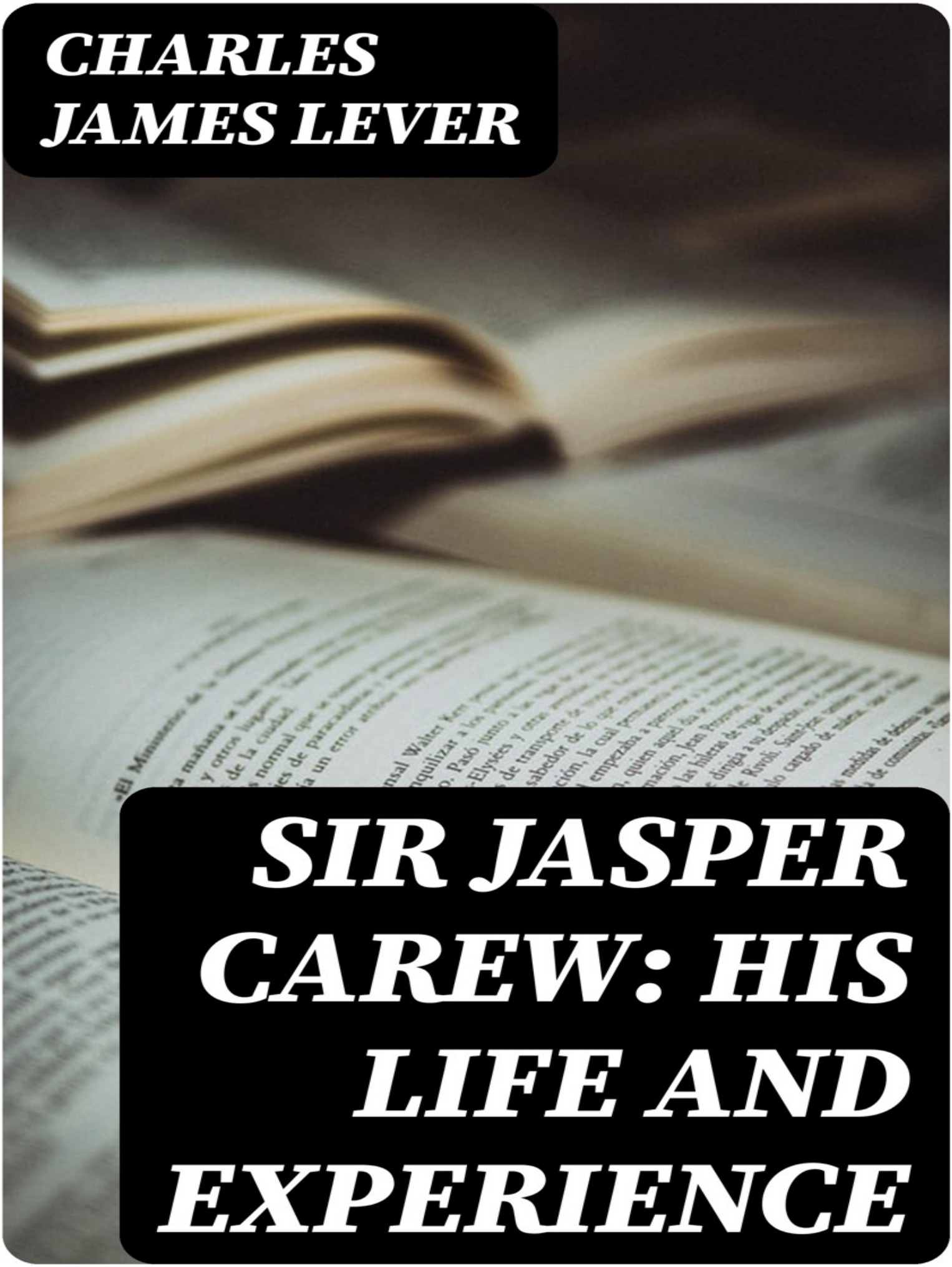
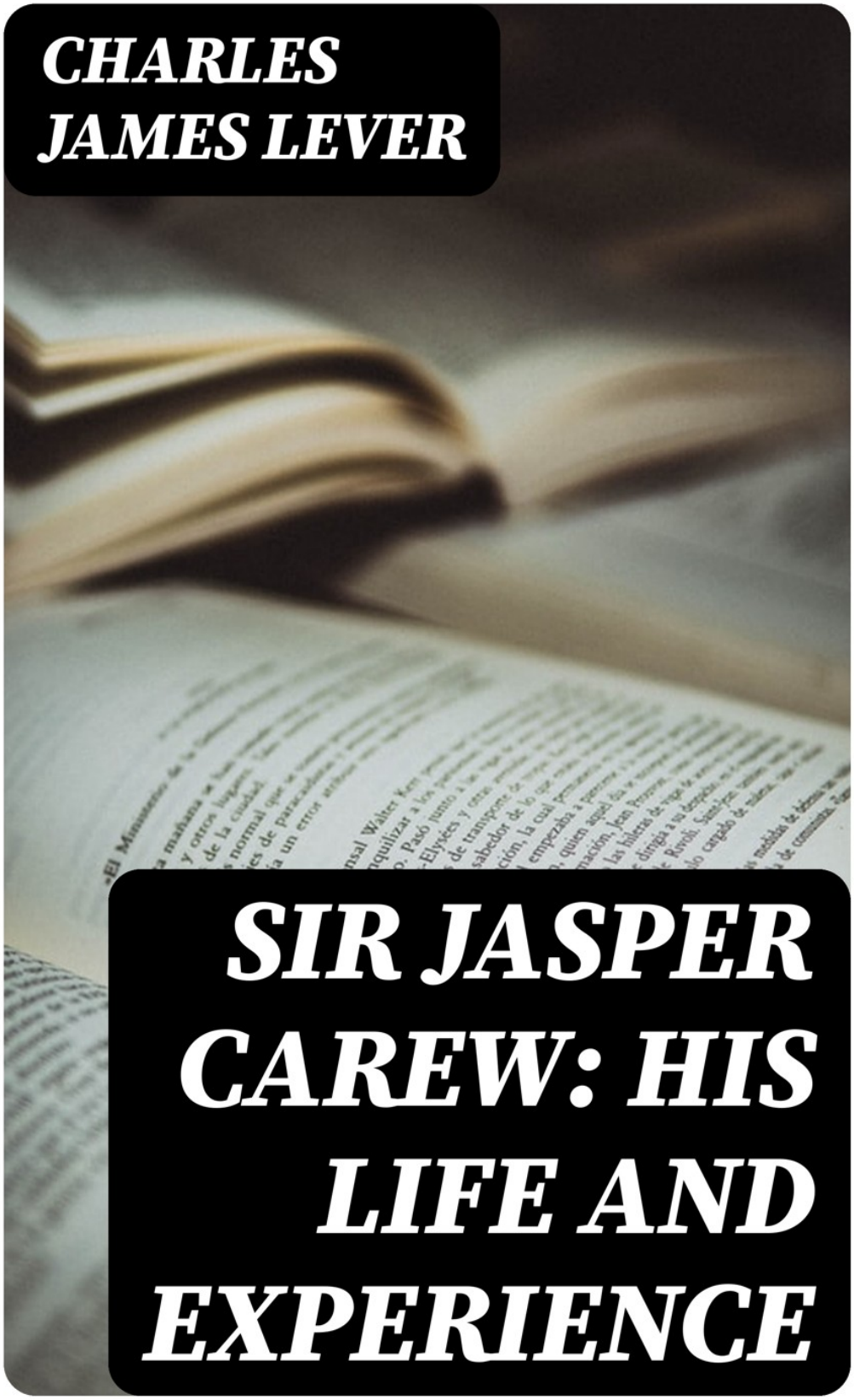


