Guy Deverell

v.

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Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu

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CHAPTER I.

Lady Alice and Varbarriere tête-à-tête in the Library.

"Well, he told you something, did not he?" persisted Lady Alice.

"In the sense of a distinct disclosure, nothing," said the Bishop, looking demurely over his horizontal leg on the neatly-shorn grass. "He did speak to me upon subjects—his wishes, and I have no doubt he intended to have been much more explicit. In fact, he intimated as much; but he was overtaken by death—unable to speak when I saw him next morning."

"He spoke to you, I know, about pulling down or blowing up that green chamber," said Lady Alice, whose recollections grew a little violent in proportion to the Bishop's reserve and her own impatience.

"He did not suggest quite such strong measures, but he did regret that it had ever been built, and made me promise to urge upon his son, as you once before mentioned you were aware, so soon as he should come of age, to shut it up."

"And you did urge him?"

"Certainly, Lady Alice," said the Bishop, with dignity. "I viewed it in the light of a duty, and a very sacred one, to do so."

"He told you the reason, then?" inquired Lady Alice.

"He gave me no reason on earth for his wish; perhaps, had he been spared for another day, he would have done so; but he expressed himself strongly indeed, with a kind of horror, and spoke of the Italian who built, and his father who ordered it, in terms of strong disapprobation, and wished frequently it had never been erected. Perhaps you would like to take a little turn. How very pretty the flowers still are!"

"Very. No, thank you, I'll sit a little. And there was something more. I know perfectly there was, my lord; what was it, pray?" answered the old lady.

"It was merely something that I took charge of," said the Bishop, cautiously.

"You need not be so reserved with me, my lord; I'm not, as you very well know, a talking old woman, by any means. I know something of the matter already, and have never talked about it; and as the late Lady Marlowe was my poor daughter by marriage, you may talk to me, I should hope, a little more freely than to a total stranger."

The Bishop, I fancy, thought there was something in this appeal, and was, perhaps, amused at the persistency of women, for he smiled sadly for a second or two on his gaiter, and he said, looking before him with his head a little on one side—

"You give me credit, my dear Lady Alice, for a great deal more reserve than I have, at least on this occasion, exercised. I have very little to disclose, and I am not forbidden by any promise, implied or direct, to tell you the very little I know."

He paused.

"Well, my lord, *pray* go on," insisted Lady Alice.

"Yes, on the whole," said the Bishop, thoughtfully, "I prefer telling you. In the room in which he died, in this house, there is, or was, a sort of lock-up place."

"That was the room in which Jekyl now sleeps," interrupted Lady Alice.

"I am not aware."

"The room at the extreme back of the house. You go through a long passage on the same level as the hall, and then, at the head of the far back-stair, into a small room on your left, and through that into the bed-room, I mean. It was there, I know, his coffin lay, for I saw him in it."

"As well as I recollect, that must have been the room. I know it lay as you describe. He gave me some keys that were placed with his purse under his pillow, and directed me to open the press, and take out a box, resembling a small oak plate-chest, which I did, and, by his direction, having unlocked it, I took out a very little trunk-shaped box, covered with stamped red leather, and he took it from me, and the keys, and that time said no more."

"Well?"

"In the evening, when I returned, he said he had been thinking about it, and wished to place it and the key in my care, as his boy was not of age, and it contained something, the value of which, as I understood, might be overlooked, and the box mislaid. His direction to me was to give it to his son,

the present Sir Jekyl, on his coming of age, and to tell him from him that he was to do what was right with it. I know those were his words, for he was exhausted, and not speaking very distinctly; and I repeated them carefully after him, and as he said, 'correctly;' after a short time he added, 'I think I shall tell you more about it to-morrow;' but, as I told you, he was unable to speak next morning."

"And what did that red box contain?" asked Lady Alice.

"I can't tell. I never unlocked it. I tied it round with a tape and sealed it, and so it remained."

"Then, Jekyl got it when he came of age?"

"I had him, about that time, at my house. He examined the box, and, when he had satisfied himself as to its contents, he secured it again with his own seal, and requested me to keep it for him for some short time longer."

"Have you got it still in your possession?"

