

LITERATURE.

REVENGE.

BY G. P. R. JAMES, ESQ.

(Continued.)

As usual, under such circumstances, the marriage was performed first in Scotland and next in London; and on the latter occasion, Henry Dillon accompanied Neville to the altar.—Strange and terrible was the feeling of joy with which he witnessed every act which hurried on the fate which he meditated for his victim.—Strange and terrible was the satisfaction which he felt in witnessing the temporary happiness that shone in Charles Neville's eyes, and showed what an engine the deep, strong love which reigned in his bosom might be to work his misery in after days. He felt, as he saw their hands united at the altar, as if he had thrown a chain forever round the man he hated. Imagination ran on into the future, and with minute accuracy depicted all the misery and wretchedness he might find means to inflict; all the dark and painful scenes through which he might follow out his revenge. And, as he strode back from the altar to the vestry, following, like the fiend in paradise, the path of two pure and happy beings, he felt as if every footstep were planted, crushing, upon the heart of Charles Neville.

The anticipation, even, was enough to satisfy him for several days; but as soon as ever he could do so with propriety, he called upon his victim, at a small house which he had taken for his bride, at a short distance from London. The scene itself was a pleasant one to his eyes. He saw Charles Neville and Lucy Grange living in a style so different to that in which they were accustomed, that he knew that the time would come, when Neville would find continual sources of pain and discomfort in the privations to which he would see Lucy exposed. Still, however, they had all the necessities, if not the luxuries of life; and Dillon began to think they looked too happy, and to grow impatient for the quicker progress of the misery he schemed.

Two days after, Charles Neville received a note, informing him that Dillon had found an opportunity of investing a large sum, in fact to any amount he chose, in a speculation which *must* be successful; the present interest was to be only seven per cent., but it was supposed that at the end of two years, a bonus could be obtained of at least five-and-twenty per cent. more.

Neville immediately hastened to town, and had an interview with the projector at the house of his pretended friend. The scheme was one of the many plausible schemes by which thousands have been ruined. Neville had some hesitation—some apprehension, indeed; and he said he would take a day to consider the matter, making an appointment with the projector, at the house of Dillon, for the next morning.—Henry Dillon's brow became clouded, even at the delay; but he could not oppose it; and he declared that he also would wait till Capt. Neville had decided.

When Neville returned home, he found his fair and beautiful bride sitting with a letter in her hand, gazing fixedly upon it with a look of deep melancholy; the first sad expression he had seen upon her countenance since she became his. Her left hand fell listless by her side; the right, which held the paper, rested on her knee, and with her head slightly bent, and the sunny ringlets of her chestnut hair falling forward on her soft blooming cheek, she kept her eyes still bent, as I have said, though it was evident enough that she had long before read its contents. She had never looked lovelier; she had never been dearer; and throwing his arms round her, her husband tenderly inquired what was the matter.

As a reply she put the letter into his hands; when he found it was one from her father, refusing either to pardon or to see her. The momentary grief passed by; hope still raised her voice; and as the evening went on, Lucy and her husband regained their cheerfulness; still, when Charles Neville looked round at the cottage in which they dwelt, when his eye fell upon the cards of several noble friends and

relations who had called upon his wife since their marriage, he experienced more anxiety than he had done before, lest Lucy should feel the privations of her situation. He thought, as the evening passed, of the tempting offer that had been made him. At one blow he would add two-thirds to his income; the carriage, which circumstances obliged them to deny themselves, might be kept without any extravagance or risk; and Lucy might appear once more in those circles where her sweetness of disposition and high qualities of mind and heart made her loved by all the good, the noble, and the wise.

With such feelings, he went to keep his appointment at the House of Henry Dillon. The projector there showed him a list of those who had taken shares in the speculation, and he found amongst them the names of all the richest and many of the cleverest mercantile men of the day. He thought there could be no risk; Henry Dillon assured him there *could* be none, and declared that, leaving it open to him to take what shares he liked, he would himself purchase all that remained. Neville hesitated no longer, and invested all but a mere pittance in the speculation which was proposed to him. Dillon also took shares to the amount of £50,000, and Neville went home perfectly satisfied that he had now a fair prospect of placing his beloved wife in a better situation.