CHARLES JAMES LEVER

# SIR JASPER CAREW: HIS LIFE AND EXPERIENCE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# Sir Jasper Carew: His Life and Experience

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# CHAPTER I. SOME “NOTICES OF MY FATHER AND MOTHER”

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It has sometimes occurred to me that the great suits of armor we see in museums, the huge helmets that come down like extinguishers on the penny candles of modern humanity, the enormous cuirasses and gigantic iron gloves, were neither more nor less than downright and deliberate cheats practised by the “Gents” of those days for the especial humbugging of us, their remote posterity. It might, indeed, seem a strange and absurd thing that any people should take so much pains, and incur so much expense, just for the sake of mystifying generations then unborn. Still, I was led to this conclusion by observing and reflecting on a somewhat similar phenomenon in our own day; and indeed it was the only explanation I was ever able to come to, respecting those great mansions that we Irish gentlemen are so fond of rearing on our estates, “totally regardless of expense,” and just as indifferent to all the circumstances of our fortune, and all the requirements of our station,—the only real difference being, that our forefathers were satisfied with quizzing their descendants, whereas we, with a livelier appreciation of fun, prefer enjoying the joke in our own day.

Perhaps I am a little too sensitive on this point; but my reader will forgive any excess of irritability when I tell him that to this national ardor for brick and mortar—this passion for cutstone and stucco—it is I owe, not only some of the mischances of my life, but also a share of what destiny has in store for those that are to come after me. We came over

