

BOOK V.

CHAPTER I.

AN University life did not bring to Coningsby that feeling of emancipation usually experienced by freshmen. The contrast between school and college life is perhaps, under any circumstances, less striking to the Etonian than to others: he has been prepared for becoming his own master by the liberty wisely entrusted to him in his boyhood, and which is, in general, discreetly exercised. But there were also other reasons why Coningsby should have been less impressed with the novelty of his life, and have encountered less temptations than commonly are met with in the new existence which an University opens to youth. In the interval which had elapsed between quitting Eton and going to Cambridge, brief as the period may comparatively appear, Coningsby had seen much of the world. Three or four months, indeed, may not seem, at the first blush, a course of time which can very materially influence the formation of character; but time must not be counted by calendars, but by sensations, by thought. Coningsby had felt a good deal, reflected more. He had encountered a great number of human beings, offering a vast variety of character for his observation. It was not merely manners, but even the intellectual and moral development of the human mind, which in a great degree, unconsciously to himself, had been submitted to his study and his scrutiny. New trains of ideas had been opened to him; his mind was teeming with suggestions. The horizon of his intelligence had insensibly expanded. He perceived that there were other opinions in the world, besides those to which he had been habituated. The depths of his intellect had been stirred. He was a wiser man.

He distinguished three individuals whose acquaintance had greatly influenced his mind; Eustace Lyle, the elder Millbank, above all, Sidonia. He curiously meditated over the fact, that three English subjects, one of them a principal landed proprietor, another one of the most eminent manufacturers, and the third the greatest capitalist in the kingdom, all of them men of great intelligence, and doubtless of a high probity and conscience, were in their hearts disaffected with the political constitution of the country. Yet, unquestionably, these were the men among whom we ought to seek for some of our first citizens. What, then, was this repulsive quality in those institutions which we persisted in calling national, and which once were so? Here was a great question.

There was another reason, also, why Coningsby should feel a little fastidious among his new habits, and, without being aware of it, a little depressed. For three or four months, and for the first time in his life, he had passed his time in the continual society of refined and charming women. It is an acquaintance which, when habitual, exercises a great influence over the tone of the mind, even if it does not produce any more violent effects. It refines the taste, quickens the perception, and gives, as it were, a grace and flexibility to the intellect. Coningsby in his solitary rooms arranging his books, sighed when he recalled the Lady Everinghams and the Lady Therasas; the gracious Duchess; the frank, good-natured Madame Colonna; that deeply interesting enigma the Princess Lucretia; and the gentle Flora. He thought with disgust of the impending dissipation of an University, which could only be an exaggeration of their coarse frolics at school. It seemed rather rapid this mighty Cambridge, over which they had so often talked in the playing fields of Eton, with such anticipations of its vast and absorbing interest. And those University honours that once were the great object of his aspirations, they did not figure in that grandeur with which they once haunted his imagination.

What Coningsby determined to conquer was knowledge.

He had watched the influence of Sidonia in society with an eye of unceasing vigilance. Coningsby perceived that all yielded to him; that Lord Monmouth even, who seemed to respect none, gave place to his intelligence; appealed to him, listened to him, was guided by him. What was the secret of this influence? Knowledge. On all subjects, his views were prompt and clear, and this not more from his native sagacity and reach of view, than from the aggregate of facts which rose to guide his judgment and illustrate his meaning, from all countries and all ages, instantly at his command.

The friends of Coningsby were now hourly arriving. It seemed when he met them again, that they had all suddenly become men since they had separated; Buckhurst especially. He had been at Paris, and returned with his mind very much opened, and trousers made quite in a new style. All his thoughts were, how soon he could contrive to get back again; and he told them endless stories of actresses, and dinners at fashionable *cafés*. Vere enjoyed Cambridge most, because he had been staying with his family since he quitted Eton. Henry Sydney was full of church architecture, national sports, restoration of the order of the Peasantry, and was to maintain a constant correspondence on these and similar subjects with Eustace Lyle. Finally, however, they all fell into a very fair, regular, routine life. They all read a little, but not with the enthusiasm which they had once projected. Buckhurst drove four-in-hand, and they all of them sometimes assisted him; but not immoderately. Their suppers were sometimes gay, but never outrageous; and, among all of them, the school friendship was maintained unbroken, and even undisturbed.

The fame of Coningsby preceded him at Cambridge. No man ever went up from whom more was expected in every way. The dons awaited a sucking member for the University, the undergraduates were prepared to welcome a new Alcibiades. He was neither: neither a prig nor a profligate; but a quiet, gentlemanlike, yet spirited young man, gracious to all, but intimate only with his old friends,

and giving always an impression in his general tone that his soul was not absorbed in his University.

And yet, perhaps, he might have been coddled into a prig, or flattered into a profligate, had it not been for the intervening experience which he had gained between his school and college life. That had visibly impressed upon him, what before he had only faintly acquired from books, that there was a greater and more real world awaiting him, than to be found in those bowers of Academus to which youth is apt at first to attribute an exaggerated importance. A world of action and passion, of power and peril; a world for which a great preparation was indeed necessary, severe and profound, but not altogether such an one as was now offered to him. Yet this want must be supplied, and by himself. Coningsby had already acquirements sufficiently considerable, with some formal application, to ensure him at all times his degree. He was no longer engrossed by the intention he once proudly entertained of trying for honours, and he chalked out for himself that range of reading, which, digested by his thought, should furnish him in some degree with that various knowledge of the history of man to which he aspired. No, we must not for a moment believe that accident could have long diverted the course of a character so strong. The same desire that prevented the Castle of his grandfather from proving a Castle of Indolence to him, that saved him from a too early initiation into the seductive distractions of a refined and luxurious society, would have preserved Coningsby from the puerile profligacy of a college life, or from being that idol of private tutors, a young pedant. It was that noble ambition, the highest and the best, that must be born in the heart and organised in the brain, which will not let a man be content, unless his intellectual power is recognised by his race, and desires that it should contribute to their welfare. It is the heroic feeling; the feeling that in old days produced demi-gods; without which no State is safe; without which political institutions are meat without salt; the Crown a bauble, the Church an establishment, Parlia-

ments debating-clubs, and Civilisation itself but a fitful and transient dream.

CHAPTER II.

LESS than a year after the arrival of Coningsby at Cambridge, and which he had only once quitted in the interval, and that to pass a short time in Berkshire with his friend Buckhurst, occurred the death of King William IV. This event necessarily induced a dissolution of the Parliament, elected under the auspices of Sir Robert Peel in 1834, and after the publication of the Tamworth Manifesto.

The death of the King was a great blow to what had now come to be generally styled the 'Conservative Cause.' It was quite unexpected; within a fortnight of his death, eminent persons still believed that 'it was only the hay-fever.' Had his Majesty lived until after the then impending registration, the Whigs would have been again dismissed. Nor is there any doubt that, under these circumstances, the Conservative Cause would have secured for the new ministers a parliamentary majority. What would have been the consequences to the country, if the four years of Whig rule, from 1837 to 1841, had not occurred? It is easier to decide what would have been the consequences to the Whigs. Some of their great friends might have lacked blue ribbons and lord-lieutenancies, and some of their little friends comfortable places in the Customs and Excise. They would have lost, undoubtedly, the distribution of four years' patronage; we can hardly say the exercise of four years' power; but they would have existed at this moment as the most powerful and popular Opposition that ever flourished in this country, if, indeed, the course of events had not long ere this carried them back to their old posts in a proud and intelligible position. The Reform Bill did not do more injury to the Tories, than the attempt to govern this country without a decided Parliamentary ma-

majority did the Whigs. The greatest of all evils is a weak government. They cannot carry good measures, they are forced to carry bad ones.

The death of the King was a great blow to the Conservative Cause; that is to say, it darkened the brow of Tadpole, quailed the heart of Taper, crushed all the rising hopes of those numerous statesmen who believe the country must be saved if they receive twelve hundred a-year. It is a peculiar class, that; 1,200*l.* per annum, paid quarterly, is their idea of political science and human nature. To receive 1,200*l.* per annum is government; to try to receive 1,200*l.* per annum is opposition; to wish to receive 1,200*l.* per annum is ambition. If a man wants to get into Parliament, and does not want to get 1,200*l.* per annum, they look upon him as daft; as a benighted being. They stare in each other's face, and ask, 'What can * * * * * want to get into Parliament for?' They have no conception that public reputation is a motive power, and with many men the greatest. They have as much idea of fame or celebrity, even of the masculine impulse of an honourable pride, as eunuchs of manly joys.

The twelve-hundred-a-yearers were in despair about the King's death. Their loyal souls were sorely grieved that his gracious Majesty had not outlived the Registration. All their happy inventions about 'hay-fever,' circulated in confidence, and sent by post to chairmen of Conservative Associations, followed by a royal funeral! General election about to take place with the old registration; government boroughs against them, and the young Queen for a cry. What a cry! Youth, beauty, and a Queen! Taper grew pale at the thought. What could they possibly get up to countervail it? Even Church and Corn-laws together would not do; and then Church was sulky, for the Conservative Cause had just made it a present of a commission, and all that the country gentlemen knew of Conservatism was, that it would not repeal the Malt Tax, and had made them repeal their pledges. Yet a cry must be found. A dissolution without a cry, in the Taper philosophy, would

be a world without a sun. A rise might be got by 'Independence of the House of Lords;' and Lord Lyndhurst's summaries might be well circulated at one penny per hundred, large discount allowed to Conservative Associations, and endless credit. Tadpole, however, was never very fond of the House of Lords; besides, it was too limited. Tadpole wanted the young Queen brought in; the rogue! At length, one morning, Taper came up to him with a slip of paper, and a smile of complacent austerity on his dull visage, 'I think, Mr. Tadpole, that will do!'

Tadpole took the paper and read, 'OUR YOUNG QUEEN, AND OUR OLD INSTITUTIONS.'

