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Author: Baron Edward Bulwer Lytton Lytton

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BOOK SECOND.

INITIAL CHAPTER.

INFORMING THE READER HOW THIS WORK CAME TO HAVE INITIAL CHAPTERS.

"There can't be a doubt," said my father, "that to each of the main divisions of your work—whether you call them Books or Parts—you should prefix an Initial or Introductory Chapter."

PISISTRATUS.—"Can't be a doubt, sir? Why so?"

MR. CAXTON.—"Fielding lays it down as an indispensable rule, which he supports by his example; and Fielding was an artistical writer, and knew what he was about."

PISISTRATUS.—"Do you remember any of his reasons, sir?"

MR. CAXTON.—"Why, indeed, Fielding says, very justly, that he is not bound to assign any reason; but he does assign a good many, here and there,—to find which I refer you to 'Tom Jones.' I will only observe, that one of his reasons, which is unanswerable, runs to the effect that thus, in every Part or Book, the reader has the advantage of beginning at the fourth or fifth page instead of the first,—'a matter by no means of trivial consequence,' saith Fielding, 'to persons who read books with no other view than to say they have read them,—a more general motive to reading than is commonly imagined; and from which not only law books and good books, but the pages of Homer and Virgil, Swift and Cervantes, have been often turned Over.' There," cried my father, triumphantly, "I will lay a shilling to twopence that I have quoted the very words."

MRS. CANTON.—"Dear me, that only means skipping; I don't see any great advantage in writing a chapter, merely for people to skip it."

PISISTRATUS.—"Neither do I!"

MR. CANTON (dogmatically).—"It is the repose in the picture,—Fielding calls it 'contrast.'—(Still

more dogmatically.)—I say there can't be a doubt about it. Besides" added my father after a pause,—"besides, this usage gives you opportunities to explain what has gone before, or to prepare for what's coming; or, since Fielding contends, with great truth, that some learning is necessary for this kind of historical composition, it allows you, naturally and easily, the introduction of light and pleasant ornaments of that nature. At each flight in the terrace you may give the eye the relief of an urn or a statue. Moreover, when so inclined, you create proper pausing-places for reflection; and complete by a separate, yet harmonious ethical department, the design of a work, which is but a mere Mother Goose's tale if it does not embrace a general view of the thoughts and actions of mankind."

PISISTRATUS.—"But then, in these initial chapters, the author thrusts himself forward; and just when you want to get on with the /dramatis personae/, you find yourself face to face with the poet himself."

MR. CANTON.—"Pooh! you can contrive to prevent that! Imitate the chorus of the Greek stage, who fill up the intervals between the action by saying what the author would otherwise say in his own person."

PISISTRATUS (slyly).—"That's a good idea, sir,—and I have a chorus, and a choregus too, already in my eye."

MR. CANTON (unsuspectingly).—"Aha! you are not so dull a fellow as you would make yourself out to be; and, even if an author did thrust himself forward, what objection is there to that? It is a mere affectation to suppose that a book can come into the world without an author. Every child has a father,—one father at least,—as the great Conde says very well in his poem."

PISISTRATUS.—"The great Conde a poet! I never heard that before."

MR. CANTON.—"I don't say he was a poet, but he sent a poem to Madame de Montansier. Envious critics think that he must have paid somebody else to write it; but there is no reason why a great captain should not write a poem,—I don't say a good poem, but a poem. I wonder, Roland, if the duke ever tried his hand at 'Stanzas to Mary,' or 'Lines to a Sleeping Babe.'"

CAPTAIN ROLAND.—"Austin, I'm ashamed of you. Of course the duke could write poetry if he pleased,—something, I dare say, in the way of the great Conde; that is, something warlike and heroic, I'll be bound. Let's hear!"

MR. CAXTON (reciting).—

"Telle est du Ciel la loi severe
Qu'il faut qu'un enfant ait un pere;
On dit meme quelquefois
Tel enfant en a jusqu'a trois."

["That each child has a father
Is Nature's decree;
But, to judge by a rumour,
Some children have three."]

CAPTAIN ROLAND (greatly disgusted).—"Conde write such stuff!—I don't believe it."

PISISTRATUS.—"I do, and accept the quotations; you and Roland shall be joint fathers to my child as well as myself."

"Tel enfant en a jusqu'a trois."

MR. CAXTON (solemnly).—"I refuse the proffered paternity; but so far as administering a little wholesome castigation now and then, I have no objection to join in the discharge of a father's duty."

PISISTRATUS.—"Agreed. Have you anything to say against the infant hitherto?"

MR. CAXTON.—"He is in long clothes at present; let us wait till he can walk."

BLANCHE.—"But pray whom do you mean for a hero? And is Miss Jemima your heroine?"

CAPTAIN ROLAND.—"There is some mystery about the—"

PISISTRATUS (hastily).—"Hush, Uncle: no letting the cat out of the bag yet. Listen, all of you! I left Frank Hazelden on his way to the Casino."

CHAPTER II.

"It is a sweet pretty place," thought Frank, as he opened the gate which led across the fields to the Casino, that smiled down upon him with its plaster pilasters. "I wonder, though, that my father, who is so particular in general, suffers the carriage-road to be so full of holes and weeds. Mounseer does not receive many visits, I take it."

But when Frank got into the ground immediately before the house, he saw no cause of complaint as to want of order and repair. Nothing could be kept more neatly. Frank was ashamed of the dint made by the pony's hoofs on the smooth gravel: he dismounted, tied the animal to the wicket, and went on foot towards the glass door in front.

He rang the bell once, twice, but nobody came, for the old woman-servant, who was hard of hearing, was far away in the yard, searching for any eggs which the hen might have scandalously hidden for culinary purposes; and Jackeymo was fishing for the sticklebacks and minnows which were, when caught, to assist the eggs, when found, in keeping together the bodies and souls of himself and his master. The old woman had been lately put upon board wages. Lucky old woman! Frank rang a third time, and with the impetuosity of his age. A face peeped from the belvidere on the terrace. "Diavolo!" said Dr. Riccabocca to himself. "Young cocks crow hard on their own dunghill; it must be a cock of a high race to crow so loud at another's."

Therewith he shambled out of the summer-house, and appeared suddenly before Frank, in a very wizard-like dressing-robe of black serge, a red cap on his head, and a cloud of smoke coming rapidly from his lips, as a final consolatory whiff, before he removed the pipe from them. Frank had indeed seen the doctor before, but never in so scholastic a costume, and he was a little startled by the apparition at his elbow, as he turned round.

"Signorino," said the Italian, taking off his cap with his usual urbanity, "pardon the negligence of my people; I am too happy to receive your commands in person."

"Dr. Rickeybockey?" stammered Frank, much confused by this polite address, and the low, yet stately, bow with which it was accompanied. "I—I have a note from the Hall. Mamma—that is, my mother—and aunt Jemima beg their best compliments, and hope you will come, sir."

The doctor took the note with another bow, and, opening the glass door, invited Frank to enter.

The young gentleman, with a schoolboy's usual bluntness, was about to say that he was in a hurry, and had rather not; but Dr. Riccabocca's grand manner awed him, while a glimpse of the hall excited his curiosity, so he silently obeyed the invitation.

The hall, which was of an octagon shape, had been originally panelled off into compartments, and in these the Italian had painted landscapes, rich with the warm sunny light of his native climate. Frank was no judge of the art displayed; but he was greatly struck with the scenes depicted: they were all views of some lake, real or imaginary; in all, dark-blue shining waters reflected dark-blue placid skies. In one, a flight of steps ascended to the lake, and a gay group was seen feasting on the margin; in another, sunset threw its rose-hues over a vast villa or palace, backed by Alpine hills, and flanked by long arcades of vines, while pleasure-boats skimmed over the waves below. In short, throughout all the eight compartments, the scene, though it differed in details, preserved the same general character, as if illustrating some favourite locality. The Italian did not, however, evince any desire to do the honours of his own art, but, preceding Frank across the hall, opened the door of his usual sitting-room, and requested him to enter. Frank did so rather reluctantly, and seated himself with unwonted bashfulness on the edge of a chair. But here new specimens of the doctor's handicraft soon riveted attention. The room had been originally papered, but Riccabocca had stretched canvas over the walls, and painted thereon sundry satirical devices, each separated from the other by scroll-works of fantastic arabesques. Here a Cupid was trundling a wheelbarrow full of hearts, which he appeared to be selling to an ugly old fellow, with a money-bag in his hand—probably Plutus. There Diogenes might be seen walking through a market-place, with his lantern in his hand, in search of an honest man, whilst the children jeered at him, and the curs snapped at his heels. In another place a lion was seen half dressed in a fox's hide, while a wolf in a sheep's mask was conversing very amicably with a young lamb. Here again might be seen the geese stretching out their necks from the Roman Capitol in full cackle, while the stout invaders were beheld in the distance, running off as hard as they could. In short, in all these quaint entablatures some pithy sarcasm was symbolically conveyed; only over the mantel piece was the design graver and more touching. It was the figure of a man in a pilgrim's garb, chained to the earth by small but innumerable ligaments, while a phantom likeness of himself, his shadow, was seen hastening down

what seemed an interminable vista; and underneath were written the pathetic words of Horace—

"Patriae quis exul
Se quoque fugit?"

["What exile from his country can also fly from himself?"]

The furniture of the room was extremely simple, and somewhat scanty; yet it was arranged so as to impart an air of taste and elegance to the room. Even a few plaster busts and statues, though bought but of some humble itinerant, had their classical effect, glistening from out stands of flowers that were grouped around them, or backed by graceful screen-works formed from twisted osiers, which, by the simple contrivance of trays at the bottom filled with earth, served for living parasitical plants, with gay flowers contrasting thick ivy leaves, and gave to the whole room the aspect of a bower. "May I ask your permission?" said the Italian, with his finger on the seal of the letter.

"Oh, yes," said Frank, with naivete.

Riccabocca broke the seal, and a slight smile stole over his countenance. Then he turned a little aside from Frank, shaded his face with his hand, and seemed to muse. "Mrs. Hazeldean," said he, at last, "does me very great honour. I hardly recognize her handwriting, or I should have been more impatient to open the letter." The dark eyes were lifted over the spectacles and went right into Frank's unprotected and undiplomatic heart. The doctor raised the note, and pointed to the characters with his forefinger.

"Cousin Jemima's hand," said Frank, as directly as if the question had been put to him.

The Italian smiled. "Mr. Hazeldean has company staying with him?"

"No; that is, only Barney,—the captain. There's seldom much company before the shooting season," added Frank, with a slight sigh; "and then, you know, the holidays are over. For my part, I think we ought to break up a month later."

The doctor seemed reassured by the first sentence in Frank's reply, and, seating himself at the table, wrote his answer,—not hastily, as we English write, but with care and precision, like one accustomed to weigh the nature of words,—in that stiff Italian hand, which allows the writer so much time to think while he forms his letters. He did not, therefore, reply at once to Frank's remark about the holidays, but was silent till he had concluded his note, read it three times over, sealed it by the taper he slowly lighted, and then, giving it to Frank, he said,

"For your sake, young gentleman, I regret that your holidays are so early; for mine, I must rejoice, since I accept the kind invitation you have rendered doubly gratifying by bringing it yourself."

"Deuce take the fellow and his fine speeches! One don't know which way to look," thought English Frank.

The Italian smiled again, as if this time he had read the boy's heart, without need of those piercing black eyes, and said, less ceremoniously than before, "You don't care much for compliments, young gentleman?"

"No, I don't indeed," said Frank, heartily.

"So much the better for you, since your way in the world is made: it would be so much the worse if you had to make it!"

Frank looked puzzled: the thought was too deep for him, so he turned to the pictures.

"Those are very funny," said he; "they seem capitally done. Who did 'em?"

"Signoriuo Hazeldean, you are giving me what you refused yourself."

"Eh?" said Frank, inquiringly.

"Compliments!"

"Oh—I—no; but they are well done: are n't they, sir?"—

"Not particularly: you speak to the artist."

"What! you painted them?"

"Yes."

"And the pictures in the hall?"

"Those too."

"Taken from nature, eh?"

"Nature," said the Italian, sententiously, perhaps evasively, "lets nothing be taken from her."

"Oh!" said Frank, puzzled again. "Well, I must wish you good morning, sir; I am very glad you are coming."

"Without compliment?"

"Without compliment."

"A rivedersi—good-by for the present, my young signorino. This way," observing Frank make a bolt towards the wrong door. "Can I offer you a glass of wine?—it is pure, of our own making."

"No, thank you, indeed, sir," cried Frank, suddenly recollecting his father's admonition. "Good-by, don't trouble yourself, sir; I know any way now."

But the bland Italian followed his guest to the wicket, where Frank had left the pony. The young gentleman, afraid lest so courteous a host should hold the stirrup for him, twitched off the bridle, and mounted in haste, not even staying to ask if the Italian could put him in the way to Rood Hall, of which way he was profoundly ignorant. The Italian's eye followed the boy as he rode up the ascent in the lane, and the doctor sighed heavily. "The wiser we grow," said he to himself, "the more we regret the age of our follies: it is better to gallop with a light heart up the stony hill than sit in the summer-house and cry 'How true!' to the stony truths of Machiavelli!"

With that he turned back into the belvedere; but he could not resume his studies. He remained some minutes gazing on the prospect, till the prospect reminded him of the fields which Jackeymo was bent on his hiring, and the fields reminded him of Lenny Fairfield. He returned to the house, and in a few moments re-emerged in his out-of-door trim, with cloak and umbrella, re-lighted his pipe, and strolled towards Hazeldean village.

Meanwhile Frank, after cantering on for some distance, stopped at a cottage, and there learned that there was a short cut across the fields to Rood Hall, by which he could save nearly three miles. Frank, however, missed the short cut, and came out into the high road; a turnpike-keeper, after first taking his toll, put him back again into the short cut; and finally, he got into some green lanes, where a dilapidated finger-post directed him to Rood. Late at noon, having ridden fifteen miles in the desire to reduce ten to seven, he came suddenly upon a wild and primitive piece of ground, that seemed half chase, half common, with crazy tumbledown cottages of villanous aspect scattered about in odd nooks and corners. Idle, dirty children were making mud-pies on the road; slovenly-looking women were plaiting straw at the threshold; a large but forlorn and decayed church, that seemed to say that the generation which saw it built was more pious than the generation which now resorted to it, stood boldly and nakedly out by the roadside.

