

LITERATURE.

REVENGE.

BY G. P. R. JAMES, ESQ.

(Continued.)

On a bright sunny day, a carriage was driving rapidly through a little village in Dorsetshire, where a great deal of neatness, and even grace characterized all the cottages though they were cottages still. The whole place did not contain a hundred dwellings: and the wall of a park flanked it on one side. In the midst stood a little inn, or, to call it by its right name, a pretty public house; and as the carriage was driving by, with many a face staring at such an equipage as they seldom saw, the master thereof let down the front window, and commanded the postillions to stop. In a moment, the two servants who were behind sprang to the door; and in a faint and feeble voice, their master told them that he was taken extremely ill, and commanded them to take him into the inn. It contained no room in which he could be properly accommodated; and while sitting in the public tap-room, with his head leaning on his hands, in apparently great agony, Henry Dillon desired that a surgeon might be sent for. The innkeeper himself ran up to the neighboring hall, and informed its owner of what had just occurred in the village. The owner himself immediately came down, with several of his servants, and insisted upon Mr. Dillon being immediately removed to his own house.

He was a man considerably advanced in years, with a frank, kindly countenance; but with an habitual quickness of motion and speech, which indicated a hasty disposition. Henry Dillon was removed to the hall; means were taken for giving him immediate relief; and a surgeon who soon after appeared from a neighboring town, declared that the gentleman's illness seemed to proceed from having taken some poisonous substance, though of what nature he could not say. No kindness was wanting on the part of the owner of the mansion; and when he came to visit the patient, after a few hours' sleep had been obtained, Dillon expressed the keenest gratitude for his benevolent attention, and begged to know the name of him to whom he was so much indebted.

"My name," replied the old gentleman, after declining all thanks,—“my name is William Neville.”

“What?” exclaimed Dillon, with very marked surprise; “surely not the uncle of my old friend and schoolfellow, Charles Neville?”

“The same, my dear sir, the same,” replied the old man. “But you seem to be surprised. Did the young dog ever mention me to you?”

“Frequently—frequently,” replied Dillon; “but in truth, I expected to see a much older man.”

He said no more at that moment, but what he had said was sufficient; and Sir William Neville went away with a feeling of dissatisfaction towards his nephew without very well knowing why. The apothecary sent in a great number of draughts and Henry Dillon began to recover from the temporary illness under which he had been suffering. But the medicines of his medical attendant had, certainly, no great share therein; for his valet, by his orders poured them regularly behind the fire at stated intervals. However Dillon, as we have said, recovered rapidly, and on the third morning, was sitting up, dressing himself to proceed on his journey, when a conversation took place between him and his valet, which was of some interest.

“He is a very fine old man, indeed,” said Dillon, in reply to some observation made by his servant: “I never was more surprised in my life than when he told me his name; for my friend Neville of the — dragoons, represented him as much older, and in his dotage—a mere driveller.”

“He is not that at all, sir,” replied the servant, “for, from what I hear in the neighborhood, he does an immense sight of good amongst his tenantry; so that every cottage-garden is quite a pleasure-ground.”

“Ay, that is what Neville used to blame him for,” replied Dillon. “He used to say that he was fooling away his time like a madman, and

that he was, in short, quite a driveller, as I said before.”

Henry Dillon spoke very loud; and there was a door between the dressing room in which he sat and the dressing-room of Sir William Neville. A chink of that door was open; and though Sir William Neville himself had long gone forth to ride, yet his old and confidential valet was busy in the dressing-room, and could not well avoid hearing every word that was said. Dillon took leave of his entertainer at luncheon, ere he proceeded on his journey: but though the baronet was both kind and polite, there was a certain testy dryness of manner about him, which showed that he was in an irritable mood: and when Dillon sank back in his carriage, there was a bitter, but triumphant smile, hanging upon his dark, but handsome countenance.