The eyes of Tadpole sparkled as if they had met a gnomic sentence of Periander or Thales; then turning to Taper, he said,

'What do you think of "ancient," instead of "old"?''

'You cannot have "Our modern Queen and our ancient Institutions,"' said Mr. Taper.

The dissolution was soon followed by an election for the borough of Cambridge. The Conservative Cause candidate was an old Etonian. That was a bond of sympathy which imparted zeal even to those who were a little sceptical of the essential virtues of Conservatism. Every undergraduate especially who remembered 'the distant spires,' became enthusiastic. Buckhurst took a very decided part. He cheered, he canvassed, he brought men to the poll whom none could move; he influenced his friends and his companions. Even Coningsby caught the contagion, and Vere, who had imbibed much of Coningsby's political sentiment, prevailed on himself to be neutral. The Conservative Cause triumphed in the person of its Eton champion. The day the member was chaired, several men in Coningsby's rooms were talking over their triumph.

'By Jove!' said the panting Buckhurst, throwing himself on the sofa, 'it was well done; never was any thing better done. An immense triumph! The greatest triumph

the Conservative Cause has had. And yet,' he added, laughing, 'if any fellow were to ask me what the Conservative Cause is, I am sure I should not know what to say.'

'Why, it is the cause of our glorious institutions,' said Coningsby. 'A Crown robbed of its prerogatives; a Church controlled by a commission; and an Aristocracy that does not lead.'

'Under whose genial influence the order of the Peasantry, "a country's pride," has vanished from the face of the land,' said Henry Sydney, 'and is succeeded by a race of serfs, who are called labourers, and who burn ricks.'

'Under which,' continued Coningsby, 'the Crown has become a cipher; the Church a sect; the Nobility drones; and the People drudges.'

'It is the great constitutional cause,' said Lord Vere, 'that refuses everything to opposition; yields everything to agitation; conservative in Parliament, destructive out-of-doors; that has no objection to any change provided only it be effected by unauthorised means.'

'The first public association of men,' said Coningsby, 'who have worked for an avowed end without enunciating a single principle.'

'And who have established political infidelity throughout the land,' said Lord Henry.

'By Jove!' said Buckhurst, 'what infernal fools we have made ourselves this last week!'

'Nay,' said Coningsby, smiling, 'it was our last schoolboy weakness. Floreat Etona, under all circumstances.'

'I certainly, Coningsby,' said Lord Vere, 'shall not assume the Conservative Cause, instead of the cause for which Hampden died in the field, and Sydney on the scaffold.'

'The cause for which Hampden died in the field and Sydney on the scaffold,' said Coningsby, 'was the cause of the Venetian Republic.'

'How, how?' said Buckhurst.

'I repeat it,' said Coningsby. 'The great object of the

Whig leaders in England from the first movement under Hampden to the last most successful one in 1688, was to establish in England a high aristocratic republic on the model of the Venetian, then the study and admiration of all speculative politicians. Read Harrington; turn over Algernon Sydney; and you will see how the minds of the English leaders in the seventeenth century were saturated with the Venetian type. And they at length succeeded. William III. found them out. He told the Whig leaders, "I will not be a Doge." He balanced parties; he baffled them as the Puritans baffled them fifty years before. The reign of Anne was a struggle between the Venetian and the English systems. Two great Whig nobles, Argyle and Somerset, worthy of seats in the Council of Ten, forced their Sovereign on her deathbed to change the ministry. They accomplished their object. They brought in a new family on their own terms. George I. was a Doge; George II. was a Doge; they were what William III., a great man, would not be. George III. tried not to be a Doge, but it was impossible materially to resist the deeply-laid combination. He might get rid of the Whig magnificoes, but he could not rid himself of the Venetian constitution. And a Venetian constitution did govern England from the accession of the House of Hanover until 1832. Now I do not ask you, Vere, to relinquish the political tenets which in ordinary times would have been your inheritance. All I say is, the constitution introduced by your ancestors having been subverted by their descendants your contemporaries, beware of still holding Venetian principles of government when you have not a Venetian constitution to govern with. Do what I am doing, what Henry Sydney and Buckhurst are doing, what other men that I could mention are doing, hold yourself aloof from political parties which, from the necessity of things, have ceased to have distinctive principles, and are therefore practically only factions; and wait and see, whether with patience, energy, honour, and Christian faith, and a desire to look to the national welfare and not to sectional and limited interests;

whether, I say, we may not discover some great principles to guide us, to which we may adhere, and which then, if true, will ultimately guide and control others.'

'The Whigs are worn out,' said Vere, 'Conservatism is a sham, and Radicalism is pollution.'

'I certainly,' said Buckhurst, 'when I get into the House of Commons, shall speak my mind without reference to any party whatever; and all I hope is, we may all come in at the same time, and then we may make a party of our own.'

'I have always heard my father say,' said Vere, 'that there was nothing so difficult as to organise an independent party in the House of Commons.'

'Ay! but that was in the Venetian period, Vere,' said Henry Sydney, smiling.

'I dare say,' said Buckhurst, 'the only way to make a party in the House of Commons is just the one that succeeds anywhere else. Men must associate together. When you are living in the same set, dining together every day, and quizzing the Dons, it is astonishing how well men agree. As for me, I never would enter into a conspiracy, unless the conspirators were fellows who had been at Eton with me; and then there would be no treachery.'

'Let us think of principles, and not of parties,' said Coningsby.

'For my part,' said Buckhurst, 'whenever a political system is breaking up, as in this country at present, I think the very best thing is to brush all the old Dons off the stage. They never take to the new road kindly. They are always hampered by their exploded prejudices and obsolete traditions. I don't think a single man, Vere, that sat in the Venetian Senate ought to be allowed to sit in the present English House of Commons.'

'Well, no one does in our family except my uncle Philip,' said Lord Henry; 'and the moment I want it, he will resign; for he detests Parliament. It interferes so with his hunting.'

'Well, we all have fair parliamentary prospects,' said Buckhurst. 'That is something. I wish we were in now.'

'Heaven forbid!' said Coningsby. 'I tremble at the responsibility of a seat at any time. With my present unsettled and perplexed views, there is nothing from which I should recoil so much as the House of Commons.'

'I quite agree with you,' said Henry Sydney. 'The best thing we can do is to keep as clear of political party as we possibly can. How many men waste the best part of their lives in painfully apologising for conscientious deviation from a parliamentary course which they adopted when they were boys, without thought, or prompted by some local connection, or interest, to secure a seat.'

It was the midnight following the morning when this conversation took place, that Coningsby, alone, and having just quitted a rather boisterous party of wassailers who had been celebrating at Buckhurst's rooms the triumph of 'Eton Statesmen,' if not of Conservative principles, stopped in the precincts of that Royal College that reminded him of his school-days, to cool his brow in the summer air, that even at that hour was soft, and to calm his mind in the contemplation of the still, the sacred, and the beauteous scene that surrounded him.

There rose that fane, the pride and boast of Cambridge, not unworthy to rank among the chief temples of Christendom. Its vast form was exaggerated in the uncertain hour; part shrouded in the deepest darkness, while a flood of silver light suffused its southern side, distinguished with revealing beam the huge ribs of its buttresses, and bathed with mild lustre its airy pinnacles.

'Where is the spirit that raised these walls?' thought Coningsby. 'Is it indeed extinct? Is then this civilisation, so much vaunted, inseparable from moderate feelings and little thoughts? If so, give me back barbarism! But I cannot believe it. Man that is made in the image of the Creator, is made for God-like deeds. Come what come may, I will cling to the heroic principle. It can alone satisfy my soul.'

CHAPTER III.

WE must now revert to the family, or rather the household, of Lord Monmouth, in which considerable changes and events had occurred since the visit of Coningsby to the Castle in the preceding autumn.

In the first place, the earliest frost of the winter had carried off the aged proprietor of Hellingsley, that contiguous estate which Lord Monmouth so much coveted, the possession of which was indeed one of the few objects of his life, and to secure which he was prepared to pay far beyond its intrinsic value, great as that undoubtedly was. Yet Lord Monmouth did not become its possessor. Long as his mind had been intent upon the subject, skilful as had been his combinations to secure his prey, and unlimited the means which were to achieve his purpose, another stepped in, and without his privity, without even the consolation of a struggle, stole away the prize; and this too a man whom he hated, almost the only individual out of his own family that he did hate; a man who had crossed him before in similar enterprises; who was his avowed foe; had lavished treasure to oppose him in elections; raised associations against his interest; established journals to assail him; denounced him in public; agitated against him in private; had declared more than once that he would make 'the county too hot for him;' his personal, inveterate, indomitable foe, Mr. Millbank of Millbank.

The loss of Hellingsley was a bitter disappointment to Lord Monmouth; but the loss of it to such an adversary touched him to the quick. He did not seek to control his anger; he could not succeed even in concealing his agitation. He threw upon Rigby that glance so rare with him, but under which men always quailed; that play of the eye which Lord Monmouth shared in common with Henry VIII., that struck awe into the trembling Commons when they had

given an obnoxious vote, as the King entered the gallery of his palace, and looked around him.

It was a look which implied that dreadful question, 'Why have I bought you that such things should happen? Why have I unlimited means and unscrupulous agents?' It made even Rigby feel; even his brazen tones were hushed.

To fly from everything disagreeable was the practical philosophy of Lord Monmouth; but he was as brave as he was sensual. He would not shrink before the new proprietor of Hellingsley. He therefore remained at the Castle with an aching heart, and redoubled his hospitalities. An ordinary mind might have been soothed by the unceasing consideration and the skilful and delicate flattery that ever surrounded Lord Monmouth; but his sagacious intelligence was never for a moment the dupe of his vanity. He had no self-love, and as he valued no one, there were really no feelings to play upon. He saw through everybody and everything; and when he had detected their purpose, discovered their weakness or their vileness, he calculated whether they could contribute to his pleasure or his convenience in a degree that counterbalanced the objections which might be urged against their intentions, or their less pleasing and profitable qualities. To be pleased was always a principal object with Lord Monmouth; but when a man wants vengeance, gay amusement is not exactly a satisfactory substitute.

