

"To answer you properly," he continued, "I must ask you a question or two in return. You cannot have forgot our excursion to Vesuvius last week?"

"Certainly not! though as to calling it *our* excursion, that is a mere matter of form, for I scarcely interchanged three words with you the whole time. Your attention was too much engrossed with the fair ——"

"Hush! hush!" interrupted he, "no more of that, an ye love me, Hal!" But fortunately you found a very good substitute for my poor company."

"Yes! I found Sir Henry Wilton a very pleasant, agreeable companion, in spite of the anxiety caused by his wife's slight illness; if such be the real cause, as you have asserted, of his occasional melancholy and absence of mind."

"The true cause, I assure you! Never was such a doting husband. Her ladyship was in the Corso next day, and Sir Henry as bright and smiling as ever."

"By the way, I have never seen Lady Wilton; is she here to-night?"

"The very point to which I have been striving to bring you! The fair Sultana whom you so much admire, is Lady Wilton herself!"

"Indeed! If her mind but match her face and figure, Sir Henry may easily be pardoned for letting his thoughts occasionally turn towards his wife in her absence, unfashionable as it may be. How well she becomes her Turkish habit, and with what perfect self-possession she queens it in her assumed character! There is none of that awkward stiffness, which an Englishwoman generally considers it her duty to assume as a necessary concomitant of a fancy dress."

"You have fallen into two mistakes there, Hugomont! Her ladyship is no Englishwoman, and the costume she wears is no fancy dress."

"You are in an enigmatical mood to night, my dear R——! Will it please you to play the *Œdipus* and solve the riddle?"

"A few words would do it, but here comes one better qualified than myself—and I believe you will find him equally ready—to allay your curiosity."

The person to whom he alluded, was the same Spanish Cavalier we had previously seen in lady Wilton's box, and in whom, as he was now unmasked, I at once recognised Sir Henry himself. Having made ourselves known to him, my friend proceeded to narrate—to the evident amusement of Sir Henry—the conversation which had just taken place, and which his appearance had so abruptly terminated.

"I will with pleasure redeem the pledge you have made on my behalf," he said, when R—— had finished; "this is not exactly a spot for story-telling, but I see your box is untenanted, and if Mr. Hugomont will accompany us there, I will give him the information he desires."

A few minutes saw us seated in R——'s box, and Sir Henry commenced his story, to which I listened with eager interest, altogether unheeding the brilliant and dazzling scene before us.

"When I was a boy," said Sir Henry, "my favorite study was History, into which I entered, not with that reckless enthusiasm which leads the young reader to emulate in after years the 'deeds of derring-doe' there recorded, but with a spirit of calm and rational enquiry—somewhat metaphysical it may be at times—which had been early instilled into me by my old tutor. The influence of this peculiar train of study was such, that when my guardian, Lord Armadale, called on me to make choice of a profession, instead of that of arms, which generation after generation of our family had followed almost as a matter of course, I decided on entering the diplomatic service. His Lordship after some demur, gave his consent, and I was ere long established as an attaché of the English Embassy at Constantinople.

"The duties of my office were light and easy, and the novelty of every thing around me gave sufficient employment to my powers of observation, to prevent all weariness or ennui. Chance gave me a better opportunity of gaining an insight into Turkish manners and customs, than is generally afforded to the Frankish stranger.

"One day I had just entered a caique at the Golden Horn to enjoy the pleasures of an evening row along the wharf near me, when a noisy altercation at the wharf near me, reached my ear. Two caiques had reached the landing place at the same moment—the boatmen of each clamoured for precedence, and, amidst the consequent pushing and shoving, the owner of one of them, endeavouring to make his way to the shore, was jostled into the water, where he was left to struggle unheeded by the angry disputants. Seeing that the man, encumbered by his loose robes, was fast sinking, I plunged in and swam to his rescue, and, my own boatmen coming to my aid, soon landed him in safety. Next day the old gentlemen, having ascertained who I was, called on me to thank me for the service I had rendered him. Not only was Mourad Effendi—such was his name—profuse in his expressions of gratitude, but he endeavoured, by every attention in his power, to show that he really felt what he expressed; and, in fact, more of my leisure time