to Ireland with Cromwell; my ancestor, I believe, and I don't desire to hide the fact, was a favorite trumpeter of Old Noll. He was a powerful, big-boned, slashing trooper, with a heavy hand on a sabre, and a fine deep, bass voice in the conventicle; and if his Christian name was a little inconvenient for those in a hurry,—he was called Bind-your-kings-in-chains-and-your-nobles-in-links-of-iron Carew,—it was of the less consequence, as he was always where he ought to be, without calling. It was said that in the eyes of his chief his moderation was highly esteemed, and that this virtue was never more conspicuous than in his choice of a recompense for his services; since, instead of selecting some fine, rich tract of Meath or Queen's County, some fruitful spot on the Shannon or the Blackwater, with a most laudable and exemplary humility he pitched upon a dreary and desolate region in the County Wicklow,—picturesque enough in point of scenery, but utterly barren and uncultivated. Here, at a short distance from the opening of the Vale of Arklow, he built a small house, contiguous to which, after a few years, was to be seen an outlandish kind of scaffolding,—a composite architecture between a draw-well and a gallows; and which, after various conjectures about its use,—some even suggesting that it was a new apparatus “to raise the Devil,”—turned out to be the machinery for working a valuable lead mine which, by “pure accident,” my fortunate ancestor had just discovered there.

It was not only lead, but copper ore was found there, and at last silver; so that in the course of three generations the trumpeter's descendants became amongst the very richest of the land; and when my father succeeded to the estate, he

owned almost the entire country between Newrath Bridge and Arklow. There were seventeen townlands in our possession, and five mines in full work. In one of these, gold was found, and several fine crystals of topaz and beryl,—a few specimens of which are yet to be seen in the Irish Academy. It has been often remarked that men of ability rarely or never transmit their gifts to the generation succeeding them. Nature would seem to set her face against monopolies, and at least, so far as intellect is concerned, to be a genuine “Free-Trader.” There is another and very similar fact, however, which has not attracted so much notice. It is this: that not only the dispositions and tastes of successive generations change and alternate, but that their luck follows the same law, and that after a good run of fortune for maybe a century or two, there is certain to come a turn; and thus it is that these ups and downs, which are only remarked in the lives of individuals, are occurring in the wider ocean of general humanity. The common incident that we so often hear of a man winning an enormous sum and losing every farthing of it, down to the very half-crown he began with, is just the type of many a family history,—the only difference being that the event which in one case occupied a night, in the other was spread over two, or maybe three, hundred years.

When my father succeeded to the family property, Ireland was enjoying her very palmiest days of prosperity. The spirit of her nationality, without coming into actual collision with England, yet had begun to assume an attitude of proud hostility,—a species of haughty defiance,—the first effect of which was to develop and call forth all the native

ardor and daring of a bold and generous people. It was in the celebrated year '82; and, doubtless, there are some yet living who can recall to memory the glorious enthusiasm of the “Volunteers.” The character of the political excitement was eminently suited to the nature of the people. The themes were precisely those which lay fastest hold of enthusiastic temperaments. Liberty and Independence were in every mouth. From the glowing eloquence of the Parliament House,—the burning words and heart-stirring sentences of Grattan and Ponsonby,—they issued forth to mingle in all the exciting din of military display,—the tramp of armed battalions, and the crash and glitter of mounted squadrons. To these succeeded those festive meetings, resounding with all the zeal of patriotic toasts,—brilliant displays of those convivial accomplishments for which the Irish gentlemen of that day were so justly famed. There was something peculiarly splendid and imposing in the spectacle of the nation at that moment; but, like the grand groupings we witness upon the stage, all the gorgeousness of the display was only to intimate that the curtain was about to fall!

But to come back to personal matters. At the first election which occurred after his accession to the property, my father was returned for Wicklow, by a large majority, in opposition to the Government candidate; and thus, at the age of twenty-two, entered upon life with all the glowing ardor of a young patriot,—rich, well-looking, and sufficiently gifted to be flattered into the self-confidence of actual ability.

Parliamentary conflicts have undergone a change just as great as those of actual warfare. In the times I speak of, tactical skill and subtlety would have availed but little, in comparison with their present success. The House was then a species of tournament, where he who would break his lance with the most valiant tilter was always sure of an antagonist. The marshalling of party, the muster of adherents, was not, as it now is, all-sufficient against the daring eloquence of a solitary opponent; and if, as is very probable, men were less under the guidance of great political theorems, they were assuredly not less earnest and devoted than we now see them. The contests of the House were carried beyond its walls, and political opponents became deadly enemies, ready to stake life at any moment in defence of their opinions. It was the school of the period; nor can it be better illustrated than by the dying farewell of a great statesman, whose last legacy to his son was in the words: “Be always ready with the pistol.” This great maxim, and the maintenance of a princely style of living, were the two golden rules of the time. My father was a faithful disciple of the sect.

In the course of a two years' tour on the Continent, he signalized himself by various adventures, the fame of which has not yet faded from the memory of some survivors. The splendor of his retinue was the astonishment of foreign courts; and the journals of the time constantly chronicled the princely magnificence of his entertainments, and the costly extravagance of his household. Wagers were the fashionable pastime of the period; and to the absurd extent to which this passion was carried, are we in all probability

now indebted for that character of eccentricity by which our countrymen are known over all Europe.