"Is this the village of Rood?" asked Frank of a stout young man breaking stones on the road—sad sign that no better labour could be found for him!

The man sullenly nodded, and continued his work. "And where's the Hall—Mr. Leslie's?"

The man looked up in stolid surprise, and this time touched his hat.

"Be you going there?"

"Yes, if I can find out where it is."

"I'll show your honour," said the boor, alertly.

Frank reined in the pony, and the man walked by his side. Frank was much of his father's son, despite the difference of age, and that more fastidious change of manner which characterizes each succeeding race in the progress of civilization. Despite all his Eton finery, he was familiar with peasants, and had the quick eye of one country-born as to country matters.

"You don't seem very well off in this village, my man?" said he, knowingly.

"Noa; there be a deal of distress here in the winter time, and summer too, for that matter; and the parish ben't much help to a single man."

"But surely the farmers want work here as well as elsewhere?"

"Deed, and there ben't much farming work here,—most o' the parish be all wild ground loike."

"The poor have a right of common, I suppose," said Frank, surveying a large assortment of vagabond birds and quadrupeds.

"Yes; neighbour Timmins keeps his geese on the common, and some has a cow, and them be neighbour Jowlas's pigs. I don't know if there's a right, loike; but the folks at the Hall does all they can to help us, and that ben't much: they ben't as rich as some folks; but," added the peasant, proudly, "they be as good blood as any in the shire."

"I 'm glad to see you like them, at all events."

"Oh, yes, I likes them well eno'; mayhap you are at school with the young gentleman?"

"Yes," said Frank.

"Ah, I heard the clergyman say as how Master Randal was a mighty clever lad, and would get rich some day. I 'se sure I wish he would, for a poor squire makes a poor parish. There's the Hall, sir."

CHAPTER III.

Frank looked right ahead, and saw a square house that, in spite of modern sash windows, was evidently of remote antiquity. A high conical roof; a stack of tall quaint chimney-pots of red-baked clay (like those at Sutton Place in Surrey) dominating over isolated vulgar smoke-conductors, of the ignoble fashion of present times; a dilapidated groin-work, encasing within a Tudor arch a door of the comfortable date of George III., and the peculiarly dingy and weather-stained appearance of the small finely-finished bricks, of which the habitation was built,—all showed the abode of former generations adapted with tasteless irreverence to the habits of descendants unenlightened by Pugin, or indifferent to the poetry of the past. The house had emerged suddenly upon Frank out of the gloomy waste land, for it was placed in a hollow, and sheltered from sight by a disorderly group of ragged, dismal, valetudinarian fir-trees, until an abrupt turn of the road cleared that screen, and left the desolate abode bare to the discontented eye. Frank dismounted; the man held his pony; and after smoothing his cravat, the smart Etonian sauntered up to the door, and startled the solitude of the place with a loud peal from the modern brass knocker,—a knock which instantly brought forth an astonished starling who had built under the eaves of the gable roof, and called up a cloud of sparrows, tomtits, and yellow-hammers, who had been regaling themselves amongst the litter of a slovenly farmyard that lay in full sight to the right of the house, fenced off by a primitive paintless wooden rail. In process of time a sow, accompanied by a thriving and inquisitive family, strolled up to the gate of the fence, and, leaning her nose on the lower bar of the gate, contemplated the visitor with much curiosity and some suspicion.

While Frank is still without, impatiently swingeing his white trousers with his whip, we will steal a hurried glance towards the respective members of the family within. Mr. Leslie, the paterfamilias, is in a little room called his "study," to which he regularly retires every morning after breakfast, rarely reappearing till one o'clock, which is his unfashionable hour for dinner. In what mysterious occupations Mr. Leslie passes those hours no one ever formed a conjecture. At the present moment he is seated before a little rickety bureau, one leg of which being shorter than the other is propped up by sundry old letters and scraps of newspapers; and the bureau is open, and reveals a great number of pigeonholes and divisions, filled with various odds and ends, the collection of many years. In some of these compartments are bundles of letters, very yellow, and tied in packets with faded tape; in another, all by itself, is a fragment of plum-pudding stone, which Mr. Leslie has picked up in his walks, and considered a rare mineral. It is neatly labelled, "Found in Hollow Lane, May 21st, 1804, by Maunder Slugge Leslie, Esq." The next division holds several bits of iron in the shape of nails, fragments of horse-shoes, etc., which Mr. Leslie has also met with in his rambles, and, according to a harmless popular superstition, deemed it highly unlucky not to pick up, and, once picked up, no less unlucky to throw away. Item, in the adjoining pigeon-hole, a goodly collection of pebbles with holes in them, preserved for the same reason, in company with a crooked sixpence; item, neatly arranged in fanciful mosaics, several periwinkles, Blackamoor's teeth (I mean the shell so called), and other specimens of the conchiferous ingenuity of Nature, partly inherited from some ancestral spinster, partly amassed by Mr. Leslie himself in a youthful excursion to the seaside. There were the farm-bailiff's accounts, several files of bills, an old stirrup, three sets of knee and shoe buckles which had belonged to Mr. Leslie's father, a

few seals tied together by a shoe-string, a shagreen toothpick case, a tortoise shell magnifying-glass to read with, his eldest son's first copybooks, his second son's ditto, his daughter's ditto, and a lock of his wife's hair arranged in a true lover's knot, framed and glazed. There were also a small mousetrap; a patent corkscrew too good to be used in common; fragments of a silver teaspoon, that had, by natural decay, arrived at a dissolution of its parts; a small brown holland bag, containing halfpence of various dates, as far back as Queen Anne, accompanied by two French /sous/ and a German /silber gros/,—the which miscellany Mr. Leslie magniloquently called "his coins," and had left in his will as a family heirloom. There were many other curiosities of congenial nature and equal value—/quae nunc describere longum est/. Mr. Leslie was engaged at this time in what is termed "putting things to rights,"—an occupation he performed with exemplary care once a week. This was his day; and he had just counted his coins, and was slowly tying them up again in the brown holland bag, when Frank's knock reached his ears.

Mr. Maunder Slugge Leslie paused, shook his head as if incredulously, and was about to resume his occupation, when he was seized with a fit of yawning which prevented the bag being tied for full two minutes.

While such the employment of the study, let us turn to the recreations in the drawing-room, or rather parlour. A drawing-room there was on the first floor, with a charming look-out, not on the dreary fir-trees, but on the romantic undulating forest-land; but the drawing-room had not been used since the death of the last Mrs. Leslie. It was deemed too good to sit in, except when there was company: there never being company, it was never sat in. Indeed, now the paper was falling off the walls with the damp, and the rats, mice, and moths—those /"edaces rerum"/—had eaten, between them, most of the chair-bottoms and a considerable part of the floor. Therefore, the parlour was the sole general sitting-room; and being breakfasted in, dined, and supped in, and, after supper, smoked in by Mr. Leslie to the accompaniment of rum-and-water, it is impossible to deny that it had what is called "a smell,"—a comfortable, wholesome family smell, speaking of numbers, meals, and miscellaneous social habitation. There were two windows: one looked full on the fir-trees; the other on the farmyard, with the pigsty closing the view. Near the fir-tree window sat Mrs. Leslie; before her, on a high stool, was a basket of the children's clothes that wanted mending. A work-table of rosewood inlaid with brass, which had been a wedding-present, and was a costly thing originally, but in that peculiar taste which is vulgarly called "Brummagem," stood at hand: the brass had started in several places, and occasionally made great havoc in the children's fingers and in Mrs. Leslie's gown; in fact it was the liveliest piece of furniture in the house, thanks to the petulant brasswork, and could not have been more mischievous if it had been a monkey. Upon the work-table lay a housewife and thimble, and scissors, and skeins of worsted and thread, and little scraps of linen and cloth for patches. But Mrs. Leslie was not actually working,—she was preparing to work; she had been preparing to work for the last hour and a half. Upon her lap she supported a novel, by a lady who wrote much for a former generation, under the name of "Mrs. Bridget Blue Mantle." She had a small needle in her left hand, and a very thick piece of thread in her right; occasionally she applied the end of the said thread to her lips, and then—her eyes fixed on the novel—made a blind, vacillating attack at the eye of the needle. But a camel would have gone through it with quite as much ease. Nor did the novel alone engage Mrs. Leslie's attention, for ever and anon she interrupted herself to scold the children, to inquire "what o'clock it was;" to observe that "Sarah would never suit;" and to wonder "why Mr. Leslie would not see that the work-table was mended." Mrs. Leslie has been rather a pretty woman. In spite of a dress at once slatternly and economical, she has still the air of a lady,—rather too much so, the hard duties of her situation considered. She is proud of the antiquity of her family on both sides; her mother was of the venerable stock of the Daudlers of Daudle Place, a race that existed before the Conquest. Indeed, one has only to read our earliest chronicles, and to glance over some of those long-winded moralizing poems which delighted the thanes and ealdermen of old, in order to see that the Daudles must have been a very influential family before William the First turned the country topsy-turvy. While the mother's race was thus indubitably Saxon, the father's had not only the name but the peculiar idiosyncrasy of the Normans, and went far to establish that crotchet of the brilliant author of "Sybil; or, The Two Nations," as to the continued distinction between the conquering and conquered populations. Mrs. Leslie's father boasted the name of Montfichet,—doubtless of the same kith and kin as those great barons of Alontfichet, who once owned such broad lands and such turbulent castles. A high-nosed, thin, nervous, excitable progeny, those same Montfydgets, as the most troublesome Norman could pretend to be. This fusion of race was notable to the most ordinary physiognomist in the physique and in the morale of Mrs. Leslie. She had the speculative blue eye of the Saxon, and the passionate high nose of the Norman; she had the musing do-nothingness of the Daudlers, and the reckless have-at-every-thingness of the Montfydgets. At Mrs. Leslie's feet, a little girl with her hair about her ears (and beautiful hair it was too) was amusing herself with a broken-nosed doll. At the far end of the room, before a high desk, sat Frank's Eton schoolfellow, the eldest son. A minute or two before Frank's alarum had disturbed the tranquillity of the household, he had raised his eyes from the books on the desk to glance at a very tattered copy of the Greek Testament, in which his brother Oliver had found a difficulty that he came to

Randal to solve. As the young Etonian's face was turned to the light, your first impression on seeing it would have been melancholy, but respectful, interest,—for the face had already lost the joyous character of youth; there was a wrinkle between the brows; and the lines that speak of fatigue were already visible under the eyes and about the mouth; the complexion was sallow, the lips were pale. Years of study had already sown in the delicate organization the seeds of many an infirmity and many a pain; but if your look had rested longer on that countenance, gradually your compassion might have given place to some feeling uneasy and sinister,—a feeling akin to fear. There was in the whole expression so much of cold calm force, that it belied the debility of the frame. You saw there the evidence of a mind that was cultivated, and you felt that in that cultivation there was something formidable. A notable contrast to this countenance, prematurely worn and eminently intelligent, was the round healthy face of Oliver, with slow blue eyes fixed hard on the penetrating orbs of his brother, as if trying with might and main to catch from them a gleam of that knowledge with which they shone clear and frigid as a star.

At Frank's knock, Oliver's slow blue eyes sparkled into animation, and he sprang from his brother's side. The little girl flung back the hair from her face, and stared at her mother with a look which spoke wonder and fright.

The young student knit his brows, and then turned wearily back to the books on his desk.

"Dear me," cried Mrs. Leslie, "who can that possibly be? Oliver, come from the window, sir, this instant: you will be seen! Juliet, run, ring the bell; no, go to the head of the kitchen stairs, and call out to Jenny 'Not at home.' Not at home, on any account," repeated Mrs. Leslie, nervously, for the Montfydget blood was now in full flow.

In another minute or so, Frank's loud boyish voice was distinctly heard at the outer door.

Randal slightly started.

"Frank Hazeldean's voice," said he; "I should like to see him, Mother."

"See him," repeated Mrs. Leslie, in amaze; "see him! and the room in this state!"

Randal might have replied that the room was in no worse state than usual; but he said nothing. A slight flush came and went over his pale face; and then he leaned his check on his hand, and compressed his lips firmly.

The outer door closed with a sullen, inhospitable jar, and a slip-shod female servant entered with a card between her finger and thumb.

"Who is that for?—give it to me. Jenny," cried Mrs. Leslie.

But Jenny shook her head, laid the card on the desk beside Randal, and vanished without saying a word.

"Oh, look, Randal, look up," cried Oliver, who had again rushed to the window; "such a pretty gray pony!"

Randal did look up; nay, he went deliberately to the window, and gazed a moment on the high-mettled pony and the well-dressed, spirited rider. In that moment changes passed over Randal's countenance more rapidly than clouds over the sky in a gusty day. Now envy and discontent, with the curled lip and the gloomy scowl; now hope and proud self-esteem, with the clearing brow and the lofty smile; and then again all became cold, firm, and close, as he walked back to his books, seated himself resolutely, and said, half aloud,—**"Well, KNOWLEDGE IS POWER!"**

CHAPTER IV.

Mrs. Leslie came up in fidget and in fuss; she leaned over Randal's shoulder and read the card. Written in pen and ink, with an attempt at imitation of printed Roman character, there appeared first "MR. FRANK HAZELDEAN;" but just over these letters, and scribbled hastily and less legibly in pencil, was,—

"DEAR LESLIE,—Sorry you were out; come and see us,—do!"

"You will go, Randal?" said Mrs. Leslie, after a pause.

"I am not sure."

"Yes, you can go; you have clothes like a gentleman; you can go anywhere, not like those children;" and Mrs. Leslie glanced almost spitefully at poor Oliver's coarse threadbare jacket, and little Juliet's torn frock.

"What I have I owe at present to Mr. Egerton, and I should consult his wishes; he is not on good terms with these Hazeldeans." Then turning towards his brother, who looked mortified, he added, with a strange sort of haughty kindness, "What I may have hereafter, Oliver, I shall owe to myself; and then if I rise, I will raise my family."