A month elapsed. Lord Monmouth with a serene or smiling visage to his guests, but in private taciturn and morose, scarcely ever gave a word to Mr. Rigby, but continually bestowed on him glances which painfully affected the appetite of that gentleman. In a hundred ways it was intimated to Mr. Rigby that he was not a welcome guest, and yet something was continually given him to do which rendered it impossible for him to take his departure. In this state of affairs, another event occurred which changed the current of feeling, and by its possible consequences distracted the Marquess from his brooding meditations over his discomfiture in the matter of Hellings-

ley. The Prince Colonna, who, since the steeple-chase, had imbibed a morbid predilection for such amusements, and indeed for every species of rough-riding, was thrown from his horse and killed on the spot.

This calamity broke up the party at Coningsby, which was not at the moment very numerous. Mr. Rigby, by command, instantly seized the opportunity of preventing the arrival of other guests who were expected. This catastrophe was the cause of Mr. Rigby resuming in a great measure his old position in the Castle. There were a great many things to be done, and all disagreeable; he achieved them all, and studied everybody's convenience. Coroners' inquests, funerals especially, weeping women, these were all spectacles which Lord Monmouth could not endure, but he was so high-bred, that he would not for the world that there should be in manner or degree the slightest deficiency in propriety or even sympathy. But he wanted somebody to do everything that was proper; to be considerate and consoling and sympathetic. Mr. Rigby did it all; gave evidence at the inquest, was chief mourner at the funeral, and arranged everything so well that not a single emblem of death crossed the sight of Lord Monmouth; while Madame Colonna found submission in his exhortations, and the Princess Lucretia, a little more pale and pensive than usual, listened with tranquillity to his discourse on the vanity of all sublunary things.

When the tumult had subsided, and habits and feelings had fallen into their old routine and relapsed into their ancient channels, the Marquess proposed that they should all return to London, and with great formality, though with warmth, begged that Madame Colonna would ever consider his roof as her own. All were glad to quit the Castle, which now presented a scene so different from its former animation, and Madame Colonna, weeping, accepted the hospitality of her friend, until the impending expansion of the spring would permit her to return to Italy. This notice of her return to her own country seemed to occasion the Marquess great disquietude.

After they had remained about a month in London, Madame Colonna sent for Mr. Rigby one morning to tell him how very painful it was to her feelings to remain under the roof of Monmouth House without the sanction of a husband; that the circumstance of being a foreigner, under such unusual affliction, might have excused, though not authorised, the step at first, and for a moment; but that the continuance of such a course was quite out of the question; that she owed it to herself, to her step-child, no longer to trespass on this friendly hospitality, which, if persisted in, might be liable to misconstruction. Mr. Rigby listened with great attention to this statement, and never in the least interrupted Madame Colonna; and then offered to do that which he was convinced the lady desired, namely, to make the Marquess acquainted with the painful state of her feelings. This he did according to his fashion, and with sufficient dexterity. Mr. Rigby himself was anxious to know which way the wind blew, and the mission with which he had been entrusted, fell in precisely with his inclinations and necessities. The Marquess listened to the communication and sighed, then turned gently round and surveyed himself in the mirror and sighed again, then said to Rigby

‘You understand exactly what I mean, Rigby. It is quite ridiculous their going, and infinitely distressing to me. They must stay.’

Rigby repaired to the Princess full of mysterious bustle, and with a face beaming with importance and satisfaction. He made much of the two sighs; fully justified the confidence of the Marquess in his comprehension of unexplained intentions; prevailed on Madame Colonna to have some regard for the feelings of one so devoted; expatiated on the insignificance of worldly misconstructions, when replied to by such honourable intentions; and fully succeeded in his mission. They did stay. Month after month rolled on, and still they stayed; every month all the family becoming more resigned or more content, and more cheerful. As for the Marquess himself, Mr. Rigby never remembered

him more serene and even joyous. His Lordship scarcely ever entered general society. The Colonna family remained in strict seclusion; and he preferred the company of these accomplished and congenial friends to the mob of the great world.

Between Madame Colonna and Mr. Rigby there had always subsisted considerable confidence. Now, that gentleman seemed to have achieved fresh and greater claims to her regard. In the pleasure with which he looked forward to her approaching alliance with his patron, he reminded her of the readiness with which he had embraced her suggestions for the marriage of her daughter with Coningsby. Always obliging, she was never wearied of chanting his praises to her noble admirer, who was apparently much gratified she should have bestowed her esteem on one of whom she would necessarily in after-life see so much. It is seldom the lot of husbands that their confidential friends gain the regards of their brides.

‘I am glad you all like Rigby,’ said Lord Monmouth, ‘as you will see so much of him.’

The remembrance of the Hellingsley failure seemed to be erased from the memory of the Marquess. Rigby never recollected him more cordial and confidential, and more equable in his manner. He told Rigby one day, that he wished that Monmouth House should possess the most sumptuous and the most fanciful boudoir in London or Paris. What a hint for Rigby! That gentleman consulted the first artists, and gave them some hints in return; his researches on domestic decoration ranged through all ages; he even meditated a rapid tour to mature his inventions; but his confidence in his native taste and genius ultimately convinced him that this movement was unnecessary.

The summer advanced; the death of the King occurred; the dissolution summoned Rigby to Coningsby and the borough of Darlford. His success was marked certain in the secret books of Tadpole and Taper. A manufacturing town, enfranchised under the Reform Act, already gained

by the Conservative cause! Here was reaction; here influence of property! Influence of character, too; for no one was so popular as Lord Monmouth; a most distinguished nobleman of strict Conservative principles, who, if he carried the county and the manufacturing borough also, merited the strawberry-leaf.

'There will be no holding Rigby,' said Taper; 'I'm afraid he will be looking for something very high.'

'The higher the better,' rejoined Tadpole, 'and then he will not interfere with us. I like your high-flyers; it is your plodders I detest, wearing old hats and high-lows, speaking in committee, and thinking they are men of business: d—n them!'

Rigby went down, and made some impressive speeches; at least they read very well in some of his second-rate journals, where all the uproar figured as loud cheering, and the interruption of a cabbage-stalk was represented as a question from some intelligent individual in the crowd. The fact is, Rigby bored his audience too much with history, especially with the French Revolution, which he fancied was his 'forte,' so that the people at last, whenever he made any allusion to the subject, were almost as much terrified as if they had seen the guillotine.

Rigby had as yet one great advantage; he had no opponent; and without personal opposition, no contest can be very bitter. It was for some days Rigby *versus* Liberal principles; and Rigby had much the best of it; for he abused Liberal principles roundly in his harangues, who, not being represented on the occasion, made no reply; while plenty of ale, and some capital songs by Lucian Gay, who went down express, gave the right cue to the mob, who declared in chorus, beneath the windows of Rigby's hotel, that he was 'a fine old English gentleman!'

But there was to be a contest; no question about that, and a sharp one, although Rigby was to win, and well. The liberal party had been so fastidious about their new candidate, that they had none ready though several biting. Jawster Sharp thought at one time that sheer necessity

would give him another chance still ; but even Rigby was preferable to Jawster Sharp, who, finding it would not do, published his long-prepared valedictory address, in which he told his constituents, that having long sacrificed his health to their interests, he was now obliged to retire into the bosom of his family. And a very well-provided-for family, too.

All this time the Liberal deputation from Darlford, two aldermen, three town-councillors, and the Secretary of the Reform Association, were walking about London like mad things, eating luncheons and looking for a candidate. They called at the Reform Club twenty times in the morning, badgered whips and red-tapers ; were introduced to candidates, badgered candidates ; examined would-be members as if they were at a cattle-show, listened to political pedigrees, dictated political pledges, referred to Hansard to see how men had voted, inquired whether men had spoken, finally discussed terms. But they never could hit the right man. If the principles were right, there was no money ; and if money were ready, money would not take pledges. In fact, they wanted a Phoenix : a very rich man, who would do exactly as they liked, with extremely low opinions and with very high connections.

‘If he would go for the ballot and had a handle to his name, it would have the best effect,’ said the secretary of the Reform Association, ‘because you see we are fighting against a Right Honourable, and you have no idea how that takes with the mob.’

The deputation had been three days in town, and urged by despatches by every train to bring affairs to a conclusion ; jaded, perplexed, confused, they were ready to fall into the hands of the first jobber or bold adventurer. They discussed over their dinner at a Strand coffee-house the claims of the various candidates who had presented themselves. Mr. Donald Macpherson Macfarlane, who would only pay the legal expenses ; he was soon despatched. Mr. Gingerly Browne, of Jermyn Street, the younger son of a baronet, who would go as far as 1000*l.* provided the seat was

secured. Mr. Juggins, a distiller, 2000*l.* man; but would not agree to any annual subscriptions. Sir Baptist Placid, vague about expenditure, but repeatedly declaring that 'there could be no difficulty on that head.' He however had a moral objection to subscribing to the races, and that was a great point at Darlford. Sir Baptist would subscribe a guinea per annum to the Infirmary, and the same to all religious societies without any distinction of sects; but races, it was not the sum, 100*l.* per annum, but the principle. He had a moral objection.

In short, the deputation began to suspect, what was the truth, that they were a day after the fair, and that all the electioneering rips that swarm in the purlieus of political clubs during an impending dissolution of Parliament, men who become political characters in their small circle because they have been talked of as once having an intention to stand for places for which they never offered themselves, or for having stood for places where they never could by any circumstance have succeeded, were in fact nibbling at their dainty morsel.