The most perilous exploits, the most reckless adventures, ordeals of personal courage, strength, endurance, and address, were invented as the subject of these wagers; and there was nothing too desperately hazardous, nor too absurdly ridiculous, as not to find a place in such contests. My father had run the gauntlet through all, and in every adventure was said to have acquitted himself with honor and distinction.

Of one only of these exploits do I intend to make mention here; the reason for the selection will soon be palpable to my reader. At the time I speak of, Paris possessed two circles totally distinct in the great world of society. One was that of the Court; the other rallied around the Duc d'Orléans. To this latter my father's youth, wealth, and expensive tastes predisposed him, and he soon became one of the most favored guests of the Palais Royal. Scanty as are the materials which have reached us, there is yet abundant reason to believe that never, in the most abandoned days of the Regency, was there any greater degree of profligacy than then prevailed there. Every vice and debauchery of a corrupt age was triumphant, and even openly defended on the base and calumnious pretence that the company was at least as moral as that of the “Petit Trianon.” My father, I have said, was received into this set with peculiar honor. His handsome figure, his winning manners, an easy disposition, and an ample fortune were ready recommendations in his favor, and he speedily became the chosen associate of the Prince.

Amongst his papers are to be found the unerring proofs of what this friendship cost him. Continued losses at play had to be met by loans of money, at the most ruinous rates of interest; and my poor father's memoranda are filled with patriarchal names that too surely attest the nature of such transactions. It would seem, however, that fortune at last took a turn,—at least, the more than commonly wasteful extravagance of his life at one period would imply that he was a winner. These gambling contests between the Duke and himself had latterly become like personal conflicts, wherein each staked skill, fortune, and address on the issue, —duels which involved passions just as deadly as any whose arbitrament was ever decided by sword or pistol! As luck favored my father, the Duke's efforts to raise money were not less strenuous, and frequently as costly, as his own; while on more than one occasion the jewelled decorations of his rank—his very sword—were the pledges of the play-table. At last, so decidedly had been the run against him that the Prince was forced to accept of loans from my father to enable him to continue the contest. Even this alternative, however, availed nothing. Loss followed upon loss, till at length, one night, when fortune had seemed to have utterly forsaken him, the Prince suddenly rose from the table, and saying, “Wait a moment, I'll make one 'coup' more,” disappeared from the room. When he returned, his altered looks almost startled my father. The color had entirely deserted his cheeks; his very lips were bloodless; his eyes were streaked with red vessels; and when he tried to speak, his first words were inaudible. Pressing my father down again upon the seat from which he had arisen, he leaned

over his shoulder, and whispered in a voice low and broken, —

“I have told you, Chevalier, that I would make one 'coup' more. This sealed note contains the stake I now propose to risk. You are at liberty to set any sum you please against it. I can only say, it is all that now remains to me of value in the world. One condition, however, I must stipulate for; it is this: If you win”—here he paused, and a convulsive shudder rendered him for some seconds unable to continue—“if you win, that you leave France within three days, and that you do not open this paper till within an hour after your departure.”

My father was not only disconcerted by the excessive agitation of his manner, but he was little pleased with a compact, the best issue of which would compel him to quit Paris and all its fascinations at a very hour's notice. He tried to persuade the Prince that there was no necessity for so heavy a venture; that he was perfectly ready to advance any sum his Royal Highness could name; that fortune, so persecuting as she seemed, should not be pushed further, at least for the present. In fact, he did everything which ingenuity could prompt to decline the wager. But the more eagerly he argued, the more resolute and determined became the Duke; till at last, excited by his losses, and irritated by an opposition to which he was but little accustomed, the Prince cut short the discussion by the insolent taunt “that the Chevalier was probably right, and deemed it safer to retain what he had won, than risk it by another venture.”

“Enough, sir; I am quite ready,” replied my father, and reseated himself at the table.

“There's my stake, then,” said the Prince, throwing a sealed envelope on the cloth.

“Your Royal Highness must correct me if I am in error,” said my father, “and make mine beneath what it ought to be.” At the same moment he pushed all the gold before him —several thousand louis—into the middle of the table.

The Prince never spoke nor moved; and my father, after in vain waiting for some remark, said,—

“I perceive, sir, that I have miscalculated. These are all that I have about me;” and he drew from his pocket a mass of bank-notes of considerable amount. The Prince still maintained silence.

“If your Royal Highness will not vouchsafe to aid me, I must only trust to my unguided reason, and, however conscious of the inferiority of the venture, I can but stake all that I possess. Yes, sir, such is my stake.”

The Prince bowed formally and coldly, and pushed the cards towards my father. The fashionable game of the day was called Barocco, in which, after certain combinations, the hand to whom fell the Queen of Spades became the winner. So evenly had gone the fortune of the game that all now depended on this card. My father was the dealer, and turned up each card slowly, and with a hand in which not the slightest tremor could be detected. The Prince, habitually the very ideal of a gambler's cold impassiveness, was agitated beyond all his efforts to control, and sat with his eyes riveted on the game; and when the fatal card fell at length from my father's hand, his arms dropped powerless

at either side of him, and with a low groan he sank fainting on the floor.

