
GUY DEVERELL

V.

1 OF 2

Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu

 **Publio**

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CHAPTER I.

Sir Jekyl Marlowe at the Plough Inn.

The pretty little posting station, known as the Plough Inn, on the Old London Road, where the Sterndale Road crosses it, was in a state of fuss and awe, at about five o'clock on a fine sharp October evening, for Sir Jekyl Marlowe, a man of many thousand acres, and M.P. for the county, was standing with his back to the fire, in the parlour, whose bow-window looks out on the ancient thoroughfare I have mentioned, over the row of scarlet geraniums which beautify the window-stone.

"Hollo!" cried the Baronet, as the bell-rope came down in answer to an energetic but not angry pull, and he received Mrs. Jones, his hostess, who entered at the moment, with the dismantled bell-handle still in his hand. "At my old tricks, you see. I've been doing you a mischief, hey? but we'll set it right in the bill, you know. How devilish well you look! wonderful girl, by Jove! Come in, my dear, and shut the door. Not afraid of me. I want to talk of ducks and mutton-chops. I've had no luncheon, and I'm awfully hungry," said the comely Baronet in a continued chuckle.

The Baronet was, by that awful red-bound volume of dates, which is one of the melancholy drawbacks of aristocracy, set down just then, and by all whom it might concern, ascertainable to be precisely forty-nine years and three months old; but so well had he worn, and so cleverly was he got up, that he might have passed for little more than forty.

He was smiling, with very white teeth, and a gay leer on pretty Mrs. Jones, an old friend, with black eyes and tresses, and pink cheeks, who bore her five-and-thirty years as well almost as he did his own burthen. The slanting autumnal sun became her, and she simpered and courtesied and blushed the best she could.

"Well, you pretty little devil, what can you do for me—hey? You know we're old friends—hey? What have you got for a hungry fellow? and don't stand at the door there, hang it—come in, can't you? and let me hear what you say."

So Mrs. Jones, with a simpering bashfulness, delivered her bill of fare off book.

The Baronet was a gallant English gentleman, and came of a healthy race, though there were a 'beau' and an archbishop in the family; he could rough it good-humouredly on beefsteak and port, and had an accommodating appetite as to hours.

"That will do very nicely, my dear, thank you. You're just the same dear hospitable little rogue I remember you—how long is it, by Jove, since I stopped here that day, and the awful thunderstorm at night, don't you recollect? and the whole house in such a devil of a row, egad!" And the Baronet chuckled and leered, with his hands in his pockets.

"Three years, by Jove, I think—eh?"

"Four years in August last, Sir Jekyl," she answered, with a little toss of her head and a courtesy.

"Four years, my dear—four devils! Is it possible? why

upon my life it has positively improved you." And he tapped her cheek playfully with his finger. "And what o'clock is it?" he continued, looking at his watch, "just five. Well, I suppose you'll be ready in half-an-hour—eh, my dear?"

"Sooner, if you wish, Sir Jekyl."

"No, thank you, dear, that will do very nicely; and stay," he added, with a pluck at her pink ribbon, as she retreated: "you've some devilish good port here, unless it's all out—old Lord Hogwood's stock—eh?"

"More than two dozen left, Sir Jekyl; would you please some?"

"You've hit it, you wicked little conjurer—a bottle; and you must give me a few minutes after dinner, and a cup of coffee, and tell me all the news—eh?"

The Baronet, standing on the threadbare hearthrug, looked waggishly, as it were, through the panels of the shut door, after the fluttering cap of his pretty landlady. Then he turned about and reviewed himself in the sea-green mirror over the chimneypiece, adjusted his curls and whiskers with a touch or two of his fingers' ends, and plucked a little at his ample silk necktie, and shook out his tresses, with his chin a little up, and a saucy simper.

But a man tires even of that prospect; and he turned on his heel, and whistled at the smoky mezzotint of George III. on the opposite wall. Then he turned his head, and looked out through the bow-window, and his whistling stopped in the middle of a bar, at sight of a young man whom he espied, only a yard or two before the covered porch of the little inn.

This young gentleman was, it seemed, giving a parting direction to some one in the doorway. He was tall, slender, rather dark, and decidedly handsome. There were, indeed, in his air, face, and costume, that indescribable elegance and superiority which constitute a man "distinguished looking."

