



GALENZI'S REVENGE.

*Galenzi's
Revenge.*



I HAD not seen old Galenzi since that sad and terrible affair of his daughter until the day I chanced on the two men together. I had known the girl; I had liked, and even admired her. She appeared to support an equivocal position with address and, one might almost say, with dignity. As the saying is, she held her own; and to do this pleasantly was, in that society, no easy matter. For certainly they were a dubious set who attended Galenzi's rooms, whether for fencing or boxing. She was greatly interested in all that went on there; but I think that her frequent visits, it must be said both in and out of season, were due, in the main, to an affectionate regard for her father—to the desire to accompany, to befriend, even to protect him. Doubtless she suffered from a too abundant leisure; her little paltry occupations, somewhere on the borderland of art, and hardly effective in commerce, were insufficient for that bright spirit, and she lived in a pitiful isolation from her own sex. I had liked her, and I reproach myself that I did so little for her—nothing, indeed, beyond a few friendly words, a bearing which I trust and believe served as an example, for I was older than the others. Her death was a great shock to me, though I had not been to Galenzi's for months.

As for Damant, I knew him for the common brute he was beneath his specious disguises. His elaborate manners were without real graciousness; his affected culture had little of sympathy or insight. I believe he took a more than ordinarily good degree at Oxford, and he had gained some little reputation of a kind at the bar. Among the small fry of callow youths and seedy "professionals" who frequented the rooms, he stood

a prominent figure. The story is known. It was, so far, the common story of seduction and desertion. Even the girl's suicide hardly differentiated it from others of its kind. Damant had a bad half-hour before the coroner's jury; but, even here, it must be admitted that if tact could save a desperate situation, he had done it. He lied, of course; but he lied carefully, and with a nice sense of what it was possible to concede, provoking sympathy, and almost admiration, in some liberal-minded auditors. The effect was spoilt by that terrible outburst of the unfortunate father, whose neglect and indiscretion were so much deplored.

And here I found them both in the little Italian restaurant, at opposite ends of the long narrow room. I saw Damant as I entered, and after I was seated I followed the direction of his eyes to where Galenzi sat. Damant lunched deliberately, with an affectation of unconcern, but they watched one another all the time. Neither seemed to observe me. Presently, Damant, who had finished his lunch, went out and, contrary to my vague expectation, the old man made no attempt to follow him. I crossed to the table at which Galenzi sat, and greeted him. He responded eagerly, nervously, with no warmth, and little attention.

"Come, old friend," I said, "let us have a bottle of wine together." I turned for the waiter, but he seized my arm.

"No, no," he muttered angrily, "it is impossible—my head—and the chance might come, and I drunk!"

He left me to speculate on his meaning, falling into a thoughtful silence. I tried to gain his interest, even his attention. I spoke of current events, of the great fight in America, of an ingenious point in a recent book on fencing. He did not appear to hear me.

The room emptied, and the waiter eyed us curiously. I ordered cigars, and he lit one at my invitation, only to let it go out. I hesitated, glancing towards the door. He touched my arm:

"You knew her. She loved to speak of you."

Then I felt the desolation of it. My eyes filled as I spoke of her, groping vainly for some form of consolation. He shook his hand towards the door—"That dog lives yet."

I waited for him to continue.

"You are her friend. You wonder when you see me sitting here quietly within reach of him. Do not mistake. It is not



*In "laager" at Levi Villa.
"Keep him there, Levi; keep him there till morning—and then (sotto voce) we'll charge him
board and lodging."*

By J. W. T. Manuel.

the consequences that I fear. They held me back from him once. Since then I have reflected. It is easy to fail. I might fail. He's a strong man—a clever man; he's awake and prepared. One day he will be off his guard. Presently, presently."

"My friend," I said, "you are speaking wildly."

"Not wildly," he said, "not wildly. Foolishly, perhaps; I betray myself to you. But you are safe; you are secret. You knew her."

Indeed, the calmness of his manner belied his words. He hardly listened to my remonstrances and appeals. Finally I said, "I go to the police."

"You'll not do that."

"To tell him, then."

"He knows."

"What?"

"He knows my desire. He's a fool. He begins to think that I dare not. I watch him; I study his habits. He's too proud to hide. The chance will come."

I rose. "It's madness and wickedness. Your daughter is dead. Let her memory rest."

We parted at the door.

That afternoon I called on Damant at his chambers. It was a hateful task, but good citizenship seemed to demand it. I think he was surprised to see me, and, though his bearing was insolent as ever, I fancied I saw in his eye a half-appeal for some concession—an entreaty for a human relation. But the sight of him brought back the past and the image of the girl. We stood stiffly. I said, "I think it right to warn you. You may be in some danger."

"You are interested in my welfare?"

"Not at all—a mere matter of police."

"Then I needn't thank you."

I detested his parade of coolness; but the man was not without courage. He continued—

"If you would shut up your friend in Bedlam, I should be obliged, of course. Otherwise, perhaps, the danger is not so very great. I even promise myself a curious psychological study. Understand, however, that I am not to be coerced. All the madmen in creation will not move me a hair's breadth. Pray pardon this unnecessary emphasis. The thing's a bore. So good of you to come."

THE BUTTERFLY.

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He ended on a false note, and its trivial insolence repelled me, or I might have begun to pity him. Galenzi was right—he knew.

My call to India was sudden and peremptory. I did indeed seek out Galenzi, but our interview was brief and futile. I could do nothing; and though at first I was haunted by the dread of some frightful catastrophe, the matter soon ceased to occupy my mind. During my absence of something over two years, I heard no news of either Damant or Galenzi.

Yesterday I passed the little restaurant, associated always now with those two figures. An impulse of insatiable curiosity turned me back, and I entered. My eyes dazzled and my brain reeled when I saw them there, each in his old place. I approached Galenzi, and sat down beside him. He spoke in a whisper: "You've been away. It's a long time. You wonder to see him here. Nothing done—no attempt. Delays and delays. And there are a thousand ways—none certain. The bullet might miss—the knife might slip; they would arrest me—imprison me. A madhouse for life, and then?—the opportunity gone for ever—I must make it sure—guard against all possible failure. I follow him. I study his habits. I'm preparing. I know his anatomy. I know where to strike. The time approaches. He cannot—he shall not escape me. Ah! but my chance came—more than once—I had him, but I hesitated. I was not sure. If I were sure! But I'm old—my hand shakes. I've thought of other ways. I'm studying now—I have ideas—the time approaches."

I turned to look at the other, and stared at him openly. It was brutal, indefensible; but my curiosity was overpowering. The fellow had a kind of strength—he would not budge. He might choose a hundred places to lunch, where Galenzi could not follow him. He would not make a concession even to himself, and he needed it. He was aged, wasted—terribly alert. He met my gaze calmly; but I saw that, did the old fool but know it, he had chanced on his revenge.

ALLAN MONKHOUSE.