He was quickly removed by his attendants, and my father never saw him after! All his efforts to obtain an audience were in vain; and when his entreaties became more urgent, he was given significantly to understand that the Prince was personally indisposed to receive him. Another and stronger hint was also supplied, in the-shape of a letter from the Minister of Police, inclosing my father's passport, and requiring his departure, by way of Calais, within a given time.

Whatever share curiosity as to the contents of the paper might have had in my father's first thoughts, a sense of offended dignity for the manner of his treatment speedily mastered; and as he journeyed along towards the coast, his mind was solely occupied with one impression. To be suddenly excluded from the society in which he had so long mixed, and banished from the country where he had lived with such distinction, were indeed deep personal affronts, and not without severe reflection on his conduct and character.

His impatience to quit a land where he had been so grossly outraged grew greater with every mile he travelled; and although the snow lay heavily on the road, he passed on, regardless of everything but his insulted honor. It was midnight when he reached Calais. The packet, which had sailed in the afternoon, had just re-entered the port, driven back by a hurricane that had almost wrecked her. The passengers, overcome with terror, fatigue, and exhaustion, were crowding into the hotel at the very moment of my

father's arrival. The gale increased in violence at every instant, and the noise of the sea breaking over the old piles of the harbor was now heard like thunder. Indifferent to such warning, my father sent for the captain, and asked him what sum would induce him to put to sea. A positive refusal to accept of any sum was the first reply; but by dint of persuasion, persistence, and the temptation of a large reward, he at last induced him to comply.

To my father's extreme surprise, he learned that two ladies who had just arrived at the hotel were no less resolutely bent on departure, and, in defiance of the gale, which was now terrific, sent to beg that they might be permitted to take their passage in the vessel. To the landlord, who conveyed this request, my father strongly represented the danger of such an undertaking; that nothing short of an extreme necessity would have induced him to embark in such a hurricane; that the captain, who had undertaken the voyage at his especial entreaty, might, most naturally, object to the responsibility. In a word, he pleaded everything against this request, but was met by the steady, unvarying reply, “That their necessity was not less urgent than his own, and that nothing less than the impossibility should prevent their departure.”

“Be it so, then,” said my father, whose mind was too much occupied with his own cares to bestow much attention on strangers. Indeed, so little of either interest or curiosity did his fellow travellers excite in him that although he assisted them to ascend the ship's side, he made no effort to see their faces; nor did he address to them a single word. They who cross the narrow strait nowadays, with all the

speed of a modern mail-steamer, can scarcely credit how much of actual danger the passage once involved. The communication with the Continent was frequently suspended for several days together; and it was no unusual occurrence to hear of three or even four mails being due from France. So great was the storm on the occasion I refer to that it was full two hours before the vessel could get clear of the port; and even then, with a mainsail closely reefed, and a mere fragment of a foresail, the utmost she could do was to keep the sea. An old and worthless craft, she was ill-suited to such a service; and now, at each stroke of the waves, some bulwark would be washed away, some spar broken, or part of the rigging torn in shreds. The frail timbers creaked and groaned with the working, and already, from the strain, leaks had burst open in many places, and half the crew were at the pumps. My father, who kept the deck without quitting it, saw that the danger was great, and, not improbably, now condemned his own rashness when it was too late. Too proud, however, to confess his shame, he walked hurriedly up and down the poop, only stopping to hold on at those moments when some tremendous lurch almost laid the craft under. In one of these it was that he chanced to look down through the cabin grating, and there beheld an old lady, at prayer, on her knees; her hands held a crucifix before her, and her upturned eyes were full of deep devotion. The lamp which swung to and fro above her head threw a passing light upon her features, and showed that she must once have been strikingly handsome, while even yet the traces were those that bespoke birth and condition. My father in vain sought for her companion, and

while he bent down over the grating to look, the captain came up to his side.

“The poor Duchess is terribly frightened,” said he, with an attempt at a smile which only half succeeded.

“How do you call her?” asked my father.

“La Duchesse de Sargance, a celebrated court beauty some forty years ago. She has been always attached to the Duchess of Orleans; or, some say, to the Duke. At least, she enjoys the repute of knowing all his secret intrigues and adventures.”

“The Duke!” said my father, musing; and, suddenly calling to mind his pledge, he drew nigh to the binnacle lamp, and, opening his letter, bent down to read it. A small gold locket fell into his hand, unclasping which, he beheld the portrait of a beautiful girl of eighteen or nineteen. She was represented in the act of binding up her hair; and in the features, the coloring, and the attitude, she seemed the very ideal of a Grecian statue. In the corner of the paper was written the words, “Ma Fille,” “Philippe d'Orléans.”