"Dear Randal," said Mrs. Leslie, fondly kissing him on the forehead, "what a good heart you have!"

"No, Mother; my books don't tell me that it is a good heart that gets on in the world: it is a hard head," replied Randal, with a rude and scornful candour. "But I can read no more just now: come out, Oliver."

So saying, he slid from his mother's hand and left the room. When Oliver joined him, Randal was already on the common; and, without seeming to notice his brother, he continued to walk quickly, and with long strides, in profound silence. At length he paused under the shade of an old oak, that, too old to be of value save for firewood, had escaped the axe. The tree stood on a knoll, and the spot commanded a view of the decayed house, the dilapidated church, the dreary village.

"Oliver," said Randal, between his teeth, so that his voice had the sound of a hiss, "it was under this tree that I first resolved to—"

He paused.

"What, Randal?"

"Read hard: knowledge is power!"

"But you are so fond of reading."

"I!" cried Randal. "Do you think, when Wolsey and Thomas-a-Becket became priests, they were fond of telling their beads and pattering Aves? I fond of reading!"

Oliver stared; the historical allusions were beyond his comprehension.

"You know," continued Randal, "that we Leslies were not always the beggarly poor gentlemen we are now. You know that there is a man who lives in Grosvenor Square, and is very rich,—very. His riches come to him from a Leslie; that man is my patron, Oliver, and he—is very good to me."

Randal's smile was withering as he spoke. "Come on," he said, after a pause,— "come on." Again the walk was quick, and the brothers were silent.

They came at length to a little shallow brook, across which some large stones had been placed at short intervals, so that the boys walked over the ford dryshod. "Will you pull down that bough, Oliver?" said Randal, abruptly, pointing to a tree. Oliver obeyed mechanically; and Randal, stripping the leaves and snapping off the twigs, left a fork at the end; with this he began to remove the stepping-stones.

"What are you about, Randal?" asked Oliver, wonderingly.

"We are on the other side of the brook now, and we shall not come back this way. We don't want the stepping-stones any more!—away with them!"

CHAPTER V.

The morning after this visit of Frank Hazeldean's to Rood Hall, the Right Honourable Audley Egerton, member of parliament, privy councillor, and minister of a high department in the State,—just below the rank of the cabinet,—was seated in his library, awaiting the delivery of the post, before he walked down to his office. In the mean while he sipped his tea, and glanced over the newspapers with that quick and

half-disdainful eye with which your practical man in public life is wont to regard the abuse or the eulogium of the Fourth Estate.

There is very little likeness between Mr. Egerton and his half-brother; none, indeed, except that they are both of tall stature, and strong, sinewy, English build. But even in this last they do not resemble each other; for the squire's athletic shape is already beginning to expand into that portly embonpoint which seems the natural development of contented men as they approach middle life. Audley, on the contrary, is inclined to be spare; and his figure, though the muscles are as firm as iron, has enough of the slender to satisfy metropolitan ideas of elegance. His dress, his look, his /tout ensemble/, are those of the London man. In the first, there is more attention to fashion than is usual amongst the busy members of the House of Commons; but then Audley Egerton has always been something more than a mere busy member of the House of Commons. He has always been a person of mark in the best society; and one secret of his success in life has been his high reputation as "a gentleman."

As he now bends over the journals, there is an air of distinction in the turn of the well-shaped head, with the dark brown hair,—dark in spite of a reddish tinge,—cut close behind, and worn away a little towards the crown, so as to give an additional height to a commanding forehead. His profile is very handsome, and of that kind of beauty which imposes on men if it pleases women; and is, therefore, unlike that of your mere pretty fellows, a positive advantage in public life. It is a profile with large features clearly cut, masculine, and somewhat severe. The expression of his face is not open, like the squire's, nor has it the cold closeness which accompanies the intellectual character of young Leslie's; but it is reserved and dignified, and significant of self-control, as should be the physiognomy of a man accustomed to think before he speaks. When you look at him, you are not surprised to learn that he is not a florid orator nor a smart debater,—he is a, "weighty speaker." He is fairly read, but without any great range either of ornamental scholarship or constitutional lore. He has not much humour; but he has that kind of wit which is essential to grave and serious irony. He has not much imagination, nor remarkable subtlety in reasoning; but if he does not dazzle he does not bore,—he is too much of the man of the world for that. He is considered to have sound sense and accurate judgment. Withal, as he now lays aside the journals, and his face relaxes its austerer lines, you will not be astonished to hear that he is a man who is said to have been greatly beloved by women, and still to exercise much influence in drawing-rooms and boudoirs. At least, no one was surprised when the great heiress, Clementina Leslie, kinswoman and ward to Lord Lansmere,—a young lady who had refused three earls and the heir apparent to a dukedom,—was declared by her dearest friends to be dying of love for Audley Egerton. It had been the natural wish of the Lansmeres that this lady should marry their son, Lord L'Estrange. But that young gentleman, whose opinions on matrimony partook of the eccentricity of his general character, could never be induced to propose, and had, according to the /on-dits/ of town, been the principal party to make up the match between Clementina and his friend Audley; for the match required making- up, despite the predilections of the young heiress. Mr. Egerton had had scruples of delicacy. He avowed, for the first time, that his fortune was much less than had been generally supposed, and he did not like the idea of owing all to a wife, however highly he might esteem and admire her. Now, Lord L'Estrange (not long after the election at Lansmere, which had given to Audley his first seat in parliament) had suddenly exchanged from the battalion of the Guards to which he belonged, and which was detained at home, into a cavalry regiment on active service in the Peninsula. Nevertheless, even abroad, and amidst the distractions of war, his interest in all that could forward Egerton's career was unabated; and by letters to his father and to his cousin Clementina, he assisted in the negotiations for the marriage between Miss Leslie and his friend; and before the year in which Audley was returned for Lansmere had expired, the young senator received the hand of the great heiress. The settlement of her fortune, which was chiefly in the Funds, had been unusually advantageous to the husband; for though the capital was tied up so long as both survived, for the benefit of any children they might have, yet in the event of one of the parties dying without issue by the marriage, the whole passed without limitation to the survivor. Miss Leslie, in spite of all remonstrance from her own legal adviser, had settled this clause with Egerton's confidential solicitor, one Mr. Levy, of whom we shall see more hereafter; and Egerton was to be kept in ignorance of it till after the marriage. If in this Miss Leslie showed a generous trust in Mr. Egerton, she still inflicted no positive wrong on her relations, for she had none sufficiently near to her to warrant their claim to the succession. Her nearest kinsman, and therefore her natural heir, was Harley L'Estrange; and if he was contented, no one had a right to complain. The tie of blood between herself and the Leslies of Rood Hall was, as we shall see presently, extremely distant.

It was not till after his marriage that Mr. Egerton took an active part in the business of the House of Commons. He was then at the most advantageous starting-point for the career of ambition. His words on the state of the country took importance from his stake in it. His talents found accessories in the opulence of Grosvenor Square, the dignity of a princely establishment, the respectability of one firmly settled in life, the reputation of a fortune in reality very large, and which was magnified by popular report into the revenues of a Croesus. Audley Egerton succeeded in parliament beyond the early

expectations formed of him. He took, from the first, that station in the House which it requires tact to establish, and great knowledge of the world to free from the charge of impracticability and crotchet, but which, once established, is peculiarly imposing from the rarity of its independence; that is to say, the station of the moderate man who belongs sufficiently to a party to obtain its support, but is yet sufficiently disengaged from a party to make his vote and word, on certain questions, matter of anxiety and speculation.

Professing Toryism (the word Conservative, which would have suited him better, was not then known), he separated himself from the country party, and always avowed great respect for the opinions of the large towns. The epithet given to the views of Audley Egerton was "enlightened." Never too much in advance of the passion of the day, yet never behind its movement, he had that shrewd calculation of odds which a consummate mastery of the world sometimes bestows upon politicians,—perceived the chances for and against a certain question being carried within a certain time, and nicked the question between wind and water. He was so good a barometer of that changeful weather called Public Opinion, that he might have had a hand in the "Times" newspaper. He soon quarrelled, and purposely, with his Lansmere constituents; nor had he ever revisited that borough,—perhaps because it was associated with unpleasant reminiscences in the shape of the squire's epistolary trimmer, and in that of his own effigies which his agricultural constituents had burned in the corn-market. But the speeches that produced such indignation at Lansmere had delighted one of the greatest of our commercial towns, which at the next general election honoured him with its representation. In those days, before the Reform Bill, great commercial towns chose men of high mark for their member; and a proud station it was for him who was delegated to speak the voice of the princely merchants of England.

Mrs. Egerton survived her marriage but a few years. She left no children; two had been born, but died in their first infancy. The property of the wife, therefore, passed without control or limit to the husband.

Whatever might have been the grief of the widower, he disdained to betray it to the world. Indeed, Audley Egerton was a man who had early taught himself to conceal emotion. He buried himself in the country, none knew where, for some months. When he returned, there was a deep wrinkle on his brow,—but no change in his habits and avocations, except that, shortly afterwards, he accepted office, and thus became more busy than ever.

Mr. Egerton had always been lavish and magnificent in money spatters. A rich man in public life has many claims on his fortune, and no one yielded to those claims with in air so regal as Audley Egerton. But amongst his many liberal actions, there was none which seemed more worthy of panegyric than the generous favour he extended to the son of his wife's poor and distant kinsfolk, the Leslies of Rood Hall.

Some four generations back, there had lived a certain Squire Leslie, a man of large acres and active mind. He had cause to be displeased with his elder son, and though he did not disinherit him, he left half his property to a younger.

The younger had capacity and spirit, which justified the parental provision. He increased his fortune; lifted himself into notice and consideration by public services and a noble alliance. His descendants followed his example, and took rank among the first commoners in England, till the last male, dying, left his sole heiress and representative in one daughter, Clementina, afterwards married to Mr. Egerton.

Meanwhile the elder son of the fore-mentioned squire had muddled and sotted away much of his share in the Leslie property; and, by low habits and mean society, lowered in repute his representation of the name.

His successors imitated him, till nothing was left to Randal's father, Mr. Maunder Slugge Leslie, but the decayed house, which was what the Germans call the /stamm schloss/, or "stem hall," of the race, and the wretched lands immediately around it.

Still, though all intercourse between the two branches of the family had ceased, the younger had always felt a respect for the elder, as the head of the House. And it was supposed that, on her death-bed, Mrs. Egerton had recommended her impoverished namesakes and kindred to the care of her husband; for when he returned to town, after Mrs. Egerton's death, Audley had sent to Mr. Maunder Slugge Leslie the sum of L5000, which he said his wife, leaving no written will, had orally bequeathed as a legacy to that gentleman; and he requested permission to charge himself with the education of the eldest son.

Mr. Maunder Slugge Leslie might have done great things for his little property with those L5000, or even kept in the three-per-cents the interest would have afforded a material addition to his comforts.

But a neighbouring solicitor, having caught scent of the legacy, hunted it down into his own hands, on pretence of having found a capital investment in a canal; and when the solicitor had got possession of the L5000, he went off with them to America.

Meanwhile Randal, placed by Mr. Egerton at an excellent preparatory school, at first gave no signs of industry or talent; but just before he left it, there came to the school, as classical tutor, an ambitious young Oxford man; and his zeal—for he was a capital teacher—produced a great effect generally on the pupils, and especially on Randal Leslie. He talked to them much in private on the advantages of learning, and shortly afterwards he exhibited those advantages in his own person; for, having edited a Greek play with much subtle scholarship, his college, which some slight irregularities of his had displeased, recalled him to its venerable bosom by the presentation of a fellowship. After this he took orders, became a college tutor, distinguished himself yet more by a treatise on the Greek accent, got a capital living, and was considered on the high road to a bishopric. This young man, then, communicated to Randal the thirst for knowledge; and when the boy went afterwards to Eton, he applied with such earnestness and resolve that his fame soon reached the ears of Audley; and that person, who had the sympathy for talent, and yet more for purpose, which often characterizes ambitious men, went to Eton to see him. From that time Audley evinced great and almost fatherly interest in the brilliant Etonian; and Randal always spent with him some days in each vacation.

I have said that Egerton's conduct with respect to this boy was more praiseworthy than most of those generous actions for which he was renowned, since to this the world gave no applause. What a man does within the range of his family connections does not carry with it that eclat which invests a munificence exhibited on public occasions. Either people care nothing about it, or tacitly suppose it to be but his duty. It was true, too, as the squire had observed, that Randal Leslie was even less distantly related to the Hazeldeans than to Mrs. Egerton, since Randal's grandfather had actually married a Miss Hazeldean (the highest worldly connection that branch of the family had formed since the great split I have commemorated). But Audley Egerton never appeared aware of that fact. As he was not himself descended from the Hazeldeans, he did not trouble himself about their genealogy; and he took care to impress it upon the Leslies that his generosity on their behalf was solely to be ascribed to his respect for his wife's memory and kindred. Still the squire had felt as if his "distant brother" implied a rebuke on his own neglect of these poor Leslies, by the liberality Audley evinced towards them; and this had made him doubly sore when the name of Randal Leslie was mentioned. But the fact really was, that the Leslies of Rood had so shrunk out of all notice that the squire had actually forgotten their existence, until Randal became thus indebted to his brother; and then he felt a pang of remorse that any one save himself, the head of the Hazeldeans, should lend a helping hand to the grandson of a Hazeldean.

But having thus, somewhat too tediously, explained the position of Audley Egerton, whether in the world or in relation to his young protege, I may now permit him to receive and to read his letters.

CHAPTER VI.

Mr. Egerton glanced over the pile of letters placed beside him, and first he tore up some, scarcely read, and threw them into the waste-basket. Public men have such odd, out-of-the-way letters, that their waste-baskets are never empty,—letters from amateur financiers proposing new ways to pay off the National Debt; letters from America (never free!) asking for autographs; letters from fond mothers in country villages, recommending some miracle of a son for a place in the king's service; letters from free-thinkers in reproof of bigotry; letters from bigots in reproof of free-thinking; letters signed Brutus Redivivus, containing the agreeable information that the writer has a dagger for tyrants, if the Danish claims are not forthwith adjusted; letters signed Matilda or Caroline, stating that Caroline or Matilda has seen the public man's portrait at the Exhibition, and that a heart sensible to its attractions may be found at No. — Piccadilly; letters from beggars, impostors, monomaniacs, speculators, jobbers,—all food for the waste-basket.