"No. I thought it best to insist at last on his taking it into his own keeping. I've brought it with me here—and I gave it to him on the day of my arrival."

"Very heavy, was it?"

"On the contrary, very light."

"H'm! Thank you, my lord; it is very good of you to converse so long with an old woman such as I."

"On the contrary, Lady Alice, I am much obliged to you. The fact is, I believe it is better to have mentioned these circumstances. It may, perhaps, prove important that some

member of the family should know exactly what took place between me and the late Sir Harry Marlowe during his last illness. You now know everything. I have reminded him, as I thought it right, of the earnest injunction of his father, first with respect to that room, the green chamber; and he tells me that he means to comply with it when his party shall have broken up. And about the other matter, the small box, I mentioned that he should do what is right with it. He asked me if I had seen what the box contained; and on my saying no, he added that he could not tell what his father meant by telling him to do what was right with it—in fact, that he could do nothing with it."

"Quite an Italian evening!" exclaimed the Bishop, after a pause, rising, and offering his arm to Lady Alice.

And so their conference ended.

Next day, contrary to her secluded custom, and for the first time, Lady Alice glided feebly into the new library of Marlowe, of which all the guests were free.

Quite empty, except of that silent company in Russia leather and gold, in vellum, and other fine suits; all so unobtrusive and quiet; all so obsequiously at her service; all ready to speak their best, their brightest, and wisest thoughts, or to be silent and neglected, and yet never affronted; always alert to serve and speak, or lie quiet.

Quite deserted! No, not quite. There, more than half hidden by that projection and carved oak pilaster, sate Monsieur Varbarriere, in an easy-chair and a pair of gold spectacles, reading easily his vellum quarto.

"Pretty room!" exclaimed Lady Alice in soliloquy, so soon as she had detected the corpulent and grave student.

Monsieur Varbarriere laid down his book with a look of weariness, and seeing Lady Alice, smiled benignly, and rose and bowed, and his sonorous bass tones greeted her courteously from the nook in which he stood framed in oak, like a portrait of a rich and mysterious burgomaster.

"What a pretty room!" repeated the old lady; "I believe we are *tête-à-tête*."

"Quite so; I have been totally alone; a most agreeable surprise, Lady Alice. Books are very good company; but even the best won't do always; and I was beginning to weary of mine."

M. Varbarriere spoke French, so did Lady Alice; in fact, for that gentleman's convenience, all conversations with him in that house were conducted in the same courtly language.

Lady Alice looked round the room to satisfy herself that they were really alone; and having made her commendatory criticisms on the apartment once more,

"Very pretty," echoed Monsieur Varbarriere; "I admire the oak, especially in a library, it is so solemn and contemplative. The Bishop was here to-day, and admired the room very much. An agreeable and good man the Bishop appears to be."

"Yes; a good man; an excellent man. I had a very interesting conversation with him yesterday. I may as well tell you, Monsieur Varbarriere—I know I may rely upon you—I have not come to my time of life without knowing

pretty well, by a kind of instinct, whom I may trust; and I well know how you sympathise with me about my lost son."

"Profoundly, madame;" and Monsieur Varbarriere, with his broad and brown hand on his breast, bowed slowly and very deep.

CHAPTER II.

M. Varbarriere orders his Wings.

In her own way, with interjections, and commentary and occasional pauses for the sake of respiration, old Lady Alice related the substance of what the Bishop had communicated to her.

"And what do you suppose, Monsieur Varbarriere, to have been the contents of that red leather box?" asked Lady Alice.

Monsieur Varbarriere smiled mysteriously and nodded.

"I fancy, Lady Alice, I have the honour to have arrived at precisely the same conclusion with yourself," said he.

"Well, I dare say. You see now what is involved. You understand now why I should be, for his own sake, more than ever grieved that my boy is gone," she said, trembling very much.

Monsieur Varbarriere bowed profoundly.

"And why it is, sir, that I do insist on your explaining your broken phrase of the other evening."

Monsieur Varbarriere in his deep oak frame stood up tall, portly, and erect. A narrow window, with stained heraldic emblazonry, was partly behind him, and the light from above fell askance on one side of his massive countenance, throwing such dark downward bars of shadow on his face,

that Lady Alice could not tell whether he was scowling or smiling, or whether the effect was an illusion.

