



EDWARD BULWER-LYTTON

MY NOVEL

BOOK VII

2008 – All rights reserved
Non commercial use permitted

BOOK SEVENTH.

INITIAL CHAPTER.

MR. CAXTON UPON COURAGE AND PATIENCE.

"What is courage?" said my uncle Roland, rousing himself from a revery into which he had fallen, after the Sixth Book in this history had been read to our family circle.

"What is courage?" he repeated more earnestly. "Is it insensibility to fear? That may be the mere accident of constitution; and if so, there is no more merit in being courageous than in being this table."

"I am very glad to hear you speak thus," observed Mr. Caxton, "for I should not like to consider myself a coward; yet I am very sensible to fear in all dangers, bodily and moral."

"La, Austin, how can you say so?" cried my mother, firing up; "was it not only last week that you faced the great bull that was rushing after Blanche and the children?"

Blanche at that recollection stole to my father's chair, and, hanging over his shoulder, kissed his forehead.

MR. CAXTON (sublimely unmoved by these flatteries).--"I don't deny that I faced the bull, but I assert that I was horribly frightened."

ROLAND.--"The sense of honour which conquers fear is the true courage of chivalry: you could not run away when others were looking on,--no gentleman could."

MR. CAXTON.--"Fiddledee! It was not on my gentility that I stood, Captain. I should have run fast enough, if it had done any good. I stood upon my understanding. As the bull could run faster than I could, the only chance of escape was to make the brute as frightened as myself."

BLANCHE.--"Ah, you did not think of that; your only thought was to save me and the children."

MR. CAXTON.--"Possibly, my dear, very possibly, I might have been afraid for you too; but I was very much afraid for myself. However, luckily I had the umbrella, and I sprang it up and spread it forth in the animal's stupid eyes, hurling at him simultaneously the biggest lines I could think of in the First Chorus of the 'Seven against Thebes.' I began with ELEDEMNAS PEDIOPLOKTUPOS; and when I came to the grand howl of [A line in Greek], the beast stood appalled as at the roar of a lion. I shall never forget his amazed snort at the Greek. Then he kicked up his hind legs, and went bolt through the gap in the hedge. Thus, armed with AEschylus and the umbrella, I remained master of the field; but" (continued Mr. Caxton ingenuously) "I should not like to go through that half-minute again."

"No man would," said the captain, kindly. "I should be very sorry to face a bull myself, even with a bigger umbrella than yours, and even though I had AEschylus, and Homer to boot, at my fingers' ends."

MR. CAXTON.--"You would not have minded if it had been a Frenchman with a sword in his hand?"

CAPTAIN.--"Of course not. Rather liked it than otherwise," he added grimly.

MR. CAXTON.--"Yet many a Spanish matador, who does n't care a button for a bull, would take to his heels at the first lunge /en carte/ from a Frenchman. Therefore, in fact, if courage be a matter of constitution, it is also a matter of custom. We face calmly the dangers we are habituated to, and recoil from those of which we have no familiar experience. I doubt if Marshal Turenue himself would have been quite at his ease on the tight-rope; and a rope-dancer, who seems disposed to scale the heavens with Titanic temerity, might possibly object to charge on a cannon."

CAPTAIN ROLAND.--"Still, either this is not the courage I mean, or it is another kind of it. I mean by courage that which is the especial force and dignity of the human character, without which there is no reliance on principle, no constancy in virtue,--a something," continued my uncle, gallantly, and with a half bow towards my mother, "which your sex shares with our own. When the lover, for instance, clasps the hand of his betrothed, and says, 'Wilt thou be true to me, in spite of absence and time, in spite of hazard and fortune, though my foes malign me, though thy friends may dissuade thee, and our lot in life may be rough and rude?' and when the betrothed answers, 'I will be true,' does not the lover trust to her courage as well as her love?"

"Admirably put, Roland," said my father. "But a propos of what do you puzzle us with these queries on courage?"

CAPTAIN ROLAND (with a slight blush).--"I was led to the inquiry (though perhaps it may be frivolous to take so much thought of what, no doubt, costs Pisistratus so little) by the last chapters in my nephew's story. I see this poor boy Leonard, alone with his fallen hopes (though very irrational they were) and his sense of shame. And I read his heart, I dare say, better than Pisistratus does, for I could feel like that boy if I had been in the same position; and conjecturing what he and thousands like him must go through, I asked myself, 'What can save him and them?' I answered, as a soldier would answer, 'Courage.' Very well. But pray; Austin, what is courage?"

MR. CAXTON (prudently backing out of a reply).--"Papae!! Brother, since you have just complimented the ladies on that quality, you had better address your question to them."

Blanche here leaned both hands on my father's chair, and said, looking down at first bashfully, but afterwards warming with the subject, "Do you not think, sir, that little Helen has already suggested, if not what is courage, what at least is the real essence of all courage that endures and conquers, that ennobles and hallows and redeems? Is it not PATIENCE, Father? And that is why we women have a courage of our own. Patience does not affect to be superior to fear, but at least it never admits despair."

PISISTRATUS.--"Kiss me, my Blanche, for you have come near to the truth which perplexed the soldier and puzzled the sage."

MR. CAXTON (tartly).--"If you mean me by the sage, I was not puzzled at all. Heaven knows you do right to inculcate patience,--it is a virtue very much required--in your readers. Nevertheless," added my father, softening with the enjoyment of his joke,--"nevertheless Blanche and Helen are quite right. Patience is the courage of the conqueror; it is the virtue, /par excellence/, of Man against Destiny,--of the One against the World, and of the Soul against Matter. Therefore this is the courage of the Gospel; and its importance in a social view--its importance to races and institutions--cannot be too earnestly inculcated. What is it that distinguishes the Anglo-Saxon from all other branches of the human family,--peoples deserts with his children and consigns to them the heritage of rising worlds? What but his faculty to brave, to suffer, to endure,--the patience that resists firmly and innovates slowly? Compare

him with the Frenchman. The Frenchman has plenty of valour,--that there is no denying; but as for fortitude, he has not enough to cover the point of a pin. He is ready to rush out of the world if he is bitten by a flea."

CAPTAIN ROLAND.--"There was a case in the papers the other day, Austin, of a Frenchman who actually did destroy himself because he was so teased by the little creatures you speak of. He left a paper on his table, saying that 'life was not worth having at the price of such torments.'"

MR. CAXTON (solemnly).--"Sir, their whole political history, since the great meeting of the /Tiers Etat/, has been the history of men who would rather go to the devil than be bitten by a flea. It is the record of human impatience that seeks to force time, and expects to grow forests from the spawn of a mushroom. Wherefore, running through all extremes of constitutional experiment, when they are nearest to democracy they are next door to a despot; and all they have really done is to destroy whatever constitutes the foundation of every tolerable government. A constitutional monarchy cannot exist without aristocracy, nor a healthful republic endure with corruption of manners. The cry of equality is incompatible with civilization, which, of necessity, contrasts poverty with wealth; and, in short, whether it be an emperor or a mob that is to rule, Force is the sole hope of order, and the government is but an army."

[Published more than a year before the date of the French empire under Louis Napoleon.]

"Impress, O Pisistratus! impress the value of patience as regards man and men. You touch there on the kernel of the social system,--the secret that fortifies the individual and disciplines the million. I care not, for my part, if you are tedious so long as you are earnest. Be minute and detailed. Let the real Human Life, in its war with Circumstance, stand out. Never mind if one can read you but slowly,--better chance of being less quickly forgotten. Patience, patience! By the soul of Epictetus, your readers shall set you an example."

CHAPTER II.

Leonard had written twice to Mrs. Fairfield, twice to Riccabocca, and once to Mr. Dale; and the poor proud boy could not bear to betray his

humiliation. He wrote as with cheerful spirits,--as if perfectly satisfied with his prospects. He said that he was well employed, in the midst of books, and that he had found kind friends. Then he turned from himself to write about those whom he addressed, and the affairs and interests of the quiet world wherein they lived. He did not give his own address, nor that of Mr. Prickett. He dated his letters from a small coffee-house near the bookseller's, to which he occasionally went for his simple meals. He had a motive in this. He did not desire to be found out. Mr. Dale replied for himself and for Mrs. Fairfield, to the epistles addressed to these two. Riccabocca wrote also.