From the correspondence thus winnowed, Mr. Egerton first selected those on business, which he put methodically together in one division of his pocket-book; and secondly, those of a private nature, which he as carefully put into another. Of these last there were but three,—one from his steward, one from Harley L'Estrange, one from Randal Leslie. It was his custom to answer his correspondence at his office; and to his office, a few minutes afterwards, he slowly took his way. Many a passenger turned back to look again at the firm figure, which, despite the hot summer day, was buttoned up to the throat; and the black frock-coat thus worn well became the erect air and the deep, full chest of the handsome senator. When he entered Parliament Street, Audley Egerton was joined by one of his colleagues, also

on his way to the cares of office.

After a few observations on the last debate this gentleman said,—

"By the way, can you dine with me next Saturday, to meet Lansmere? He comes up to town to vote for us on Monday."

"I had asked some people to dine with me," answered Egerton, "but I will put them off. I see Lord Lansmere too seldom to miss any occasion to meet a man whom I respect so much."

"So seldom! True, he is very little in town; but why don't you go and see him in the country? Good shooting,—pleasant, old-fashioned house."

"My dear Westbourne, his house is 'nimum vicina Cremonae,' close to a borough in which I have been burned in effigy."

"Ha! ha! yes, I remember you first came into parliament for that snug little place; but Lansmere himself never found fault with your votes, did he?"

"He behaved very handsomely, and said he had not presumed to consider me his mouthpiece; and then, too, I am so intimate with L'Estrange."

"Is that queer fellow ever coming back to England?"

"He comes, generally, every year, for a few days, just to see his father and mother, and then returns to the Continent."

"I never meet him."

"He comes in September or October, when you, of course, are not in town, and it is in town that the Lansmeres meet him."

"Why does he not go to them?"

"A man in England but once a year, and for a few days, has so much to do in London, I suppose."

"Is he as amusing as ever?" Egerton nodded.

"So distinguished as he might be!" remarked Lord Westbourne.

"So distinguished as he is!" said Egerton, formally; "an officer selected for praise, even in such fields as Quatre Bras and Waterloo; a scholar, too, of the finest taste; and as an accomplished gentleman matchless!"

"I like to hear one man praise another so warmly in these ill-natured days," answered Lord Westbourne. "But still, though L'Estrange is doubtless all you say, don't you think he rather wastes his life living abroad?"

"And trying to be happy, Westbourne? Are you sure it is not we who waste our lives? But I can't stay to hear your answer. Here we are at the door of my prison."

"On Saturday, then?"

"On Saturday. Good day."

For the next hour or more, Mr. Egerton was engaged on the affairs of the State. He then snatched an interval of leisure (while awaiting a report, which he had instructed a clerk to make him), in order to reply to his letters. Those on public business were soon despatched; and throwing his replies aside to be sealed by a subordinate hand, he drew out the letters which he had put apart as private.

He attended first to that of his steward: the steward's letter was long, the reply was contained in three lines. Pitt himself was scarcely more negligent of his private interests and concerns than Audley Egerton; yet, withal, Audley Egerton was said by his enemies to be an egotist.

The next letter he wrote was to Randal, and that, though longer, was far from prolix: it ran thus:—

DEAR MR. LESLIE,—I appreciate your delicacy in consulting me whether you should accept Frank Hazeldean's invitation to call at the Hall. Since you are asked, I can see no objection to it. I should be sorry if you appeared to force yourself there; and for the rest, as a general rule, I think a young man who has his own way to make in life had better avoid all intimacy with those of his own age who have no kindred objects nor congenial pursuits.

As soon as this visit is paid, I wish you to come to London. The report I receive of your progress at Eton renders it unnecessary, in my judgment, that you should return there. If your father has no objection, I propose that you should go to Oxford at the ensuing term. Meanwhile, I have engaged a gentleman, who is a fellow of Balliol, to read with you. He is of opinion, judging only by your high repute at Eton, that you may at once obtain a scholarship in that college. If you do so, I shall look upon your career in life as assured.

Your affectionate friend, and sincere well-wisher, A. E.

The reader will remark that in this letter there is a certain tone of formality. Mr. Egerton does not call his protegee "Dear Randal," as would seem natural, but coldly and stiffly, "Dear Mr. Leslie." He hints, also, that the boy has his own way to make in life. Is this meant to guard against too sanguine notions of inheritance, which his generosity may have excited? The letter to Lord L'Estrange was of a very different kind from the others. It was long, and full of such little scraps of news and gossip as may interest friends in a foreign land; it was written gayly, and as with a wish to cheer his friend; you could see that it was a reply to a melancholy letter; and in the whole tone and spirit there was an affection, even to tenderness, of which those who most liked Audley Egerton would have scarcely supposed him capable. Yet, notwithstanding, there was a kind of constraint in the letter, which perhaps only the fine tact of a woman would detect. It had not that abandon, that hearty self-outpouring, which you might expect would characterize the letters of two such friends, who had been boys at school together, and which did breathe indeed in all the abrupt rambling sentences of his correspondent. But where was the evidence of the constraint? Egerton is off-hand enough where his pen runs glibly through paragraphs that relate to others; it is simply that he says nothing about himself,—that he avoids all reference to the inner world of sentiment and feeling! But perhaps, after all, the man has no sentiment and feeling! How can you expect that a steady personage in practical life, whose mornings are spent in Downing Street, and whose nights are consumed in watching Government bills through a committee, can write in the same style as an idle dreamer amidst the pines of Ravenna, or on the banks of Como?

Audley had just finished this epistle, such as it was, when the attendant in waiting announced the arrival of a deputation from a provincial trading town, the members of which deputation he had appointed to meet at two o'clock. There was no office in London at which deputations were kept waiting less than at that over which Mr. Egerton presided.

The deputation entered,—some score or so of middle-aged, comfortable-looking persons, who, nevertheless, had their grievance, and considered their own interest, and those of the country, menaced by a certain clause in a bill brought in by Mr. Egerton.

The mayor of the town was the chief spokesman, and he spoke well,—but in a style to which the dignified official was not accustomed. It was a slap-dash style,—unceremonious, free and easy,—an American style. And, indeed, there was something altogether in the appearance and bearing of the mayor which savoured of residence in the Great Republic. He was a very handsome man, but with a look sharp and domineering,—the look of a man who did not care a straw for president or monarch, and who enjoyed the liberty to speak his mind and "wallop his own nigger!"

His fellow-burghers evidently regarded him with great respect; and Mr. Egerton had penetration enough to perceive that Mr. Mayor must be a rich man, as well as an eloquent one, to have overcome those impressions of soreness or jealousy which his tone was calculated to create in the self-love of his equals.

Mr. Egerton was far too wise to be easily offended by mere manner; and though he stared somewhat haughtily when he found his observations actually pooh-poohed, he was not above being convinced. There was much sense and much justice in Mr. Mayor's arguments, and the statesman civilly promised to take them into full consideration.

He then bowed out the deputation; but scarcely had the door closed before it opened again, and Mr. Mayor presented himself alone, saying aloud to his companions in the passage, "I forgot something I had to say to Mr. Egerton; wait below for me."

"Well, Mr. Mayor," said Audley, pointing to a seat, "what else would you suggest?"

The mayor looked round to see that the door was closed; and then, drawing his chair close to Mr. Egerton's, laid his forefinger on that gentleman's arm, and said, "I think I speak to a man of the world, sir?"

Mr. Egerton bowed, and made no reply by word, but he gently removed his arm from the touch of the forefinger.

MR. MAYOR.—"You observe, sir, that I did not ask the members whom we return to parliament to accompany us. Do better without 'em. You know they are both in Opposition,—out-and-outers."

MR. EGERTON.—"It is a misfortune which the Government cannot remember when the question is whether the trade of the town itself is to be served or injured."

MR. MAYOR.—"Well, I guess you speak handsome, sir. But you'd be glad to have two members to support ministers after the next election."

MR. EGERTON (smiling).—"Unquestionably, Mr. Mayor."

MR. MAYOR.—"And I can do it, Mr. Egerton. I may say I have the town in my pocket; so I ought,—I spend a great deal of money in it. Now, you see, Mr. Egerton, I have passed a part of my life in a land of liberty— the United States—and I come to the point when I speak to a man of the world. I'm a man of the world myself, sir. And so, if the Government will do something for me, why, I'll do something for the Government. Two votes for a free and independent town like ours,—that's something, isn't it?"

MR. EGERTON (taken by surprise).—"Really, I—"

MR. MAYOR (advancing his chair still nearer, and interrupting the official).—"No nonsense, you see, on one side or the other. The fact is, that I've taken it into my head that I should like to be knighted. You may well look surprised, Mr. Egerton,—trumpery thing enough, I dare say; still, every man has his weakness, and I should like to be Sir Richard. Well, if you can get me made Sir Richard, you may just name your two members for the next election,—that is, if they belong to your own set, enlightened men, up to the times. That's speaking fair and manful, is n't it?"

MR. EGERTON (drawing himself up).—"I am at a loss to guess why you should select me, sir, for this very extraordinary proposition."

MR. MAYOR (nodding good-humouredly).—"Why, you see, I don't go along with the Government; you're the best of the bunch. And may be you'd like to strengthen your own party. This is quite between you and me, you understand; honour's a jewel!"

MR. EGERTON (with great gravity).—"Sir, I am obliged by your good opinion; but I agree with my colleagues in all the great questions that affect the government of the country, and—"

MR. MAYOR (interrupting him).—"Ah, of course, you must say so; very right. But I guess things would go differently if you were Prime Minister. However, I have another reason for speaking to you about my little job. You see you were member for Lansmere once, and I think you only came in by a majority of two, eh?"

MR. EGERTON.—"I know nothing of the particulars of that election; I was not present."

MR. MAYOR.—"No; but luckily for you, two relations of mine were, and they voted for you. Two votes, and you came in by two. Since then, you have got into very snug quarters here, and I think we have a claim on you—"

MR. EGERTON.—"Sir, I acknowledge no such claim; I was and am a stranger to Lansmere; and if the electors did me the honour to return me to parliament, it was in compliment rather to—"

MR. MAYOR (again interrupting the official).—"Rather to Lord Lansmere, you were going to say; unconstitutional doctrine that, I fancy. Peer of the realm. But never mind, I know the world; and I'd ask Lord Lansmere to do my affair for me, only he is a pompous sort of man; might be qualmish: antiquated notions. Not up to snuff like you and me."

MR. EGERTON (in great disgust, and settling his papers before him).—"Sir, it is not in my department to recommend to his Majesty candidates for the honour of knighthood, and it is still less in my department to make bargains for seats in parliament."

MR. MAYOR.—"Oh, if that's the case, you'll excuse me; I don't know much of the etiquette in these matters. But I thought that if I put two seats in your hands for your own friends, you might contrive to take the affair into your department, whatever it was. But since you say you agree with your colleagues, perhaps it comes to the same thing. Now, you must not suppose I want to sell the town, and that I can change and chop my politics for my own purpose. No such thing! I don't like the sitting members; I'm all for progressing, but they go too much ahead for me; and since the Government is disposed to move a little, why, I'd as lief support them as not. But, in common gratitude, you see," added the mayor, coaxingly, "I ought to be knighted! I can keep up the dignity, and do credit to his Majesty."

MR. EGERTON (without looking up from his papers).—"I can only refer you, sir, to the proper quarter."

MR. MAYOR (impatiently).—"Proper quarter! Well, since there is so much humbug in this old country of ours, that one must go through all the forms and get at the job regularly, just tell me whom I ought to go to."

MR. EGERTON (beginning to be amused as well as indignant).—"If you want a knighthood, Mr. Mayor, you must ask the Prime Minister; if you want to give the Government information relative to seats in parliament, you must introduce yourself to Mr. ——, the Secretary of the Treasury."

MR. MAYOR.—"And if I go to the last chap, what do you think he'll say?"

MR. EGERTON (the amusement preponderating over the indignation).—"He will say, I suppose, that you must not put the thing in the light in which you have put it to me; that the Government will be very proud to have the confidence of yourself and your brother electors; and that a gentleman like you, in the proud position of mayor, may well hope to be knighted on some fitting occasion; but that you must not talk about the knighthood just at present, and must confine yourself to converting the unfortunate political opinions of the town."

MR. MAYOR.—"Well, I guess that chap there would want to do me! Not quite so green, Mr. Egerton. Perhaps I'd better go at once to the fountain-head. How d' ye think the Premier would take it?"

MR. EGERTON (the indignation preponderating over the amusement).—"Probably just as I am about to do."

Mr. Egerton rang the bell; the attendant appeared. "Show Mr. Mayor the way out," said the minister.

The mayor turned round sharply, and his face was purple. He walked straight to the door; but suffering the attendant to precede him along the corridor, he came back with a rapid stride, and clenching his hands, and with a voice thick with passion, cried, "Some day or other I will make you smart for this, as sure as my name's Dick Avenel!"

"Avenel!" repeated Egerton, recoiling,— "Avenel!" But the mayor was gone.

Audley fell into a deep and musing revery, which seemed gloomy, and lasted till the attendant announced that the horses were at the door.

He then looked up, still abstractedly, and saw his letter to Harley L'Estrange open on the table. He drew it towards him, and wrote, "A man has just left me, who calls himself Aven—" In the middle of the name his pen stopped. "No, no," muttered the writer, "what folly to reopen the old wounds there!" and he carefully erased the words.

Audley Egerton did not ride in the Park that day, as was his wont, but dismissed his groom; and, turning his horse's head towards Westminster Bridge, took his solitary way into the country. He rode at first slowly, as if in thought; then fast, as if trying to escape from thought. He was later than usual at the House that evening, and he looked pale and fatigued. But he had to speak, and he spoke well.

CHAPTER VII.

In spite of all his Machiavellian wisdom, Dr. Riccabocca had been foiled in his attempt to seduce Leonard Fairfield into his service, even though he succeeded in partially winning over the widow to his views. For to her he represented the worldly advantages of the thing. Lenny would learn to be fit for more than a day-labourer; he would learn gardening, in all its branches,—rise some day to be a head gardener. "And," said Riccabocca, "I will take care of his book-learning, and teach him whatever he has a head for."

