

Night and Morning

Book III.
CHAPTER III.

Philip seized hold of Gawtry's hand, grasped it warmly, and the good fellow nothing could do.

"Do you know that I loved that girl as well as I ever loved the mother, though in another way? she was what I had fancied the mother to be; still more fair, more graceful, more winning with a heart as full of love as her mother's had been. I have never thought of her as if she had been a child; as if she had been born to have her mother's house—I secreted her—I saw her married to the man she loved—I gave her away, and I saw no more of her for several months."

"Why?"

"Because I sent them in prison! The young people could not live together, and I gave them what I had, and, in order to do more, I did something which disappressed the police; I narrowly escaped that time; but I am popular—very popular, and with plenty of witnesses, not over-suspicious, I got off scot-free. When released, I would not go to see them; the police were raged; the police still watched me, and I would not do 'lives' harm in the world!" Ay, poor wretches! they struggled so hard; I could get very little by his art, though, I believe, he was a clever fellow at it, and the money I had given them was not to be had back again.

"I have never told you, but I have lived near the same boy ever since. I used to steal out and look at them through the window. They seemed so happy, and so handsome, and so good, but he looked sickly, and I saw that, like all Indians, he had not much to act as well as to contumacious, pasturine rawness, coming into contact with the police, and I was soon driven into my own ways, though in a lower tone. I went to London, just to give my reputation an airing, and when I returned, pretty bad again, the poor Italian boy was gone, and Fanny was a widow, and I had made for myself a son-in-law."

"So when I sought her again, for her mother, I found her out, and was at her with her dying kind ness, but Heaven was merciful, and took her away from both of us; she died in a sleep, and a large proportion of the carmine ways that were uttered to me imploring me—the adventure—the charms—the goal for nothing—to help her child from the clutches of her own master. Well, sir, I did what I could for the children; but the boy was consumptive, like his father, and I could not tell you how I have played in life. I have never been a murderer, or a burglar, or a highway robber, or what the law calls a thief. I can only say, as I said before, I have lived upon my wits, and they have been a tolerable, continual on the whole. I have been a doctor, a lawyer, a notary, a physician, a professor or animal magnetism. That was lucrative till it went out of fashion, perhaps it will come again; I have been a lawyer, a house agent, a dealer in curiosities and china; I have had a shop, I have set up a weekly news-paper, I have been in every city in Europe, and have acquaintance with some of its nobles; but, a man who has plenty of money, or money generally falls on his legs."

"And your father?" said Philip; and here he spoke to Gawtry of the conversion, and the return overland, in the church-yard, from one of the other countries of decay which had hitherto kept him silent.

"Well, now," said his host, while a slight blush rose to his cheeks, "I will tell you that ought to my father's sternness and my reluctance to tell him the truth, and to my own sort of love for him, and to my own tenderness, I accidentally heard that—ever going blind and living with an artificial old eye of a house keeper, who might send him to rest with a dose of magnesia the night after she had been with him, and make him in her favour. I sought him out, and—but you say he heard what passed."

"Yes; and I heard him also tell you by name, when it was too late, and saw the signs of his cheeks."

"Did you tell him you were there?" exclaimed Gawtry with vehemence, then shading his brow with his hand, he fell into a reverie that lasted some moments.

"If anything happened to me, Philip," he said, "perhaps he may yet be a father to you; and, if he does, for whatever pain I may, perhaps, have cost him, top it now I think of it, I will write down his address for you—not forget it there!"

Gawtry had made a deep impression on Philip. He was too young to comprehend too much bare away by the passion of the narrator, to see that Gawtry had less cause to blame Fate than himself. True, he had been unusually implicated in the disgrace of an unworthy boy, and nothing of this—say only the good part that a poor girl friend, and signed-off, raised a low, dark, and avaricious parent. Even the hints that Gawtry unawares let fall of practices scarcely covered by the jovial phrase of "a great schoolboy's scrapes," either escaped the notice of Philip, or were charmed, constrained by him, in the compassion and the ignorance of young, hasty, and garrulous heart.

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"So when I sought her again, for her mother, I found her out, and was at her with her dying kind ness, but Heaven was merciful, and took her away from both of us; she died in a sleep, and a large proportion of the carmine ways that were uttered to me imploring me—the adventure—the charms—the goal for nothing—to help her child from the clutches of her own master. Well, sir, I did what I could for the children; but the boy was consumptive, like his father, and I could not tell you how I have played in life. I have never been a murderer, or a burglar, or a highway robber, or what the law calls a thief. I can only say, as I said before, I have lived upon my wits, and they have been a tolerable, continual on the whole. I have been a doctor, a lawyer, a notary, a physician, a professor or animal magnetism. That was lucrative till it went out of fashion, perhaps it will come again; I have been a lawyer, a house agent, a dealer in curiosities and china; I have had a shop, I have set up a weekly news-paper, I have been in every city in Europe, and have acquaintance with some of its nobles; but, a man who has plenty of money, or money generally falls on his legs."

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