Nothing could be more kind than the replies of both. They came to Leonard in a very dark period in his life, and they strengthened him in the noiseless battle with despair.

If there be a good in the world that we do without knowing it, without conjecturing the effect it may have upon a human soul; it is when we show kindness to the young in the first barren footpath up the mountain of life.

Leonard's face resumed its serenity in his intercourse with his employer; but he did not recover his boyish ingenuous frankness. The under-currents flowed again pure from the turbid soil and the splintered fragments uptorn from the deep; but they were still too strong and too rapid to allow transparency to the surface. And now he stood in the sublime world of books, still and earnest as a seer who invokes the dead; and thus, face to face with knowledge, hourly he discovered how little he knew. Mr. Prickett lent him such works as he selected and asked to take home with him. He spent whole nights in reading, and no longer desultorily. He read no more poetry, no more Lives of Poets. He read what poets must read if they desire to be great--/Sapere principium et fons/,--strict reasonings on the human mind; the relations between motive and conduct, thought and action; the grave and solemn truths of the past world; antiquities, history, philosophy. He was taken out of himself; he was carried along the ocean of the universe. In that ocean, O seeker, study the law of the tides; and seeing Chance nowhere, Thought presiding over all, Fate, that dread phantom, shall vanish from creation, and Providence alone be visible in heaven and on earth!

CHAPTER III.

There was to be a considerable book-sale at a country house one day's journey from London. Mr. Prickett meant to have attended it on his own behalf, and that of several gentlemen who had given him commissions for purchase; but on the morning fixed for his departure, he was seized with a severe return of his old foe the rheumatism. He requested Leonard to attend instead of himself. Leonard went, and was absent for the three days during which the sale lasted. He returned late in the evening, and went at once to Mr. Prickett's house. The shop was closed; he knocked at the private entrance; a strange person opened the door to him, and in reply to his question if Mr. Prickett was at home, said, with a long and funereal face, "Young man, Mr. Prickett senior is gone to his long home, but Mr. Richard Prickett will see you."

At this moment a very grave-looking man, with lank hair, looked forth from the side-door communicating between the shop and the passage, and then stepped forward. "Come in, sir; you are my late uncle's assistant, Mr. Fairfield, I suppose?"

"Your late uncle! Heavens, sir, do I understand aright, can Mr. Prickett be dead since I left London?"

"Died, sir, suddenly, last night. It was an affection of the heart. The doctor thinks the rheumatism attacked that organ. He had small time to provide for his departure, and his account-books seem in sad disorder: I am his nephew and executor."

Leonard had now--followed the nephew into the shop. There still burned the gas-lamp. The place seemed more dingy and cavernous than before. Death always makes its presence felt in the house it visits.

Leonard was greatly affected,--and yet more, perhaps, by the utter want of feeling which the nephew exhibited. In fact the deceased had not been on friendly terms with this person, his nearest relative and heir-at-law, who was also a bookseller.

"You were engaged but by the week, I find, young man, on reference to my late uncle's papers. He gave you L1 a week,--a monstrous sum! I shall not require your services any further. I shall move these books to my own house. You will be good enough to send me a list of those you bought at the sale, and your account of travelling expenses, etc. What may be due to you shall be sent to your address. Good-evening."

Leonard went home, shocked and saddened at the sudden death of his kind employer. He did not think much of himself that night; but when he rose

the next day, he suddenly felt that the world of London lay before him, without a friend, without a calling, without an occupation for bread.

This time it was no fancied sorrow, no poetic dream disappointed. Before him, gaunt and palpable, stood Famine. Escape!--yes. Back to the village: his mother's cottage; the exile's garden; the radishes and the fount. Why could he not escape? Ask why civilization cannot escape its ills, and fly back to the wild and the wigwam.

Leonard could not have returned to the cottage, even if the Famine that faced had already seized him with her skeleton hand. London releases not so readily her fated step-sons.

CHAPTER IV.

One day three persons were standing before an old bookstall in a passage leading from Oxford Street into Tottenham Court Road. Two were gentlemen; the third, of the class and appearance of those who more habitually halt at old bookstalls.

"Look," said one of the gentlemen to the other, "I have discovered here what I have searched for in vain the last ten years,--the Horace of 1580, the Horace of the Forty Commentators, a perfect treasury of learning, and marked only fourteen shillings!"

"Hush, Norreys," said the other, "and observe what is yet more worth your study;" and he pointed to the third bystander, whose face, sharp and attenuated, was bent with an absorbed, and, as it were, with a hungering attention over an old worm-eaten volume.

"What is the book, my lord?" whispered Mr. Norreys. His companion smiled, and replied by another question, "What is the man who reads the book?"

Mr. Norreys moved a few paces, and looked over the student's shoulder. "Preston's translation of Boethius's 'The Consolations of Philosophy,'" he said, coming back to his friend.

"He looks as if he wanted all the consolations Philosophy can give him, poor boy."

At this moment a fourth passenger paused at the bookstall, and, recognizing the pale student, placed his hand on his shoulder, and said, "Aha, young sir, we meet again. So poor Prickett is dead. But you are still haunted by associations. Books, books,--magnets to which all iron minds move insensibly. What is this? Boethius! Ah, a book written in prison, but a little time before the advent of the only philosopher who solves to the simplest understanding every mystery of life--"

"And that philosopher?"

"Is death!" said Mr. Burley. "How can you be dull enough to ask? Poor Boethius, rich, nobly born, a consul, his sons consuls, the world one smile to the Last Philosopher of Rome. Then suddenly, against this type of the old world's departing WISDOM stands frowning the new world's grim genius, FORCE,--Theodoric the Ostrogoth condemning Boethius the schoolman; and Boethius in his Pavian dungeon holding a dialogue with the shade of Athenian Philosophy. It is the finest picture upon which lingers the glimmering of the Western golden day, before night rushes over time."

"And," said Mr. Norreys, abruptly, "Boethius comes back to us with the faint gleam of returning light, translated by Alfred the Great; and, again, as the sun of knowledge bursts forth in all its splendour by Queen Elizabeth. Boethius influences us as we stand in this passage; and that is the best of all the Consolations of Philosophy,--eh, Mr. Burley?"

Mr. Burley turned and bowed.

The two men looked at each other; you could not see a greater contrast,-- Mr. Burley, his gay green dress already shabby and soiled, with a rent in the skirts and his face speaking of habitual night-cups; Mr. Norreys, neat and somewhat precise in dress, with firm, lean figure, and quiet, collected, vigorous energy in his eye and aspect.

"If," replied Mr. Burley, "a poor devil like me may argue with a gentleman who may command his own price with the booksellers, I should say it is no consolation at all, Mr. Norreys. And I should like to see any man of sense accept the condition of Boethius in his prison, with some strangler or headsman waiting behind the door, upon the promised proviso that he should be translated, centuries afterwards, by kings and queens, and help indirectly to influence the minds of Northern barbarians, babbling about him in an alley, jostled by passers-by who never heard the name of Boethius, and who don't care a fig for philosophy. Your servant, sir, young man, come and talk."

Burley hooked his arm within Leonard's, and led the boy passively away.

"That is a clever man," said Harley L'Estrange. "But I am sorry to see you young student, with his bright earnest eyes, and his lip that has the quiver of passion and enthusiasm, leaning on the arm of a guide who seems disenchanted of all that gives purpose to learning, and links philosophy with use to the world. Who and what is this clever man whom you call Burley?"

"A man who might have been famous, if he had condescended to be respectable! The boy listening to us both so attentively interested me too,—I should like to have the making of him. But I must buy this Horace."

The shopman, lurking within his hole like a spider for flies, was now called out. And when Mr. Norreys had bought the Horace, and given an address where to send it, Harley asked the shopman if he knew the young man who had been reading Boethius.

"Only by sight. He has come here every day the last week, and spends hours at the stall. When once he fastens on a book, he reads it through."

"And never buys?" said Mr. Norreys.