When Sir Jekyl beheld this particularly handsome young man, it was with a disagreeable shock, like the tap on a big drum, upon his diaphragm. If anyone had been there he would have witnessed an odd and grizzly change in the pleasant Baronet's countenance. For a few seconds he did not move. Then he drew back a pace or two, and stood at the further side of the fire, with the mantelpiece partially between him and the young gentleman who spoke his parting directions, all unconscious of the haggard stare which made Sir Jekyl look a great deal less young and good-natured than was his wont.

This handsome young stranger, smiling, signalled with his cane, as it seemed, to a companion, who had preceded him, and ran in pursuit.

For a time Sir Jekyl did not move a muscle, and then, with a sudden pound on the chimneypiece, and a great oath, he exclaimed—

"I could not have believed it! What the devil can it mean?"

Then the Baronet bethought him—"What confounded stuff one does talk and think, sometimes! Half the matter dropt out of my mind. Twenty years ago, by Jove, too. *More* than that, egad! How could I be such an ass?"

And he countermarched, and twirled on his heel into his

old place, with his back to the fire, and chuckled and asked again—

"How the plague *could* I be such a fool?"

And after some more of this sort of catechism he began to ruminate oddly once more, and, said he—

"It's plaguy *odd*, for all that."

And he walked to the window, and, with his face close to the glass, tried in vain to see the stranger again. The bow-window did not command the road far enough to enable him to see any distance; and he stuck his hat on his head, and marched by the bar, through the porch, and, standing upon the road itself, looked shrewdly in the same direction.

But the road makes a bend about there, and between the hedgerows of that wooded country the vista was not far.

With a cheerful air of carelessness, Sir Jekyl returned and tapped on the bar window.

"I say, Mrs. Jones, who's that good-looking young fellow that went out just now?"

"The gentleman in the low-crowned hat, sir, with the gold-headed cane, please?"

"Yes, a tall young fellow, with large dark eyes, and brown hair."

"That will be Mr. Strangers, Sir Jekyl."

"Does he sleep here to-night?"

"Yes, sir, please."

"And what's his business?"

"Oh, dear! No business, Sir Jekyl, please. He's a real gentleman, and no end of money."

"I mean, how does he amuse himself?"

"A looking after prospects, and old places, and such like, Sir Jekyl. Sometimes riding and sometimes a fly. Every day some place or other."

"Oh! pencils and paint-boxes—eh?"

"I aven't seen none, sir. I can't say how that will be."

"Well, and what is he about; where is he gone; where is he now?" demanded the Baronet.

"What way did Mr. Strangers go, Bill, just now?" the lady demanded of boots, who appeared at the moment.

"The Abbey, ma'am."

"The Abbey, please, Sir Jekyl."

"The Abbey—that's Wail Abbey—eh? How far is it?"

"How far will it be, Bill?"

"'Taint a mile all out, ma'am."

"Not quite a mile, Sir Jekyl."

"A good ruin—isn't it?" asked the Baronet.

"Well, they do say it's *very* much out of repair; but I never saw it myself, Sir Jekyl."

"Neither did I," said Sir Jekyl. "I say, my good fellow, you

can point it out, I dare say, from the steps here?"

"Ay, please, Sir Jekyl."

"You'll have dinner put back, Sir—please, Sir Jekyl?" asked Mrs. Jones.

"Back or forward, *any* way, my dear child. Only I'll have my walk first."

And kissing and waving the tips of his fingers, with a smile to Mrs. Jones, who courtesied and simpered, though her heart was perplexed with culinary solitudes "how to keep the water from getting into the trout, and prevent the ducks of overroasting," the worthy Baronet, followed by Bill, stept through the porch, and on the ridge of the old high-road, his own heart being oddly disturbed with certain cares which had given him a long respite; there he received Bill's directions as to the route to the Abbey.

It was a clear frosty evening. The red round sun by this time, near the horizon, looked as if a tall man on the summit of the western hill might have touched its edge with his finger. The Baronet looked on the declining luminary as he buttoned his loose coat across his throat, till his eyes were almost dazzled, thinking all the time of nothing but that handsome young man; and as he walked on briskly toward the Abbey, he saw little pale green suns dancing along the road and wherever else his eyes were turned.