At this moment of despair, a ray of hope was imparted to them by a confidential note from a secretary of the Treasury, who wished to see them at the Reform Club on the morrow. You may be sure they were punctual to their appointment. The secretary received them with great consideration. He had got them a candidate, and one of high mark, the son of a Peer, and connected with the highest Whig houses. Their eyes sparkled. A real honourable. If they liked he would introduce them immediately to the Honourable Alberic de Crecy. He had only to introduce them, as there was no difficulty either as to means or opinions, expenses or pledges.

The secretary returned with a young gentleman, whose diminutive stature would seem, from his smooth and singularly puerile countenance, to be merely the consequence of his very tender years; but Mr. De Crecy was really of age, or at least would be by nomination-day. He did not say a word, but looked like the rosebud which dangled in the

button-hole of his frock-coat. The aldermen and town-councillors were what is sometimes emphatically styled flabbergasted; they were speechless from bewilderment. 'Mr. de Crecy will go for the ballot,' said the secretary of the Treasury, with an audacious eye and a demure look, 'and for Total and Immediate, if you press him hard; but don't, if you can help it, because he has an uncle, an old county member, who has prejudices, and might disinherit him. However, we answer for him. And I am very happy that I have been the means of bringing about an arrangement which, I feel, will be mutually advantageous.' And so saying, the secretary effected his escape.

Circumstances, however, retarded for a season the political career of the Honourable Alberic de Crecy. While the Liberal party at Darlford were suffering under the daily inflictions of Mr. Rigby's slashing style, and the post brought them very unsatisfactory prospects of a champion, one offered himself, and in an address which intimated that he was no man of straw, likely to recede from any contest in which he chose to embark. The town was suddenly placarded with a letter to the Independent Electors from Mr. Millbank, the new proprietor of Hellingsley.

He expressed himself as one not anxious to obtrude himself on their attention, and founding no claim to their confidence on his recent acquisition; but at the same time as one resolved that the free and enlightened community, with which he must necessarily hereafter be much connected, should not become the nomination borough of any Peer of the realm without a struggle, if they chose to make one. And so he offered himself if they could not find a better candidate, without waiting for the ceremony of a requisition. He was exactly the man they wanted; and though he had 'no handle to his name,' and was somewhat impracticable about pledges, his fortune was so great, and his character so high, that it might be hoped that the people would be almost as content as if they were appealed to by some obscure scion of factitious nobility, subscribing to political engagements which he could not comprehend, and

which, in general, are vomited with as much facility as they are swallowed.

CHAPTER IV.

THE people of Darford, who, as long as the contest for their representation remained between Mr. Rigby and the abstraction called Liberal Principles, appeared to be very indifferent about the result, the moment they learned that for the phrase had been substituted a substance, and that, too, in the form of a gentleman who was soon to figure as their resident neighbour, became excited, speedily enthusiastic. All the bells of all the churches rang when Mr. Millbank commenced his canvass; the Conservatives, on the alert, if not alarmed, insisted on their champion also showing himself in all directions; and in the course of four-and-twenty hours, such is the contagion of popular feeling, the town was divided into two parties, the vast majority of which were firmly convinced that the country could only be saved by the return of Mr. Rigby, or preserved from inevitable destruction by the election of Mr. Millbank.

The results of the two canvasses were such as had been anticipated from the previous reports of the respective agents and supporters. In these days the personal canvass of a candidate is a mere form. The whole country that is to be invaded has been surveyed and mapped out before entry; every position reconnoitred; the chain of communications complete. In the present case, as was not unusual, both candidates were really supported by numerous and reputable adherents; and both had good grounds for believing that they would be ultimately successful. But there was a body of the electors sufficiently numerous to turn the election, who would not promise their votes: conscientious men who felt the responsibility of the duty that the constitution had entrusted to their discharge, and who

would not make up their minds without duly weighing the respective merits of the two rivals. This class of deeply meditative individuals are distinguished not only by their pensive turn of mind, but by a charitable vein that seems to pervade their being. Not only will they think of your request, but for their parts they wish both sides equally well. Decision, indeed, as it must dash the hopes of one of their solicitors, seems infinitely painful to them; they have always a good reason for postponing it. If you seek their suffrage during the canvass, they reply, that the writ not having come down, the day of election is not yet fixed. If you call again to inform them that the writ has arrived, they rejoin, that perhaps after all there may not be a contest. If you call a third time, half dead with fatigue, to give them friendly notice that both you and your rival have pledged yourselves to go to the poll, they twitch their trousers, rub their hands, and with a dull grin observe,

‘Well, sir, we shall see.’

‘Come, Mr. Jobson,’ says one of the committee, with an insinuating smile, ‘give Mr. Millbank one.’

‘Jobson, I think you and I know each other,’ says a most influential supporter, with a knowing nod.

‘Yes, Mr. Smith, I should think we did.’

‘Come, come, give us one.’

‘Well, I have not made up my mind yet, gentlemen.’

‘Jobson!’ says a solemn voice, ‘didn’t you tell me the other night you wished well to this gentleman?’

‘So I do; I wish well to everybody,’ replies the imperturbable Jobson.

‘Well, Jobson,’ exclaims another member of the committee, with a sigh, ‘who could have supposed that you would have been an enemy?’

‘I don’t wish to be no enemy to no man, Mr. Trip.’

‘Come, Jobson,’ says a jolly tanner, ‘if I wanted to be a Parliament man, I don’t think you could refuse me one!’

‘I don’t think I could, Mr. Oakfield.’

‘Well, then, give it to my friend.’

'Well, sir, I'll think about it.'

Leave him to me,' says another member of the committee, with a significant look. 'I know how to get round him. It's all right.'

'Yes, leave him to Hayfield, Mr. Millbank; he knows how to manage him.'

But all the same, Jobson continues to look as little tractable and lamb-like as can be well fancied.

And here, in a work which, in an unpretending shape, aspires to take neither an uninformed nor a partial view of the political history of the ten eventful years of the Reform struggle, we should pause for a moment to observe the strangeness, that only five years after the reconstruction of the electoral body by the Whig party, in a borough called into political existence by their policy, a manufacturing town, too, the candidate comprising in his person every quality and circumstance which could recommend him to the constituency, and his opponent the worst specimen of the Old Generation, a political adventurer, who owed the least disreputable part of his notoriety to his opposition to the Reform Bill; that in such a borough, under such circumstances, there should be a contest, and that, too, one of a very doubtful issue.

What was the cause of this? Are we to seek it in the 'Reaction' of the Tadpoles and the Tapers? That would not be a satisfactory solution. Reaction, to a certain extent, is the law of human existence. In the particular state of affairs before us, England after the Reform Act, it never could be doubtful that Time would gradually, and in some instances rapidly, counteract the national impulse of 1832. There never could have been a question, for example, that the English counties would have reverted to their natural allegiance to their proprietors; but the results of the appeals to the third Estate in 1835 and 1837 are not to be accounted for by a mere readjustment of legitimate influences.

The truth is, that, considerable as are the abilities of the Whig leaders, highly accomplished as many of them un-

questionably must be acknowledged in parliamentary debate, experienced in council, sedulous in office, eminent as scholars, powerful from their position, the absence of individual influence, and of the pervading authority of a commanding mind, have been the cause of the fall of the Whig party.

Such a supremacy was generally acknowledged in Lord Grey on the accession of this party to power: but it was the supremacy of a tradition rather than of a fact. Almost at the outset of his authority his successor was indicated. When the crisis arrived, the intended successor was not in the Whig ranks. It is in this virtual absence of a real and recognised leader, almost from the moment that they passed their great measure, that we must seek a chief cause of all that insubordination, all those distempered ambitions, and all those dark intrigues, that finally broke up, not only the Whig government, but the Whig party; demoralised their ranks, and sent them to the country, both in 1835 and 1837, with every illusion, which had operated so happily in their favour in 1832, scattered to the winds. In all things we trace the irresistible influence of the individual.

And yet the interval that elapsed between 1835 and 1837 proved, that there was all this time in the Whig array one entirely competent to the office of leading a great party, though his capacity for that fulfilment was too tardily recognised.

LORD JOHN RUSSELL has that degree of imagination, which, though evinced rather in sentiment than expression, still enables him to generalise from the details of his reading and experience; and to take those comprehensive views, which, however easily depreciated by ordinary men in an age of routine, are indispensable to a statesman in the conjunctures in which we live. He understands, therefore, his position; and he has the moral intrepidity which prompts him ever to dare that which his intellect assures him is politic. He is consequently, at the same time, sagacious and bold in council. As an administrator he is prompt and indefatigable. He is not a natural orator, and

labours under physical deficiencies which even a Demosthenic impulse could scarcely overcome. But he is experienced in debate, quick in reply, fertile in resource, takes large views, and frequently compensates for a dry and hesitating manner by the expression of those noble truths that flash across the fancy, and rise spontaneously to the lip, of men of poetic temperament when addressing popular assemblies. If we add to this, a private life of dignified repute, the accidents of his birth and rank, which never can be severed from the man, the scion of a great historic family, and born, as it were, to the hereditary service of the State, it is difficult to ascertain at what period, or under what circumstances, the Whig party have ever possessed, or could obtain, a more efficient leader.

But we must return to the Darlford election. The class of thoughtful voters was sufficiently numerous in that borough to render the result of the contest doubtful to the last; and on the eve of the day of nomination both parties were equally sanguine.

Nomination-day altogether is an unsatisfactory affair. There is little to be done, and that little mere form. The tedious hours remain, and no one can settle his mind to anything. It is not a holiday, for every one is serious; it is not business, for no one can attend to it; it is not a contest, for there is no canvassing; nor an election, for there is no poll. It is a day of lounging without an object, and luncheons without an appetite; of hopes and fears; confidence and dejection; bravado bets and secret hedging; and, about midnight, of furious suppers of grilled bones, brandy-and-water, and recklessness.