Just two days after the events we have above noticed, a gay and happy party was assembled in the house of Lord Grange, to witness the marriage of his daughter Lucy and Captain Charles Neville. Spring had now taken the place of winter; the village church was all decked with flowers; the villagers were crowding round the porch to see sweet Miss Lucy, as they called her, come as a bride to the altar; and in the mansion two happy hearts were beating with many a thrilling hope—with happiness and love. The boy who had been sent to the post town for letters had spurred his horse into double speed, in order to be back in time to see Miss Lucy's wedding; and the bag was put into Lord Grange's hand just at the moment that the party were waiting for the carriages to come round to convey them to the church. He looked over the letters carelessly, intending to read none of them till he returned. The address of one caught his eye, however, and seemed to interest him strongly; for, casting down the others, he broke it open and read. It was very short, but to the following effect:—

“My Lord,—As it has occurred to me, although nothing has been said upon the subject, that your lordship's determination of giving your daughter in marriage to my nephew, may be, in some degree, affected by the chance of his succeeding to my property, I think it but right to inform you that it is not my intention to leave him any part thereof; but, on the contrary, to bequeath everything I possess to my sister's second son, William, Charles' first cousin. I hope this letter will reach you in time to prevent any unpleasant misconceptions; and have the honor to be, with compliments to Miss Lucy, and the rest of your family, your lordship's most obedient servant,

“WILLIAM NEVILLE.”

“In time, and just in time,” said Lord Grange. “Captain Neville, will you do me the favor of speaking with me in my library?”

Charles Neville followed him in some surprise; and, in an hour afterwards, Lucy Grange was weeping in her own chamber, and Charles Neville was posting down to his uncle's seat to ascertain the motives of that extraordinary change which had blasted all his expected happiness, at the very moment of its accomplishment. As his carriage drove up to the house, he saw the windows half shut; and he was met in the hall, before he could ask any questions, by his aunt's husband, the father of the youth who was to be the gainer by his loss.

“Probably you have come, Captain Neville,” said Sir John Stanmore, “to endeavor to alter your uncle's determination on a point which I feel must be very painful to you? Your coming, however, is too late to have that effect, as your uncle only lived a few hours after signing the will, which he sent for me to witness; by which he bequeathed to my second son, William, the whole of his property, except a few legacies, on the condition of his taking the name and arms of Neville. I, of course, represent my son, during his absence with his ship; and I, together with my uncle's lawyer, have put my seal upon everything in the house. After the funeral, however, we will examine everything together, and I trust sincerely, we may find something which may convey even a part of the property to you; as the amount of that which seems likely to fall to my son, is, doubtless, as much beyond his ambition, as it certainly was beyond his expectations.”

Such words of course had little effect in soothing the mind of Charles Neville, who saw the

cup of happiness snatched from his lips in a moment; and he returned to London with nothing but disappointment and despair. He wrote immediately to Lord Grange, informing him of the event; and in his letter he pleaded, with all the eloquence of love, against the fate which the cold and calculating father of Lucy Grange had assigned to him and her. He showed that, even without his commission in the army, which afforded him a certain prospect of advancement, he possessed, independent of any one, eight hundred per annum, which with the fortune that Lord Grange had promised to his daughter, would be quite sufficient to maintain them in respectability. And he urged, that after their long attachment to each other, neither could ever forget, or form any other union with a prospect of happiness.

In the meantime, Henry Dillon had not failed to gain information of the progress of his work. He had diligently read that part of the newspapers which usually contain the record of marriages amongst persons who pretend to station and respectability, and every day when he turned his eye thither, his heart had beat with a feeling of apprehension which he had never felt on any former occasion, dreading that he should see the marriage of Charles Neville with Lucy Grange; fearing that one drop of happiness should be poured into that cup which he had determined to render bitter. With a heated cheek, and a triumphant smile, he at length saw a somewhat sneering announcement that the apprehended marriage had not taken place; and oh! with what exultation did he read, that Sir William Neville had died, leaving the whole of his property to his sister's second son, a midshipman in the navy, whom he had never twice beheld in his life. It was all gratification to him—it was all triumph! But the cup which he was draining so eagerly,—the cup by which he was destroying his immortal soul, was like that wherewith the drunkard destroys the mortal body. Each draught does but increase the thirst, which it was drained at first to allay; and the fiery burning of his heart for more, was but aggravated by that which was employed to quench it.

Dillon had found out the hotel at which Capt. Neville had resided while in London, and he had taken means to ascertain the moment of his return. When he learned, however, that he had actually arrived, there was a struggle in his heart,—a strife between the eager impetuosity of his desires, and the dark, deliberate purpose of giving those desires their utmost gratification. He had determined to see Charles Neville; not only that he might, in person, witness his sufferings, but that he might goad him on along the road to destruction. And yet, when the moment came that he was to put this resolve into execution, he felt that with all the mastery he had acquired over his demeanor, it would scarcely be possible for him to shroud within his own bosom the revengeful hatred, the first promptings of which were, to slay his enemy wheresoever he found him.—He passed, and revolved the whole in his own mind. But he saw a new triumph even in the very conquest of himself. He felt that it would be double the pleasure to plant the blow with his own hand, and stir the dagger in the wound; and he muttered between his teeth, as he concluded,—“Yes, I will go to him—I will console him—I will befriend him; and try whether he will not be idiot enough to forget how he has injured me, or to think that I am fool enough not to see and know it.”