"What phrase, pray, does your ladyship allude to?" he inquired.

"You spoke of my boy—my poor Guy—as if you knew more of him than you cared to speak—as if you were on the point of disclosing, and suddenly recollected yourself," replied Lady Alice.

"You mean when I had the honour to converse with you the night before last in the drawing-room," said he, a little brusquely, observing that the old lady was becoming vehemently excited.

"Yes; when you left me under the impression that you thought my son still living," half screamed Lady Alice, like a woman in a fury.

"Bah!" thundered the sneering diapason of Monsieur Varbarriere, whose good manners totally forsook him in his angry impatience, and his broad foot on the floor enforced his emphasis with a stamp.

"What do you mean, you foreign masquerader, whom nobody knows? What *can* it be? Sir, you have half distracted me. I've heard of people getting into houses—I've heard of magicians—I've heard of the devil—I have heard of charlatans, sir. I'd like to know what right, if you know nothing of my dear son, you have to torture me with doubts—"

"Doubts!" repeated Varbarriere, if less angrily, even more contemptuously. "Pish!"

"You may say *pish*, sir, or any rudeness you please; but depend upon this, if you do know *anything* of any kind, about my darling son, I'll have it from you if there be either laws or men in England," shrieked Lady Alice.

Varbarriere all at once subsided, and looked hesitatingly. In tones comparatively quiet, but still a little ruffled, he said—

"I've been, I fear, very rude; everyone that's angry is. I think you are right. I ought never to have approached the subject of your domestic sorrow. It was not my doing, madame; it was *you* who insisted on drawing me to it."

"You told me that you had seen my son, and knew Mr. Strangways intimately."

"I did *not*!" cried Varbarriere sternly, with his head thrown back; and he and Lady Alice for a second or two were silent. "That is, I beg pardon, you *misapprehended* me. I'm sure I never could have said I had seen your son, Mr. Guy Deverell, or that I had a particularly intimate acquaintance with Mr. Strangways."

"It won't do," burst forth Lady Alice again; "I'll not be fooled—I won't be fooled, sir."

"Pray, then, pause for one moment before you have excited an alarm in the house, and possibly decide me on taking my leave for ever," said Varbarriere, in a low but very stern tone. "Whatever I may be—charlatan, conjurer, devil—if you but knew the truth, you would acknowledge yourself profoundly and everlastingly indebted to me. It *is* quite true that I am in possession of facts of which you had not even a

suspicion; it is true that the affairs of those nearest to you in blood have occupied my profoundest thoughts and most affectionate care. I believe, if you will but exercise the self-command of which I have no doubt you are perfectly capable, for a very few days, I shall have so matured my plans as to render their defeat impracticable. On the other hand, if you give me any trouble, or induce the slightest suspicion anywhere that I have taken an interest of the kind I describe, I shall quit England, and you shall go down to your grave in *darkness*, and with the conviction, moreover, that you have blasted the hopes for which you ought to have sacrificed not your momentary curiosity only, but your unhappy life."

Lady Alice was awed by the countenance and tones of this strange man, who assumed an authority over her, on this occasion, which neither of her deceased lords had ever ventured to assert in their lifetimes.

Her fearless spirit would not, however, succumb, but looked out through the cold windows of her deep-set eyes into the fiery gaze of her *master*, as she felt him, daringly as before.

After a short pause, she said—

"You would have acted more wisely, Monsieur Varbarriere, had you spoken to me on other occasions as frankly as you have just now done."

"Possibly, madame."

"Certainly, monsieur."

M. Varbarriere bowed.

"Certainly, sir. But having at length heard so much, I am willing to concede what you say. I trust the delay may not be long.—I think you ought to tell me soon. I suppose we had better talk no more in the interim," she added, suddenly turning as she approached the threshold of the room, and recovering something of her lofty tone—"upon that, to me, terrible subject."

"*Much* better, madame," acquiesced M. Varbarriere.

"And we meet otherwise as before," said the old lady, with a disdainful condescension and a slight bow.