"I'll see this fellow face to face, and talk a bit with him. I dare say if one were near he's not at all so like. It *is* devilish odd though; twenty-five years and not a relation on earth—and dead—hang him! Egad, its like the Wandering Jew,

and the what do you call 'em, *vitæ*. Ay, here it is."

He paused for a moment, looking at the pretty stile which led a little pathway across the fields to the wooded hollow by the river, where the ruin stands. Two old white stone, fluted piers, once a doorway, now tufted with grass, and stained and worn by time, and the stile built up between.

"I know, of course, there's nothing in it; but it's so odd—it *is* so *devilish* odd. I'd like to know all about it," said the Baronet, picking the dust from the fluting with the point of his walking-cane. "Where has he got, I wonder, by this time?" So he mounted the stile, and paused near the summit to obtain a commanding view.

"Well, I suppose he's got among the old walls and rubbish by this time. I'll make him out; he'll break cover."

And he skipped down the stile on the other side, and whistled a little, cutting gaily in the air with his cane as he went.

But for all he could do the same intensely uncomfortable curiosity pressed upon him as he advanced. The sun sank behind the distant hills, leaving the heavens flooded with a discoloured crimson, and the faint silver of the moon in the eastern sky glimmered coldly over the fading landscape, as he suddenly emerged from the hedged pathway on the rich meadow level by the slow river's brink, on which, surrounded by lofty timber, the ruined Abbey stands.

The birds had come home. Their vesper song had sunk with the setting sun, and in the sad solitude of twilight the grey ruins rose dimly before him.

"A devilish good spot for a picnic!" said he, making an effort to recover his usual agreeable vein of thought and spirits.

So he looked up and about him, and jauntily marched over the sward, and walked along the line of the grey walls until he found a doorway, and began his explorations.

Through dark passages, up broken stairs, over grass-grown piles of rubbish, he peeped into all sorts of roofless chambers. Everything was silent and settling down into night. At last, by that narrow doorway, which in such buildings so oddly gives entrance here and there into vast apartments, he turned into that grand chamber, whose stone floor rests on the vaults beneath; and there the Baronet paused for a moment with a little start, for at the far end, looking towards him, but a little upward, with the faint reflected glow that entered through the tall row of windows, on the side of his face and figure, stood the handsome young man of whom he was in pursuit.

The Baronet being himself only a step or two from the screw stairs, and still under the shadow of the overhanging arch in the corner, the stranger saw nothing of him, and to announce his approach, though not much of a musician, he hummed a bar or two briskly as he entered, and marched across and about as if thinking of nothing but architecture or the picturesque.

"Charming ruin this, sir," exclaimed he, raising his hat, so soon as he had approached the stranger sufficiently near to make the address natural. "Although I'm a resident of this part of the world, I'm ashamed to say I never saw it before."

The young man raised his hat too, and bowed with a ceremonious grace, which, as well as his accent, had something foreign in it.

"While I, though a stranger, have been unable to resist its fascination, and have already visited it three times. You have reason to be proud of your county, sir, it is full of beauties."

The stranger's sweet, but peculiar, voice thrilled the Baronet with a recollection as vivid and detested. In fact this well-seasoned man of the world was so much shocked that he answered only with a bow, and cleared his voice, and chuckled after his fashion, but all the time felt a chill creeping over his back.

There was a broad bar of a foggy red light falling through the ivy-girt window, but the young man happened to stand at that moment in the shadow beside it, and when the Baronet's quick glance, instead of detecting some reassuring distinction of feature or expression, encountered only the ambiguous and obscure, he recoiled inwardly as from something abominable.

"Beautiful effect—beautiful sky!" exclaimed Sir Jekyl, not knowing very well what he was saying, and waving his cane upwards towards the fading tints of the sky.

The stranger emerged from his shadow and stood beside him, and such light as there was fell full upon his features, and as the Baronet beheld he felt as if he were in a dream.

CHAPTER II.

The Baronet Visits Wardlock Manor.

