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## LITERATURE.

### REVENGE.

BY G. P. R. JAMES, ESQ.

(Concluded.)

Charles Neville gazed at him in stupefied astonishment, scarcely able to conceive what he meant; and, before he had sufficiently recovered himself to make any inquiries, Dillon had quitted the room, and was descending the stairs towards his carriage. For several minutes after he was gone his victim stood in the midst of that miserable chamber, with his whole senses bewildered by the variety of contending emotions which the brief interview called up in his bosom. Rage and indignation struggled with agony and despair; but at length the more potent passions overcame the more fierce and evanescent ones. He saw that he was ruined; that not only in fortune he was a bankrupt, but that by the cunning scheme of a fiend-like enemy, his honor and reputation, too, were lost; that all was gone; everything that made life valuable, except the love of one true devoted being, who stood gazing upon his pale and haggard countenance with the unchanged look of deep affection only rendered more intense by care and sorrow, and anxiety.

"What does he mean?" said Lucy, at length, "how have you offended him, Charles? Your ruin, depend upon it, is his doing. I have always doubted him; I have always feared that he had some evil purpose in his schemes he has suggested to you. I have seen it in the curl of his lip and the flash of his eye, when you did not know that he was looking on you. But I knew not that you had ever given him any cause to hate you."

"Nor have I, my Lucy," replied Neville, "nor have I. But once, when we were school-boys together, and he was ill treating poor Graham, I divulged what I had heard while living near his father in Northumberland, that he was a natural son. I had forgotten all about it long ago, till his words just now, about his illegitimacy, brought it back to my mind. But let us think no more of the villain, Lucy," he said, casting his arms around her; "let us think, my bright, my beautiful, my beloved, let us think of our present situation. Lucy, I am undone and ruined. By some villainous scheme, doubtless, of the scoundrel who has just quitted us, I am not only a beggar, but I may be made to appear, in the eyes of my friends and my profession, a criminal also. There is no chance, there is no hope left, nothing is left for Charles Neville, but to lie down on your bed and die! Lucy," he added, holding her a little distance from him, and gazing earnestly in her face, "Lucy, I madly took you from a happy home to bring you to misery, to want, and to disgrace! Blessings on you, dear girl; smile not so, and shake your head; it is but too true. Not yet three months you have been my wife, and what must I now do? I must send you back to the home from whence I took you. Go, my Lucy, go! Cast yourself at your father's feet, implore his forgiveness, tell him that never yet was filial disobedience so severely punished; beseech him to take you again to his bosom, and only to let you recall Charles Neville when death shall have ended his being and his misery."

Lucy again smiled and shook her head. "No Charles," she said, "no. If no earthly thing could have torn me from you in prosperity, adversity but links my fate to yours more firmly. I can die with you, Charles, but never leave you. And yet," she continued while a bright light came

up into her beautiful eyes, "and yet I will leave you, yet I will go to my father! But it will not be to plead for myself: it shall be to plead for Charles Neville. Nay, hear me, Charles; look not so hopeless. I, too, might hope little from my father's affection, when his pride is offended; but I build my hopes upon his pride. I will beseech him to come forth and support us in our hour of necessity; I will beseech him not to let Lord Grange's daughter starve in prison; I will beseech him not to let Lord Grange's son-in-law be condemned unheard! Nay, Charles, I know what you would say; that life, wealth, everything, are nothing worth without honor; but, Charles, your honor is pure, and it behooves you to make every exertion to defend it! Charles, you must, you dare not talk of dying," she continued, with all the fire of a noble enthusiastic spirit flashing from her countenance. "Charles, you must not, you dare not talk of dying, while an unjust stain remains upon your name. Nay, nay," she continued, "trust to my schemes now, trust to your Lucy, and I doubt not, ere two days are over, to bring you some comfort. At all events, Charles, I think I can make your honor and integrity apparent; for something—a presentiment it must have been—made me keep that bad man, Dillon's letter of invitation to you, in which you are expressly requested to come in your uniform. With it, too, is the letter which caused you to hurry so suddenly back; and I have a suspicion that, though the letter was written in a disguised hand, yet minute examination might prove that they both came from the same person."

The words of Lucy came to Charles Neville like a gleam of light to a benighted and tempest-beaten traveller. He consented at once that she should go, and divided with her the small sum they had left, in order to put her plan into execution.

"In two days' time, Charles," she said, "I will be back again; and you promise me, by all the mutual love we bear each other, not to give way in any degree to despair till you see me again."

"I will do my best, Lucy," he replied, "I will do my best. Sweet, beloved girl, who would not struggle on for life and hope with the love of such a being as you are to light them on their way?"

They parted; and for a short time—a very short time—the hopes, which Lucy's words had inspired continued to give a degree of comfort to Charles Neville; but, as the hours went by, and he sat in solitude and silence in the low and wretched room, with its barred windows and smoky walls, without any occupation but his own sad thoughts, the gloom deepened round him; more and more painful became his imaginings; every picture of misery and distress that imagination could conjure up, thronged the apartment; and, could the eye of Henry Dillon have seen him at that moment, with the anguish that wrung his heart traced in distinct lines upon his countenance, he surely would have felt that vengeance had done enough. But he had prepared yet more. As he had gone on, his appetite for the inebriating draught had increased; the caution with which he set out, too, had been abandoned. Instead of wishing to conceal his purposes and their motive, he now desired that Charles Neville should know that it was his hand that had struck the blow, and what had called it down. He had taken means to learn, as far as possible, all that occurred in the house where Neville was confined. Nobody passed in and out without being watched by his agents; all the servants of the house were bribed to tell all that passed. Like every other passion, pampered to a certain degree,

revenge had become his master instead of his slave, and was growing into a reckless and frenzied state of excitement, to which the sight of Charles Neville, suffering under his lash, had but added fresh fire and earnestness.