“Is this possible? can this be real?” cried my father, whose quick intelligence at once seemed to divine all. The next instant he was at the door of the cabin, knocking impatiently to get in.

“Do you know this, madam?” cried he, holding out the miniature towards the Duchess. “Can you tell me aught of this?”

“Is the danger over? Are we safe?” was her exclamation, as she arose from her knees.

“The wind is abating, madam,—the worst is over; and now to my question.”

“She is yours, sir,” said the Duchess, with a deep obeisance. “His Royal Highnesses orders were, not to leave her till she reached England. Heaven grant that we are to see that hour! This is Mademoiselle de Courtois,” continued she, as at the same instant the young lady entered the cabin.

The graceful ease and unaffected demeanor with which she received my father at once convinced him that she at least knew nothing of the terrible compact in which she was involved. Habituated as he was to all the fascinations of beauty, and all the blandishments of manner, there was something to him irresistibly charming in the artless tone with which she spoke of her voyage, and all the pleasure she anticipated from a tour through England.

“You see, sir,” said the Duchess, when they were once more alone together, “Mademoiselle Josephine is a stranger to the position in which she stands. None could have undertaken the task of breaking it to her. Let us trust that she is never to know it.”

“How so, madam? Do you mean that I am to relinquish my right?” cried my father.

“Nothing could persuade me that you would insist upon it, sir.”

“You are wrong, then, madam,” said he, sternly. “To the letter I will maintain it. Mademoiselle de Courtois is mine; and within twenty-four hours the law shall confirm my title, for I will make her my wife.”

I have heard that however honorable my father's intentions thus proclaimed themselves, the Duchess only could see a very lamentable *mésalliance* in such a union;

nor did she altogether disguise from my father that his Royal Highness was very likely to take the same view of the matter. Mademoiselle's mother was of the best blood of France, and illegitimacy signified little if Royalty but bore its share of the shame. Fortunately the young lady's scruples were more easily disposed of: perhaps my father understood better how to deal with them; at all events, one thing is certain, Madame de Sargance left Dover for Calais on the same day that my father and his young bride started for London,—perhaps it might be exaggeration to say the happiest, but it is no extravagance to call them—as handsome a pair as ever journeyed the same road on the same errand. I have told some things in this episode which, perhaps, second thoughts would expunge, and I have omitted others that as probably the reader might naturally have looked for. But the truth is, the narrative has not been without its difficulties. I have had to speak of a tone of manners and habits now happily bygone, of which I dare not mark my reprehension with all the freedom I could wish, since one of the chief actors was my father,—its victim, my mother.

# CHAPTER II. THE ILLUSTRATION OF AN ADAGE

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“Marry in haste,” says the adage, and we all know what occupation leisure will bring with it; unhappily, my father was not to prove the exception to the maxim. It was not that his wife was wanting in any quality which can render married life happy; she was, on the contrary, most rarely gifted with them all. She was young, beautiful, endowed with excellent health and the very best of tempers. The charm of her manner won every class with whom she came into contact. But—alas that there should be a but!—she had been brought up in habits of the most expensive kind. Living in royal palaces, waited on by troops of menials, with costly equipages and splendid retinues ever at her command, only mingling with those whose lives were devoted to pleasure and amusement, conversant with no other themes than those which bore upon gayety and dissipation, she was peculiarly unsuited to the wear and tear of a social system which demanded fully as much of self-sacrifice as of enjoyment. The long lessons my father would read to her of deference to this one, patient endurance of that, how she was to submit to the tiresome prosings of certain notorieties in respect of their political or social eminence,—she certainly heard with most exemplary resignation; but by no effort of her reason, nor, indeed, of imagination, could she attain to the fact why any one should associate with those distasteful to them, nor ever persuade herself that any

worldly distinction could possibly be worth having at such a price.

She was quite sure—indeed, her own experience proved it—“that the world was full of pleasant people.” Beauty to gaze on and wit to listen to, were certainly not difficult to be found; why, then, any one should persist in denying themselves the enjoyment derivable from such sources was as great a seeming absurdity as that of him who, turning his back on the rare flowers of a conservatory, would go forth to make his bouquet of the wild flowers and weeds of the roadside. Besides this, in the world wherein she had lived, her own gifts were precisely those which attracted most admiration and exerted most sway; and it was somewhat hard to descend to a system where such a coinage was not accepted as currency, but rather regarded as gilded counters, pretty to look at, but, after all, a mere counterfeit money, unrecognized by the mint.

My father saw all this when it was too late; but he lost no time in vain repinings. On the contrary, having taken a cottage in a secluded part of North Wales, by way of passing the honeymoon in all the conventional isolation that season is condemned to, he devoted himself to that educational process at which I have hinted, and began to instil those principles, to the difficulty of whose acquirement I have just alluded.