"I thank you, madame, for that favour," replied M. Varbarriere, reverentially, approaching the door, which, as she drew near to withdraw, he opened for her with a bow, and they parted.

"I hope she'll be quiet, that old grey wildcat. I must get a note from her to Madame Gwynn. The case grows stronger; a little more and it will be irresistible, if only that stupid and ill-tempered old woman can be got to govern herself for a few days."

That evening, in the drawing-room, Monsieur Varbarriere was many degrees more respectful than ever to that old grey wildcat, at whom that morning he had roared in a way so utterly ungentlemanlike and ferocious.

People at a distance might have almost fancied a sexagenarian caricature of a love-scene. There had plainly been the lovers' quarrel. The lady carried her head a little

high, threw sidelong glances on the carpet, had a little pink flush in her cheeks, and spoke little; listened, but smiled not; while the gentleman sat as close as he dare, and spoke earnestly and low.

Monsieur Varbarriere was, in fact, making the most of his time, and recovering all he could of his milder influence over Lady Alice, and did persuade and soften; and at length he secured a promise of the note he wanted to Mrs. Gwynn, pledging his honour that she would thoroughly approve the object of it, so soon as he was at liberty to disclose it.

That night, taking leave of Sir Jekyl, Monsieur Varbarriere said—

"You've been so good as to wish me to prolong my visit, which has been to me so charming and so interesting. I have ventured, therefore, to enable myself to do so, by arranging an absence of two days, which I mean to devote to business which will not bear postponement."

"Very sorry to lose you, even for the time you say; but you must leave your nephew, Mr. Strangways, as a hostage in our hands to secure your return."

"He shall remain, as you are so good as to desire it, to enjoy himself. As for me, I need no tie to hold me to my engagement, and only regret every minute stolen for other objects from my visit."

There was some truth in these complimentary speeches. Sir Jekyl was now quite at ease as to the character of his guests, whom he had at first connected with an often threatened attack, which he profoundly dreaded, however

lightly he might talk of its chances of success. The host, on the whole, liked his guests, and really wished their stay prolonged; and Monsieur Varbarriere, who silently observed many things of which he did not speak, was, perhaps, just now particularly interested in his private perusal of that little romance which was to be read only at Marlowe Manor.

"I see, Guy, you have turned over a new leaf—no fooling now—you must not relapse, mind. I shall be away for two days. If longer, address me at Slowton. May I rely on your good sense and resolution—knowing what are our probable relations with this family—to continue to exercise the same caution as I have observed in your conduct, with much satisfaction, for the last two evenings? Well, I suppose I may. If you cannot trust yourself—fly. Get away—pack. You may follow me to Slowton, make what excuse you please; but don't loiter here. Good-night."

Such was the farewell spoken by Varbarriere to his nephew, as he nodded his good-night on the threshold of their dressing-room.

In the morning Monsieur Varbarriere's place knew him no more at the breakfast-table. With his valise, despatch-box, and desk, he had glided away, in the frosty sunlight, in a Marlowe post-chaise, to the "Plough Inn," on the Old London Road, where, as we know, he had once sojourned before. It made a slight roundabout to the point to which his business really invited his route; and as he dismissed his vehicle here, I presume it was done with a view to mystify possible inquirers.

At the "Plough Inn" he was received with an awful bustle

and reverence. The fame of the consideration with which he was entertained at Marlowe had reached that modest hostelry, and Monsieur Varbarriere looked larger, grander, more solemn in its modest hall, than ever; his valise was handled with respect, and lifted in like an invalid, not hauled and trundled like a prisoner; and the desk and despatch-box, as the more immediate attendants on his person, were eyed with the respect which such a confidence could not fail to inspire.

So Monsieur Varbarriere, having had his appetising drive through a bright country and keen air, ate his breakfast very comfortably; and when that meal was over, ordered a "fly," in which he proceeded to Wardlock, and pulled up at the hall-door of Lady Alice's reserved-looking, but comfortable old redbrick mansion.

CHAPTER III.

Monsieur Varbarriere talks with Donica Gwynn.