In fact Sir Jekyl would have been puzzled to know exactly what to say next, so odd were his sensations, and his mind so pre-occupied with a chain of extremely uncomfortable conjecture, had not the handsome young gentleman who stood beside him at the gaping window with its melancholy folds of ivy, said—

"I have often tried to analyse the peculiar interest of ruins like these—the mixture of melancholy and curiosity. I have seen very many monasteries abroad—perhaps as old as this, even older—still peopled with their monks, with very little interest indeed, and no sympathy; and yet here I feel a yearning after the bygone age of English monasticism, an anxiety to learn all about their ways and doings, and a sort of reverence and sadness I can't account for, unless it be an expression of that profound sympathy which mortals feel with every expression of decay and dissolution."

The Baronet fancied that he saw a lurking smile in the young man's face, and recoiled from psychologic talk about mortality.

"I dare say you're right, sir, but I am the worst metaphysician in the world." He thought the young man smiled again. "In your liking for the picturesque, however, I quite go with you. Do you intend extending your tour to Wales and Scotland?"

"I can hardly call this little excursion a tour. The fact is, my curiosity is pretty much limited to this county; there are old reasons which make me feel a very particular interest in it," said the young man, with a very pointed carelessness and a smile, which caused the Baronet inwardly to wince.

"I should be very happy," said Sir Jekyl, "if you would take Marlowe in your way: there are some pictures there, as well as some views you might like to see. I am Sir Jekyl Marlowe, and own two or three places in this county, which are thought pretty—and, may I give you my card?"

The snowy parallelogram was here presented and accepted with a mutual bow. The stranger was smiling oddly as Sir Jekyl introduced himself, with an expression which he fancied he could read in spite of the dark, as implying "rather old news you tell me."

"And—and—what was I going to say?—oh!—yes—if I can be of any use to you in procuring access to any house or place you wish to see, I shall be very happy. You are at present staying at my occasional quarters, the 'Plough.' I'm afraid you'll think me very impertinent and intrusive; but I should like to be able to mention your name to some of my friends, who don't usually allow strangers to see their places."

This was more like American than English politeness; but the Baronet was determined to know all about the stranger, commencing with his name, and the laws of good breeding, though he knew them very well, were not likely to stand long in his way when he had made up his mind to accomplish an object.

"My name is Guy Strangways," said the stranger.

"O—ho—it's very odd!" exclaimed the Baronet, in a sharp snarl, quite unlike his previous talk. I think the distance between them was a little increased, and he was looking askance upon the young gentleman, who made him a very low foreign bow.

There was a silence, and just then a deep metallic voice from below called, "Guy—hollo!"

"Excuse me—just a moment," and the young man was gone. The Baronet waited.

"He'll be back," muttered Sir Jekyl, "in a minute."

But the Baronet was mistaken. He waited at that open window, whistling out upon the deepening twilight, till the edges of the ivy began to glitter in the moonbeams, and the bats to trace their zigzags in the air; and at last he gave over expecting.

He looked back into the gloomy void of that great chamber, and listened, and felt rather angry at his queer sensations. He had not turned about when the stranger withdrew, and did not know the process of his vanishing, and for the first time it struck him, "who the plague could the fellow who *called* him be?"

On the whole he wished himself away, and he lighted a cigar for the sake of its vulgar associations, and made his way out of the ruins, and swiftly through darkened fields toward the Old London Road; and was more comfortable than he cared to say, when he stepped through the porch into the

open hall of the "Plough," and stopped before the light at the bar, to ask his hostess once more, quite in his old way, whether Mr. Strangways had returned.

"No, not yet; always uncertain; his dinner mostly overdone."

"Has he a friend with him?"

"Yes, sir, sure."

"And what is he like?"

"Older man, Sir Jekyl, a long way than young Mr. Guy Strangways; some relation I do think."

"When do they leave you?"

"To-morrow evening, with a chaise and pair for Aukworth."

"Aukworth? why, that's another of my properties!—ha, ha, ha, by Jove! Does he know the Abbey here is mine?"

"I rayther think not, Sir Jekyl. Would you please to wish dinner?"

"To be sure, you dear little quiz, dinner by all means; and let them get my horses to in half-an-hour; and if Mr. Strangways should return before I go, I'd like to see him, and don't fail to let me know—do ye see?"

Dinner came and went, but Mr. Strangways did not return, which rather vexed Sir Jekyl, who, however, left his card for that gentleman, together with an extremely polite note, which he wrote at the bar with his hat on, inviting him and

his companion to Marlowe, where he would be at home any time for the next two months, and trusted they would give him a week before they left the country.