I believe that his life at this period was one of as much happiness as ever is permitted to poor mortality in this world; so, at least, his letters to his friends bespeak it. It may be even doubted if the little diversities of taste and disposition between himself and my mother did not

heighten the sense of his enjoyment; they assuredly averted that lassitude and ennui which are often the results of a connubial duet unreasonably prolonged. I know, too, that my poor mother often looked back to that place as to the very paradise of her existence. My father had encouraged such magnificent impressions of his ancestral house and demesne that he was obliged to make great efforts to sustain the deception. An entire wing had to be built to complete the symmetry of the mansion. The roof had also to be replaced by another, of more costly construction. In the place of a stucco colonnade, one of polished granite was to be erected. The whole of the furniture was to be exchanged. Massive old cabinets and oaken chairs, handsome enough in their way, were but ill-suited to ceilings of fretted gold, and walls hung in the rich draperies of Lyons. The very mirrors, which had been objects of intense admiration for their size and splendor, were now to be discarded for others of more modern pretensions. The china bowls and cups which for centuries had been regarded as very gems of virtu were thrown indignantly aside, to make place for Sèvres vases and rich groupings of pure Saxon. In fact, all the ordinary comforts and characteristics of a country gentleman's house were abandoned for the sumptuous and splendid furniture of a palace. To meet such expenses large sums were raised on loan, and two of the richest mines on the estate were heavily mortgaged. Of course it is needless to say that preparations on such a scale of magnificence attracted a large share of public attention. The newspapers duly chronicled the increasing splendor of “Castle Carew.” Scarcely a ship arrived without some precious consignment,

either of pictures, marbles, or tapestries; and these announcements were usually accompanied by some semi-mysterious paragraph about the vast wealth of the owner, and the great accession of fortune he had acquired by his marriage. On this latter point nothing was known, beyond the fact that the lady was of an ancient ducal family of France, of immense fortune and eminently beautiful. Even my father's most intimate friends knew nothing beyond this; for, however strange it may sound to our present-day notions, my father was ashamed of her illegitimacy and rightly judged what would be the general opinion of her acquaintances, should the fact become public. At last came the eventful day of the landing in Ireland; and, certainly, nothing could be more enthusiastic nor affectionate than the welcome that met them.

Personally, my father's popularity was very great; politically, he had already secured many admirers, since, even in the few months of his parliamentary life, he had distinguished himself on two or three occasions. His tone was manly and independent; his appearance was singularly prepossessing; and then, as he owned a large estate, and spent his money freely, it would have been hard if such qualities had not made him a favorite in Ireland.

It was almost a procession that accompanied him from the quay to the great hotel of the Drogheda Arms, where they stopped to breakfast.

“I am glad to see you back amongst us, Carew!” said Joe Parsons, one of my father's political advisers, a county member of great weight with the Opposition. “We want every good and true man in his place just now.”

“Faith! we missed you sorely at the Curragh meetings, Watty,” cried a sporting-looking young fellow, in “tops and leathers.” “No such thing as a good handicap, nor a hurdle race for a finish, without you.”

“Harry deplores those pleasant evenings you used to spend at three-handed whist, with himself and Dick Morgan,” said another, laughing.

“And where's Dick?” asked my father, looking around him on every side.

“Poor Dick!” said the last speaker. “It's no fault of his that he 's not here to shake your hand to-day. He was arrested about six weeks ago, on some bills he passed to Fagan.”

“Old Tony alive still?” said my father, laughing. “And what was the amount?” added he, in a whisper.

“A heavy figure,—above two thousand, I believe; but Tony would be right glad to take five hundred.”

“And couldn't Dick's friends do that much for him?” asked my father, half indignantly. “Why, when I left this, Dick was the very life of your city. A dinner without him was a failure. Men would rather have met him at the cover than seen the fox. His hearty face and his warm shake-hands were enough to inspire jollity into a Quaker meeting.”

“All true, Watty; but there's been a general shipwreck of us all, somehow. Where the money has gone, nobody knows; but every one seems out at elbows. You are the only fellow the sun shines upon.”

“Make hay, then, when it does so,” said my father, laughing; and, taking but his pocket-book, he scribbled a few lines on a leaf which he tore out. “Give that to Dick, and tell him to come down and dine with us on Friday. You'll join

him. Quin and Parsons won't refuse me.—And what do you say, Gervy Power? Can you spare a day from the tennis-court, or an evening from piquet?—Jack Gore, I count upon you. Harvey Hepton will drive you down, for I know you never can pay the post-boys."

"Egad, they 're too well trained to expect it. The rascals always look to me for a hint about the young horses at the Curragh, and, now and then, I do throw a stray five-pound in their way."

"We have not seen madam yet. Are we not to have that honor to-day?" said Parsons.

"I believe not; she's somewhat tired. We had a stormy time of it," said my father, who rather hesitated about introducing his bachelor friends to my mother without some little preparation.