"Sir," said the shopman, with a good-natured smile, "they who buy seldom read. The poor boy pays me twopence a day to read as long as he pleases. I would not take it, but he is proud."

"I have known men amass great learning in that way," said Mr. Norreys.

"Yes, I should like to have that boy in my hands. And now, my lord, I am at your service, and we will go to the studio of your artist."

The two gentlemen walked on towards one of the streets out of Fitzroy Square.

In a few minutes more Harley L'Estrange was in his element, seated carelessly on a deal table smoking his cigar, and discussing art with the gusto of a man who honestly loved, and the taste of a man who thoroughly understood it. The young artist, in his dressing robe, adding slow touch upon touch, paused often to listen the better. And Henry Norreys, enjoying the brief respite from a life of great labour, was gladly reminded of idle hours under rosy skies; for these three men had formed

their friendship in Italy, where the bands of friendship are woven by the hands of the Graces.

CHAPTER V.

Leonard and Mr. Burley walked on into the suburbs round the north road from London, and Mr. Burley offered to find literary employment for Leonard,—an offer eagerly accepted.

Then they went into a public-house by the wayside. Burley demanded a private room, called for pen, ink, and paper; and placing these implements before Leonard, said, "Write what you please, in prose, five sheets of letter-paper, twenty-two lines to a page,—neither more nor less."

"I cannot write so."

"Tut, 't is for bread."

The boy's face crimsoned.

"I must forget that," said he.

"There is an arbour in the garden, under a weeping-ash," returned Burley. "Go there, and fancy yourself in Arcadia."

Leonard was too pleased to obey. He found out the little arbour at one end of a deserted bowling-green. All was still,—the hedgerow shut out the sight of the inn. The sun lay warm on the grass, and glinted pleasantly through the leaves of the ash. And Leonard there wrote the first essay from his hand as Author by profession. What was it that he wrote? His dreamy impressions of London, an anathema on its streets and its hearts of stone, murmurs against poverty, dark elegies on fate?

Oh, no! little knowest thou true genius, if thou askest such questions, or thinkest that there under the weeping-ash the task-work for bread was remembered; or that the sunbeam glinted but over the practical world, which, vulgar and sordid, lay around. Leonard wrote a fairy tale,—one of the loveliest you can conceive, with a delicate touch of playful humour, in a style all flowered over with happy fancies. He smiled as he wrote the last word,—he was happy. In rather more than an hour Mr.

Burley came to him, and found him with that smile on his lips.

Mr. Burley had a glass of brandy-and-water in his hand; it was his third. He too smiled, he too looked happy. He read the paper aloud, and well. He was very complimentary. "You will do!" said he, clapping Leonard on the back. "Perhaps some day you will catch my one-eyed perch." Then he folded up the manuscript, scribbled off a note, put the whole in one envelope, and they returned to London.

Mr. Burley disappeared within a dingy office near Fleet Street, on which was inscribed, "Office of the 'Beehive,'" and soon came forth with a golden sovereign in his hand, Leonard's first-fruits. Leonard thought Peru lay before him. He accompanied Mr. Burley to that gentleman's lodging in Maida Hill. The walk had been very long; Leonard was not fatigued. He listened with a livelier attention than before to Burley's talk. And when they reached the apartments of the latter, and Mr. Burley sent to the cookshop, and their joint supper was taken out of the golden sovereign, Leonard felt proud, and for the first time for weeks he laughed the heart's laugh. The two writers grew more and more intimate and cordial. And there was a vast deal in Burley by which any young man might be made the wiser. There was no apparent evidence of poverty in the apartments,--clean, new, well-furnished; but all things in the most horrible litter,--all speaking of the huge literary sloven.

For several days Leonard almost lived in those rooms. He wrote continuously, save when Burley's conversation fascinated him into idleness. Nay, it was not idleness,--his knowledge grew larger as he listened; but the cynicism of the talker began slowly to work its way. That cynicism in which there was no faith, no hope, no vivifying breath from Glory, from Religion,--the cynicism of the Epicurean, more degraded in his sty than ever was Diogenes in his tub; and yet presented with such ease and such eloquence, with such art and such mirth, so adorned with illustration and anecdote, so unconscious of debasement!

Strange and dread philosophy, that made it a maxim to squander the gifts of mind on the mere care for matter, and fit the soul to live but as from day to day, with its scornful cry, "A fig for immortality and laurels!" An author for bread! Oh, miserable calling! was there something grand and holy, after all, even in Chatterton's despair?

CHAPTER VI.

The villanous "Beehive"! Bread was worked out of it, certainly; but fame, but hope for the future,--certainly not. Milton's Paradise Lost would have perished without a sound had it appeared in the "Beehive."

Fine things were there in a fragmentary crude state, composed by Burley himself. At the end of a week they were dead and forgotten,--never read by one man of education and taste; taken simultaneously and indifferently with shallow politics and wretched essays, yet selling, perhaps, twenty or thirty thousand copies,--an immense sale; and nothing got out of them but bread and brandy!

"What more would you have?" cried John Burley. "Did not stern old Sam Johnson say he could never write but from want?"

"He might say it," answered Leonard; "but he never meant posterity to believe him. And he would have died of want, I suspect, rather than have written 'Rasselas' for the 'Beehive!' Want is a grand thing," continued the boy, thoughtfully,--"a parent of grand things. Necessity is strong, and should give us its own strength; but Want should shatter asunder, with its very writhings, the walls of our prison-house, and not sit contented with the allowance the jail gives us in exchange for our work."

"There is no prison-house to a man who calls upon Bacchus; stay, I will translate to you Schiller's Dithyramb. 'Then see I Bacchus; then up come Cupid and Phcebus, and all the Celestials are filling my dwelling.'"

Breaking into impromptu careless rhymes, Burley threw off a rude but spirited translation of that divine lyric. "O materialist!" cried the boy, with his bright eyes suffused. "Schiller calls on the gods to take him to their heaven with them; and you would debase the gods to a ginpalace."

"Ho, ho!" cried Burley, with his giant laugh. "Drink, and you will understand the Dithyramb."

CHAPTER VII.

Suddenly one morning, as Leonard sat with Burley, a fashionable cabriolet, with a very handsome horse, stopped at the door. A loud knock, a quick step on the stairs, and Randal Leslie entered. Leonard

recognized him, and started. Randal glanced at him in surprise, and then, with a tact that showed he had already learned to profit by London life, after shaking hands with Burley, approached, and said, with some successful attempt at ease, "Unless I am not mistaken, sir, we have met before. If you remember me, I hope all boyish quarrels are forgotten?"

Leonard bowed, and his heart was still good enough to be softened.

"Where could you two ever have met?" asked Burley. "In a village green, and in single combat," answered Randal, smiling; and he told the story of the Battle of the Stocks, with a well-bred jest on himself. Burley laughed at the story. "But," said he, when this laugh was over, "my young friend had better have remained guardian of the village stocks than come to London in search of such fortune as lies at the bottom of an inkhorn."

"Ah," said Randal, with the secret contempt which men elaborately cultivated are apt to feel for those who seek to educate themselves,-- "ah, you make literature your calling, sir? At what school did you conceive a taste for letters? Not very common at our great public schools."

"I am at school now for the first time," answered Leonard, dryly.

"Experience is the best schoolmistress," said Burley; "and that was the maxim of Goethe, who had book-learning enough, in all conscience."

Randal slightly shrugged his shoulders, and without wasting another thought on Leonard, peasant-born and self-taught, took his seat, and began to talk to Burley upon a political question, which made then the war-cry between the two great parliamentary parties. It was a subject in which Burley showed much general knowledge; and Randal, seeming to differ from him, drew forth alike his information and his argumentative powers. The conversation lasted more than an hour.

"I can't quite agree with you," said Randal, taking his leave; "but you must allow me to call again,--will the same hour tomorrow suit you?"

"Yes," said Burley.

Away went the young man in his cabriolet. Leonard watched him from the window.

For five days, consecutively, did Randal call and discuss the question in

all its bearings; and Burley, after the second day, got interested in the matter, looked up his authorities, refreshed his memory, and even spent an hour or two in the Library of the British Museum.