"He has a head for everything," said the widow.

"Then," said the wise man, "everything shall go into it." The widow was certainly dazzled; for, as we have seen, she highly prized scholarly distinction, and she knew that the parson looked upon Riccabocca as a wondrous learned man. But still Riccabocca was said to be a Papist, and suspected to be a conjuror. Her scruples on both these points, the Italian, who was an adept in the art of talking over

the fair sex, would no doubt have dissipated, if there had been any use in it; but Lenny put a dead stop to all negotiations. He had taken a mortal dislike to Riccabocca: he was very much frightened by him,—and the spectacles, the pipe, the cloak, the long hair, and the red umbrella; and said so sturdily, in reply to every overture, "Please, sir, I'd rather not; I'd rather stay along with Mother," that Riccabocca was forced to suspend all further experiments in his Machiavellian diplomacy. He was not at all cast down, however, by his first failure; on the contrary, he was one of those men whom opposition stimulates; and what before had been but a suggestion of prudence, became an object of desire. Plenty of other lads might no doubt be had on as reasonable terms as Lenny Fairfield; but the moment Lenny presumed to baffle the Italian's designs upon him, the special acquisition, of Lenny became of paramount importance in the eyes of Signor Riccabocca.

Jackeymo, however, lost all his interest in the traps, snares, and gins which his master proposed to lay for Leonard Fairfield, in the more immediate surprise that awaited him on learning that Dr. Riccabocca had accepted an invitation to pass a few days at the Hall.

"There will be no one there but the family," said Riccabocca. "Poor Giacomo, a little chat in the servants' hall will do you good; and the squire's beef is more nourishing, after all, than the sticklebacks and minnows. It will lengthen your life."

"The padrone jests," said Jackeymo, stately; "as if any one could starve in his service."

"Um," said Riccabocca. "At least, faithful friend, you have tried that experiment as far as human nature will permit;" and he extended his hand to his fellow-exile with that familiarity which exists between servant and master in the usages of the Continent. Jackeymo bent low, and a tear fell upon the hand he kissed.

"Cospetto!" said Dr. Riccabocca, "a thousand mock pearls do not make up the cost of a single true one! The tears of women—we know their worth; but the tears of an honest man—Fie, Giacomo!—at least I can never repay you this! Go and see to our wardrobe."

So far as his master's wardrobe was concerned, that order was pleasing to Jackeymo; for the doctor had in his drawers suits which Jackeymo pronounced to be as good as new, though many a long year had passed since they left the tailor's hands. But when Jackeymo came to examine the state of his own clothing department, his face grew considerably longer. It was not that he was without other clothes than those on his back,—quantity was there, but the quality! Mournfully he gazed on two suits, complete in three separate members of which man's raiments are composed: the one suit extended at length upon his bed, like a veteran stretched by pious hands after death; the other brought piecemeal to the invidious light,—the torso placed upon a chair, the limbs dangling down from Jackeymo's melancholy arm. No bodies long exposed at the Morgue could evince less sign of resuscitation than those respectable defuncts! For, indeed, Jackeymo had been less thrifty of his apparel, more /profusus sui/, than his master. In the earliest days of their exile, he preserved the decorous habit of dressing for dinner,—it was a respect due to the padrone,—and that habit had lasted till the two habits on which it necessarily depended had evinced the first symptoms of decay; then the evening clothes had been taken into morning wear, in which hard service they had breathed their last.

The doctor, notwithstanding his general philosophical abstraction from such household details, had more than once said, rather in pity to Jackeymo than with an eye to that respectability which the costume of the servant reflects on the dignity of the master, "Giacomo, thou wantest clothes; fit thyself out of mine!"

And Jackeymo had bowed his gratitude, as if the donation had been accepted; but the fact was that that same fitting out was easier said than done. For though thanks to an existence mainly upon sticklebacks and minnows—both Jackeymo and Riccabocca had arrived at that state which the longevity of misers proves to be most healthful to the human frame,—namely, skin and bone,—yet the bones contained in the skin of Riccabocca all took longitudinal directions; while those in the skin of Jackeymo spread out latitudinally. And you might as well have made the bark of a Lombardy poplar serve for the trunk of some dwarfed and pollarded oak—in whose hollow the Babes of the Wood could have slept at their ease—as have fitted out Jackeymo from the garb of Riccabocca. Moreover, if the skill of the tailor could have accomplished that undertaking, the faithful Jackeymo would never have had the heart to avail himself of the generosity of his master. He had a sort of religious sentiment, too, about those vestments of the padrone. The ancients, we know, when escaping from shipwreck, suspended in the votive temple the garments in which they had struggled through the wave. Jackeymo looked on those relics of the past with a kindred superstition. "This coat the padrone wore on such an occasion. I remember the very evening the padrone last put on those pantaloons!" And coat and pantaloons were tenderly dusted, and carefully restored to their sacred rest.

But now, after all, what was to be done? Jackeymo was much too proud to exhibit his person to the

eyes of the squire's butler in habiliments discreditable to himself and the padrone. In the midst of his perplexity the bell rang, and he went down into the parlour.

Riccabocca was standing on the hearth under his symbolical representation of the "Patriae Exul."

"Giacomo," quoth he, "I have been thinking that thou hast never done what I told thee, and fitted thyself out from my superfluities. But we are going now into the great world: visiting once begun, Heaven knows where it may stop. Go to the nearest town and get thyself clothes. Things are dear in England. Will this suffice?" And Riccabocca extended a five-pound note.

Jackeymo, we have seen, was more familiar with his master than we formal English permit our domestics to be with us; but in his familiarity he was usually respectful. This time, however, respect deserted him.

"The padrone is mad!" he exclaimed; "he would fling away his whole fortune if I would let him. Five pounds English, or a hundred and twenty-six pounds Milanese! Santa Maria! unnatural father! And what is to become of the poor signorina? Is this the way you are to marry her in the foreign land?"

"Giacomo," said Riccabocca, bowing his head to the storm, "the signorina to-morrow; to-day the honour of the House. Thy small-clothes, Giacomo,—miserable man, thy small-clothes!"

"It is just," said Jackeymo, recovering himself, and with humility; "and the padrone does right to blame me, but not in so cruel a way. It is just,—the padrone lodges and boards me, and gives me handsome wages, and he has a right to expect that I should not go in this figure."

"For the board and the lodgment, good," said Riccabocca. For the handsome wages, they are the visions of thy fancy!"

"They are no such thing," said Jackeymo, "they are only in arrear. As if the padrone could not pay them some day or other; as if I was demeaning myself by serving a master who did not intend to pay his servants! And can't I wait? Have I not my savings too? But be cheered, be cheered; you shall be contented with me. I have two beautiful suits still. I was arranging them when you rang for me. You shall see, you shall see."

And Jackeymo hurried from the room, hurried back into his own chamber, unlocked a little trunk which he kept at his bed-head, tossed out a variety of small articles, and from the deepest depth extracted a leathern purse. He emptied the contents on the bed. They were chiefly Italian coins, some five-franc pieces, a silver medallion inclosing a little image of his patron saint,—San Giacomo,—one solid English guinea, and somewhat more than a pound's worth in English silver. Jackeymo put back the foreign coins, saying prudently, "One will lose on them here;" he seized the English coins, and counted them out. "But are you enough, you rascals?" quoth he, angrily, giving them a good shake. His eye caught sight of the medallion,—he paused; and after eying the tiny representation of the saint with great deliberation, he added, in a sentence which he must have picked up from the proverbial aphorisms of his master,—

"What's the difference between the enemy who does not hurt me, and the friend who does not serve me? Monsignore San Giacomo, my patron saint, you are of very little use to me in the leathern bag; but if you help me to get into a new pair of small-clothes on this important occasion, you will be a friend indeed. /Alla bisogna, Monsignore./" Then, gravely kissing the medallion, he thrust it into one pocket, the coins into the other, made up a bundle of the two defunct suits, and muttering to himself, "Beast, miser, that I am, to disgrace the padrone with all these savings in his service!" ran downstairs into his pantry, caught up his hat and stick, and in a few moments more was seen trudging off to the neighbouring town of L———.

Apparently the poor Italian succeeded, for he came back that evening in time to prepare the thin gruel which made his master's supper, with a suit of black,—a little threadbare, but still highly respectable,—two shirt fronts, and two white cravats. But out of all this finery, Jackeymo held the small-clothes in especial veneration; for as they had cost exactly what the medallion had sold for, so it seemed to him that San Giacomo had heard his prayer in that quarter to which he had more exclusively directed the saint's direction. The other habiliments came to him in the merely human process of sale and barter; the small-clothes were the personal gratuity of San Giacomo!

CHAPTER VIII.

Life has been subjected to many ingenious comparisons; and if we do not understand it any better, it is not for want of what is called "reasoning by illustration." Amongst other resemblances, there are moments when, to a quiet contemplator, it suggests the image of one of those rotatory entertainments commonly seen in fairs, and known by the name of "whirligigs," or "roundabouts," in which each participator of the pastime, seated on his hobby, is always apparently in the act of pursuing some one before him, while he is pursued by some one behind. Man, and woman too, are naturally animals of chase; the greatest still find something to follow, and there is no one too humble not to be an object of prey to another. Thus, confining our view to the village of Hazeldean, we behold in this whirligig Dr. Riccabocca spurring his hobby after Lenny Fairfield; and Miss Jemima, on her decorous side-saddle, whipping after Dr. Riccabocca. Why, with so long and intimate a conviction of the villany of our sex, Miss Jemima should resolve upon giving the male animal one more chance of redeeming itself in her eyes, I leave to the explanation of those gentlemen who profess to find "their only books in woman's looks." Perhaps it might be from the over-tenderness and clemency of Miss Jemima's nature; perhaps it might be that as yet she had only experienced the villany of man born and reared in these cold northern climates, and in the land of Petrarch and Romeo, of the citron and myrtle, there was reason to expect that the native monster would be more amenable to gentle influences, less obstinately hardened in his iniquities. Without entering further into these hypotheses, it is sufficient to say that, on Signor Riccabocca's appearance in the drawing-room at Hazeldean, Miss Jemima felt more than ever rejoiced that she had relaxed in his favour her general hostility to men. In truth, though Frank saw something quizzical in the old-fashioned and outlandish cut of the Italian's sober dress; in his long hair, and the /chapeau bras/, over which he bowed so gracefully, and then pressed it, as if to his heart, before tucking it under his arm, after the fashion in which the gizzard reposes under the wing of a roasted pullet,—yet it was impossible that even Frank could deny to Riccabocca that praise which is due to the air and manner of an unmistakable gentleman. And certainly as, after dinner, conversation grew more familiar, and the parson and Mrs. Dale, who had been invited to meet their friend, did their best to draw him out, his talk, though sometimes a little too wise for his listeners, became eminently animated and agreeable. It was the conversation of a man who, besides the knowledge which is acquired from books and life, had studied the art which becomes a gentleman,—that of pleasing in polite society.

The result was that all were charmed with him; and that even Captain Barnabas postponed the whist-table for a full hour after the usual time. The doctor did not play; he thus became the property of the two ladies, Miss Jemima and Mrs. Dale.

Seated between the two, in the place rightfully appertaining to Flimsey, who this time was fairly dislodged, to her great wonder and discontent, the doctor was the emblem of true Domestic Felicity, placed between Friendship and Love.

Friendship, as became her, worked quietly at the embroidered pocket-handkerchief and left Love to more animated operations.

"You must be very lonely at the Casino," said Love, in a sympathizing tone.

"Madam," replied Riccabocca, gallantly, "I shall think so when I leave you."

Friendship cast a sly glance at Love; Love blushed, or looked down on the carpet,—which comes to the same thing. "Yet," began Love again,—"yet solitude to a feeling heart—"

Riccabocca thought of the note of invitation, and involuntarily buttoned his coat, as if to protect the individual organ thus alarmingly referred to.

"Solitude to a feeling heart has its charms. It is so hard even for us poor ignorant women to find a congenial companion—but for YOU!" Love stopped short, as if it had said too much, and smelt confusedly at its bouquet.

Dr. Riccabocca cautiously lowered his spectacles, and darted one glance which, with the rapidity and comprehensiveness of lightning, seemed to envelop and take in, as it were, the whole inventory of Miss Jemima's personal attractions. Now Miss Jemima, as I have before observed, had a mild and pensive expression of countenance; and she would have been positively pretty had the mildness looked a little more alert, and the pensiveness somewhat less lackadaisical. In fact, though Miss Jemima was constitutionally mild, she was not /de natura/ pensive; she had too much of the Hazeldean blood in her veins for that sullen and viscid humour called melancholy, and therefore this assumption of pensiveness really spoiled her character of features, which only wanted to be lighted up by a cheerful smile to be extremely prepossessing. The same remark might apply to the figure, which—thanks to the same pensiveness—lost all the undulating grace which movement and animation bestow on the fluent curves of the feminine form. The figure was a good figure, examined in detail, —a little thin, perhaps, but by no means emaciated, with just and elegant proportions, and naturally light and flexible. But the same

unfortunate pensiveness gave to the whole a character of inertness and languor; and when Miss Jemima reclined on the sofa, so complete seemed the relaxation of nerve and muscle that you would have thought she had lost the use of her limbs. Over her face and form, thus defrauded of the charms Providence had bestowed on them, Dr. Riccabocca's eye glanced rapidly; and then moving nearer to Mrs. Dale—"Defend me" (he stopped a moment, and added) "from the charge of not being able to appreciate congenial companionship."

"Oh, I did not say that!" cried Miss Jemima.

"Pardon me," said the Italian, "if I am so dull as to misunderstand you. One may well lose one's head, at least, in such a neighbourhood as this." He rose as he spoke, and bent over Frank's shoulder to examine some views of Italy, which Miss Jemima (with what, if wholly unselfish, would have been an attention truly delicate) had extracted from the library in order to gratify the guest.

"Most interesting creature, indeed," sighed Miss Jemima, but too—too flattering."