Nor was the caution quite unreasonable. Their style and breeding were totally unlike anything she had ever seen before. The tone of familiarity they used towards each other was the very opposite to that school of courtly distance which even the very nearest in blood or kindred observed in her own country; and lastly, very few of those then present understood anything of French; and my mother's English, at the time I speak of, did not range beyond a few monosyllables, pronounced with an accent that made them all but unintelligible.

"You'll have Kitty Dwyer to call upon you the moment she hears you 're come," said Quin.

"Charmed to see her, if she 'll do us that honor," said my father, laughing.

“You must have no common impudence, then, Watty,” said another; “you certainly jilted her.”

“Nothing of the kind,” replied my father; “she it was who refused me.”

“Bother!” broke in an old squire, a certain Bob French of Frenchmount; “Kitty refuse ten thousand a-year, and a good-looking fellow into the bargain! Kitty's no fool; and she knows mankind just as well as she knows horseflesh,—and, faix, that's not saying a trifle.”

“How is she looking?” asked my father, rather anxious to change the topic.

“Just as you saw her last. She hurt her back at an ugly fence in Kennedy's park, last winter; but she's all right again, and riding the little black mare that killed Morrissy, as neatly as ever!”

“She's a fine dashing girl!” said my father.

“No, but she's a good girl,” said the old squire, who evidently admired her greatly. “She rode eight miles of a dark night, three weeks ago, to bring the doctor to old Hackett's wife, and it raining like a waterfall; and she gave him two guineas for the job. Ay, faith, and maybe at the same time, two guineas was two guineas to her.”

“Why, Mat Dwyer is not so hard-up as that comes to?” exclaimed my father.

“Is n't he, faith? I don't believe he knows where to lay his hand on a fifty-pound note this morning. The truth is, Walter, Mat ran himself out for *you*.”

“For me! How do you mean for me?”

“Just because he thought you 'd marry Kitty. Oh! you need n't laugh. There 's many more thought the same thing.

You remember yourself that you were never out of the house. You used to pretend that Bishop's-Lough was a better cover than your own,—that it was more of a grass country to ride over. Then, when summer came, you took to fishing, as if your bread depended on it; and the devil a salmon you ever hooked.”

A roar of laughter from the surrounders showed how they relished the confusion of my father's manner.

“Even all that will scarcely amount to an offer of marriage,” said he, in half pique.

“Nobody said it would,” retorted the other; “but when you teach a girl to risk her life, four days in the week, over the highest fences in a hunting country,—when she gives up stitching and embroidery, to tying flies and making brown hackles,—when she 'd rather drive a tandem than sit quiet in a coach and four,—why, she's as good as spoiled for any one else. 'Tis the same with women as with young horses,—every one likes to break them in for himself. Some like a puller; others prefer a light mouth; and there's more that would rather go along without having to think at all, sure that, no matter how rough the road, there would be neither a false step nor stumble in it.”

“And what's become of MacNaghten?” asked my father, anxious to change the topic.

“Scheming, scheming, just the same as ever. I 'm sure I wonder he 's not here to-day. May I never! if that's not his voice I hear on the stairs. Talk of the devil—”

“And you're sure to see Dan MacNaghten,” cried my father; and the next moment he was heartily shaking hands with a tall, handsome man who, though barely thirty, was

yet slightly bald on the top of the head. His eyes were blue and large; their expression full of the joyous merriment of a happy schoolboy,—a temperament that his voice and laugh fully confirmed.

“Watty, boy, it 's as good as a day rule to have a look at you again,” cried he. “There's not a man can fill your place when you 're away,—devil a one.”

“There he goes,—there he goes!” muttered old French, with a sly wink at the others.

“Ireland wasn't herself without you, my boy,” continued MacNaghten. “We were obliged to put up with Tom Burke's harriers and old French's claret; and the one has no more scent than the other has bouquet.”

French's face at this moment elicited such a roar of laughter as drowned the remainder of the speech.

“'T was little time you had either to run with the one or drink the other, Dan,” said he; “for you were snug in Kilmainham the whole of the winter.”

“*Otium cum dignitate*,” said Dan. “I spent my evenings in drawing up a bill for the better recovery of small debts.”

“How so, Dan?”

“Lending enough more, to bring the debtor into the superior courts,—trying him for murder instead of manslaughter.”

“Faith, you'd do either if you were put to it,” said French, who merely heard the words, without understanding the context.

Dan MacNaghten was now included in my father's invitation to Castle Carew; and, after a few other allusions to

past events and absent friends, they all took their leave, and my father hastened to join his bride.

“You thought them very noisy, my dear,” said my father, in reply to a remark of hers. “They, I have no doubt, were perfectly astonished at their excessive quietness,—an air of decorum only assumed because they heard you were in the next room.”

“They were not afraid of me, I trust,” said she, smiling. “Not exactly afraid,” said my father, with a very peculiar smile.