By the fifth day, Burley had really exhausted all that could well be said on his side of the question.

Leonard, during these colloquies, had sat apart seemingly absorbed in reading, and secretly stung by Randal's disregard of his presence. For indeed that young man, in his superb self-esteem, and in the absorption of his ambitious projects, scarce felt even curiosity as to Leonard's rise above his earlier station, and looked on him as a mere journeyman of Burley's.

But the self-taught are keen and quick observers; and Leonard had remarked that Randal seemed more as one playing a part for some private purpose, than arguing in earnest; and that, when he rose, and said, "Mr. Burley, you have convinced me," it was not with the modesty of a sincere reasoner, but the triumph of one who has gained his end. But so struck, meanwhile, was our unheeded and silent listener with Burley's power of generalization and the wide surface over which his information extended, that when Randal left the room the boy looked at the slovenly, purposeless man, and said aloud, "True; knowledge is not power."

"Certainly not," said Burley, dryly,--"the weakest thing in the world."

"Knowledge is power," muttered Randal Leslie, as, with a smile on his lip, he drove from the door.

Not many days after this last interview there appeared a short pamphlet; anonymous, but one which made a great impression on the town. It was on the subject discussed between Randal and Burley. It was quoted at great length in the newspapers. And Burley started to his feet one morning, and exclaimed, "My own thoughts! my very words! Who the devil is this pamphleteer?"

Leonard took the newspaper from Burley's hand. The most flattering encomiums preceded the extracts, and the extracts were as stereotypes of Burley's talk.

"Can you doubt the author?" cried Leonard, in deep disgust and ingenuous scorn. "The young man who came to steal your brains, and turn your knowledge--"

"Into power," interrupted Burley, with a laugh,—but it was a laugh of pain. "Well, this was very mean; I shall tell him so when he comes."

"He will come no more," said Leonard. Nor did Randal come again. But he sent Mr. Burley a copy of the pamphlet with a polite note, saying, with candid but careless acknowledgment, that he "had profited much by Mr. Burley's hints and remarks."

And now it was in all the papers that the pamphlet which had made so great a noise was by a very young man, Mr. Audley Egerton's relation. And high hopes were expressed of the future career of Mr. Randal Leslie.

Burley still attempted to laugh, and still his pain was visible. Leonard most cordially despised and hated Randal Leslie, and his heart moved to Burley with noble but perilous compassion. In his desire to soothe and comfort the man whom he deemed cheated out of fame, he forgot the caution he had hitherto imposed on himself, and yielded more and more to the charm of that wasted intellect. He accompanied Burley now to the haunts to which his friend went to spend his evenings; and more and more—though gradually, and with many a recoil and self-rebuke—there crept over him the cynic's contempt for glory, and miserable philosophy of debased content.

Randal had risen into grave repute upon the strength of Burley's knowledge. But, had Burley written the pamphlet, would the same repute have attended him? Certainly not. Randal Leslie brought to that knowledge qualities all his own,—a style simple, strong, and logical; a certain tone of good society, and allusions to men and to parties that showed his connection with a Cabinet minister, and proved that he had profited no less by Egerton's talk than Burley's.

Had Burley written the pamphlet, it would have showed more genius, it would have had humour and wit, but have been so full of whims and quips, sins against taste, and defects in earnestness, that it would have failed to create any serious sensation. Here, then, there was something else besides knowledge, by which knowledge became power. Knowledge must not smell of the brandy-bottle.

Randal Leslie might be mean in his plagiarism, but he turned the useless into use. And so far he was original. But one's admiration, after all, rests where Leonard's rested,—with the poor, riotous, lawless, big, fallen man. Burley took himself off to the Brent, and fished again for the one-eyed perch. Leonard accompanied him. His feelings were indeed different from what they had been when he had reclined under the old

tree, and talked with Helen of the future. But it was almost pathetic to see how Burley's nature seemed to alter, as he strayed along the banks of the rivulet, and discoursed of his own boyhood. The man then seemed restored to something of the innocence of the child. He cared, in truth, little for the perch, which continued intractable, but he enjoyed the air and the sky, the rustling grass and the murmuring waters. These excursions to the haunts of youth seemed to rebaptize him, and then his eloquence took a pastoral character, and Izaak Walton himself would have loved to hear him. But as he got back into the smoke of the metropolis, and the gas-lamps made him forget the ruddy sunset and the soft evening star, the gross habits reassumed their sway; and on he went with his swaggering, reckless step to the orgies in which his abused intellect flamed forth, and then sank into the socket quenched and rayless.

CHAPTER VIII.

Helen was seized with profound and anxious sadness. Leonard had been three or four times to see her, and each time she saw a change in him that excited all her fears. He seemed, it is true, more shrewd, more worldly-wise, more fitted, it might be, for coarse daily life; but, on the other hand, the freshness and glory of his youth were waning slowly. His aspirings drooped earthward. He had not mastered the Practical, and moulded its uses with the strong hand of the Spiritual Architect, of the Ideal Builder; the Practical was overpowering himself. She grew pale when he talked of Burley, and shuddered, poor little Helen? when she found he was daily, and almost nightly, in a companionship which, with her native honest prudence, she saw so unsuited to strengthen him in his struggles, and aid him against temptation. She almost groaned when, pressing him as to his pecuniary means, she found his old terror of debt seemed fading away, and the solid healthful principles he had taken from his village were loosening fast. Under all, it is true, there was what a wiser and older person than Helen would have hailed as the redeeming promise. But that something was grief,--a sublime grief in his own sense of falling, in his own impotence against the Fate he had provoked and coveted. The Sublimity of that grief Helen could not detect; she saw only that it was grief, and she grieved with it, letting it excuse every fault,--making her more anxious to comfort, in order that she might save. Even from the first, when Leonard had exclaimed, "Ah, Helen, why did you ever leave me?" she had revolved the idea of return to him; and when in the boy's last visit he told her that Burley, persecuted by duns, was about to fly from his present lodgings, and take his abode with Leonard,

in the room she had left vacant, all doubt was over. She resolved to sacrifice the safety and shelter of the home assured her. She resolved to come back and share Leonard's penury and struggles, and save the old room, wherein she had prayed for him, from the tempter's dangerous presence. Should she burden him? No; she had assisted her father by many little female arts in needle and fancy work. She had improved herself in these during her sojourn with Miss Starke. She could bring her share to the common stock. Possessed with this idea, she determined to realize it before the day on which Leonard had told her Burley was to move his quarters. Accordingly she rose very early one morning; she wrote a pretty and grateful note to Miss Starke, who was fast asleep, left it on the table, and before any one was astir, stole from the house, her little bundle on her arm.

She lingered an instant at the garden-gate, with a remorseful sentiment, --a feeling that she had ill-repaid the cold and prim protection that Miss Starke had shown her. But sisterly love carried all before it. She closed the gate with a sigh, and went on.

She arrived at the lodging-house before Leonard was up, took possession of her old chamber, and presenting herself to Leonard, as he was about to go forth, said (story-teller that she was), "I am sent away, brother, and I have come to you to take care of me. Do not let us part again. But you must be very cheerful and very happy, or I shall think that I am sadly in your way."

Leonard at first did look cheerful, and even happy; but then he thought of Burley, and then of his own means of supporting Helen, and was embarrassed, and began questioning her as to the possibility of reconciliation with Miss Starke. And Helen said gravely, "Impossible,-- do not ask it, and do not go near her."

Then Leonard thought she had been humbled and insulted, and remembered that she was a gentleman's child, and felt for her wounded pride, he was so proud himself. Yet still he was embarrassed.

"Shall I keep the purse again, Leonard?" said Helen, coaxingly.

"Alas!" replied Leonard, "the purse is empty."

"That is very naughty in the purse," said Helen, "since you put so much into it."

"Did not you say that you made, at least, a guinea a week?"

"Yes; but Burley takes the money; and then, poor fellow! as I owe all to him, I have not the heart to prevent him spending it as he likes."

"Please, I wish you could settle the month's rent," said the landlady, suddenly showing herself. She said it civilly, but with firmness.