The footman opened the door in deshabille and unshorn, with a countenance that implied his sense of the impertinence of this disturbance of his gentlemanlike retirement. There was, however, that in the countenance of Monsieur Varbarriere, as well as the intangible but potent "aura" emitted by wealth, which surrounded him—an influence which everybody feels and no one can well define, which circumambiates a rich person and makes it felt, nobody knows how, that he *is* wealthy—that brought the flunky to himself; and adjusting his soiled necktie hastily with one hand, he ran down to the heavy but commanding countenance that loomed on his from the window of the vehicle.

"This is Wardlock?" demanded the visitor.

"Wardlock Manor?—yes, sir," answered the servant.

"I've a note from Lady Alice Redcliffe, and a few words to Mrs. Gwynn the housekeeper. She's at home?"

"Mrs. Gwynn?—yes, sir."

"Open the door, please," said Monsieur Varbarriere, who was now speaking good frank English with wonderful fluency, considering his marked preference for the French tongue

elsewhere.

The door flew open at the touch of the footman; and Monsieur Varbarriere entered the staid mansion, and was shown by the servant into the wainscoted parlour in which Lady Alice had taken leave of the ancient retainer whom he was about to confer with.

When Mrs. Gwynn, with that mixture of curiosity and apprehension which an unexpected visit is calculated to inspire, entered the room, very erect and natty, she saw a large round-shouldered stranger, standing with his back toward her, arrayed in black, at the window, with his grotesque high-crowned hat on.

Turning about he removed this with a slight bow and a grave smile, and with his sonorous foreign accent inquired—

"Mrs. Gwynn, I suppose?"

"Yes, sir, that is my name, if you please."

"A note, Mrs. Gwynn, from Lady Alice Redcliffe."

And as he placed it in the thin and rather ladylike fingers of the housekeeper, his eyes rested steadily on her features, as might those of a process-server, whose business it might be hereafter to identify her.

Mrs. Gwynn read the note, which was simply an expression of her mistress's wish that she should answer explicitly whatever questions the gentleman, M. Varbarriere, who would hand it to her, and who was, moreover, a warm friend of the family, might put to her.

When Mrs. Gwynn, with the help of her spectacles, had spelled through this letter, she in turn looked searchingly at Monsieur Varbarriere, and began to wonder unpleasantly what line his examination might take.

"Will you, Mrs. Gwynn, allow me the right to sit down, by yourself taking a chair?" said Monsieur Varbarriere, very politely, smiling darkly, and waving his hand toward a seat.

"I'm very well as I am, I thank you, sir," replied Gwynn, who did not very much like the gentleman's looks, and thought him rather like a great roguish Jew pedlar whom she had seen long ago at the fair of Marlowe.

"Nay, but pray sit down—I can't while you stand—and our conversation may last some time—pray do."

"I can talk as well, sir, one way as t'other," replied she, while at the same time, with a sort of fidgeted impatience, she did sit down and fold her hands in her lap.

"We have all, Mrs. Gwynn, a very high opinion of you; I mean Lady Alice and the friends of her family, among whom I reckon myself."

"It's only of late as I came to my present misses, you're aware, sir, 'aving been, from, I may say, my childhood in the Marlowe family."

"I know—the Marlowe family—it's all one, in fact; but I may say, Mrs. Gwynn, that short, comparatively, as has been your time with Lady Alice, you are spoken of with more respect and liking by that branch of the family than by Sir Jekyl."

"I've done nothing to disoblege Sir Jekyl, as Lady Alice knows. Will you be so kind, sir, as to say what you want of me, having business to attend to up-stairs?"

"Certainly, it is only a trifle or two."

Monsieur Varbarriere cleared his voice.

"Having ascertained all about that *secret door* that opens into the green chamber at Marlowe, we would be obliged to you to let us know at what time, to your knowledge, it was first used."

His large full eyes, from under his projecting brows, stared full upon her shrinking gaze as he asked this question in tones deep and firm, but otherwise as civil as he could employ.

It was vain for Mrs. Gwynn to attempt to conceal her extreme agitation. Her countenance showed it—she tried to speak, and failed; and cleared her throat, and broke down again.

"Perhaps you'd like some water," said Varbarriere, rising and approaching the bell.

"No," said Donica Gwynn, rising suddenly and getting before him. "Let be."

He saw that she wished to escape observation.

