enterprises and exertions might enable him to direct his energies to great objects of public benefit. But in the height of his vast prosperity he suddenly died, leaving only one child, a youth still of tender years, and heir to the greatest fortune in Europe, so great, indeed, that it could only be calculated by millions.

Shut out from universities and schools, those universities and schools which were indebted for their first knowledge of ancient philosophy to the learning and enterprise of his ancestors, the young Sidonia was fortunate in the tutor whom his father had procured for him, and who devoted to his charge all the resources of his trained intellect and vast and various erudition. A Jesuit before the revolution; since then an exiled Liberal leader; now a member of the Spanish Cortes; Rebello was always a Jew. He found in his pupil that precocity of intellectual development which is characteristic of the Arabian organisation. The young Sidonia penetrated the highest mysteries of mathematics with a facility almost instinctive; while a memory, which never had any twilight hours, but always reflected a noon-tide clearness, seemed to magnify his acquisitions of ancient learning by the promptness with which they could be reproduced and applied.

The circumstances of his position, too, had early contributed to give him an unusual command over the modern languages. An Englishman, and taught from his cradle to be proud of being an Englishman, he first evinced in speaking his native language those remarkable powers of expression, and that clear and happy elocution, which ever afterwards distinguished him. But the son of a Spaniard, the sonorous syllables of that noble tongue constantly resounded in his ear; while the foreign guests who thronged his father's mansion habituated him from an early period of life to the tones of languages that were not

long strange to him. When he was nineteen, Sidonia, who had then resided some time with his uncle at Naples, and had made a long visit to another of his father's relatives at Frankfort, possessed a complete mastery over the principal European languages.

At seventeen he had parted with Rebello, who returned to Spain, and Sidonia, under the control of his guardians, commenced his travels. He resided, as we have mentioned, some time in Germany, and then, having visited Italy, settled at Naples, at which city it may be said he made his entrance into life. With an interesting person, and highly accomplished, he availed himself of the gracious attentions of a court of which he was principal creditor; and which, treating him as a distinguished English traveller, were enabled perhaps to show him some favours that the manners of the country might not have permitted them to accord to his Neapolitan relatives. Sidonia thus obtained at an early age that experience of refined and luxurious society, which is a necessary part of a finished education. It gives the last polish to the manners; it teaches us something of the power of the passions, early, developed in the hot-bed of self-indulgence; it instils into us that indefinable tact seldom obtained in later life, which prevents us from saying the wrong thing, and often impels us to do the right.

Between Paris and Naples Sidonia passed two years, spent apparently in the dissipation which was perhaps inseparable from his time of life. He was admired by women, to whom he was magnificent, idolised by artists whom he patronised, received in all circles with great distinction, and appreciated for his intellect by the very few to whom he at all opened himself. For, though affable and gracious, it was impossible to penetrate him. Though unreserved in his manner, his frankness was strictly limited to the surface. He observed everything, thought ever, but avoided serious discussion. If you pressed him for an opinion, he took refuge in raillery, or threw out some grave paradox with which it was not easy to cope.

The moment he came of age, Sidonia, having previously, at a great family congress held at Naples, made arrangements with the heads of the houses that bore his name respecting the disposition and management of his vast fortune, quitted Europe.

Sidonia was absent from his connections for five years, during which period he never communicated with them. They were aware of his existence only by the orders which he drew on them for payment, and which arrived from all quarters of the globe. It would appear from these documents that he had dwelt a considerable time in the Mediterranean regions; penetrated Nilotic Africa to Sennaar and Abyssinia; traversed the Asiatic continent to Tartary, whence he had visited Hindostan, and the isles of that Indian Sea which are so little known. Afterwards he was heard of at Valparaiso, the Brazils, and Lima. He evidently remained some time at Mexico, which he quitted for the United States. One morning, without notice, he arrived in London.

Sidonia had exhausted all the sources of human knowledge; he was master of the learning of every nation, of all tongues dead or living, of every literature, Western and Oriental. He had pursued the speculations of science to their last term, and had himself illustrated them by observation and experiment. He had lived in all orders of society, had viewed every combination of Nature and of Art, and had observed man under every phasis of civilisation. He had even studied him in the wilderness. The influence of creeds and laws, manners, customs, traditions, in all their diversities, had been subjected to his personal scrutiny.