Leonard coloured. "It shall be paid to-day."

Then he pressed his hat on his head, and putting Helen gently aside, went forth.

"Speak to me in future, kind Mrs. Smedley," said Helen, with the air of a housewife. "He is always in study, and must not be disturbed."

The landlady--a good woman, though she liked her rent--smiled benignly. She was fond of Helen, whom she had known of old.

"I am so glad you are come back; and perhaps now the young man will not keep such late hours. I meant to give him warning, but--"

"But he will be a great man one of these days, and you must bear with him now." And Helen kissed Mrs. Smedley, and sent her away half inclined to cry.

Then Helen busied herself in the rooms. She found her father's box, which had been duly forwarded. She re-examined its contents, and wept as she touched each humble and pious relic. But her father's memory itself thus seemed to give this home a sanction which the former had not; and she rose quietly and began mechanically to put things in order, sighing as she saw all so neglected, till she came to the rosetree, and that alone showed heed and care. "Dear Leonard!" she murmured, and the smile resettled on her lips.

CHAPTER IX.

Nothing, perhaps, could have severed Leonard from Burley but Helen's return to his care. It was impossible for him, even had there been another room in the house vacant (which there was not), to install this noisy, riotous son of the Muse by Bacchus, talking at random and smelling of spirits, in the same dwelling with an innocent, delicate, timid,

female child. And Leonard could not leave her alone all the twenty-four hours. She restored a home to him and imposed its duties. He therefore told Mr. Burley that in future he should write and study in his own room, and hinted, with many a blush, and as delicately as he could, that it seemed to him that whatever he obtained from his pen ought to be halved with Burley, to whose interest he owed the employment, and from whose books or whose knowledge he took what helped to maintain it; but that the other half, if his, he could no longer afford to spend upon feasts or libations. He had another life to provide for.

Burley pooh-poohed the notion of taking half his coadjutor's earning with much grandeur, but spoke very fretfully of Leonard's sober appropriation of the other half; and though a good-natured, warm-hearted man, felt extremely indignant at the sudden interposition of poor Helen. However, Leonard was firm; and then Burley grew sullen, and so they parted. But the rent was still to be paid. How? Leonard for the first time thought of the pawnbroker. He had clothes to spare, and Riccabocca's watch. No; that last he shrank from applying to such base uses.

He went home at noon, and met Helen at the street-door. She too had been out, and her soft cheek was rosy red with unwonted exercise and the sense of joy. She had still preserved the few gold pieces which Leonard had taken back to her on his first visit to Miss Starke's. She had now gone out and bought wool and implements for work; and meanwhile she had paid the rent.

Leonard did not object to the work, but he blushed deeply when he knew about the rent, and was very angry. He paid back to her that night what she had advanced; and Helen wept silently at his pride, and wept more when she saw the next day a woful hiatus in his wardrobe.

But Leonard now worked at home, and worked resolutely; and Helen sat by his side, working too; so that next day, and the next, slipped peacefully away, and in the evening of the second he asked her to walk out in the fields. She sprang up joyously at the invitation, when bang went the door, and in reeled John Burley,--drunk,--and so drunk!

CHAPTER X.

And with Burley there reeled in another man,--a friend of his, a man who had been a wealthy trader and once well to do, but who, unluckily, had

literary tastes, and was fond of hearing Burley talk. So, since he had known the wit, his business had fallen from him, and he had passed through the Bankrupt Court. A very shabby-looking dog he was, indeed, and his nose was redder than Burley's.

John made a drunken dash at poor Helen. "So you are the Pentheus in petticoats who defies Bacchus," cried he; and therewith he roared out a verse from Euripides. Helen ran away, and Leonard interposed.

"For shame, Burley!"

"He's drunk," said Mr. Douce, the bankrupt trader, "very drunk; don't mind him. I say, sir, I hope we don't intrude. Sit still, Burley, sit still, and talk, do,—that's a good man. You should hear him--ta--ta--talk, sir." Leonard meanwhile had got Helen out of the room into her own, and begged her not to be alarmed, and keep the door locked. He then returned to Burley, who had seated himself on the bed, trying wondrous hard to keep himself upright; while Mr. Douce was striving to light a short pipe that he carried in his button-hole--without having filled it--and, naturally failing in that attempt, was now beginning to weep.

Leonard was deeply shocked and revolted for Helen's sake; but it was hopeless to make Burley listen to reason. And how could the boy turn out of his room the man to whom he was under obligations?

Meanwhile there smote upon Helen's shrinking ears loud jarring talk and maudlin laughter, and cracked attempts at jovial songs. Then she heard Mrs. Smedley in Leonard's room, remonstrating; and Burley's laugh was louder than before, and Mrs. Smedley, who was a meek woman, evidently got frightened, and was heard in precipitate retreat. Long and loud talk recommenced, Burley's great voice predominant, Mr. Douce chiming in with hiccoughy broken treble. Hour after hour this lasted, for want of the drink that would have brought it to a premature close. And Burley gradually began to talk himself somewhat sober. Then Mr. Douce was heard descending the stairs, and silence followed. At dawn, Leonard knocked at Helen's door. She opened it at once, for she had not gone to bed.

"Helen," said he, very sadly, "you cannot continue here. I must find out some proper home for you. This man has served me when all London was friendless, and he tells me that he has nowhere else to go,—that the bailiffs are after him. He has now fallen asleep. I will go and find you some lodging close at hand, for I cannot expel him who has protected me; and yet you cannot be under the same roof with him. My own good

angel, I must lose you."

He did not wait for her answer, but hurried down stairs. The morning looked through the shutterless panes in Leonard's garret, and the birds began to chird from the elmtree, when Burley rose and shook himself, and stared round. He could not quite make out where he was. He got hold of the water-jug, which he emptied at three draughts, and felt greatly refreshed. He then began to reconnoitre the chamber,--looked at Leonard's manuscripts, peeped into the drawers, wondered where the devil Leonard himself had gone to, and finally amused himself by throwing down the fireirons, ringing the bell, and making all the noise he could, in the hopes of attracting the attention of somebody or other, and procuring himself his morning dram.

In the midst of this charivari the door opened softly, but as if with a resolute hand, and the small quiet form of Helen stood before the threshold. Burley turned round, and the two looked at each other for some moments with silent scrutiny.

BURLEY (composing his features into their most friendly expression).--
"Come hither, my dear. So you are the little girl whom I saw with Leonard on the banks of the Brent, and you have come back to live with him,--and I have come to live with him too. You shall be our little housekeeper, and I will tell you the story of Prince Pettyman, and a great many others not to be found in 'Mother Goose.' Meanwhile, my dear little girl, here's sixpence,--just run out and change this for its worth in rum."

HELEN (coming slowly up to Mr. Burley, and still gazing earnestly into his face).--"Ah, sir, Leonard says you have a kind heart, and that you have served him; he cannot ask you to leave the house; and so I, who have never served him, am to go hence and live alone."

BURLEY (moved).--"You go, my little lady; and why? Can we not all live together?"

HELEN.--"No, sir. I left everything to come to Leonard, for we had met first at my father's grave; but you rob me of him, and I have no other friend on earth."

BURLEY (discomposed).--"Explain yourself. Why must you leave him because I come?"

Helen looked at Mr. Burley again, long and wistfully, but made no answer.

BURLEY (with a gulp).--"Is it because he thinks I am not fit company for you?"

Helen bowed her head.

Burley winced, and after a moment's pause said, "He is right."

HELEN (obeying the impulse of her heart, springs forward and takes Burley's hand).--"Ah, sir," she cried, "before he knew you he was so different; then he was cheerful, then, even when his first disappointment came, I grieved and wept but I felt he would conquer still, for his heart was so good and pure. Oh, sir, don't think I reproach you; but what is to become of him if--if---No, it is not for myself I speak. I know that if I was here, that if he had me to care for, he would come home early, and work patiently, and--and--that I might save him. But now when I am gone, and you live with him,--you to whom he is grateful, you whom he would follow against his own conscience (you must see that, sir), what is to become of him?"

Helen's voice died in sobs.