"As you please, Mrs. Gwynn—sit down again—I shan't without your leave—and recover a little."

"There's nothing wrong with me, sir," replied Donica, now in possession of her voice, very angrily; "there's nothing to

cause it."

"Well, Mrs. Gwynn, it's quite excusable; I know all about it."

"What *are* you, a builder or a hartist?"

"Nothing of the kind; I'm a gentleman without a profession, Mrs. Gwynn, and one who will not permit you to be compromised; one who will protect you from the slightest suspicion of anything unpleasant."

"I don't know what you're a-driving at," said Mrs. Gwynn, still as white as death, and glancing furiously.

"Come, Mrs. Gwynn, you're a sensible woman. You *do* know *perfectly*. You have maintained a respectable character."

"Yes, sir!" said Donica Gwynn, and suddenly burst into a paroxysm of hysterical tears.

"Listen to me: you have maintained a respectable character, I know it: nothing whatever to injure that character shall ever fall from my lips; no human being—but two or three just as much interested in concealing all about it as you or I—shall ever know anything about it; and Sir Jekyl Marlowe has consented to take it down, so soon as the party at present at Marlowe shall have dispersed."

"Lady Alice—I'll never like to see her again," sobbed Donica.

"Lady Alice has no more suspicion of the existence of that door than the Pope of Rome has; and what is more, never

shall. You may rely upon me to observe the most absolute silence and secrecy—nay, more, if necessary for the object of concealment—so to mislead and mystify people, that they can never so much as surmise the truth, *provided*—pray observe me—*provided* you treat me with the most *absolute candour*. You must not practise the least reserve or concealment. On tracing the slightest shadow of either in your communication with me, I hold myself free to deal with the facts in my possession, precisely as may seem best to myself. You understand?"

"Not Lady Alice, nor none of the servants, nor—nor a creature living, please."

"*Depend* on me," said Varbarriere.

"Well, sure I may; a gentleman would not break his word with such as me," said Donica, imploringly.

"We can't spend the whole day repeating the same thing over and over," said Varbarriere, rather grimly; "I've said my say—I know everything that concerns *you* about it, without your opening your lips upon the subject. You occupied that room for two years and a half during Sir Harry's lifetime—you see I know it all. *There!* you are perfectly safe. I need not have made you any promise, but I do—perfectly safe with me—and the room shall vanish this winter, and no one but ourselves know anything of that door—do you understand?—*provided*—"

"Yes, sir, please—and what do you wish to know more from me? I don't know, I'm sure, why I should be such a fool as to take on so about it, as if *I* could help it, or was ever a bit

the worse of it myself. There's been many a one has slep' in that room and never so much as knowd there was a door but that they came in by."

"To be sure; so tell me, do you recollect Mr. Deverell's losing a paper in that room?"

"Well, I do mind the time he said he lost it there, but I know no more than the child unborn."

"Did Sir Harry never tell you?"

"They said a deal o' bad o' Sir Harry, and them that should a' stood up for him never said a good word for him. Poor old creature!—I doubt if he had pluck to do it. I don't think he had, poor fellow!"

"Did he ever *tell* you he had done it? Come, remember your promise."

"No, upon my soul—never."

"Do you *think* he took it?"

Their eyes met steadily.

"Yes, I do," said she, with a slight defiant frown.

"And *why* do you think so?"

"Because, shortly after the row began about that paper, he talked with me, and said there was something a-troubling of him, and he wished me to go and live in a farm-house at Applehythe, and keep summat he wanted kep safe, as there was no one in all England so true as me—poor old fellow! He never told me, and I never asked. But I laid it down in my

own mind it was the paper Mr. Deverell lost, that's all."

"Did he ever show you that paper?"

"No."

"Did he tell you where it was?"

"He never said he had it."

"Did he show you where that thing was which he wanted you to take charge of?"

"Yes, in the press nigh his bed's head."

"Did he open the press?"

"Ay."

"Well?"

"He showed me a sort of a box, and he said that was all."

"A little trunk of stamped red leather—was that like it?"

"That was just it."

"Did he afterwards give it into anybody's charge?"

"I know no more about it. I saw it there, that's all. I saw it once, and never before nor since."