The president and vice-president of the Conservative Association, the secretary and the four solicitors who were agents, had impressed upon Mr. Rigby that it was of the utmost importance, and must produce a great moral effect, if he obtained the show of hands. With his powers of eloquence and their secret organisation, they flattered themselves it might be done. With this view, Rigby inflicted a speech of more than two hours' duration on the

electors, who bore it very kindly, as the mob likes, above all things, that the ceremonies of nomination-day should not be cut short: moreover, there is nothing that the mob likes so much as a speech. Rigby therefore had, on the whole, a far from unfavourable audience, and he availed himself of their forbearance. He brought in his crack theme, the guillotine, and diated so elaborately upon its qualities, that one of the gentlemen below could not refrain from exclaiming, 'I wish you may get it.' This exclamation gave Mr. Rigby what is called a great opening, which, like a practised speaker, he immediately seized. He denounced the sentiment as 'un-English,' and got much cheered. Excited by this success, Rigby began to call everything else 'un-English' with which he did not agree, until menacing murmurs began to rise, when he shifted the subject, and rose into a grand peroration, in which he assured them that the eyes of the whole empire were on this particular election; cries of 'That's true,' from all sides; and that England expected every man to do his duty.

'And who do you expect to do yours?' inquired a gentleman below, 'about that ere pension?'

'Rigby,' screeched a hoarse voice, 'don't you mind; you guv it them well.'

'Rigby, keep up your spirits, old chap: we will have you.'

'Now!' said a stentorian voice; and a man as tall as Saul looked round him. This was the engaged leader of the Conservative mob; the eye of every one of his minions was instantly on him. 'Now! Our young Queen and our Old Institutions! Rigby for ever!'

This was a signal for the instant appearance of the leader of the Liberal mob. Magog Wrath, not so tall as Bully Bluck, his rival, had a voice almost as powerful, a back much broader, and a countenance far more forbidding. 'Now, my boys, the Queen and Millbank for ever!'

These rival cries were the signals for a fight between the two bands of gladiators in the face of the hustings, the body of the people little interfering. Bully Bluck seized

Magog Wrath's colours; they wrestled, they seized each other; their supporters were engaged in mutual contest; it appeared to be a most alarming and perilous fray; several ladies from the windows screamed, one fainted; a band of special constables pushed their way through the mob; you heard their staves resounding on the skulls of all who opposed them, especially the little boys: order was at length restored; and, to tell the truth, the only hurts inflicted were those which came from the special constables. Bully Bluck and Magog Wrath, with all their fierce looks, flaunting colours, loud cheers, and desperate assaults, wore, after all, only a couple of Condottieri, who were cautious never to wound each other. They were, in fact, a peaceful police, who kept the town in awe, and prevented others from being mischievous who were more inclined to do harm. Their hired gangs were the safety-valves for all the scamps of the borough, who, receiving a few shillings per head for their nominal service, and as much drink as they liked after the contest, were bribed and organised into peace and sobriety on the days in which their excesses were most to be apprehended.

Now Mr. Millbank came forward: he was brief compared with Mr. Rigby; but clear and terse. No one could misunderstand him. He did not favour his hearers with any history, but gave them his views about taxes, free trade, placemen, and pensioners, whoever and wherever they might be.

'Hilloa, Rigby, about that ere pension?'

'Millbank for ever! We will have him.'

'Never mind, Rigby, you'll come in next time.'

Mr. Millbank was energetic about resident representatives, but did not understand that a resident representative meant the nominee of a great Lord, who lived in a great castle; great cheering. There was a Lord once who declared that, if he liked, he would return his negro valet to Parliament; but Mr. Millbank thought those days were over. It remained for the people of Darlford to determine whether he was mistaken.

'Never!' exclaimed the mob. 'Millbank for ever! Rigby in the river! No niggers, no walets!'

'Three groans for Rigby.'

'His language ain't as purty as the Lunnun chap's,' said a critic below; 'but he speaks from his 'art: and give me the man who 'as got a 'art.'

'That's your time of day, Mr. Robinson.'

'Now!' said Magog Wrath, looking around. 'Now, the Queen and Millbank for ever! Hurrah!'

The show of hands was entirely in favour of Mr. Millbank. Scarcely a hand was held up for Mr. Rigby below, except by Bully Bluck and his prætorians. The Chairman and the Deputy Chairman of the Conservative Association, the Secretary, and the four agents, severally and respectively went up to Mr. Rigby and congratulated him on the result, as it was a known fact, 'that the show of hands never won.'

The eve of polling-day was now at hand. This is the most critical period of an election. All night parties in disguise were perambulating the different wards, watching each other's tactics; masks, wigs, false noses, gentles in livery coats, men in female attire, a silent carnival of manoeuvre, vigilance, anxiety, and trepidation. The thoughtful voters about this time make up their minds; the enthusiasts who have told you twenty times a-day for the last fortnight, that they would get up in the middle of the night to serve you, require the most watchful cooping; all the individuals who have assured you that 'their word is their bond,' change sides.

Two of the Rigbyites met in the market-place about an hour after midnight.

'Well, how goes it?' said one.

'I have been the rounds. The blunt's going like the ward-pump. I saw a man come out of Moffatt's house, muffled up with a mask on. I dodged him. It was Biggs.'

'You don't mean that, do you? D—c, I'll answer for Moffatt.'

'I never thought he was a true man.'

'Told Robius?'

'I could not see him; but I met young Gunning and told him.'

'Young Gunning! That won't do.'

'I thought he was as right as the town clock.'

'So did I, once. Hush! who comes here? The enemy, Franklin and Sampson Potts. Keep close.'

'I'll speak to them. Good night, Potts. Up rather late to-night?'

'All fair election time. You ain't snoring, are you?'

'Well, I hope the best man will win.'

'I am sure he will.'

'You must go for Moffatt early, to breakfast at the White Lion; that's your sort. Don't leave him, and poll him yourself. I am going off to Solomon Lacey's. He has got four Millbankites cooped up very drunk, and I want to get them quietly into the country before daybreak.'

'Tis polling day! The candidates are roused from their slumbers at an early hour by the music of their own bands perambulating the town, and each playing the 'conquering hero' to sustain the courage of their jaded employers, by depriving them of that rest which can alone tranquillise the nervous system. There is something in that matin burst of music, followed by a shrill cheer from the boys of the borough, the only inhabitants yet up, that is very depressing.

The committee-rooms of each candidate are soon rife with black reports; each side has received fearful bulletins of the preceding night campaign; and its consequences as exemplified in the morning, unprecedented tergiversations, mysterious absences; men who breakfast with one side and vote with the other; men who won't come to breakfast; men who won't leave breakfast.

At ten o'clock Mr. Rigby was in a majority of twenty-eight.

The polling was brisk and equal until the middle of the day, when it became slack. Mr. Rigby kept a majority,

but an inconsiderable one. Mr. Millbank's friends were not disheartened, as it was known that the leading members of Mr. Rigby's committee had polled; whereas his opponent's were principally reserved. At a quarter-past two there was great cheering and uproar. The four voters in favour of Millbank, whom Solomon Lacey had cooped up, made drunk, and carried into the country, had recovered their senses, made their escape, and voted as they originally intended. Soon after this, Mr. Millbank was declared by his committee to be in a majority of one, but the committee of Mr. Rigby instantly posted a placard, in large letters, to announce that, on the contrary, their man was in a majority of nine.

'If we could only have got another registration,' whispered the principal agent to Mr. Rigby, at a quarter-past four.

'You think it's all over then?'

'Why, I do not see now how we can win. We have polled all our dead men, and Millbank is seven a-head.'

'I have no doubt we shall be able to have a good petition,' said the consoling chairman of the Conservative Association.

CHAPTER V.

It was not with feelings of extreme satisfaction that Mr. Rigby returned to London. The loss of Hellingsley, followed by the loss of the borough to Hellingsley's successful master, were not precisely the incidents which would be adduced as evidence of Mr. Rigby's good management or good fortune. Hitherto that gentleman had persuaded the world that he was not only very clever, but that he was also always in luck; a quality which many appreciate more even than capacity. His reputation was unquestionably damaged, both with his patron and his party. But what the Tapers and the Tadpoles thought or said, what even might be the injurious

effect on his own career of the loss of this election, assumed an insignificant character when compared with its influence on the temper and disposition of the Marquess of Monmouth.

And yet his carriage is now entering the courtyard of Monmouth House, and, in all probability, a few minutes would introduce him to that presence before which he had, ere this, trembled. The Marquess was at home, and anxious to see Mr. Rigby. In a few minutes that gentleman was ascending the private staircase, entering the antechamber, and waiting to be received in the little saloon, exactly as our Coningsby did more than five years ago, scarcely less agitated, but by feelings of a very different character.

'Well, you made a good fight of it,' exclaimed the Marquess, in a cheerful and cordial tone, as Mr. Rigby entered his dressing-room. 'Patience! We shall win next time.'

This reception instantly reassured the defeated candidate, though its contrast to that which he expected rather perplexed him. He entered into the details of the election, talked rapidly of the next registration, the propriety of petitioning; accustomed himself to hearing his voice with its habitual volubility in a chamber where he had feared it might not sound for some time.

'D—n politics!' said the Marquess. 'These fellows are in for this Parliament, and I am really weary of the whole affair. I begin to think the Duke was right, and it would have been best to have left them to themselves. I am glad you have come up at once, for I want you. The fact is, I am going to be married.'

This was not a startling announcement to Mr. Rigby; he was prepared for it, though scarcely could have hoped that he would have been favoured with it on the present occasion, instead of a morose comment on his misfortunes. Marriage, then, was the predominant idea of Lord Monmouth at the present moment, in whose absorbing interest all vexations were forgotten. Fortunate Rigby! Disgusted by the failure of his political combinations, his disappoint-

ments in not dictating to the county and not carrying the borough, and the slight prospect at present of obtaining the great object of his ambition, Lord Monmouth had resolved to precipitate his fate, was about to marry immediately, and quit England.

'You will be wanted, Rigby,' continued the Marquess. 'We must have a couple of trustees, and I have thought of you as one. You know you are my executor; and it is better not to bring in unnecessarily new names into the management of my affairs. Lord Eskdale will act with you.'