It was now dark, and Sir Jekyl loitered under the lamplight of his chaise for a while, in the hope that Mr. Strangways would turn up. But he did not; and the Baronet jumped into the vehicle, which was forthwith in motion.

He sat in the corner, with one foot on the cushion, and lighted a cigar. His chuckling was all over, and his quizzing, for the present. Mrs. Jones had not a notion that he was in the least uneasy, or on any but hospitable thoughts intent. But anyone who now looked in his face would have seen at a glance how suddenly it had become overcast with black care.

"Guy Strangways!" he thought; "those two names, and his wonderful likeness! Prowling about this county! Why this more than another? He seemed to take a triumphant pleasure in telling me of his special fancy for this county. And his voice—a tenor they call it—I hate that sweet sort of voice. Those d—— singing fellows. I dare say he sings. They never do a bit of good. It's very odd. It's the same voice. I forgot that odd silvery sound. The *same*, by Jove! I'll come to the bottom of the whole thing. D—— me, I will!"

Then the Baronet puffed away fast and earnestly at his cigar, and then lighted another, and after that a third. They steadied him, I dare say, and helped to oil the mechanism of thought. But he had not recovered his wonted cheer of mind when the chaise drew up at a pair of time-worn fluted piers, with the gable of an old-fashioned dwelling-house overlooking the road at one side. An iron gate admitted to a

courtyard, and the hall door of the house was opened by an old-fashioned footman, with some flour on the top of his head.

Sir Jekyl jumped down.

"Your mistress quite well, hey? My daughter ready?" inquired the Baronet. "Where are they? No, I'll not go up, thank you; I'll stay here," and he entered the parlour. "And, do you see, you just go up and ask your mistress if she wishes to see me."

By this time Sir Jekyl was poking up the fire and frowning down on the bars, with the flickering glare shooting over his face.

"Can the old woman have anything to do with it? Pooh! no. I'd like to see her. But who knows what sort of a temper she's in?"

As he thus ruminated, the domestic with the old-fashioned livery and floured head returned to say that his mistress would be happy to see him.

The servant conducted him up a broad stair with a great oak banister, and opening a drawing-room door, announced—

"Sir Jekyl Marlowe."

He was instantly in the room, and a tall, thin old lady, with a sad and stately mien, rose up to greet him.

"How is little mamma?" cried the Baronet, with his old chuckle. "An age since we met, hey? How well you look!"

The old lady gave her thin mittened hand to her son-in-law, and looked a grim and dubious sort of welcome upon him.

"Yes, Jekyl, an age; and only that Beatrix is here, I suppose another age would have passed without my seeing you. And an old woman at my years has not many ages between her and the grave."

The old lady spoke not playfully, but sternly, like one who had suffered long and horribly, and who associated her sufferings with her visitor; and in her oblique glance was something of deep-seated antipathy.

"Egad! you're younger than I, though you count more years. You live by clock and rule, and you show it. You're as fresh as that bunch of flowers there; while I am literally knocking myself to pieces—and I know it—by late hours, and all sorts of nonsense. So you must not be coming the old woman over me, you know, unless you want to frighten me. And how is Beatrix? How do, Beatrix? All ready, I see. Good child."

Beatrix at this moment was entering. She was tall and slightly formed, with large dark eyes, hair of soft shadowy black, and those tints of pure white and rich clear blush, scarlet lips, and pearly teeth, and long eyelashes, which are so beautiful in contrast and in harmony. She had the prettiest little white nose, and her face was formed in that decided oval which so heightens the charm of the features. She was not a tragic heroine. Her smile was girlish and natural—and the little ring of pearls between her lips laughed beautifully—and her dimples played on chin and cheek as she smiled.

Her father kissed her, and looked at her with a look of gratification, as he might on a good picture that belonged to

him; and turning her smiling face, with his finger and thumb upon her little dimpled chin, toward Lady Alice, he said—

"Pretty well, this girl, hey?"

"I dare say, Jekyl, she'll do very well; she's not formed yet, you know,"—was stately Lady Alice's qualified assent. She was one of that school who are more afraid of spoiling people than desirous of pleasing them by admiration. "She promises to be like her darling mother; and that is a melancholy satisfaction to me, and, of course, to you. You'll have some tea, Jekyl?"