"Is there more than one secret door into that room?" pursued Varbarriere.

"More than one; no, never as I heard or thought."

"Where is the door placed with which *you* are acquainted?"

"Why? Don't you know?"

"Suppose I know of two. We have discovered a second. Which is the one you saw used? *Come!*"

Parenthetically it is to be observed that no such discovery had been made, and Varbarriere was merely fishing for information without disclosing his ignorance.

"In the recess at the right of the bed's head."

"Yes; and how do you open it? I mean from the green chamber?"

"I never knowd any way how to open it—it's from t'other side. There's a way to bolt it, though."

"Ay? How's that?"

"There's an ornament of scrowl-work, they calls it, bronze-like, as runs down the casing of the recess, shaped like letter esses. Well, the fourteenth of them, reckoning up from the bottom, next the wall, turns round with your finger and thumb; so if anyone be in the green chamber, and knows the secret, they can stop the door being opened."

"I see—thank you. You've been through the passage leading from Sir Harry's room that was—Sir Jekyl Marlowe's room, at the back of the house, to the secret door of the green chamber?"

"No, never. I know nothink o' that, no more nor a child."

"No?"

"No, nothink at all."

Varbarriere had here been trying to establish another conjecture.

There was a pause. Varbarriere, ruminating darkly, looked on Donica Gwynn. He then closed his pocket-book, in which he had inscribed a few notes, and said—

"Thank you, Mrs. Gwynn. Should I want anything more I'll call again; and you had better not mention the subject of my visit. Let me see the pictures—that will be the excuse—and do *you* keep *your* secret, and I'll keep mine."

"No, I thank you, sir," said Donica, drily, almost fiercely, drawing back from his proffered douceur.

"Tut, tut—pray do."

"No, I thank you."

So he looked at the pictures in the different rooms, and at some old china and snuff-boxes, to give a colour to his visit; and with polite speeches and dark smiles, and a general courtesy that was unctuous, he took his leave of Donica Gwynn, whom he left standing in the hall with a flushed face and a sore heart.

CHAPTER IV.

A Story of a Magician and a Vampire.

The pleasant autumn sun touched the steep roofs and mullioned windows of Marlowe Manor pleasantly that morning, turning the thinning foliage of its noble timber into gold, and bringing all the slopes and undulations of its grounds into relief in its subdued glory. The influence of the weather was felt by the guests assembled in the spacious breakfast-parlour, and gay and animated was the conversation.

Lady Jane Lennox, that "superbly handsome creature," as old Doocey used to term her, had relapsed very much into her old ways. Beatrix had been pleased when, even in her impetuous and uncertain way, that proud spirit had seemed to be drawn toward her again. But that was past, and that unruly nature had broken away once more upon her own solitary and wayward courses. She cared no more for Beatrix, or, if at all, it was plainly not kindly.

In Lady Jane's bold and mournful isolation there was something that interested Beatrix, ungracious as her ways often were, and she felt sore at the unjust repulse she had experienced. But Beatrix was proud, and so, though wounded, she did not show her pain—not that pain, nor another far deeper.

Between her and Guy Strangways had come a coldness unintelligible to her, an estrangement which she would have felt like an insult, had it not been for his melancholy looks and evident loss of spirits.

There is a very pretty room at Marlowe; it is called (*why*, I forget) Lady Mary's boudoir; its door opens from the first landing on the great stair. An oak floor, partly covered with a Turkey carpet, one tall window with stone shafts, a high old-fashioned stone chimneypiece, and furniture perhaps a little incongruous, but pleasant in its incongruity. Tapestry in the Teniers style—Dutch village festivals, with no end of figures, about half life-size, dancing, drinking, making music; old boors, and young and fair-haired maidens, and wrinkled vraus, and here and there gentlemen in doublets and plumed hats, and ladies, smiling and bare-headed, and fair and plump, in great stomachers. These pleasant subjects, so lifelike, with children, cocks and hens, and dogs interspersed, helped, with a Louis Quatorze suit of pale green, and gold chairs cushioned with Utrecht velvet, to give to this room its character so mixed, of gaiety and solemnity, something very quaint and cheery.