The speculation seemed likely in every respect to be successful; and though at first Lucy had looked grave, yet when she found that a month after the whole had been arranged, her husband had been offered a considerable premium for his shares, she too was satisfied. The result of that satisfaction was, that her husband and herself, who had set out with the most careful economy, began to think that they might indulge in some little extraordinary expenses. Lucy Grange appeared as a bride in society, was courted, admired, and esteemed; one invitation, which could not well be refused, was succeeded by another, and the approaching dividend was calculated upon to meet the expenses of the moment. Charles Neville looked into the happy face of his young wife and saw that she was happy, and he also gave himself fully up to the joy of possessing her, and of seeing her contented with her situation.

The first thing that woke him from his dream, was to hear that the shares of the speculation in which he had taken part, had suffered a fall in value; and he instantly hurried to Dillon's house to ask what he ought to do. Dillon, he found, had gone down to his seat in Northumberland, and he instantly wrote to him, informing him of the facts, and asking his opinion.—While he was waiting with impatience, rumor upon rumor agitated and alarmed him; but he resolved not to act without his friend; he thought it would be dishonorable to do so, at least before Dillon could answer. The answer came by return of post. It was as kind as words could make it; expressing, however, great apprehensions of the result, and bidding Neville consult with his agent, in whose hands Henry Dillon said he had left the absolute management of all his affairs.

Charles Neville flew instantly to the house of the man of business, and informed him what was the object of his coming; the man stared at him with surprise: "Lord bless you, sir," he said, "I sold out all Mr. Dillon's shares two days ago, and that was at a loss of nearly ten thousand pounds. Since then, the thing has gone down like a waterfall, and I doubt not, by this time the bubble's burst."

In an agony of mind such as few can conceive, Neville flew to the stock exchange, and found that the bubble had burst indeed! His shares were not worth a sixpence; and all he had on earth was his captain's pay and a few hundred pounds. The agony of his mind, at the moment when this news met his ear, was keen and poignant beyond all expression, and was well calculated to gratify to the utmost the hatred of his most bitter enemy. It did gratify that enemy to a degree that none who have not felt the delight of satisfied revenge can know. After the letter of his agent had reached him, showing him that all his schemes were successful, though at the cost of several thousand pounds, Dillon sat in his high and lordly hall, gazing upon the pictures of his ancestors, and stimulating himself to the full enjoyment of his ac-

complished vengeance, by dwelling bitterly on the offence. "Yes," he said to himself, as he gazed around, "yes, I am an illegitimate child; there is a bar between me and all those noble men who passed through life within these walls. The purchase of the dwelling, and the land, and the riches, could not give me birth, could bestow on me no true title to call them my ancestors'. It is all true! He said nothing but the truth; but, nevertheless, he shall be rewarded sufficiently. If I am a bastard, he is a beggar!" And gazing forth upon vacancy with a well satisfied smile, he pictured to himself all the minute points of the misery he had caused; he saw in the glass of imagination the despair of Charles Neville, the wretchedness of Lucy, the evils of penury coming quick upon them; all the petty wants, and cares, and sorrows of poverty; the high-minded and the generous hearts reduced to the cool calculation of sixpences; the comparison between past affluence and present need; and there was not one single spot in the dark picture of their fate on which his eye did not rest with pleasure.

Yet it was not enough; his revenge knew no satiety; he eagerly asked his own heart, "What next?" and for a moment he thought with satisfaction of going at once to London, and giving his victim an intimation that his ruin had been designed, and why. His gratification could not be complete, he felt, unless Charles Neville knew the hand that dealt the blow. "When he does know it," Dillon thought, "he will assuredly call me out, and then I may have my revenge indeed! I may have the pleasure of punishing him sufficiently, and seeing how he will meet death, with the knowledge that he is leaving his wife to beggary and starvation."

But as he thus thought, he paused and saw that there were yet two or three steps to be taken which might add two or three steps of misery more to those which he had already piled upon the head of him he hated. "I know Charles Neville, well," he thought, "and he can never be truly wretched so long as he has love and honor to support him. I must bring upon him some disgrace; I must deprive him of the consolation of her affection, and then—and then he shall quit the world if he so pleases."