"Tell me," said Mrs. Dale, gravely, "do you think, love, that you could put off the end of the world a little longer, or must we make haste in order to be in time?"

"How wicked you are!" said Miss Jemima, turning aside. Some few minutes afterwards, Mrs. Dale contrived it so that Dr. Riccabocca and herself were in a farther corner of the room, looking at a picture said to be by Wouvermans.

MRS. DALE.—"She is very amiable, Jemima, is she not?"

RICCABOCCA.—"Exceedingly so. Very fine battle-piece!"

MRS. DALE.—"So kind-hearted."

RICCABOCCA.—"All ladies are. How naturally that warrior makes his desperate cut at the runaway!"

MRS. DALE.—"She is not what is called regularly handsome, but she has something very winning."

RICCABOCCA (with a smile).—"So winning, that it is strange she is not won. That gray mare in the foreground stands out very boldly!"

MRS. DALE (distrusting the smile of Riccabocca, and throwing in a more effective grape-charge).—"Not won yet; and it is strange! she will have a very pretty fortune."

RICCABOCCA.—"Ah!"

MRS. DALE. "Six thousand pounds, I dare say,—certainly four."

RICCABOCCA (suppressing a sigh, and with his wonted address).—"If Mrs. Dale were still single, she would never need a friend to say what her portion might be; but Miss Jemima is so good that I am quite sure it is not Miss Jemima's fault that she is still—Miss Jemima!"

The foreigner slipped away as he spoke, and sat himself down beside the whist-players.

Mrs. Dale was disappointed, but certainly not offended. It would be such a good thing for both," muttered she, almost inaudibly.

"Giacomo," said Riccabocca, as he was undressing that night in the large, comfortable, well-carpeted English bedroom, with that great English four-posted bed in the recess which seems made to shame folks out of single blessedness, "Giacomo, I have had this evening the offer of probably L6000, certainly of four thousand."

"Cosa meravigliosa!"—"Miraculous thing."—exclaimed Jackeymo, and he crossed himself with great fervour. "Six thousand pounds English! why, that must be a hundred thousand—blockhead that I am!—more than L150,000 Milanese!" And Jackeymo, who was considerably enlivened by the squire's ale, commenced a series of gesticulations and capers, in the midst of which he stopped and cried, "But not for nothing?"

"Nothing! no!"

"These mercenary English! the Government wants to bribe you?"

"That's not it."

"The priests want you to turn heretic?"

"Worse than that!" said the philosopher.

"Worse than that! O Padrone! for shame!"

"Don't be a fool, but pull off my pantaloons—they want me never to wear THESE again!"

"Never to wear what?" exclaimed Jackeymo, staring outright at his master's long legs in their linen drawers,—“never to wear—”

"The breeches," said Riccabocca, laconically.

"The barbarians!" faltered Jackeymo.

"My nightcap! and never to have any comfort in this," said Riccabocca, drawing on the cotton head-gear; "and never to have any sound sleep in that," pointing to the four-posted bed; "and to be a bondsman and a slave," continued Riccabocca, waxing wroth; "and to be wheedled and purred at, and pawed and clawed, and scolded and fondled, and blinded and deafened, and bridled and saddled—bedevilled and—married!"

"Married!" said Jackeymo, more dispassionately—"that's very bad, certainly; but more than a hundred and fifty thousand lire, and perhaps a pretty young lady, and—"

"Pretty young lady!" growled Riccabocca, jumping into bed and drawing the clothes fiercely over him. "Put out the candle, and get along with you, —do, you villanous old incendiary!"

CHAPTER IX.

It was not many days since the resurrection of those ill-omened stocks, and it was evident already, to an ordinary observer, that something wrong had got into the village. The peasants wore a sullen expression of countenance; when the squire passed, they took off their hats with more than ordinary formality, but they did not return the same broad smile to his quick, hearty "Good-day, my man." The women peered at him from the threshold or the casement, but did not, as was their wont (as least the wont of the prettiest), take occasion to come out to catch his passing compliment on their own good looks, or their tidy cottages. And the children, who used to play after work on the site of the old stocks, now shunned the place, and, indeed, seemed to cease play altogether.

On the other hand, no man likes to build, or rebuild, a great public work for nothing. Now that the squire had resuscitated the stocks, and made them so exceedingly handsome, it was natural that he should wish to put somebody into them. Moreover, his pride and self-esteem had been wounded by the parson's opposition; and it would be a justification to his own forethought, and a triumph over the parson's understanding, if he could satisfactorily and practically establish a proof that the stocks had not been repaired before they were wanted.

Therefore, unconsciously to himself, there was something about the squire more burly and authoritative and menacing than heretofore. Old Gaffer Solomons observed, "that they had better moind well what they were about, for that the squire had a wicked look in the tail of his eye,—just as the dun bull had afore it tossed neighbour Barnes's little boy."

For two or three days these mute signs of something brewing in the atmosphere had been rather noticeable than noticed, without any positive overt act of tyranny on the one hand or rebellion on the other. But on the very Saturday night in which Dr. Riccabocca was installed in the four-posted bed in the chintz chamber, the threatened revolution commenced. In the dead of that night personal outrage was committed on the stocks. And on the Sunday morning, Mr. Stirn, who was the earliest riser in the parish, perceived, in going to the farmyard, that the knob of the column that flanked the board had been feloniously broken off; that the four holes were bunged up with mud; and that some jacobinical villain had carved, on the very centre of the flourish or scroll-work, "Dam the stoks!" Mr. Stirn was much too vigilant a right-hand man, much too zealous a friend of law and order, not to regard such proceedings with horror and alarm. And when the squire came into his dressing-room at half-past seven, his butler (who fulfilled also the duties of valet) informed him, with a mysterious air, that Mr. Stirn had something "very partikler to communicate about a most howdacious midnight 'spiracy and 'sault."

The squire stared, and bade Mr. Stirn be admitted.

"Well?" cried the squire, suspending the operation of stropping his razor.

Mr. Stirn groaned.

"Well, man, what now?"

"I never knowed such a thing in this here parish afore," began Mr. Stirn; "and I can only 'count for it by s'posing that them foreign Papishers have been semminating—"

"Been what?"

"Semminating—"

"Disseminating, you blockhead,—disseminating what?"

"Damn the stocks," began Mr. Stirn, plunging right /in medias res/, and by a fine use of one of the noblest figures in rhetoric.

"Mr. Stirn!" cried the squire, reddening, "did you say, 'Damn the stocks'?—damn my new handsome pair of stocks!"

"Lord forbid, sir; that's what they say: that's what they have digged on it with knives and daggers, and they have stuffed mud in its four holes, and broken the capital of the elevation."

The squire took the napkin off his shoulder, laid down strop and razor; he seated himself in his armchair majestically, crossed his legs, and, in a voice that affected tranquillity, said,—

"Compose yourself, Stirn; you have a deposition to make, touching an assault upon—can I trust my senses?—upon my new stocks. Compose yourself; be calm. Now! What the devil is come to the parish?"

"Ah, sir, what indeed?" replied Mr. Stirn: and then laying the forefinger of the right hand on the palm of the left he narrated the case.

"And whom do you suspect? Be calm now; don't speak in a passion. You are a witness, sir,—a dispassionate, unprejudiced witness. Zounds and fury! this is the most insolent, unprovoked, diabolical—but whom do you suspect, I say?" Stirn twirled his hat, elevated his eyebrows, jerked his thumb over his shoulder, and whispered, "I hear as how the two Papishers slept at your honour's last night."

"What, dolt! do you suppose Dr. Rickeybockey got out of his warm bed to bung up the holes in my new stocks?"

"Noa; he's too cunning to do it himself, but he may have been semminating. He's mighty thick with Parson Dale, and your honour knows as how the parson set his face agin the stocks. Wait a bit, sir,—don't fly at me yet. There be a boy in this here parish—"

"A boy! ah, fool, now you are nearer the mark. The parson write 'Damn the stocks,' indeed! What boy do you mean?"

"And that boy be cockered up much by Mr. Dale; and the Papisher went and sat with him and his mother a whole hour t' other day; and that boy is as deep as a well; and I seed him lurking about the place, and hiding hissself under the tree the day the stocks was put up,—and that 'ere boy is Lenny Fairfield."

"Whew," said the squire, whistling, "you have not your usual senses about you to-day, man. Lenny Fairfield,—pattern boy of the village. Hold your tongue. I dare say it is not done by any one in the parish, after all: some good-for-nothing vagrant—that cursed tinker, who goes about with a very vicious donkey,—a donkey that I caught picking thistles out of the very eyes of the old stocks! Shows how the tinker brings up his donkeys! Well, keep a sharp look-out. To-day is Sunday; worst day of the week, I'm sorry and ashamed to say, for rows and depredations. Between the services, and after evening church, there are always idle fellows from all the neighbouring country about, as you know too well. Depend on it, the real culprits will be found gathering round the stocks, and will betray themselves; have your eyes, ears, and wits about you, and I've no doubt we shall come to the rights of the matter before the day's out. And if we do," added the squire, "we'll make an example of the ruffian!"

"In course," said Stirn: "and if we don't find him we must make an example all the same. That's what it is, sir. That's why the stocks ben't respected; they has not had an example yet,—we wants an example."

"On my word I believe that's very true; and we'll clap in the first idle fellow you catch in anything wrong, and keep him there for two hours at least."

"With the biggest pleasure, your honour,—that's what it is."

And Mr. Stirn having now got what he considered a complete and unconditional authority over all the legs and wrists of Hazeldean parish, /quoad/ the stocks, took his departure.

CHAPTER X.

"Randal," said Mrs. Leslie on this memorable Sunday,—"Randal, do you think of going to Mr. Hazeldean's?"

"Yes, ma'am," answered Randal. "Mr. Egerton does not object to it; and as I do not return to Eton, I may have no other opportunity of seeing Frank for some time. I ought not to fail in respect to Mr. Egerton's natural heir."

"Gracious me!" cried Mrs. Leslie, who, like many women of her cast and kind, had a sort of worldliness in her notions, which she never evinced in her conduct,—"gracious me! natural heir to the old Leslie property!"

"He is Mr. Egerton's nephew, and," added Randal, ingenuously letting out his thoughts, "I am no relation to Mr. Egerton at all."

"But," said poor Mrs. Leslie, with tears in her eyes, "it would be a shame in the man, after paying your schooling and sending you to Oxford, and having you to stay with him in the holidays, if he did not mean anything by it."

"Anything, Mother, yes,—but not the thing you suppose. No matter. It is enough that he has armed me for life, and I shall use the weapons as seems to me best."

Here the dialogue was suspended by the entrance of the other members of the family, dressed for church.

"It can't be time for church! No, it can't," exclaimed Mrs. Leslie. She was never in time for anything,

"Last bell ringing," said Mr. Leslie, who, though a slow man, was methodical and punctual. Mrs. Leslie made a frantic rush at the door, the Montfydget blood being now in a blaze, dashed up the stairs, burst into her room, tore her best bonnet from the peg, snatched her newest shawl from the drawers, crushed the bonnet on her head, flung the shawl on her shoulders, thrust a desperate pin into its folds, in order to conceal a buttonless yawn in the body of her gown, and then flew back like a whirlwind. Meanwhile the family were already out of doors, in waiting; and just as the bell ceased, the procession moved from the shabby house to the dilapidated church.

The church was a large one, but the congregation was small, and so was the income of the parson. It was a lay rectory, and the great tithes had belonged to the Leslies, but they had been long since sold. The vicarage, still in their gift, might be worth a little more than L100 a year. The present incumbent had nothing else to live upon. He was a good man, and not originally a stupid one; but penury and the anxious cares for wife and family, combined with what may be called solitary confinement for the cultivated mind, when, amidst the two-legged creatures round, it sees no other cultivated mind with which it can exchange one extra-parochial thought, had lulled him into a lazy mournfulness, which at times was very like imbecility. His income allowed him to do no good to the parish, whether in work, trade, or charity; and thus he had no moral weight with the parishioners beyond the example of his sinless life, and such negative effect as might be produced by his slumberous exhortations. Therefore his parishioners troubled him very little; and but for the influence which, in hours of Montfydget activity, Mrs. Leslie exercised over the most tractable,—that is, the children and the aged,—not half-a-dozen persons would have known or cared whether he shut up his church or not.

But our family were seated in state in their old seignorial pew, and Mr. Dumdrum, with a nasal twang, went lugubriously through the prayers; and the old people who could sin no more, and the children who had not yet learned to sin, croaked forth responses that might have come from the choral

frogs in Aristophanes; and there was a long sermon a propos to nothing which could possibly interest the congregation,—being, in fact, some controversial homily which Mr. Dumdrum had composed and preached years before. And when this discourse was over, there was a loud universal grunt, as if of relief and thanksgiving, and a great clatter of shoes, and the old hobbled, and the young scrambled, to the church door.

Immediately after church, the Leslie family dined; and as soon as dinner was over, Randal set out on his foot journey to Hazeldean Hall.

Delicate and even feeble though his frame, he had the energy and quickness of movement which belongs to nervous temperaments; and he tasked the slow stride of a peasant, whom he took to serve him as a guide for the first two or three miles. Though Randal had not the gracious open manner with the poor which Frank inherited from his father, he was still (despite many a secret hypocritical vice at war with the character of a gentleman) gentleman enough to have no churlish pride to his inferiors. He talked little, but he suffered his guide to talk; and the boor, who was the same whom Frank had accosted, indulged in eulogistic comments on that young gentleman's pony, from which he diverged into some compliments on the young gentleman himself. Randal drew his hat over his brows. There is a wonderful tact and fine breeding in your agricultural peasant; and though Tom Stowell was but a brutish specimen of the class, he suddenly perceived that he was giving pain. He paused, scratched his head, and, glancing affectionately towards his companion, exclaimed,—

"But I shall live to see you on a handsomer beastis than that little pony, Master Randal; and sure I ought, for you be as good a gentleman as any in the land."

"Thank you," said Randal. "But I like walking better than riding,—I am more used to it."

"Well, and you walk bra'ly,—there ben't a better walker in the county. And very pleasant it is walking; and 't is a pretty country afore you, all the way to the Hall."