He brought to the study of this vast aggregate of knowledge a penetrative intellect that, matured by long meditation, and assisted by that absolute freedom from prejudice, which was the compensatory possession of a man without a country, permitted Sidonia to fathom, as it were by intuition, the depth of questions apparently the most difficult and profound. He possessed the rare faculty of com-

municating with precision ideas the most abstruse, and in general a power of expression which arrests and satisfies attention.

With all this knowledge, which no one knew more to prize, with boundless wealth, and with an athletic frame, which sickness had never tried, and which had avoided excess, Sidonia nevertheless looked upon life with a glance rather of curiosity than content. His religion walled him out from the pursuits of a citizen; his riches deprived him of the stimulating anxieties of a man. He perceived himself a lone being, alike without cares and without duties.

To a man in his position there might yet seem one un-failing source of felicity and joy; independent of creed, independent of country, independent even of character. He might have discovered that perpetual spring of happiness in the sensibility of the heart. But this was a sealed fountain to Sidonia. In his organisation there was a peculiarity, perhaps a great deficiency. He was a man without affections. It would be harsh to say he had no heart, for he was susceptible of deep emotions, but not for individuals. He was capable of rebuilding a town that was burned down; of restoring a colony that had been destroyed by some awful visitation of Nature; of redeeming to liberty a horde of captives; and of doing these great acts in secret; for, void of all self-love, public approbation was worthless to him; but the individual never touched him. Woman was to him a toy, man a machine.

The lot the most precious to man, and which a beneficent Providence has made not the least common; to find in another heart a perfect and profound sympathy; to unite his existence with one who could share all his joys, soften all his sorrows, aid him in all his projects, respond to all his fancies, counsel him in his cares, and support him in his perils; make life charming by her charms, interesting by her intelligence, and sweet by the vigilant variety of her tenderness; to find your life blessed by such an influence, and to feel that your influence can bless such a life: this lot, the most divine of divine gifts, that power and even

fame can never rival in its delights, all this Nature had denied to Sidonia.

With an imagination as fiery as his native Desert, and an intellect as luminous as his native sky, he wanted, like that land, those softening dews without which the soil is barren, and the sunbeam as often a messenger of pestilence as an angel of regenerative grace.

Such a temperament, though rare, is peculiar to the East. It inspired the founders of the great monarchies of antiquity, the prophets that the Desert has sent forth, the Tartar chiefs who have overrun the world; it might be observed in the great Corsican, who, like most of the inhabitants of the Mediterranean isles, had probably Arab blood in his veins. It is a temperament that befits conquerors and legislators, but, in ordinary times and ordinary situations, entails on its possessor only eccentric aberrations or profound melancholy.

The only human quality that interested Sidonia was Intellect. He cared not whence it came; where it was to be found: creed, country, class, character, in this respect, were alike indifferent to him. The author, the artist, the man of science, never appealed to him in vain. Often he anticipated their wants and wishes. He encouraged their society; was as frank in his conversation as he was generous in his contributions; but the instant they ceased to be authors, artists, or philosophers, and their communications arose from anything but the intellectual quality which had originally interested him, the moment they were rash enough to approach intimacy and appealed to the sympathising man, instead of the congenial intelligence, he saw them no more. It was not however intellect merely in these unquestionable shapes that commanded his notice. There was not an adventurer in Europe with whom he was not familiar. No Minister of State had such communication with secret agents and political spies as Sidonia. He held relations with all the clever outcasts of the world. The catalogue of his acquaintance in the shape of Greeks, Armenians, Moors, secret Jews, Tartars, Gipsies, wandering

Poles and Carbonari, would throw a curious light on those subterranean agencies of which the world in general knows so little, but which exercise so great an influence on public events. His extensive travels, his knowledge of languages, his daring and adventurous disposition, and his unlimited means, had given him opportunities of becoming acquainted with these characters, in general so difficult to trace, and of gaining their devotion. To these sources he owed that knowledge of strange and hidden things which often startled those who listened to him. Nor was it easy, scarcely possible, to deceive him. Information reached him from so many, and such contrary quarters, that with his discrimination and experience, he could almost instantly distinguish the truth. The secret history of the world was his pastime. His great pleasure was to contrast the hidden motive, with the public pretext, of transactions.