His plans had never been completely formed; for his purposes and their accomplishment increased step by step, and he remained one day longer in the country, in order to trace out his scheme more completely. He then hastened to London, and his first visit was to the house on which he had brought calamity. The faces of Charles and Lucy Neville expressed all that he could have wished. Corroding care, the searing and withering touch of some great, sudden and unexpected misfortune, the haggard eye of anxious and painful expectation, all were there, showing him how his vengeance worked. When he arrived, there was with him a little man, much older in appearance than in reality, whom Neville introduced as their mutual school-fellow, Mr. Graham, now a solicitor. And, for a time Dillon imagined that he might have come to press the bankrupt Neville in regard to some debt; but he soon learned that Graham's object had been to offer his services to Neville in arranging his affairs; and he discovered also that the little lawyer was an old acquaintance of Mrs. Neville's. From that moment, Dillon treated him with a degree of haughtiness which soon induced him to take his hat and depart.—Graham paused a moment after the door closed upon him, as if doubtful whether he should not turn back to say something more; but the moment after he walked on again, and Dillon proceeded to condole with Neville on the terrible loss they had mutually sustained.

"There is but one way of retrieving, Neville," he said, as soon as Lucy had left them, "and by that means, I understand you may speedily recover a portion of what you lost, by the risk of a mere insignificant sum."

"But I have no sum to risk, Dillon," replied Neville; "I am utterly ruined; I cannot command three hundred pounds at this moment."

"But I can," said Dillon, assuming a frank tone, "but I can; and while I have the means, you may command them."

He then went on to explain to his victim, that in those fluctuating times, large fortunes might be made by speculation in the funds; and he offered to advance for his friend five thousand

pounds to enable him to pursue that species of gambling. The mind of Charles Neville, however, revolted from the very thought. He pointed out that he knew nothing of such transactions; and he expressed his determination of retiring with Lucy into some remote part of the country, and live upon the little they had, till a renewal of the war called him again into active service. Dillon, however, adhered to his advice, and pursued it by a thousand arguments. As to carrying on the business at the stock exchange, he said, neither of them could, of course, do that; but his agent would manage the whole under their direction. He himself possessed means of obtaining secret information, he declared, which would enable them to take advantage of the fluctuations of the market. And, to put his friend's mind quite at ease, he said he would advance the five thousand pounds upon condition of its being repaid to him, if they were successful within a certain time; but if not the debt to be cancelled altogether.

Neville's sense of honor, would not, of course, permit him to take advantage of this proposal; but it had the effect which Dillon intended. It induced him to listen to his pretended friend's scheme, and ultimately to take part in it, borrowing absolutely the five hundred pounds.—He declared, however, that he was perfectly incompetent to manage the transaction; and Dillon, willingly on his part, undertook to arrange the whole. A number of meetings and conferences were necessary; and, on several occasions, Dillon found the same Mr. Graham at the house of Captain Neville. The presence of the little lawyer displeased him, and he treated him with a degree of haughty rudeness, which, though the man of law bore it with all patience, called a remonstrance from Neville himself.

"I have my reasons!" replied Dillon, abruptly; and that very reply, spoken on the spur of the moment, suggested to his mind a scheme for consummating the last act of his revenge.

When all was completed, an interval occurred during which Charles Neville heard little or nothing of the further proceedings of his friend, and the time passed in very anxious expectation; whilst several of his creditors, judging from his altered style of living that he was a falling man, with the ordinary charity of the human race, pressed eagerly for payment. At length one day his friend informed him that there was to be a meeting at his house in the country, about thirty miles from London, of various influential men, one of whom, he thought, was likely to obtain for Neville one of those appointments on the staff at home, which would put him for the time, at ease. He invited him, therefore, warmly, to come down with his wife; adding, that as there was to be a fancy ball in the evening, he had better bring his regimental uniform.

Lucy refused to go, but insisted upon her husband's doing so; and the day passed over with Charles Neville in the happiness of renewed hope, for the personage to whom Dillon had alluded, who was well aware of the young officer's high talents in his profession, took much notice of him during the whole day, conversed with him over his future prospects, and taught him to expect assistance and support. Twice, during the course of the day, however, Neville caught the eye of Dillon resting upon him with an expression which startled and surprised him. But it created no suspicion, for how could he suspect a man who showed nothing but the strongest desire to aid and befriend him? The ball which followed was as splendid as wealth and taste could make it, protracted till almost daylight.

The morning, in fact, was gray in the sky, when one of the servants sought out Captain Neville, and placed a note in his hand, which, he said, had been brought that moment, by a messenger in great haste, from London. It was in a strange hand, but purported to come from a physician, and went to inform him that his wife had been taken suddenly ill in the night, and that if he wished to see her alive, he must hasten back with all speed. Neville's cheek turned deadly pale at the news; and Dillon, who was standing near, demanded eagerly what was the matter. As soon as he was told, he insisted on horses being sent for, and Charles Neville, in an agony of mind, posted back