Burley took three or four long strides through the room; he was greatly agitated. "I am a demon," he murmured. "I never saw it before; but it is true, I should be this boy's ruin." Tears stood in his eyes, he paused abruptly, made a clutch at his hat, and turned to the door.

Helen stopped the way, and taking him gently by the arm, said, "Oh, sir, forgive me,--I have pained you;" and looked up at him with a compassionate expression, that indeed made the child's sweet face as that of an angel.

Burley bent down as if to kiss her, and then drew back, perhaps with a sentiment that his lips were not worthy to touch that innocent brow.

"If I had had a sister,--a child like you, little one," he muttered, "perhaps I too might have been saved in time. Now--"

"Ah, now you may stay, sir; I don't fear you any more."

"No, no; you would fear me again ere night-time, and I might not be always in the right mood to listen to a voice like yours, child. Your Leonard has a noble heart and rare gifts. He should rise yet, and he shall. I will not drag him into the mire. Good-by,--you will see me no

more." He broke from Helen, cleared the stairs with a bound, and was out of the house.

When Leonard returned he was surprised to hear his unwelcome guest was gone,--but Helen did not venture to tell him of her interposition. She knew instinctively how such officiousness would mortify and offend the pride of man; but she never again spoke harshly of poor Burley. Leonard supposed that he should either see or hear of the humourist in the course of the day. Finding he did not, he went in search of him at his old haunts; but no trace. He inquired at the "Beehive" if they knew there of his new address, but no tidings of Burley could be obtained.

As he came home disappointed and anxious, for he felt uneasy as to the disappearance of his wild friend, Mrs. Smedley met him at the door.

"Please, sir, suit yourself with another lodging," said she. "I can have no such singings and shoutings going on at night in my house. And that poor little girl, too! you should be ashamed of yourself."

Leonard frowned, and passed by.

CHAPTER XI.

Meanwhile, on leaving Helen, Burley strode on; and, as if by some better instinct, for he was unconscious of his own steps, he took his way towards the still green haunts of his youth. When he paused at length, he was already before the door of a rural cottage, standing alone in the midst of fields, with a little farmyard at the back; and far through the trees in front was caught a glimpse of the winding Brent.

With this cottage Burley was familiar; it was inhabited by a good old couple who had known him from a boy. There he habitually left his rods and fishing-tackle; there, for intervals in his turbid, riotous life, he had sojourned for two or three days together, fancying the first day that the country was a heaven, and convinced before the third that it was a purgatory.

An old woman, of neat and tidy exterior, came forth to greet him.

"Ah, Master John," said she, clasping his nerveless hand, "well, the fields be pleasant now; I hope you are come to stay a bit? Do; it will

freshen you; you lose all the fine colour you had once, in Lunnon town."

"I will stay with you, my kind friend," said Burley, with unusual meekness; "I can have the old room, then?"

"Oh, yes, come and look at it. I never let it now to any one but you, --never have let it since the dear beautiful lady with the angel's face went away. Poor thing, what could have become of her?"

Thus speaking, while Burley listened not, the old woman drew him within the cottage, and led him up the stairs into a room that might have well become a better house, for it was furnished with taste, and even elegance. A small cabinet pianoforte stood opposite the fireplace, and the window looked upon pleasant meads and tangled hedgerows, and the narrow windings of the blue rivulet. Burley sank down exhausted, and gazed wistfully from the casement.

"You have not breakfasted?" said the hostess, anxiously.

"No."

"Well, the eggs are fresh laid, and you would like a rasher of bacon, Master John? And if you will have brandy in your tea, I have some that you left long ago in your own bottle."

Burley shook his head. "No brandy, Mrs. Goodyer; only fresh milk. I will see whether I can yet coax Nature."

Mrs. Goodyer did not know what was meant by coaxing Nature, but she said, "Pray do, Master John," and vanished. That day Burley went out with his rod, and he fished hard for the one-eyed perch; but in vain. Then he roved along the stream with his hands in his pockets, whistling. He returned to the cottage at sunset, partook of the fare provided for him, abstained from the brandy, and felt dreadfully low.

He called for pen, ink, and paper, and sought to write, but could not achieve two lines. He summoned Mrs. Goodyer. "Tell your husband to come and sit and talk."

Up came old Jacob Goodyer, and the great wit bade him tell him all the news of the village. Jacob obeyed willingly, and Burley at last fell asleep. The next day it was much the same, only at dinner he had up the brandy-bottle, and finished it; and he did not have up Jacob, but he contrived to write.

The third day it rained incessantly. "Have you no books, Mrs. Goodyer?" asked poor John Burley.

"Oh, yes, some that the dear lady left behind her; and perhaps you would like to look at some papers in her own writing?"

"No, not the papers,--all women scribble, and all scribble the same things. Get me the books."

The books were brought up,--poetry and essays--John knew them by heart. He looked out on the rain, and at evening the rain had ceased. He rushed to his hat and fled.

"Nature, Nature!" he exclaimed, when he was out in the air and hurrying by the dripping hedgerows, "you are not to be coaxed by me! I have jilted you shamefully, I own it; you are a female, and unforgiving. I don't complain. You may be very pretty, but you are the stupidest and most tire some companion that ever I met with. Thank Heaven, I am not married to you!"

Thus John Burley made his way into town, and paused at the first public-house. Out of that house he came with a jovial air, and on he strode towards the heart of London. Now he is in Leicester Square, and he gazes on the foreigners who stalk that region, and hums a tune; and now from yonder alley two forms emerge, and dog his careless footsteps; now through the maze of passages towards St. Martin's he threads his path, and, anticipating an orgy as he nears his favourite haunts, jingles the silver in his pockets; and now the two forms are at his heels.

"Hail to thee, O Freedom!" muttered John Burley, "thy dwelling is in cities, and thy palace is the tavern."

"In the king's name," quoth a gruff voice; and John Burley feels the horrid and familiar tap on the shoulder.

The two bailiffs who dogged have seized their prey. "At whose suit?" asked John Burley, falteringly. "Mr. Cox, the wine-merchant."

"Cox! A man to whom I gave a check on my bankers not three months ago!"

"But it war n't cashed."

"What does that signify?--the intention was the same. A good heart takes

the will for the deed. Cox is a monster of ingratitude, and I withdraw my custom."

"Sarve him right. Would your honour like a jarvey?"

"I would rather spend the money on something else," said John Burley. "Give me your arm, I am not proud. After all, thank Heaven, I shall not sleep in the country."

And John Burley made a night of it in the Fleet.

CHAPTER XII.

Miss Starke was one of those ladies who pass their lives in the direst of all civil strife,—war with their servants. She looked upon the members of that class as the unrelenting and sleepless enemies of the unfortunate householders condemned to employ them. She thought they ate and drank to their villainous utmost, in order to ruin their benefactors; that they lived in one constant conspiracy with one another and the tradesmen, the object of which was to cheat and pilfer. Miss Starke was a miserable woman. As she had no relations or friends who cared enough for her to share her solitary struggle against her domestic foes; and her income, though easy, was an annuity that died with herself, thereby reducing various nephews, nieces, or cousins to the strict bounds of a natural affection,—that did not exist; and as she felt the want of some friendly face amidst this world of distrust and hate,—so she had tried the resource of venal companions. But the venal companions had never stayed long, either they disliked Miss Starke, or Miss Starke disliked them.

Therefore the poor woman had resolved upon bringing up some little girl, whose heart, as she said to herself, would be fresh and uncorrupted, and from whom she might expect gratitude. She had been contented, on the whole, with Helen, and had meant to keep that child in her house as long as she (Miss Starke) remained upon the earth,—perhaps some thirty years longer; and then, having carefully secluded her from marriage and other friendship, to leave her nothing but the regret of having lost so kind a benefactress. Conformably with this notion, and in order to secure the affections of the child, Miss Starke had relaxed the frigid austerity natural to her manner and mode of thought, and been kind to Helen in an iron way. She had neither slapped nor pinched her, neither had she starved. She had allowed her to see Leonard, according to the agreement made with Dr. Morgan, and had laid out tenpence on cakes, besides

contributing fruit from her garden for the first interview,--a hospitality she did not think it fit to renew on subsequent occasions. In return for this, she conceived she had purchased the right to Helen bodily and spiritually, and nothing could exceed her indignation when she rose one morning and found the child had gone. As it never had occurred to her to ask Leonard's address, though she suspected Helen had gone to him, she was at a loss what to do, and remained for twenty-four hours in a state of inane depression. But then she began to miss the child so much that her energies woke, and she persuaded herself that she was actuated by the purest benevolence in trying to reclaim this poor creature from the world into which Helen had thus rashly plunged.