In the meanwhile Neville remained watching the heavy hours, and counting every minute as it flew, in hopes of Lucy's return. The second day went by, and Charles Neville watched the sound of every carriage that came near, listened for the opening door, marked each step upon the stair, but still Lucy came not; and the day went down into night. At length the heavy footfall of the bailiff was heard ascending towards his chamber, and the man entered, and put a note into his hand.

"There, sir," he said, "the debt is paid; and if I might advise you, you'd take yourself off as fast as possible; for, as far as I can hear, you are likely to get into a worse place than this."

Neville gazed upon the man in some surprise; but he saw the hand-writing of Henry Dillon upon the note, and tore it open before he answered. The writing was steady and clear; but to Neville, who knew nothing or but little of all that had been passing in Dillon's mind, the style seemed that of a madman.

"I have paid your debt, sir," so it ran, "and have set you free; but neither from regard towards you, nor consideration of your happiness. When you took the pains of informing Lord Grange that I was an illegitimate son, and thus broke off my proposed marriage with your fair wife's sister, you, perhaps, did me a favor, at least, if her conduct had proved in the end the same as that of your admirable lady. My purpose of freeing you from the duration of which she is taking advantage, is to give you an opportunity of satisfying yourself with your own eyes as to what is her conduct; and to show you that, while you imagine her safe at her father's seat, she is passing her time with your excellent companion, Mr. Graham, who has been, I understand, the kind friend of her youth. To conclude all matters existing between us, I have only further to say, that if you still consider yourself injured by me, as you expressed yourself when last we met, I am willing to waive all consideration of the disgraceful position in which you stand with society, and afford you the same satisfaction which I would give to a man of honor."

In the mad eagerness of his thirst for revenge, Dillon had overshot his mark; up to this point he had found means of wringing and torturing the heart of his victim; but, in regard to Lucy, love rendered that heart invulnerable. No look of doubt, no expression of suspicion, followed the perusal of that letter; a calm proud smile of thorough scorn was all that it produced.

"He is a fool as well as villain," muttered Neville, "and he has now exposed to me the whole of his base and ungenerous conduct; but I will go to Graham himself and lay the letter before him. Had I followed his advice and accepted his assistance, I should have escaped from the fangs of this viper, against whom he warned me long ago. Let all the few things I have here," he continued, turning to the bailiff, "be carried to my house; and if Mrs. Neville comes to night, inform her that I have returned home. Now, what have I to pay you?"

The exorbitant fees were soon discharged; and Neville set out on foot, taking his way to the chambers of the young lawyer, Mr. Graham. The servant who came to the door informed him that Mr. Graham was very busy, and had given orders to be disturbed for no one. Did a doubt arise in the mind of Charles Neville?—No! not a shadow. "Give your master this card," he said, "and tell him that a gentleman

wishes to speak with him for a few minutes.—I will wait here.

The servants left him at the door, and, proceeding along the passage, entered a room beyond. A moment after, the voice of Mr. Graham was heard speaking; and then an exclamation in a tone that made Neville's heart beat high. It was the voice of his wife; and Neville gazed along the passage. The instant after, the half-open door was thrown wide, and Lucy, darting forth, cast herself into her husband's arms.

"Oh! Charles?" she exclaimed, "I shall not easily forgive the person who has anticipated me in setting you free; ten minutes more would have brought me to you." Lucy had been followed more slowly, by Mr. Graham, who grasped Neville's hand warmly, and, with a look of satisfaction which admitted no mistake,—"We are two late," he said, "we are two late! And yet I trust that we have some happy news in store, which you have not yet heard. But let us come into this other room, Neville, for there are too many people in there;" and he pointed to the room from which he and Mrs. Neville had come.

"Do I know them?" said Neville.

"All of them, but my clerk, I believe," replied Graham. "There is my good Lord Grange, and your fair sister-in-law, and Sir John Stanmore."

"I had better meet them all at once," replied Neville; "I have been betrayed by a villain, and I have a proof of his villainy under his own hand. But I have done nothing that should make me ashamed or afraid to meet any man on earth. Read that, Graham;"—and he put Henry Dillon's letter into his friend's hand.

"Come, Charles! come then!" said Lucy; "not only our fortunes, but my father's ideas are very much changed since I left you."

At that moment Lord Grange appeared at the door, and welcomed Charles Neville as his son, adding a few words of dignified rebuke for his stolen marriage; but it was reserved for another to explain what had caused so complete a change in the worthy nobleman's views. It was neither the tears nor the persuasions of Lucy, for she had not seen her father till that night. From the place where her husband was confined, she had gone to the house of Mr. Graham—who was her father's agent; it must be remembered—for the purpose of beseeching him to take steps to clear her husband's honor of the imputation cast upon it, while she hurried down to her father's seat, in order to entreat his forgiveness and protection. She found, however, that Mr. Graham had lately married a lady considerably older than himself, who had been her own governess; and that he was upon the eve of setting out for the country house of Lord Grange; sent for thither, it appeared, on business of great importance. He besought Lucy to intrust the advocacy of her cause with her father to him, and to remain with his wife, whom she both loved and revered, doing what she could herself in London to clear her husband's character of all imputation, during his absence.

Lucy had lost no time, and bursting forth in a new character, had shown that, however sweet and gentle in moments where nothing was required at her hands but soothing kindness or calm fortitude, she possessed powers and energies of a more commanding kind, ever ready to act in the service of those she loved. She had in person proceeded to the commander-in-chief and had obtained an audience of him; she had persuaded him to investigate all accusations against her husband far more fully than he had done; and, in a second audience which she obtained, she proved to him, both from two letters