Rigby then, after all, was a lucky man. After such a succession of failures, he had returned only to receive fresh and the most delicate marks of his patron's good feeling and consideration. Lord Monmouth's trustee and executor! 'You know you are my executor.' Sublime truth! It ought to be blazoned in letters of gold in the most conspicuous part of Rigby's library, to remind him perpetually of his great and impending destiny. Lord Monmouth's executor, and very probably one of his residuary legatees! A legatee of some sort he knew he was. What a splendid *memento mori*! What cared Rigby for the borough of Darford? And as for his political friends, he wished them joy of their barren benches. Nothing was lost by not being in this Parliament.

It was then with sincerity that Rigby offered his congratulations to his patron. He praised the judicious alliance, accompanied by every circumstance conducive to worldly happiness; distinguished beauty, perfect temper, princely rank. Rigby, who had hardly got out of his hustings' vein, was most eloquent in his praises of Madama Colonna.

'An amiable woman,' said Lord Monmouth, 'and very handsome. I always admired her; and an agreeable person too; I dare say a very good temper, but I am not going to marry her.'

'Might I then ask who is ——'

'Her step-daughter, the Princess Lucretia, replied the Marquess, quietly, and looking at his ring.

Here was a thunderbolt! Rigby had made another mistake. He had been working all this time for the wrong woman! The consciousness of being a trustee alone sustained him. There was an inevitable pause. The Marquess would not speak however, and Rigby must. He babbled rather incoherently about the Princess Lucretia being admired by everybody; also that she was the most fortunate of women, as well as the most accomplished; he was just beginning to say he had known her from a child, when discretion stopped his tongue, which had a habit of running on somewhat rashly; but Rigby, though he often blundered in his talk, had the talent of extricating himself from the consequence of his mistakes.

‘And Madame must be highly gratified by all this?’ observed Mr. Rigby, with an enquiring accent. He was dying to learn how she had first received the intelligence, and congratulated himself that his absence at his contest had preserved him from the storm.

‘Madame Colonna knows nothing of our intentions,’ said Lord Monmouth. ‘And by the bye, that is the very business on which I wish to see you, Rigby. I wish you to communicate them to her. We are to be married, and immediately. It would gratify me that the wife of Lucretia’s father should attend our wedding. You understand exactly what I mean, Rigby; I must have no scenes. Always happy to see the Princess Colonna under my roof: but then I like to live quietly, particularly at present; harassed as I have been by the loss of these elections, by all this bad management, and by all these disappointments on subjects in which I was led to believe success was certain. Madame Colonna is at home;’ and the Marquess bowed Mr. Rigby out of the room.

CHAPTER VI.

THE departure of Sidonia from Coningsby Castle, in the autumn, determined the Princess Lucretia on a step which had for some time before his arrival occupied her brooding imagination. Nature had bestowed on this lady an ambitious soul and a subtle spirit; she could dare much and could execute finely. Above all things she coveted power; and though not free from the characteristic susceptibility of her sex, the qualities that could engage her passions or fascinate her fancy must partake of that intellectual eminence which distinguished her. Though the Princess Lucretia in a short space of time had seen much of the world, she had as yet encountered no hero. In the admirers whom her rank, and sometimes her intelligence, assembled around her, her master had not yet appeared. Her heart had not trembled before any of those brilliant forms whom she was told her sex admired; nor did she envy any one the homage which she did not appreciate. There was, therefore, no disturbing element in the worldly calculations which she applied to that question which is, to woman, what a career is to man, the question of marriage. She would marry to gain power, and therefore she wished to marry the powerful. Lord Eskdale hovered around her, and she liked him. She admired his incomparable shrewdness; his freedom from ordinary prejudices; his selfishness which was always good-natured, and the imperturbability that was not callous. But Lord Eskdale had hovered round many; it was his easy habit. He liked clever women, young, but who had seen something of the world. The Princess Lucretia pleased him much; with the form and mind of a woman even in the nursery. He had watched her development with interest; and had witnessed her launched in that world where she floated at once with as much dignity and consciousness of superior power, as if she had braved for seasons its waves and its tempests.

Musing over Lord Eskdale, the mind of Lucretia was drawn to the image of his friend; her friend; the friend of her parents. And why not marry Lord Monmouth? The idea pleased her. There was something great in the conception; difficult and strange. The result, if achieved, would give her all that she desired. She devoted her mind to this secret thought. She had no confidants. She concentrated her intellect on one point, and that was to fascinate the grandfather of Coningsby, while her step-mother was plotting that she should marry his grandson. The volition of Lucretia Colonna was, if not supreme, of a power most difficult to resist. There was something charm-like and alluring in the conversation of one who was silent to all others; something in the tones of her low rich voice which acted singularly on the nervous system. It was the voice of the serpent; indeed, there was an undulating movement in Lucretia, when she approached you, which irresistibly reminded you of that mysterious animal.

Lord Monmouth was not insensible to the spell, though totally unconscious of its purpose. He found the society of Lucretia very agreeable to him; she was animated, intelligent, original; her inquiries were stimulating; her comments on what she saw, and heard, and read, racy and often indicating a fine humour. But all this was reserved for his ear. Before her parents, as before all others, Lucretia was silent, a little scornful, never communicating, neither giving nor seeking amusement, shut up in herself.

Lord Monmouth fell therefore into the habit of riding and driving with Lucretia alone. It was an arrangement which he found made his life more pleasant. Nor was it displeasing to Madame Colonna. She looked upon Lord Monmouth's fancy for Lucretia as a fresh tie for them all. Even the Prince, when his wife called his attention to the circumstance, observed it with satisfaction. It was a circumstance which represented in his mind a continuance of good eating and good drinking, fine horses, luxurious baths, unceasing billiards.

In this state of affairs appeared Sidonia, known before

to her step-mother, but seen by Lucretia for the first time. Truly, he came, saw, and conquered. Those eyes that rarely met another's were fixed upon his searching yet unimpassioned glance. She listened to that voice, full of music yet void of tenderness; and the spirit of Lucretia Colonna bowed before an intelligence that commanded sympathy, yet offered none.

Lucretia naturally possessed great qualities as well as great talents. Under a genial influence, her education might have formed a being capable of imparting and receiving happiness. But she found herself without a guide. Her father offered her no love; her step-mother gained from her no respect. Her literary education was the result of her own strong mind and inquisitive spirit. She valued knowledge, and she therefore acquired it. But not a single moral principle or a single religious truth had ever been instilled into her being. Frequent absence from her own country had by degrees broken off even an habitual observance of the forms of her creed; while a life of undisturbed indulgence, void of all anxiety and care, while it preserved her from many of the temptations to vice, deprived her of that wisdom 'more precious than rubies,' which adversity and affliction, the struggles and the sorrows of existence, can alone impart.

Lucretia had passed her life in a refined, but rather dissolute, society. Not indeed that a word that could call forth a maiden blush, conduct that could pain the purest feelings, could be heard or witnessed in those polished and luxurious circles. The most exquisite taste pervaded their atmosphere; and the uninitiated who found themselves in those perfumed chambers and those golden saloons, might believe, from all that passed before them, that their inhabitants were as pure, as orderly, and as irreproachable as their furniture. But among the habitual dwellers in these delicate halls there was a tacit understanding, a prevalent doctrine that required no formal exposition, no proofs and illustrations, no comment and no gloss; which was indeed rather a traditional conviction than an imparted dogma;

that the exoteric public were, on many subjects, the victims of very vulgar prejudices, which these enlightened personages wished neither to disturb nor to adopt.

A being of such a temper, bred in such a manner; a woman full of intellect and ambition, daring and lawless, and satiated with prosperity, is not made for equable fortunes and an uniform existence. She would have sacrificed the world for Sidonia, for he had touched the fervent imagination that none before could approach; but that inscrutable man would not read the secret of her heart; and prompted alike by pique, the love of power, and a weariness of her present life, Lucretia resolved on that great result which Mr. Rigby is now about to communicate to the Princess Colonna.

About half-an-hour after Mr. Rigby had entered that lady's apartments it seemed that all the bells of Monmouth House were ringing at the same time. The sound even reached the Marquess in his luxurious recess; who immediately took a pinch of snuff, and ordered his valet to lock the door of the ante-chamber. The Princess Lucretia, too, heard the sounds; she was lying on a sofa, in her boudoir, reading the *Inferno*, and immediately mustered her garrison in the form of a French maid, and gave directions that no one should be admitted. Both the Marquess and his intended bride felt that a crisis was at hand, and resolved to participate in no scenes.

The ringing ceased; there was again silence. Then there was another ring; a short, hasty, and violent pull; followed by some slamming of doors. The servants, who were all on the alert, and had advantages of hearing and observation denied to their secluded master, caught a glimpse of Mr. Rigby endeavouring gently to draw back into her apartments Madame Colonna, furious amid his deprecatory exclamations.

'For heaven's sake, my dear Madame; for your own sake; now really; now I assure you; you are quite wrong; you are indeed; it is a complete misapprehension; I will explain everything. I entreat, I implore, whatever you like, just what you please; only listen.'

Then the lady, with a mantling visage and flashing eye, violently closing the door, was again lost to their sight. A few minutes after there was a moderate ring, and Mr. Rigby, coming out of the apartments, with his cravat a little out of order, as if he had had a violent shaking, met the servant who would have entered.

'Order Madame Colonna's travelling carriage,' he exclaimed in a loud voice, 'and send Mademoiselle Conrad here directly. I don't think the fellow hears me,' added Mr. Rigby, and following the servant, he added in a low tone and with a significant glance, 'No travelling carriage; no Mademoiselle Conrad; order the britska round as usual.'

Nearly another hour passed; there was another ring; very moderate indeed. The servant was informed that Madame Colonna was coming down, and she appeared as usual. In a beautiful morning dress, and leaning on the arm of Mr. Rigby, she descended the stairs, and was handed into her carriage by that gentleman, who, seating himself by her side, ordered them to drive to Richmond.