Accordingly she put an advertisement into the "Times," to the following effect, liberally imitated from one by which in former years she had recovered a favourite Blenheim:--

TWO GUINEAS' REWARD.

STRAYED, from Ivy Cottage, Highgate, a Little Girl,--answers to the name of Helen; with blue eyes and brown hair; white muslin frock, and straw hat with blue ribbons. Whoever will bring the same to Ivy Cottage, shall receive the above Reward.

N. B.---Nothing more will be offered.

Now it so happened that Mrs. Smedley had put an advertisement in the "Times" on her own account, relative to a niece of hers who was coming from the country, and for whom she desired to find a situation. So, contrary to her usual habit, she sent for the newspaper, and close by her own advertisement, she saw Miss Starke's.

It was impossible that she could mistake the description of Helen; and as this advertisement caught her eye the very day after the whole house had been disturbed and scandalized by Burley's noisy visit, and on which she had resolved to get rid of a lodger who received such visitors, the good-hearted woman was delighted to think that she could restore Helen to some safe home. While thus thinking, Helen herself entered the kitchen where Mrs. Smedley sat, and the landlady had the imprudence to point out the advertisement, and talk, as she called it, "seriously," to the little girl.

Helen in vain and with tears entreated her to take no step in reply to the advertisement. Mrs. Smedley felt that it was an affair of duty, and

was obdurate, and shortly afterwards put on her bonnet and left the house. Helen conjectured that she was on her way to Miss Starke's, and her whole soul was bent on flight. Leonard had gone to the office of the "Beehive" with his manuscripts; but she packed up all their joint effects, and just as she had done so, he returned. She communicated the news of the advertisement, and said she should be so miserable if compelled to go back to Miss Starke's, and implored him so pathetically to save her from such sorrow, that he at once assented to her proposal of flight. Luckily, little was owing to the landlady,--that little was left with the maid-servant; and, profiting by Mrs. Smedley's absence, they escaped without scene or conflict. Their effects were taken by Leonard to a stand of hackney vehicles, and then left at a coach-office while they went in search of lodgings. It was wise to choose an entirely new and remote district; and before night they were settled in an attic in Lambeth.

CHAPTER XIII.

As the reader will expect, no trace of Burley could Leonard find: the humourist had ceased to communicate with the "Beehive." But Leonard grieved for Burley's sake; and, indeed, he missed the intercourse of the large, wrong mind. But he settled down by degrees to the simple, loving society of his child companion, and in that presence grew more tranquil. The hours in the daytime that he did not pass at work, he spent as before, picking up knowledge at book-stalls; and at dusk he and Helen would stroll out,--sometimes striving to escape from the long suburb into fresh rural air; more often wandering to and fro the bridge that led to glorious Westminster--London's classic land--and watching the vague lamps reflected on the river. This haunt suited the musing, melancholy boy. He would stand long and with wistful silence by the balustrade, seating Helen thereon, that she too might look along the dark mournful waters, which, dark though they be, still have their charm of mysterious repose.

As the river flowed between the world of roofs, and the roar of human passions on either side, so in those two hearts flowed Thought--and all they knew of London was its shadow.

CHAPTER XIV.

There appeared in the "Beehive" certain very truculent political papers, --papers very like the tracts in the tinker's bag. Leonard did not heed them much, but they made far more sensation in the public that read the "Beehive" than Leonard's papers, full of rare promise though the last were. They greatly increased the sale of the periodical in the manufacturing towns, and began to awake the drowsy vigilance of the Home Office. Suddenly a descent was made upon the "Beehive" and all its papers and plant. The editor saw himself threatened with a criminal prosecution, and the certainty of two years' imprisonment: he did not like the prospect, and disappeared. One evening, when Leonard, unconscious of these mischances, arrived at the door of the office, he found it closed. An agitated mob was before it, and a voice that was not new to his ear was haranguing the bystanders, with many imprecations against "tyrants." He looked, and, to his amaze, recognized in the orator Mr. Sprott the Tinker.

The police came in numbers to disperse the crowd, and Mr. Sprott prudently vanished. Leonard learned, then, what had befallen, and again saw himself without employment and the means of bread.

Slowly he walked back. "O knowledge, knowledge!--powerless, indeed!" he murmured.

As he thus spoke, a handbill in large capitals met his eyes on a dead wall, "Wanted, a few smart young men for India."

A crimp accosted him. "You would make a fine soldier, my man. You have stout limbs of your own." Leonard moved on.

"It has come back then to this,--brute physical force after all! O Mind, despair! O Peasant, be a machine again!" He entered his attic noiselessly, and gazed upon Helen as she sat at work, straining her eyes by the open window--with tender and deep compassion. She had not heard him enter, nor was she aware of his presence. Patient and still she sat, and the small fingers plied busily. He gazed, and saw that her cheek was pale and hollow, and the hands looked so thin! His heart was deeply touched, and at that moment he had not one memory of the baffled Poet, one thought that proclaimed the Egotist.

He approached her gently, laid his hand on her shoulder, "Helen, put on your shawl and bonnet, and walk out,--I have much to say."

In a few moments she was ready, and they took their way to their

favourite haunt upon the bridge. Pausing in one of the recesses, or nooks, Leonard then began, "Helen, we must part!"

"Part?--Oh, brother!"

"Listen. All work that depends on mind is over for me, nothing remains but the labour of thews and sinews. I cannot go back to my village and say to all, 'My hopes were self-conceit, and my intellect a delusion!' I cannot. Neither in this sordid city can I turn menial or porter. I might be born to that drudgery, but my mind has, it may be unhappily, raised me above my birth. What, then, shall I do? I know not yet,--serve as a soldier, or push my way to some wilderness afar, as an emigrant, perhaps. But whatever my choice, I must henceforth be alone; I have a home no more. But there is a home for you, Helen, a very humble one (for you too, so well born), but very safe,--the roof of--of--my peasant mother. She will love you for my sake, and--and--"

Helen clung to him trembling, and sobbed out, "Anything, anything you will. But I can work; I can make money, Leonard. I do, indeed, make money,--you do not know how much, but enough for us both till better times come to you. Do not let us part."

"And I--a man, and born to labour--to be maintained by the work of an infant! No, Helen, do not so degrade me."

She drew back as she looked on his flushed brow, bowed her head submissively, and murmured, "Pardon."

"Ah," said Helen, after a pause, "if now we could but find my poor father's friend! I never so much cared for it before."

"Yes, he would surely provide for you."

"For me!" repeated Helen, in a tone of soft, deep reproach, and she turned away her head to conceal her tears.

"You are sure you would remember him, if we met him by chance?"

"Oh, yes. He was so different from all we see in this terrible city, and his eyes were like yonder stars, so clear and so bright; yet the light seemed to come from afar off, as the light does in yours, when your thoughts are away from all things round you. And then, too, his dog, whom he called Nero--I could not forget that."

"But his dog may not be always with him."

"But the bright clear eyes are! Ah, now you look up to heaven, and yours seem to dream like his."

Leonard did not answer, for his thoughts were indeed less on earth than struggling to pierce into that remote and mysterious heaven.

Both were silent long; the crowd passed them by unheedingly. Night deepened over the river, but the reflection of the lamp-lights on its waves was more visible than that of the stars. The beams showed the darkness of the strong current; and the craft that lay eastward on the tide, with sail-less spectral masts and black dismal hulks, looked death-like in their stillness.

Leonard looked down, and the thought of Chatterton's grim suicide came back to his soul; and a pale, scornful face, with luminous haunting eyes, seemed to look up from the stream, and murmur from livid lips, "Struggle no more against the tides on the surface,--all is calm and rest within the deep."