One source of interest Sidonia found in his descent and in the fortunes of his race. As firm in his adherence to the code of the great Legislator as if the trumpet still sounded on Sinai, he might have received in the conviction of divine favour an adequate compensation for human persecution. But there were other and more terrestrial considerations that made Sidonia proud of his origin, and confident in the future of his kind. Sidonia was a great philosopher, who took comprehensive views of human affairs, and surveyed every fact in its relative position to other facts, the only mode of obtaining truth.

Sidonia was well aware that in the five great varieties into which Physiology has divided the human species; to wit, the Caucasian, the Mongolian, the Malayan, the American, the Ethiopian; the Arabian tribes rank in the first and superior class, together, among others, with the Saxon and the Greek. This fact alone is a source of great pride and satisfaction to the animal Man. But Sidonia and his brethren could claim a distinction which the Saxon and the Greek, and the rest of the Caucasian nations, have forfeited. The Hebrew is an unmixed race. Doubtless, among the tribes who inhabit the bosom of the

Desert, progenitors alike of the Mosaic and the Mohammedan Arabs, blood may be found as pure as that of the descendants of the Scheik Abraham. But the Mosaic Arabs are the most ancient, if not the only, unmixed blood that dwells in cities.

An unmixed race of a first-rate organisation are the aristocracy of Nature. Such excellence is a positive fact; not an imagination, a ceremony, coined by poets, blazoned by cozening heralds, but perceptible in its physical advantages, and in the vigour of its unsullied idiosyncrasy.

In his comprehensive travels, Sidonia had visited and examined the Hebrew communities of the world. He had found, in general, the lower orders debased; the superior immersed in sordid pursuits; but he perceived that the intellectual development was not impaired. This gave him hope. He was persuaded that organisation would outlive persecution. When he reflected on what they had endured, it was only marvellous that the race had not disappeared. They had defied exile, massacre, spoliation, the degrading influence of the constant pursuit of gain; they had defied Time. For nearly three thousand years, according to Archbishop Usher, they have been dispersed over the globe. To the unpolluted current of their Caucasian structure, and to the segregating genius of their great Law-giver, Sidonia ascribed the fact that they had not been long ago absorbed among those mixed races, who presume to persecute them, but who periodically wear away and disappear, while their victims still flourish in all the primeval vigour of the pure Asian breed.

Shortly after his arrival in England, Sidonia repaired to the principal Courts of Europe, that he might become personally acquainted with the monarchs and ministers of whom he had heard so much. His position insured him a distinguished reception; his personal qualities immediately made him cherished. He could please; he could do more, he could astonish. He could throw out a careless observation which would make the oldest diplomatist start; a winged word that gained him the consideration, sometimes the confidence, of Sovereigns. When he had fathomed

the intelligence which governs Europe, and which can only be done by personal acquaintance, he returned to this country.

The somewhat hard and literal character of English life suited one who shrank from sensibility, and often took refuge in sarcasm. Its masculine vigour and active intelligence occupied and interested his mind. Sidonia, indeed, was exactly the character who would be welcomed in our circles. His immense wealth, his unrivalled social knowledge, his clear vigorous intellect, the severe simplicity of his manners, frank, but neither claiming nor brooking familiarity, and his devotion to field-sports, which was the safety-valve of his energy, were all circumstances and qualities which the English appreciate and admire; and it may be fairly said of Sidonia that few men were more popular, and none less understood.

CHAPTER XI.

AT dinner, Coningsby was seated on the same side as Sidonia, and distant from him. There had been, therefore, no mutual recognition. Another guest had also arrived, Mr. Ormsby. He came straight from London, full of rumours, had seen Tadpole, who, hearing he was on the wing for Coningsby Castle, had taken him into a dark corner of a club, and shown him his book, a safe piece of confidence, as Mr. Ormsby was very near-sighted. It was, however, to be received as an undoubted fact, that all was right, and somehow or other, before very long, there would be national demonstration of the same. This arrival of Mr. Ormsby, and the news that he bore, gave a political turn to the conversation after the ladies had left the room.

'Tadpole wants me to stand for Birmingham,' said Mr. Ormsby, gravely.

'You!' exclaimed Lord Monmouth, and, throwing himself back in his chair, he broke into a real, hearty laugh.