Lord Monmouth having been informed that all was calm, and that Madame Colonna, attended by Mr. Rigby, had gone to Richmond, ordered his carriage, and accompanied by Lucretia and Lucian Gay, departed immediately for Blackwall, where, in whitebait, a quiet bottle of claret, the society of his agreeable friends, and the contemplation of the passing steamers, he found a mild distraction and an amusing repose.

Mr. Rigby reported that evening to the Marquess on his return, that all was arranged and tranquil. Perhaps he exaggerated the difficulties, to increase the service; but according to his account they were considerable. It required some time to make Madame Colonna comprehend the nature of his communication. All Rigby's diplomatic skill was expended in the gradual development. When it was once fairly put before her, the effect was appalling. That was the first great ringing of bells. Rigby softened a little what he had personally endured; but he confessed she sprang at him like a tigress balked of her prey, and

poured forth on him a volume of epithets, many of which Rigby really deserved. But after all, in the present instance, he was not treacherous, only base, which he always was. Then she fell into a passion of tears, and vowed frequently that she was not weeping for herself, but only for that dear Mr. Coningsby, who had been treated so infamously and robbed of Lucretia, and whose heart she knew must break. It seemed that Rigby stemmed the first violence of her emotion by mysterious intimations of an important communication that he had to make; and piquing her curiosity, he calmed her passion. But really having nothing to say, he was nearly involved in fresh dangers. He took refuge in the affectation of great agitation which prevented exposition. The lady then insisted on her travelling carriage being ordered and packed, as she was determined to set out for Rome that afternoon. This little occurrence gave Rigby some few minutes to collect himself, at the end of which he made the Princess several announcements of intended arrangements, all of which pleased her mightily, though they were so inconsistent with each other, that if she had not been a woman in a passion, she must have detected that Rigby was lying. He assured her almost in the same breath, that she was never to be separated from them, and that she was to have any establishment in any country she liked. He talked wildly of equipages, diamonds, shawls, opera-boxes; and while her mind was bewildered with these dazzling objects, he, with intrepid gravity, consulted her as to the exact amount she would like to have apportioned, independent of her general revenue, for the purposes of charity.

At the end of two hours, exhausted by her rage and soothed by these visions, Madame Colonna having grown calm and reasonable, sighed and murmured a complaint, that Lord Monmouth ought to have communicated this important intelligence in person. Upon this Rigby instantly assured her, that Lord Monmouth had been for some time waiting to do so, but in consequence of her lengthened interview with Rigby, his Lordship had departed for Rich-

mond with Lucretia, where he hoped that Madame Colonna and Mr. Rigby would join him. So it ended, with a morning drive and suburban dinner; Rigby, after what he had gone through, finding no difficulty in accounting for the other guests not being present, and bringing home Madame Colonna in the evening, at times almost as gay and good-tempered as usual, and almost oblivious of her disappointment.

When the Marquess met Madame Colonna he embraced her with great courtliness, and from that time consulted her on every arrangement. He took a very early occasion of presenting her with a diamond necklace of great value. The Marquess was fond of making presents to persons to whom he thought he had not behaved very well, and who yet spared him scenes.

The marriage speedily followed, by special license, at the villa of the Right Hon. Nicholas Rigby, who gave away the bride. The wedding was very select, but brilliant as the diamond necklace: a royal Duke and Duchess, Lady St. Julians, and a few others. Mr. Ormsby presented the bride with a bouquet of precious stones, and Lord Eskdale with a French fan in a diamond frame. It was a fine day; Lord Monmouth, calm as if he were winning the St. Leger; Lucretia, universally recognised as a beauty; all the guests gay, the Princess Colonna especially.

The travelling carriage is at the door which is to bear away the happy pair. Madame Colonna embraces Lucretia; the Marquess gives a grand bow: they are gone. The guests remain awhile. A Prince of the blood will propose a toast; there is another glass of champagne quaffed, another ortolan devoured; and then they rise and disperse. Madame Colonna leaves with Lady St. Julians, whose guest for a while she is to become. And in a few minutes their host is alone.

Mr. Rigby retired into his library: the repose of the chamber must have been grateful to his feelings after all this distraction. It was spacious, well-stored, classically adorned, and opened on a beautiful lawn. Rigby threw

himself into an ample chair, crossed his legs, and resting his head on his arm, apparently fell into deep contemplation.

He had some cause for reflection, and though we did once venture to affirm that Rigby never either thought or felt, this perhaps may be the exception that proves the rule.

He could scarcely refrain from pondering over the strange event which he had witnessed, and at which he had assisted.

It was an incident that might exercise considerable influence over his fortunes. His patron married, and married to one who certainly did not offer to Mr. Rigby such a prospect of easy management as her step-mother! Here were new influences arising; new characters, new situations, new contingencies. Was he thinking of all this? He suddenly jumps up, hurries to a shelf and takes down a volume. It is his interleaved peerage, of which for twenty years he had been threatening an edition. Turning to the Marquisate of Monmouth, he took up his pen and thus made the necessary entry:

'Married, second time, August 3rd, 1837, The Princess Lucretia Colonna, daughter of Prince Paul Colonna, born at Rome, February 16th, 1819.'

That was what Mr. Rigby called 'a great fact.' There was not a peerage-compiler in England who had that date save himself.

Before we close this slight narrative of the domestic incidents that occurred in the family of his grandfather since Coningsby quitted the Castle, we must not forget to mention what happened to Villebecque and Flora. Lord Monmouth took a great liking to the manager. He found him very clever in many things independently of his profession; he was useful to Lord Monmouth, and did his work in an agreeable manner. And the future Lady Monmouth was accustomed to Flora, and found her useful too, and did not like to lose her. And so the Marquess, turning all the circumstances in his mind, and being con-

vinced that Villebecque could never succeed to any extent in England in his profession, and probably nowhere else, appointed him, to Villebecque's infinite satisfaction, intendant of his household, with a considerable salary, while Flora still lived with her kind step-father.

CHAPTER VII.

ANOTHER year elapsed; not so fruitful in incidents to Coningsby as the preceding ones, and yet not unprofitably passed. It had been spent in the almost unremitting cultivation of his intelligence. He had read deeply and extensively, digested his acquisitions, and had practised himself in surveying them, free from those conventional conclusions and those traditionary inferences that surrounded him. Although he had renounced his once cherished purpose of trying for University honours, an aim which he found discordant with the investigations on which his mind was bent, he had rarely quitted Cambridge. The society of his friends, the great convenience of public libraries, and the general tone of studious life around, rendered an University for him a genial residence. There is a moment in life, when the pride and thirst of knowledge seem to absorb our being, and so it happened now to Coningsby, who felt each day stronger in his intellectual resources, and each day more anxious and avid to increase them. The habits of public discussion fostered by the Debating Society were also for Coningsby no inconsiderable tie to the University. This was the arena in which he felt himself at home. The promise of his Eton days was here fulfilled. And while his friends listened to his sustained argument or his impassioned declamation, the prompt reply or the apt retort, they looked forward with pride through the vista of years to the time when the hero of the youthful Club should convince or dazzle in the senate. It is probable then that he would have remained at Cambridge

with slight intervals until he had taken his degree, had not circumstances occurred which gave altogether a new turn to his thoughts.

When Lord Monmouth had fixed his wedding-day he had written himself to Coningsby to announce his intended marriage, and to request his grandson's presence at the ceremony. The letter was more than kind; it was warm and generous. He assured his grandson that this alliance should make no difference in the very ample provision which he had long intended for him; that he should ever esteem Coningsby his nearest relative; and that, while his death would bring to Coningsby as considerable an independence as an English gentleman need desire, so in his lifetime Coningsby should ever be supported as became his birth, breeding, and future prospects. Lord Monmouth had mentioned to Lucretia, that he was about to invite his grandson to their wedding, and the lady had received the intimation with satisfaction. It so happened that a few hours after, Lucretia, who now entered the private rooms of Lord Monmouth without previously announcing her arrival, met Villebecque with the letter to Coningsby in his hand. Lucretia took it away from him, and said it should be posted with her own letters. It never reached its destination. Our friend learnt the marriage from the newspapers, which somewhat astounded him; but Coningsby was fond of his grandfather, and he wrote Lord Monmouth a letter of congratulation, full of feeling and ingenuousness, and which, while it much pleased the person to whom it was addressed, unintentionally convinced him that Coningsby had never received his original communication. Lord Monmouth spoke to Villebecque, who could throw sufficient light upon the subject, but it was never mentioned to Lady Monmouth. The Marquess was a man who always found out everything, and enjoyed the secret.

Rather more than a year after the marriage, when Coningsby had completed his twenty-first year, the year which he had passed so quietly at Cambridge, he received a letter from his grandfather, informing him that after a

variety of movements Lady Monmouth and himself were established in Paris for the season, and desiring that he would not fail to come over as soon as practicable, and pay them as long a visit as the regulations of the University would permit. So, at the close of the December term, Coningsby quitted Cambridge for Paris.

Passing through London, he made his first visit to his banker at Charing Cross, on whom he had periodically drawn since he commenced his college life. He was in the outer counting-house, making some inquiries about a letter of credit, when one of the partners came out from an inner room, and invited him to enter. This firm had been for generations the bankers of the Coningsby family; and it appeared that there was a sealed box in their possession, which had belonged to the father of Coningsby, and they wished to take this opportunity of delivering it to his son. This communication deeply interested him; and as he was alone in London, at an hotel, and on the wing for a foreign country, he requested permission at once to examine it, in order that he might again deposit it with them: so he was shown into a private room for that purpose. The seal was broken; the box was full of papers, chiefly correspondence: among them was a packet described as letters from 'my dear Helen,' the mother of Coningsby. In the interior of this packet there was a miniature of that mother. He looked at it; put it down; looked at it again and again. He could not be mistaken. There was the same blue fillet in the bright hair. It was an exact copy of that portrait which had so greatly excited his attention when at Millbank! This was a mysterious and singularly perplexing incident. It greatly agitated him. He was alone in the room when he made the discovery. When he had recovered himself, he sealed up the contents of the box, with the exception of his mother's letters and the miniature, which he took away with him, and then re-delivered it to his banker for custody until his return.