He went, accordingly; asked for Captain Neville, and was admitted. But he paused a moment at the foot of the stairs, to recollect all his determinations, to calm down every agitation, and to discipline the dark passions of his soul in order to win the complete victory for which he paused. Then, with a calm, deliberate step he mounted the staircase, and entered the room in which Charles Neville sat. He could scarcely restrain the grim, satisfied smile, which convulsed his lip even as he repressed it, on beholding the altered appearance of him he hated:—the ruddy cheek turned pale; the eye, grown haggard and anxious; the once firm and resolute lip, quivering with the quick passing of many painful emotions. There was a certain negligence, too, which spoke strongly of pain, and disappointment, and anxiety, and distress;

and, for the first time, Dillon tasted deeply of the sweets of revenge, and was resolved not to set down the cup till it was drained to the last drop.

Charles Neville rose, and grasped his hand warmly. “This is very kind of you, Dillon,” he said; “very kind of you, indeed!”

“Not at all, my dear Neville,” replied Dillon, calmly; “I heard that you had been suffering, like myself, from the caprice of that old man, Lord Grange; and I thought no one was better calculated to console you, than one who had undergone the same, and had at length shaken off the effect.”

A long conversation ensued; which ended in Dillon giving his advice in regard to Charles Neville's future conduct. “You have but two things to do,” he said. “At least were I in your situation, such would be my behavior.—This old man promised you his daughter, and encouraged your addresses to her, without making any stipulation concerning your uncle's fortune. Are you, and the beautiful girl you love, to suffer through your whole lives for this injustice? There is no man on earth who will not think you perfectly justified in marrying without his consent, if he now withdraws it. My case is far different; for though he at one time sanctioned my addresses to your fair Lucy's sister, he withdrew his approbation ere I had time to win her regard; but with you the matter is straightforward; and if you do not pursue your suit to Lucy Grange herself, without at all heeding her father, you sacrifice her happiness as well as your own. A thousand to one, after all is over, the old man is reconciled to you in a month, and gives his second daughter the same sum that he bestows upon her elder sister.”

“I care little about that,” replied Charles Neville; “except in one point of view, and that is the dread of exposing my beloved girl to those privations and petty inconveniences to which she has never been subjected.”

“Does she love you?” demanded Dillon, with emphasis.

“I trust so,” answered Neville. “Nay, I am sure she does.”

“Then fear not!” replied his companion. “She will thank you more deeply for making her taste those inconveniences, than if you had seated her on a throne. But I was going to meet your objection in another way. The second object which you ought to have in view, after having secured your union with your fair bride, is to increase your fortune. Thousands of men who attain affluence—nay the height of fortune, set out in life with not the hundredth part of that which you possess. Indeed, what you have already, properly placed, would produce double that which you now receive: I have myself more than doubled my income within the last two years; and as soon as ever I find anything that is perfectly safe for investing your money to greater advantage, I will let you know; but I will propose nothing to you on which I am not willing to risk a much larger sum myself. And, in the meantime, if I can aid you in obtaining your fair Lucy, command me! I am ready to serve you, hand and heart!”

Neville believed him; for he was one of those who, though he had mingled much with the world, had known little of its deceits; his own heart was the pure diamond, the lustre of which might be dimmed for a moment, but could not be permanently sullied; and, in the military career through which he had passed, he had made acquaintance with high and noble deeds. He had witnessed too many a dark act of blood and cruelty, beyond his power to prevent or remedy; but he had been very little accustomed to scrutinize or contend with that peculiar kind of treachery which, as in the present instance, clothes the most deadly and venomous enmity in the fair and glossy robe of friendship. He believed him! and gave himself up to his guidance, not blindly, not foolishly; for any apparent deceit, any proposal of a doubtful or dishonorable nature, would either have opened his eyes at once, or excited suspicions which might have proved his safeguard. But he admitted that Lucy Grange was his by right, that they were bound to one another by every vow which could unite two hearts together, except the last at the altar; and that Lord Grange had no right to withdraw his consent at such a time and for