The Baronet was standing, hat in hand, with his outside coat on, and his back to the fire, and a cashmere muffler loosely about his throat.

"Well, as it is here, I don't mind."

"May I run down, grandmamma, and say good-bye to Ellen and old Mrs. Mason?"

"Surely—you mean, of course to the parlour? You may have them there."

"And you must not be all night about it, Beatrix. We'll be going in a few minutes. D'ye mind?"

"I'm quite ready, papa," said she; and as she glided from the room she stole a glance at her bright reflection in the mirror.

"You are always in a hurry, Jekyl, to leave me when you chance to come here. I should be sorry, however, to interfere with the pleasanter disposition of your time."

"Now, little mother, you mustn't be huffed with me. I have a hundred and fifty things to look after at Marlowe when I get there. I have not had a great deal of time, you know—first the session, then three months knocking about the world."

"You never wrote to me since you left Paris," said the old lady, grimly.

"Didn't I? That was very wrong! But you knew those were my holidays, and I detest writing, and you knew I could take care of myself; and it is so much better to tell one's adventures than to put them into letters, don't you think?"

"If one could tell them all in five minutes," replied the old lady, drily.

"Well, but you'll come over to Marlowe—you really must—and I'll tell you everything there—the truth, the whole truth, and as much more as you like."

This invitation was repeated every year, but like Don Juan's to the statue, was not expected to lead to a literal visit.

"You have haunted rooms there, Jekyl," she said, with an unpleasant smile and a nod. "You have not kept house in Marlowe for ten years, I think. Why do you go there now?"

"Caprice, whim, what you will," said the Baronet, combing out his favourite whisker with the tips of his fingers, while he smiled on himself in the glass upon the chimneypiece, "I wish *you'd* tell me, for *I* really don't know, except that I'm tired of Warton and Dartbroke, as I am of all monotony. I like change, you know."

"Yes; you *like change*," said the old lady, with a dignified

sarcasm.

"I'm afraid it's a true bill," admitted Sir Jekyl, with a chuckle, "So you'll come to Marlowe and see us there—won't you?"

"No, Jekyl—certainly *not*," said the old lady, with intense emphasis.

A little pause ensued, during which the Baronet twiddled at his whisker, and continued to smile amusedly at himself in the glass.

"I wonder you could think of asking me to Marlowe, considering all that has happened there. I sometimes wonder at myself that I can endure to see you at all, Jekyl Marlowe; and I don't think, if it were not for that dear girl, who is so like her sainted mother, I should ever set eyes on you again."

"I'm glad we have that link. You make me love Beatrix better," he replied. He was now arranging the elaborate breast-pin with its tiny chain, which was at that date in vogue.

"And so you are going to keep house at Marlowe?" resumed the lady, stiffly, not heeding the sentiment of his little speech.

"Well, so I purpose."

"I don't like that house," said the old lady, with a subdued fierceness.

"Sorry it does not please you, little mother," replied Sir Jekyl.

"You know I don't like it," she repeated.

"In that case you need not have told me," he said.

"I choose to tell you. I'll say so as often as I see you—as often as I like."

It was an odd conference—back to back—the old lady stiff and high—staring pale and grimly at the opposite wall. The Baronet looking with a quizzical smile on his handsome face in the mirror—now plucking at a whisker—now poking at a curl with his finger-tip—and now in the same light way arranging the silken fall of his necktie.

"There's nothing my dear little mamma can say, I'll not listen to with pleasure."

"There is much I might say you could not listen to with pleasure." The cold was growing more intense, and bitter in tone and emphasis, as she addressed the Italian picture of Adonis and his two dogs hanging on the distant wall.

"Well, with *respect*, *not* with pleasure—no," said he, and tapped his white upper teeth with the nail of his middle finger.

"Assuming, then, that you speak truth, it is high time, Jekyl Marlowe, that you should alter your courses—here's your daughter, just come out. It is ridiculous, your affecting the vices of youth. Make up as you will—you're past the middle age—you're an elderly man now."

"You can't vex me that way, you dear old mamma," he said, with a chuckle, which looked for the first time a little vicious in the glass. "We baronets, you know, are all booked, and all the world can read our ages; but you women manage

better—you and your two dear sisters, Winifred and Georgiana."

