

**MAURICE
DURANT. VOL. II**

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Maurice Durant. Vol. II by Charles Garvice

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CHARLES GARVICE

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BY

CHARLES GARVICE,

AUTHOR OF "ONLY COUNTRY LOVE," "EVS," &c.

VOL. II.



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CHAPTER I.

"This is my kingdom; these my subjects,
My sceptre is their love,
My throne their hearts."

LADY MILDRED and the young ladies found Chudleigh Chichester in one of the narrow avenues of flowers in the impromptu place of exhibition, the school-room.

The place was crowded with the villagers and farm labourers, Hodge staring with grinning admiration at the rows of dazzling nature-jewels, and the small tradesmen and servants flocking to and fro amidst a storm of delighted expressions.

At the farther end of the room stood Sir Fielding, Mrs. Gregson, and Mr. Gregson, chat-

ting affably, and examining a splendid specimen of amber rose.

Chudleigh, surrounded by an affectionately respectful group of his adoring tenants, was admiring a fine specimen of an English juvenile as the ladies approached him, and looked up with a start, and a pleased smile as he recognised the stately figure of Carlotta.

"What did you mean, Chud, by ordering us here an hour too soon?" said Lady Mildred, smiling right and left at the reverential group which made way for her.

Chudleigh flushed slightly and stooped to pick up a flower tablet.

"I thought you would like to look over the flowers quietly—that is, before the doors were open," and he stole a glance at the grand face of Carlotta.

But she was looking at a camellia and did not appear to have heard either the question or the answer.

"Oh, was that it?" said Lady Mildred. "Of

course. How stupid of me. We might have guessed the reason, my dear," turning to Carlotta. "Never mind, Chudleigh; you shall take us all through now," and she placed her exquisitely gloved hand upon his arm. "I think," she said, "I see Sir Fielding and Mrs. Gregson, my dear. I'll go and speak to them. Don't trouble to come, Chud; I can make my way. See to the girls," and her ladyship, with a pleasant smile, made her way to the group at the end of the room, where she could be heard talking with rapid good nature, delighting the Gregsons by her amiability and pleasing Sir Fielding, for he then was left to walk out into the open air away from the crowd and the show.

"Who told you that you were an hour too soon, Miss Lawley?" said Chudleigh, having by some means or other—probably not unaided by Maud—managed to separate Carlotta from the throng and inveigle her, under the pretence of inspecting a fine tulip, into an almost deserted corner.

"Maud, I think," said Carlotta, lifting her eyes to his, but dropping them beneath his gaze, which would be admiring, try hard though he did to make their expression simply respectfully calm. "No, not Maud. One of the Miss Gregsons. It was a mistaken kindness."

"How gracious of you to say so," he said, quickly.

She raised her brows.

"We should have had more time and room in which to see the flowers."

"Ah, yes," he said, disappointedly; "that was what I meant."

"All this must have given you a great deal of trouble," said Carlotta, as they walked on.

"Not much," said Chudleigh. "It was quickly arranged, and Maud has been a valuable help. I would not mind undergoing twice the trouble to give these simple souls one quarter the pleasure they are evidently taking in the affair."

Carlotta glanced at him—he was looking another way—with a sudden light in her eyes,