Randal strode on, as if impatient of these attempts to flatter or to soothe; and coming at length into a broader lane, said, "I think I can find my way now. Many thanks to you, Tom;" and he forced a shilling into Tom's horny palm. The man took it reluctantly, and a tear started to his eye. He felt more grateful for that shilling than he had for Frank's liberal half-crown; and he thought of the poor fallen family, and forgot his own dire wrestle with the wolf at his door.

He stayed lingering in the lane till the figure of Randal was out of sight, and then returned slowly. Young Leslie continued to walk on at a quick pace. With all his intellectual culture and his restless aspirations, his breast afforded him no thought so generous, no sentiment so poetic, as those with which the unlettered clown crept slouchingly homeward.

As Randal gained a point where several lanes met on a broad piece of waste land, he began to feel tired, and his step slackened. Just then a gig emerged from one of these byroads, and took the same direction as the pedestrian. The road was rough and hilly, and the driver proceeded at a foot's pace; so that the gig and the pedestrian went pretty well abreast.

"You seem tired, sir," said the driver, a stout young farmer of the higher class of tenants, and he looked down compassionately on the boy's pale countenance and weary stride. "Perhaps we are going the same way, and I can give you a lift?"

It was Randal's habitual policy to make use of every advantage proffered to him, and he accepted the proposal frankly enough to please the honest farmer.

"A nice day, sir," said the latter, as Randal sat by his side. "Have you come far?"

"From Rood Hall."

"Oh, you be young Squire Leslie," said the farmer, more respectfully, and lifting his hat.

"Yes, my name is Leslie. You know Rood, then?"

"I was brought up on your father's land, sir. You may have heard of Farmer Bruce?"

RANDAL.—"I remember, when I was a little boy, a Mr. Bruce who rented, I believe, the best part of our land, and who used to bring us cakes when he called to see my father. He is a relation of yours?"

FARMER BRUCE.—"He was my uncle. He is dead now, poor man."

RANDAL.—"Dead! I am grieved to hear it. He was very kind to us children. But it is long since he left

my father's farm."

FARMER BRUCE (apologetically).—"I am sure he was very sorry to go. But, you see, he had an unexpected legacy—"

RANDAL.—"And retired from business?"

FARMER BRUCE.—"No. But, having capital, he could afford to pay a good rent for a real good farm."

RANDAL (bitterly).—"All capital seems to fly from the lands of Rood. And whose farm did he take?"

FARMER BRUCE.—"He took Hawleigh, under Squire Hazeldean. I rent it now. We've laid out a power o' money on it. But I don't complain. It pays well."

RANDAL.—"Would the money have paid as well sunk on my father's land?"

FARMER BRUCE.—"Perhaps it might, in the long run. But then, sir, we wanted new premises,—barns and cattlesheds, and a deal more,—which the landlord should do; but it is not every landlord as can afford that. Squire Hazeldean's a rich man."

RANDAL.—"Ay!"

The road now became pretty good, and the farmer put his horse into a brisk trot.

"But which way be you going, sir? I don't care for a few miles more or less, if I can be of service."

"I am going to Hazeldean," said Randal, rousing himself from a reverie. "Don't let me take you out of your way."

"O, Hawleigh Farm is on the other side of the village, so it be quite my way, sir."

The farmer, then, who was really a smart young fellow,—one of that race which the application of capital to land has produced, and which, in point of education and refinement, are at least on a par with the squires of a former generation,—began to talk about his handsome horse, about horses in general, about hunting and coursing: he handled all these subjects with spirit, yet with modesty. Randal pulled his hat still lower down over his brows, and did not interrupt him till they passed the Casino, when, struck by the classic air of the place, and catching a scent from the orange-trees, the boy asked abruptly, "Whose house is that?"

"Oh, it belongs to Squire Hazeldean, but it is let or lent to a foreign mounseer. They say he is quite the gentleman, but uncommonly poor."

"Poor," said Randal, turning back to gaze on the trim garden, the neat terrace, the pretty belvidere, and (the door of the house being open) catching a glimpse of the painted hall within,—"poor? The place seems well kept. What do you call poor, Mr. Bruce?"

The farmer laughed. "Well, that's a home question, sir. But I believe the mounseer is as poor as a man can be who makes no debts and does not actually starve."

"As poor as my father?" asked Randal, openly and abruptly.

"Lord, sir! your father be a very rich man compared to him." Randal continued to gaze, and his mind's eye conjured up the contrast of his slovenly shabby home, with all its neglected appurtenances. No trim garden at Rood Hall, no scent from odorous orange blossoms. Here poverty at least was elegant,—there, how squalid! He did not comprehend at how cheap a rate the luxury of the Beautiful can be effected. They now approached the extremity of the squire's park pales; and Randal, seeing a little gate, bade the farmer stop his gig, and descended. The boy plunged amidst the thick oak groves; the farmer went his way blithely, and his mellow merry whistle came to Randal's moody ear as he glided quick under the shadow of the trees.

He arrived at the Hall to find that all the family were at church; and, according to the patriarchal custom, the churchgoing family embraced nearly all the servants. It was therefore an old invalid housemaid who opened the door to him. She was rather deaf, and seemed so stupid that Randal did not ask leave to enter and wait for Frank's return. He therefore said briefly that he would just stroll on the lawn, and call again when church was over.

The old woman stared, and strove to hear him; meanwhile Randal turned round abruptly, and sauntered towards the garden side of the handsome old house.

There was enough to attract any eye in the smooth greensward of the spacious lawn, in the numerous parterres of variegated flowers, in the venerable grandeur of the two mighty cedars, which threw their still shadows over the grass, and in the picturesque building, with its projecting mullions and heavy gables; yet I fear that it was with no poet's nor painter's eye that this young old man gazed on the scene before him.

He beheld the evidence of wealth—and the envy of wealth jaundiced his soul.

Folding his arms on his breast, he stood a while, looking all around him, with closed lips and lowering brow; then he walked slowly on, his eyes fixed on the ground, and muttered to himself,—

"The heir to this property is little better than a dunce; and they tell me I have talents and learning, and I have taken to my heart the maxim, 'Knowledge is power.' And yet, with all my struggles, will knowledge ever place me on the same level as that on which this dunce is born? I don't wonder that the poor should hate the rich. But of all the poor, who should hate the rich like the pauper gentleman? I suppose Audley Egerton means me to come into parliament, and be a Tory like himself? What! keep things as they are! No; for me not even Democracy, unless there first come Revolution. I understand the cry of a Marat,—'More blood!' Marat had lived as a poor man, and cultivated science—in the sight of a prince's palace."

He turned sharply round, and glared vindictively on the poor old Hall, which, though a very comfortable habitation, was certainly no palace; and, with his arms still folded on his breast, he walked backward, as if not to lose the view, nor the chain of ideas it conjured up.

"But," he continued to soliloquize,— "but of revolution there is no chance. Yet the same wit and will that would thrive in revolutions should thrive in this commonplace life. Knowledge is power. Well, then, shall I have no power to oust this blockhead? Oust him—what from? His father's halls? Well, but if he were dead, who would be the heir of Hazeldean? Have I not heard my mother say that I am as near in blood to this squire as any one, if he had no children? Oh, but the boy's life is worth ten of mine! Oust him from what? At least from the thoughts of his Uncle Egerton,—an uncle who has never even seen him! That, at least, is more feasible. 'Make my way in life,' sayest thou, Audley Egerton? Ay,—and to the fortune thou hast robbed from my ancestors. Simulation! simulation! Lord Bacon allows simulation. Lord Bacon practised it, and—"

Here the soliloquy came to a sudden end; for as, rapt in his thoughts, the boy had continued to walk backwards, he had come to the verge where the lawn slid off into the ditch of the ha-ha; and just as he was fortifying himself by the precept and practice of my Lord Bacon, the ground went from under him, and—slap into the ditch went Randal Leslie!

It so happened that the squire, whose active genius was always at some repair or improvement, had been but a few days before widening and sloping off the ditch just in that part, so that the earth was fresh and damp, and not yet either turfed or flattened down. Thus when Randal, recovering his first surprise and shock, rose to his feet, he found his clothes covered with mud; while the rudeness of the fall was evinced by the fantastic and extraordinary appearance of his hat, which, hollowed here, bulging there, and crushed out of all recognition generally, was as little like the hat of a decorous, hard-reading young gentleman—protege of the dignified Mr. Audley Egerton—as any hat picked out of a kennel after some drunken brawl possibly could be.

Randal was dizzy and stunned and bruised, and it was some moments before he took heed of his raiment. When he did so his spleen was greatly aggravated. He was still boy enough not to like the idea of presenting himself to the unknown squire and the dandy Frank in such a trim: he resolved incontinently to regain the lane and return home, without accomplishing the object of his journey; and seeing the footpath right before him, which led to a gate that he conceived would admit him into the highway sooner than the path by which he had come, he took it at once.

It is surprising how little we human creatures heed the warnings of our good genius. I have no doubt that some benignant power had precipitated Randal Leslie into the ditch, as a significant hint of the fate of all who choose what is, nowadays; by no means an uncommon step in the march of intellect,—namely, the walking backwards, in order to gratify a vindictive view of one's neighbour's property! I suspect that, before this century is out, many a fine fellow will thus have found his ha-ha, and scrambled out of the ditch with a much shabbier coat than he had on when he fell into it. But Randal did not thank his good genius for giving him a premonitory tumble,—and I never yet knew a man who did!

CHAPTER, XI.

The squire was greatly ruffled at breakfast that morning. He was too much of an Englishman to bear insult patiently, and he considered that he had been personally insulted in the outrage offered to his recent donation to the parish. His feelings, too, were hurt as well as his pride. There was something so ungrateful in the whole thing, just after he had taken so much pains, not only in the resuscitation but the embellishment of the stocks. It was not, however, so rare an occurrence for the squire to be ruffled as to create any remark. Riccabocca, indeed, as a stranger, and Mrs. Hazeldean, as a wife, had the quick tact to perceive that the host was glum and the husband snappish; but the one was too discreet, and the other too sensible, to chafe the new sore, whatever it might be, and shortly after breakfast the squire retired into his study, and absented himself from morning service. In his delightful "Life of Oliver Goldsmith," Mr. Forster takes care to touch our hearts by introducing his hero's excuse for not entering the priesthood. "He did not feel himself good enough." Thy Vicar of Wakefield, poor Goldsmith, was an excellent substitute for thee; and Dr. Primrose, at least, will be good enough for the world until Miss Jemima's fears are realized. Now, Squire Hazeldean had a tenderness of conscience much less reasonable than Goldsmith's. There were occasionally days in which he did not feel good enough—I don't say for a priest, but even for one of the congregation,— "days in which," said the squire in his own blunt way, "as I have never in my life met a worse devil than a devil of a temper, I'll not carry mine into the family pew. He sha'n't be growling out hypocritical responses from my poor grandmother's prayer-book." So the squire and his demon stayed at home. But the demon was generally cast out before the day was over: and on this occasion, when the bell rang for afternoon service, it may be presumed that the squire had reasoned or fretted himself into a proper state of mind; for he was then seen sallying forth from the porch of his hall, arm-in-arm with his wife, and at the head of his household. The second service was (as is commonly the case in rural districts) more numerously attended than the first one; and it was our parson's wont to devote to this service his most effective discourse.

Parson Dale, though a very fair scholar, had neither the deep theology nor the archaeological learning that distinguish the rising generation of the clergy. I much doubt if he could have passed what would now be called a creditable examination in the Fathers; and as for all the nice formalities in the rubric, he would never have been the man to divide a congregation or puzzle a bishop. Neither was Parson Dale very erudite in ecclesiastical architecture. He did not much care whether all the details in the church were purely Gothic or not; crockets and finials, round arch and pointed arch, were matters, I fear, on which he had never troubled his head.

But one secret Parson Dale did possess, which is perhaps of equal importance with those subtler mysteries,—he knew how to fill his church! Even at morning service no pews were empty, and at evening service the church overflowed.

Parson Dale, too, may be considered nowadays to hold but a mean idea of the spiritual authority of the Church. He had never been known to dispute on its exact bearing with the State,—whether it was incorporated with the State or above the State, whether it was antecedent to the Papacy or formed from the Papacy, etc. According to his favourite maxim, "*Quieta non movere*,"—"Not to disturb things that are quiet."—I have no doubt that he would have thought that the less discussion is provoked upon such matters the better for both Church and laity. Nor had he ever been known to regret the disuse of the ancient custom of excommunication, nor any other diminution of the powers of the priesthood, whether minatory or militant; yet for all this, Parson Dale had a great notion of the sacred privilege of a minister of the gospel,—to advise, to deter, to persuade, to reprove. And it was for the evening service that he prepared those sermons which may be called "sermons that preach at you." He preferred the evening for that salutary discipline, not only because the congregation was more numerous, but also because, being a shrewd man in his own innocent way, he knew that people bear better to be preached at after dinner than before; that you arrive more insinuatingly at the heart when the stomach is at peace. There was a genial kindness in Parson Dale's way of preaching at you. It was done in so imperceptible, fatherly, a manner that you never felt offended. He did it, too, with so much art that nobody but your own guilty self knew that you were the sinner he was exhorting. Yet he did not spare rich nor poor: he preached at the squire, and that great fat farmer, Mr. Bullock, the churchwarden, as boldly as at Hodge the ploughman and Scrub the hedger. As for Mr. Stirn, he had preached at him more often than at any one in the parish; but Stirn, though he had the sense to know it, never had the grace to reform. There was, too, in Parson Dale's sermons something of that boldness of illustration which would have been scholarly if he had not made it familiar, and which is found in the discourses of our elder divines. Like them, he did not scruple now and then to introduce an anecdote from history, or borrow an allusion from some non-scriptural author, in order to enliven the attention of his audience, or render an argument more plain. And the good man had an object in this, a little distinct from, though wholly subordinate to, the main purpose of his discourse. He was a friend to knowledge,—but to knowledge accompanied by religion; and sometimes his references to sources not within the ordinary

reading of his congregation would spirit up some farmer's son, with an evening's leisure on his hands, to ask the parson for further explanation, and so to be lured on to a little solid or graceful instruction, under a safe guide.