"They are *dead*," interrupted Lady Alice, with more asperity than pathos.

"Yes, I know, poor old souls—to be sure, peers' daughters die like other people, I'm afraid."

"And when they do, are mentioned, if not with sorrow, at least with decent respect, by persons, that is, who know how to behave themselves."

There was a slight quiver in Lady Alice's lofty tone that pleased Sir Jekyl, as you might have remarked had you looked over his shoulder into the glass.

"Well, you know, I was speaking not of deaths but births, and only going to say if you look in the peerage you'll find all the men, poor devils, pinned to their birthdays, and the women left at large, to exercise their veracity on the point; but you need not care—you have not pretended to youth for the last ten years I think."

"You are excessively impertinent, sir."

"I *know* it," answered Sir Jekyl, with a jubilant chuckle.

A very little more, the Baronet knew, and Lady Alice Redcliffe would have risen gray and grim, and sailed out of the room. Their partings were often after this sort.

But he did not wish matters to go quite that length at present. So he said, in a sprightly way, as if a sudden thought had struck him—

"By Jove, I believe I *am devilish* impertinent, without knowing it though—and you have forgiven me so often, I'm sure you *will* once more, and I am really so much obliged for your kindness to Beatrix. I am, indeed."

So he took her hand, and kissed it.

CHAPTER III.

Concerning two Remarkable Persons who appeared in Wardlock Church.

Lady Alice carried her thin Roman nose some degrees higher; but she said—

"If I say anything disagreeable, it is not for the pleasure of giving you pain, Jekyl Marlowe; but I understand that you mean to have old General Lennox and his artful wife to stay at your house, and if so, I think it an arrangement that had better be dispensed with. I don't think her an eligible acquaintance for Beatrix, and you know very well she's *not*—and it is not a respectable or creditable kind of thing."

"Now, what d—d fool, I beg pardon—but who the plague has been filling your mind with those ridiculous stories—my dear little mamma? You know how ready I am to confess; you *might* at least; I tell you everything; and I do assure you I *never* admired her. She's good looking, I know; but so are fifty pictures and statues I've seen, that don't please me."

"Then it's true, the General and his wife are going on a visit to Marlowe?" insisted Lady Alice, drily.

"No, they are not. D—— me, I'm not thinking of the General and his wife, nor of any such d—d trumpery. I'd give something to know who the devil's taking these cursed

liberties with my name."

"Pray, Jekyl Marlowe, command your language. It can't the least signify who tells me; but you see I do sometimes get a letter."

"Yes, and a precious letter too. Such a pack of lies did any human being ever hear fired off in a sentence before? I'm *é pris* of Mrs. General Lennox. Thumper number one! She's a lady of—I beg pardon—easy virtue. Thumper number two! and I invite her and her husband down to Marlowe, to make love of course to her, and to fight the old General. Thumper number three!"

And the Baronet chuckled over the three "thumpers" merrily.

"Don't talk slang, if you please—gentlemen don't, at least in addressing ladies."

"Well, then, I won't; I'll speak just as you like, only you must not blow me up any more; for really there is no cause, and we here only two or three minutes together, you know; and I want to tell you something, or rather to ask you—do you ever hear anything of those *Deverells*, you know?"

Lady Alice looked quite startled, and turned quickly half round in her chair, with her eyes on Sir Jekyl's face. The Baronet's smile subsided, and he looked with a dark curiosity in hers. A short but dismal silence followed.

"You've heard from them?"

"No!" said the lady, with little change in the expression of her face.

"Well, *of* them?"

"No," she repeated; "but *why* do you ask? It's *very* strange!"

"*What's* strange? Come, now, you *have* something to say; tell me what it is."

"I wonder, Jekyll, you ask for them, in the first place."

"Well—well, of course; but what next?" murmured the Baronet, eagerly: "why is it so strange?"

"Only because I've been thinking of them—a great deal—for the last few days; and it seemed very odd your asking; and in fact I fancy the same thing has happened to us both."

"Well, may be; but what *is* it?" demanded the Baronet, with a sinister smile.

"I have been startled; most painfully and powerfully affected; I have seen the most extraordinary resemblance to my beautiful, *murdered* Guy."