Coningsby found Lord and Lady Monmouth in a splendid hotel in the Faubourg St. Honoré, near the English Embassy.

His grandfather looked at him with marked attention, and received him with evident satisfaction. Indeed, Lord Monmouth was greatly pleased that Harry had come to Paris; it was the University of the World, where everybody should graduate. Paris and London ought to be the great objects of all travellers; the rest was mere landscape.

It cannot be denied that between Lucretia and Coningsby there existed from the first a certain antipathy; and though circumstances for a short time had apparently removed or modified the aversion, the manner of the lady when Coningsby was ushered into her boudoir, resplendent with all that Parisian taste and luxury could devise, was characterised by that frigid politeness which had preceded the days of their more genial acquaintance. If the manner of Lucretia were the same as before her marriage, a considerable change might however be observed in her appearance. Her fine form had become more developed; while her dress, that she once neglected, was elaborate and gorgeous, and of the last mode. Lucretia was the fashion at Paris; a great lady, greatly admired. A guest under such a roof, however, Coningsby was at once launched into the most brilliant circles of Parisian society, which he found fascinating.

The art of society is, without doubt, perfectly comprehended and completely practised in the bright metropolis of France. An Englishman cannot enter a saloon without instantly feeling he is among a race more social than his compatriots. What, for example, is more consummate than the manner in which a French lady receives her guests! She unites graceful repose and unaffected dignity, with the most amiable regard for others. She sees every one; she speaks to every one; she sees them at the right moment; she says the right thing; it is utterly impossible to detect any difference in the position of her guests by the spirit in which she welcomes them. There is, indeed, throughout every circle of Parisian society, from the *château* to the *cabaret*, a sincere homage to intellect; and this without any maudlin sentiment. None sooner than the Parisians can

draw the line between factitious notoriety and honest fame; or sooner distinguish between the counterfeit celebrity and the standard reputation. In England, we too often alternate between a supercilious neglect of genius and a rhapsodical pursuit of quacks. In England when a new character appears in our circles, the first question always is, 'Who is he?' In France it is, 'What is he?' In England, 'How much a-year?' In France, 'What has he done?'

CHAPTER VIII.

ABOUT a week after Coningsby's arrival in Paris, as he was sauntering on the soft and sunny Boulevards, soft and sunny though Christmas, he met Sidonia.

'So you are here?' said Sidonia. 'Turn now with me, for I see you are only lounging, and tell me when you came, where you are, and what you have done since we parted. I have been here myself but a few days.'

There was much to tell. And when Coningsby had rapidly related all that had passed, they talked of Paris. Sidonia had offered him hospitality, until he learned that Lord Monmouth was in Paris, and that Coningsby was his guest.

'I am sorry you cannot come to me,' he remarked; 'I would have shown you everybody and everything. But we shall meet often.'

'I have already seen many remarkable things,' said Coningsby; 'and met many celebrated persons. Nothing strikes me more in this brilliant city than the tone of its society, so much higher than our own. What an absence of petty personalities! How much conversation, and how little gossip! Yet nowhere is there less pedantry. Here all women are as agreeable as is the remarkable privilege in London of some half-dozen. Men too, and great men, develop their minds. A great man in England, on the

contrary, is generally the dullest dog in company. And yet, how piteous to think that so fair a civilisation should be in such imminent peril!

'Yes! that is a common opinion; and yet I am somewhat sceptical of its truth,' replied Sidonia. 'I am inclined to believe that the social system of England is in infinitely greater danger than that of France. We must not be misled by the agitated surface of this country. The foundations of its order are deep and sure. Learn to understand France. France is a Kingdom with a Republic for its capital. It has been always so, for centuries. From the days of the League to the days of the Sections, to the days of 1830. It is still France, little changed; and only more national, for it is less Frank and more Gallic; as England has become less Norman and more Saxon.'

'And it is your opinion, then, that the present King may maintain himself?'

'Every movement in this country, however apparently discordant, seems to tend to that inevitable end. He would not be on the throne if the nature of things had not demanded his presence. The Kingdom of France required a Monarch; the Republic of Paris required a Dictator. He comprised in his person both qualifications; lineage and intellect; blood for the provinces, brains for the city.'

'What a position! what an individual!' exclaimed Coningsby. 'Tell me,' he added, eagerly, 'what is he? This Prince of whom one hears in all countries at all hours; on whose existence we are told the tranquillity, almost the civilisation, of Europe depends, yet of whom we receive accounts so conflicting, so contradictory; tell me, you who can tell me, tell me what he is.'

Sidonia smiled at his earnestness. 'I have a creed of mine own,' he remarked, 'that the great characters of antiquity are at rare epochs reproduced for our wonder, or our guidance. Nature, wearied with mediocrity, pours the warm metal into an heroic mould. When circumstances at length placed me in the presence of the King of France, I recognised, ULYSSES!'

'But is there no danger,' resumed Coningsby, after the pause of a few moments, 'that the Republic of Paris may absorb the Kingdom of France?'

'I suspect the reverse,' replied Sidonia. 'The tendency of advanced civilisation is in truth to pure Monarchy. Monarchy is indeed a government which requires a high degree of civilisation for its full development. It needs the support of free laws and manners, and of a widely-diffused intelligence. Political compromises are not to be tolerated except at periods of rude transition. An educated nation recoils from the imperfect vicariate of what is called a representative government. Your House of Commons, that has absorbed all other powers in the State, will in all probability fall more rapidly than it rose. Public opinion has a more direct, a more comprehensive, a more efficient organ for its utterance, than a body of men sectionally chosen. The Printing-press is a political element unknown to classic or feudal times. It absorbs in a great degree the duties of the Sovereign, the Priest, the Parliament; it controls, it educates, it discusses. That public opinion, when it acts, would appear in the form of one who has no class interests. In an enlightened age the Monarch on the throne, free from the vulgar prejudices and the corrupt interests of the subject, becomes again divine!'

At this moment they reached that part of the Boulevards which leads into the Place of the Madeleine, whither Sidonia was bound; and Coningsby was about to quit his companion, when Sidonia said:

'I am only going a step over to the Rue Tronchet to say a few words to a friend of mine, M. P——s. I shall not detain you five minutes; and you should know him, for he has some capital pictures, and a collection of Limoges ware that is the despair of the dilettanti.'

So saying they turned down by the Place of the Madeleine, and soon entered the court of the hotel of M. P——s. That gentleman received them in his gallery. After some general conversation, Coningsby turned towards the pictures, and left Sidonia with their host. The collection was

rare, and interested Coningsby, though unacquainted with art. He sauntered on from picture to picture until he reached the end of the gallery, where an open door invited him into a suite of rooms also full of pictures and objects of curiosity and art. As he was entering a second chamber, he observed a lady leaning back in a cushioned chair, and looking earnestly on a picture. His entrance was unheard and unnoticed, for the lady's back was to the door; yet Coningsby, advancing in an angular direction, obtained nearly a complete view of her countenance. It was upraised, gazing on the picture with an expression of delight; the bonnet thrown back, while the large sable cloak of the gazer had fallen partly off. The countenance was more beautiful than the beautiful picture. Those glowing shades of the gallery to which love, and genius, and devotion had lent their inspiration, seemed without life and lustre by the radiant and expressive presence which Coningsby now beheld.

The finely-arched brow was a little elevated, the soft dark eyes were fully opened, the nostril of the delicate nose slightly dilated, the small, yet rich, full lips just parted; and over the clear, transparent visage, there played a vivid glance of gratified intelligence.

The lady rose, advanced towards the picture, looked at it earnestly for a few moments, and then, turning in a direction opposite to Coningsby, walked away. She was somewhat above the middle stature, and yet could scarcely be called tall; a quality so rare, that even skilful dancers do not often possess it, was hers; that elastic gait that is so winning, and so often denotes the gaiety and quickness of the spirit.

The fair object of his observation had advanced into other chambers, and as soon as it was becoming, Coningsby followed her. She had joined a lady and gentleman, who were examining an ancient carving in ivory. The gentleman was middle-aged and portly; the elder lady tall and elegant, and with traces of interesting beauty. Coningsby heard her speak; the words were English, but the accent not of a native.

In the remotest part of the room, Coningsby, apparently engaged in examining some of that famous Limoges ware of which Sidonia had spoken, watched with interest and intentness the beautiful being whom he had followed, and whom he concluded to be the child of her companions. After some little time, they quitted the apartment on their return to the gallery; Coningsby remained behind, caring for none of the rare and fanciful objects that surrounded him, yet compelled, from the fear of seeming obtrusive, for some minutes to remain. Then he too returned to the gallery, and just as he had gained its end, he saw the portly gentleman in the distance shaking hands with Sidonia, the ladies apparently expressing their thanks and gratification to M. P——s, and then all vanishing by the door through which Coningsby had originally entered.

‘What a beautiful countrywoman of yours!’ said M. P——s, as Coningsby approached him.

‘Is she my countrywoman? I am glad to hear it; I have been admiring her,’ he replied.

‘Yes,’ said M. P——s, ‘it is Sir Wallinger: one of your deputies; don’t you know him?’

‘Sir Wallinger!’ said Coningsby, ‘no, I have not that honour.’ He looked at Sidonia

‘Sir Joseph Wallinger,’ said Sidonia, ‘one of the new Whig baronets, and member for ——. I know him. He married a Spaniard. That is not his daughter, but his niece; the child of his wife’s sister. It is not easy to find any one more beautiful.’

END OF BOOK V.