Now, on the present occasion, the parson, who had always his eye and heart on his flock, and who had seen with great grief the realization of his fears at the revival of the stocks; seen that a spirit of discontent was already at work amongst the peasants, and that magisterial and inquisitorial designs were darkening the natural benevolence of the squire,—seen, in short, the signs of a breach between classes, and the precursors of the ever inflammable feud between the rich and the poor, meditated nothing less than a great Political Sermon,—a sermon that should extract from the roots of social truths a healing virtue for the wound that lay sore, but latent, in the breast of his parish of Hazeldean.

And thus ran—

THE POLITICAL SERMON OF PARSON DALE.

CHAPTER XII.

For every man shall bear his own burden.—Gal. vi. 5.

"BRETHREN! every man has his burden. If God designed our lives to end at the grave, may we not believe that He would have freed an existence so brief from the cares and sorrows to which, since the beginning of the world, mankind has been subjected? Suppose that I am a kind father, and have a child whom I dearly love, but I know by a divine revelation that he will die at the age of eight years, surely I should not vex his infancy by needless preparations for the duties of life? If I am a rich man, I should not send him from the caresses of his mother to the stern discipline of school. If I am a poor man, I should not take him with me to hedge and dig, to scorch in the sun, to freeze in the winter's cold: why inflict hardships on his childhood for the purpose of fitting him for manhood, when I know that he is doomed not to grow into man? But if, on the other hand, I believe my child is reserved for a more durable existence, then should I not, out of the very love I bear to him, prepare his childhood for the struggle of life, according to that station in which he is born, giving many a toil, many a pain, to the infant, in order to rear and strengthen him for his duties as man? So it is with our Father that is in heaven. Viewing this life as our infancy and the next as our spiritual maturity, where 'in the ages to come He may show the exceeding riches of His grace,' it is in His tenderness, as in His wisdom; to permit the toil and the pain which, in tasking the powers and developing the virtue of the soul, prepare it for 'the earnest of our inheritance.' Hence it is that every man has his burden. Brethren, if you believe that God is good, yea, but as tender as a human father, you will know that your troubles in life are a proof that you are reared for an eternity. But each man thinks his own burden the hardest to bear: the poor-man groans under his poverty, the rich man under the cares that multiply with wealth. For so far from wealth freeing us from trouble, all the wise men who have written in all ages have repeated, with one voice, the words of the wisest, 'When goods increase, they are increased that eat them: and what good is there to the owners thereof, saving the beholding of them with their eyes?' And this is literally true, my brethren: for, let a man be as rich as was the great King Solomon himself, unless he lock up all his gold in a chest, it must go abroad to be divided amongst others; yea, though, like Solomon, he make him great works,—though he build houses and plant vineyards, and make him gardens and orchards,—still the gold that he spends feeds but the mouths he employs; and Solomon himself could not eat with a better relish than the poorest mason who builded the house, or the humblest labourer who planted the vineyard. Therefore 'when goods increase, they are increased that eat them.' And this, my brethren, may teach us toleration and compassion for the rich. We share their riches, whether they will or not; we do not share their cares. The profane history of our own country tells us that a princess, destined to be the greatest queen that ever sat on this throne, envied the milk-maid singing; and a profane poet, whose wisdom was only less than that of the inspired writers, represents the man who, by force—and wit, had risen to be a king sighing for the sleep vouchsafed to the meanest of his subjects,—all bearing out the words of the son of David, 'The sleep of the labouring man is sweet, whether he eat little or much; but the abundance of the rich will not suffer him to sleep.'

"Amongst my brethren now present there is, doubtless, some one who has been poor, and by honest industry has made himself comparatively rich. Let his heart answer me while I speak: are not the chief cares that now disturb him to be found in the goods he hath acquired? Has he not both vexations to his spirit and trials to his virtue, which he knew not when he went forth to his labour, and took no heed of the morrow? But it is right, my brethren, that to every station there should be its care, to every man his

burden; for if the poor did not sometimes so far feel poverty to be a burden as to desire to better their condition, and (to use the language of the world) 'seek to rise in life,' their most valuable energies would never be aroused; and we should not witness that spectacle, which is so common in the land we live in,—namely, the successful struggle of manly labour against adverse fortune,—a struggle in which the triumph of one gives hope to thousands. It is said that necessity is the mother of invention; and the social blessings which are now as common to us as air and sunshine have come from that law of our nature which makes us aspire towards indefinite improvement, enriches each successive generation by the labours of the last, and in free countries often lifts the child of the labourer to a place amongst the rulers of the land. Nay, if necessity is the mother of invention, poverty is the creator of the arts. If there had been no poverty, and no sense of poverty, where would have been that which we call the wealth of a country? Subtract from civilization all that has been produced by the poor, and what remains?—the state of the savage. Where you now see labourer and prince, you would see equality indeed,—the equality of wild men. No; not even equality there! for there brute force becomes lordship, and woe to the weak! Where you now see some in frieze, some in purple, you would see nakedness in all. Where stands the palace and the cot, you would behold but mud huts and caves. As far as the peasant excels the king among savages, so far does the society exalted and enriched by the struggles of labour excel the state in which Poverty feels no disparity, and Toil sighs for no ease. On the other hand, if the rich were perfectly contented with their wealth, their hearts would become hardened in the sensual enjoyments it procures. It is that feeling, by Divine Wisdom implanted in the soul, that there is vanity and vexation of spirit in the things of Mammon, which still leaves the rich man sensitive to the instincts of Heaven, and teaches him to seek for happiness in those beneficent virtues which distribute his wealth to the profit of others. If you could exclude the air from the rays of the fire, the fire itself would soon languish and die in the midst of its fuel; and so a man's joy in his wealth is kept alive by the air which it warms; and if pent within itself, is extinguished.

"And this, my brethren, leads me to another view of the vast subject opened to us by the words of the apostle, 'Every man shall bear his own burden.' The worldly conditions of life are unequal. Why are they unequal? O my brethren, do you not perceive? Think you that, if it had been better for our spiritual probation that there should be neither great nor lowly, rich nor poor, Providence would not so have ordered the dispensations of the world, and so, by its mysterious but merciful agencies, have influenced the framework and foundations of society? But if from the remotest period of human annals, and in all the numberless experiments of government which the wit of man has devised, still this inequality is ever found to exist, may we not suspect that there is something in the very principles of our nature to which that inequality is necessary and essential? Ask why this inequality? Why?—as well ask why life is the sphere of duty and the nursery of virtues! For if all men were equal, if there were no suffering and no ease, no poverty and no wealth, would you not sweep with one blow the half, at least, of human virtues from the world? If there were no penury and no pain, what would become of fortitude; what of patience; what of resignation? If there were no greatness and no wealth, what would become of benevolence, of charity, of the blessed human pity, of temperance in the midst of luxury, of justice in the exercise of power? Carry the question further; grant all conditions the same,—no reverse, no rise, and no fall, nothing to hope for, nothing to fear,—what a moral death you would at once inflict upon all the energies of the soul, and what a link between the Heart of Man and the Providence of God would be snapped asunder! If we could annihilate evil, we should annihilate hope; and hope, my brethren, is the avenue to faith. If there be 'a time to weep and a time to laugh,' it is that he who mourns may turn to eternity for comfort, and he who rejoices may bless God for the happy hour. Ah, my brethren, were it possible to annihilate the inequalities of human life, it would be the banishment of our worthiest virtues, the torpor of our spiritual nature, the palsy of our mental faculties. The moral world, like the world without us, derives its health and its beauty from diversity and contrast.

"'Every man shall bear his own burden.' True; but now turn to an earlier verse in the same chapter,—'Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.' Yes, while Heaven ordains to each his peculiar suffering, it connects the family of man into one household, by that feeling which, more perhaps than any other, distinguishes us from the brute creation,—I mean the feeling to which we give the name of sympathy,—the feeling for each other! The herd of deer shun the stag that is marked by the gunner; the flock heedeth not the sheep that creeps into the shade to die; but man has sorrow and joy not in himself alone, but in the joy and sorrow of those around him. He who feels only for himself abjures his very nature as man; for do we not say of one who has no tenderness for mankind that he is inhuman; and do we not call him who sorrows with the sorrowful humane?

"Now, brethren, that which especially marked the divine mission of our Lord is the direct appeal to this sympathy which distinguishes us from the brute. He seizes, not upon some faculty of genii given but to few, but upon that ready impulse of heart which is given to us all; and in saying, 'Love one another,' 'Bear ye one another's burdens,' he elevates the most delightful of our emotions into the most sacred of His laws. The lawyer asks our Lord, 'Who is my neighbour?' Our Lord replies by the parable of the good Samaritan. The priest and the Levite saw the wounded man that fell among the thieves and

passed by on the other side. That priest might have been austere in his doctrine, that Levite might have been learned in the law; but neither to the learning of the Levite nor to the doctrine of the priest does our Saviour even deign to allude. He cites but the action of the Samaritan, and saith to the lawyer, 'Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, He that showed mercy unto him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.'

"O shallowness of human judgments! It was enough to be born a Samaritan in order to be rejected by the priest, and despised by the Levite. Yet now, what to us the priest and the Levite, of God's chosen race though they were? They passed from the hearts of men when they passed the sufferer by the wayside; while this loathed Samaritan, half thrust from the pale of the Hebrew, becomes of our family, of our kindred; a brother amongst the brotherhood of Love, so long as Mercy and Affliction shall meet in the common thoroughfare of Life!

"Bear ye one another's burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ.' Think not, O my brethren, that this applies only to almsgiving, to that relief of distress which is commonly called charity, to the obvious duty of devoting from our superfluities something that we scarcely miss to the wants of a starving brother. No. I appeal to the poorest amongst ye, if the worst burdens are those of the body,—if the kind word and the tender thought have not often lightened your hearts more than bread bestowed with a grudge, and charity that humbles you by a frown. Sympathy is a beneficence at the command of us all,—yea, of the pauper as of the king; and sympathy is Christ's wealth. Sympathy is brotherhood. The rich are told to have charity for the poor, and the poor are enjoined to respect their superiors. Good: I say not to the contrary. But I say also to the poor, 'In your turn have charity for the rich/;' and I say to the rich, 'In your turn respect the poor/.'

"Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.' Thou, O poor man, envy not nor grudge thy brother his larger portion of worldly goods. Believe that he hath his sorrows and crosses like thyself, and perhaps, as more delicately nurtured, he feels them more; nay, hath he not temptations so great that our Lord hath exclaimed, 'How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of heaven'? And what are temptations but trials; what are trials but perils and sorrows? Think not that you can bestow no charity on the rich man, even while you take your sustenance from his hands. A heathen writer, often cited by the earliest preachers of the gospel, hath truly said, 'Wherever there is room for a man there is place for a benefit.'

"And I ask any rich brother amongst you, when he hath gone forth to survey his barns and his granaries, his gardens and orchards, if suddenly in the vain pride of his heart, he sees the scowl on the brow of the labourer,—if he deems himself hated in the midst of his wealth, if he feels that his least faults are treasured up against him with the hardness of malice, and his plainest benefits received with the ingratitude of envy,—I ask, I say, any rich man, whether straightway all pleasure in his worldly possessions does not fade from his heart, and whether he does not feel what a wealth of gladness it is in the power of the poor man to bestow! For all these things of Mammon pass away; but there is in the smile of him whom we have served a something that we may take with us into heaven. If, then, ye bear one another's burdens, they who are poor will have mercy on the errors and compassion for the griefs of the rich. To all men it was said—yes, to Lazarus as to Dives—'Judge not, that ye be not judged.' But think not, O rich man, that we preach only to the poor. If it be their duty not to grudge thee thy substance, it is thine to do all that may sweeten their labour. Remember that when our Lord said, 'How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of heaven,' He replied also to them who asked, 'Who then can be saved?' 'The things which are impossible with men are possible with God,' that is, man left to his own temptations would fail; but, strengthened by God, he shall be saved. If thy riches are the tests of thy trial, so may they also be the instruments of thy virtues. Prove by thy riches that thou art compassionate and tender, temperate and benign, and thy riches themselves may become the evidence at once of thy faith and of thy works.

"We have constantly on our lips the simple precept, 'Do unto others as you would be done by.' Why do we fail so often in the practice? Because we neglect to cultivate that SYMPATHY which nature implants as an instinct, and the Saviour exalts as a command. If thou wouldst do unto thy neighbour as thou wouldst be done by, ponder well how thy neighbour will regard the action thou art about to do to him. Put thyself into his place. If thou art strong and he is weak, descend from thy strength and enter into his weakness; lay aside thy burden for the while, and buckle on his own; let thy sight see as through his eyes, thy heart beat as in his bosom. Do this, and thou wilt often confess that what had seemed just to thy power will seem harsh to his weakness. For 'as a zealous man hath not done his duty when he calls his brother drunkard and beast,' even so an administrator of the law mistakes his object if he writes on the grand column of society only warnings that irritate the bold and terrify the timid; and a man will be no more in love with law than with virtue, 'if he be forced to it with rudeness and incivilities.' If, then, ye would bear the burden of the lowly, O ye great, feel not only for them, but with! Watch that your pride does not chafe them, your power does not wantonly gall. Your worldly inferior is of the class from which the Apostles were chosen, amidst which the Lord of Creation descended from a throne above the

seraphs."

The parson here paused a moment, and his eye glanced towards the pew near the pulpit, where sat the magnate of Hazeldean. The squire was leaning his chin thoughtfully on his hand, his brow inclined downwards, and the natural glow of his complexion much heightened.

"But," resumed the parson, softly, without turning to his book, and rather as if prompted by the suggestion of the moment—"but he who has cultivated sympathy commits not these errors, or, if committing them, hastens to retract. So natural is sympathy to the good man that he obeys it mechanically when he suffers his heart to be the monitor of his conscience. In this sympathy, behold the bond between rich and poor! By this sympathy, whatever our varying worldly lots, they become what they were meant to be,—exercises for the virtues more peculiar to each; and thus, if in the body each man bear his own burden, yet in the fellowship of the soul all have common relief in bearing the burdens of each other. This is the law of Christ,—fulfil it, O my flock!"

Here the parson closed his sermon, and the congregation bowed their heads.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK "MY NOVEL" — VOLUME 02 ***

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