Starting in terror from the gloom of his reverie, the boy began to talk fast to Helen, and tried to soothe her with descriptions of the lowly home which he had offered.

He spoke of the light cares which she would participate with his mother (for by that name he still called the widow), and dwelt, with an eloquence that the contrast round him made sincere and strong, on the happy rural life, the shadowy woodlands, the rippling cornfields, the solemn, lone churchspire soaring from the tranquil landscape.

Flatteringly he painted the flowery terraces of the Italian exile, and the playful fountain that, even as he spoke, was flinging up its spray to the stars, through serene air untroubled by the smoke of cities, and untainted by the sinful sighs of men. He promised her the love and protection of natures akin to the happy scene: the simple, affectionate mother, the gentle pastor, the exile wise and kind, Violante, with dark eyes full of the mystic thoughts that solitude calls from childhood,-- Violante should be her companion.

"And, oh!" cried Helen, "if life be thus happy there, return with me, return! return!"

"Alas!" murmured the boy, "if the hammer once strike the spark from the

anvil, the spark must fly upward; it cannot fall back to earth until light has left it. Upward still, Helen,--let me go upward still!"

CHAPTER XV.

The next morning Helen was very ill,--so ill that, shortly after rising, she was forced to creep back to bed. Her frame shivered, her eyes were heavy, her hand burned like fire. Fever had set in. Perhaps she might have caught cold on the bridge, perhaps her emotions had proved too much for her frame. Leonard, in great alarm, called in the nearest apothecary. The apothecary looked grave, and said there was danger. And danger soon declared itself,--Helen became delirious. For several days she lay in this state, between life and death. Leonard then felt that all the sorrows of earth are light, compared with the fear of losing what we love. How valueless the envied laurel seemed beside the dying rose!

Thanks, perhaps, more to his heed and tending than to medical skill, she recovered sense at last. Immediate peril was over; but she was very weak and reduced, her ultimate recovery doubtful, convalescence, at best, likely to be very slow.

But when she learned how long she had been thus ill, she looked anxiously at Leonard's face as he bent over her, and faltered forth, "Give me my work; I am strong enough for that now,--it would amuse me."

Leonard burst into tears.

Alas! he had no work himself; all their joint money had melted away. The apothecary was not like good Dr. Morgan; the medicines were to be paid for, and the rent. Two days before, Leonard had pawned Riccabocca's watch; and when the last shilling thus raised was gone, how should he support Helen? Nevertheless he conquered his tears, and assured her that he had employment; and that so earnestly that she believed him, and sank into soft sleep. He listened to her breathing, kissed her forehead, and left the room. He turned into his own neighbouring garret, and leaning his face on his hands, collected all his thoughts.

He must be a beggar at last. He must write to Mr. Dale for money,--Mr. Dale, too, who knew the secret of his birth. He would rather have begged of a stranger; it seemed to add a new dishonour to his mother's memory

for the child to beg of one who was acquainted. with her shame. Had he himself been the only one to want and to starve, he would have sunk inch by inch into the grave of famine, before he would have so subdued his pride. But Helen, there on that bed,--Helen needing, for weeks perhaps, all support, and illness making luxuries themselves like necessities! Beg he must. And when he so resolved, had you but seen the proud, bitter soul he conquered, you would have said, "This, which he thinks is degradation,--this is heroism." Oh, strange human heart! no epic ever written achieves the Sublime and the Beautiful which are graven, unread by human eye, in thy secret leaves.

Of whom else should he beg? His mother had nothing, Riccabocca was poor, and the stately Violante, who had exclaimed, "Would that I were a man!"--he could not endure the thought that she should pity him and despise. The Avenels! No,--thrice No. He drew towards him hastily ink and paper, and wrote rapid lines that were wrung from him as from the bleeding strings of life.

But the hour for the post had passed, the letter must wait till the next day; and three days at least would elapse before he could receive an answer. He left the letter on the table, and, stifling as for air, went forth. He crossed the bridge, he passed on mechanically, and was borne along by a crowd pressing towards the doors of parliament. A debate that excited popular interest was fixed for that evening, and many bystanders collected in the street to see the members pass to and fro, or hear what speakers had yet risen to take part in the debate, or try to get orders for the gallery.

He halted amidst these loiterers, with no interest, indeed, in common with them, but looking over their heads abstractedly towards the tall Funeral Abbey,--imperial Golgotha of Poets and Chiefs and Kings.

Suddenly his attention was diverted to those around by the sound of a name, displeasingly known to him. "How are you, Randal Leslie? coming to hear the debate?" said a member, who was passing through the street.

"Yes; Mr. Egerton promised to get me under the gallery. He is to speak himself to-night, and I have never heard him. As you are going into the House, will you remind him of his promise to me?"

"I can't now, for he is speaking already,--and well too. I hurried from the Athenaeum, where I was dining, on purpose to be in time, as I heard that his speech was making a great effect."

"This is very unlucky," said Randal. "I had no idea he would speak so early."

"C----- brought him up by a direct personal attack. But follow me; perhaps I can get you into the House; and a man like you, Leslie, from whom we expect great things some day, I can tell you, should not miss any such opportunity of knowing what this House of ours is on a field-night. Come on!"

The member hurried towards the door; and as Randal followed him, a bystander cried, "That is the young man who wrote the famous pamphlet, --Egerton's relation."

"Oh, indeed!" said another. "Clever man, Egerton,--I am waiting for him."

"So am I"

"Why, you are not a constituent, as I am."

"No; but he has been very kind to my nephew, and I must thank him. You are a constituent--he is an honour to your town."

"So he is: enlightened man!"

"And so generous!"

"Brings forward really good measures," quoth the politician.

"And clever young men," said the uncle.

Therewith one or two others joined in the praise of Audley Egerton, and many anecdotes of his liberality were told. Leonard listened at first listlessly, at last with thoughtful attention. He had heard Burley, too, speak highly of this generous statesman, who, without pretending to genius himself, appreciated it in others. He suddenly remembered, too, that Egerton was half-brother to the squire. Vague notions of some appeal to this eminent person, not for charity, but employment to his mind, gleamed across him,--inexperienced boy that he yet was! And while thus meditating, the door of the House opened and out came Audley Egerton himself. A partial cheering, followed by a general murmur, apprised Leonard of the presence of the popular statesman. Egerton was caught hold of by some five or six persons in succession; a shake of the hand, a nod, a brief whispered word or two, sufficed the practised member for

graceful escape; and soon, free from the crowd, his tall, erect figure passed on, and turned towards the bridge. He paused at the angle and took out his watch, looking at it by the lamp-light.

"Harley will be here soon," he muttered,--"he is always punctual; and now that I have spoken, I can give him an hour or so. That is well."

As he replaced his watch in his pocket and re-buttoned his coat over his firm, broad chest, he lifted his eyes, and saw a young man standing before him.

"Do you want me?" asked the statesman, with the direct brevity of his practical character.

"Mr. Egerton," said the young man, with a voice that slightly trembled and yet was manly amidst emotion, "you have a great name, and great power; I stand here in these streets of London without a friend, and without employment. I believe that I have it in me to do some nobler work than that of bodily labour, had I but one friend,--one opening for my thoughts. And now I have said this, I scarcely know how, or why, but from despair, and the sudden impulse which that despair took from the praise that follows your success, I have nothing more to add."

Audley Egerton was silent for a moment, struck by the tone and address of the stranger; but the consummate and wary man of the world, accustomed to all manner of strange applications and all varieties of imposture, quickly recovered from a passing and slight effect.

"Are you a native of?" (naming the town which the statesman represented).

"No, sir."

"Well, young man, I am very sorry for you; but the good sense you must possess (for I judge of that by the education you have evidently received) must tell you that a public man, whatever be his patronage, has it too fully absorbed by claimants who have a right to demand it, to be able to listen to strangers."

He paused a moment, and as Leonard stood silent, added with more kindness than most public men so accosted would have shown,

"You say you are friendless,--poor fellow! In early life that happens to many of us, who find friends enough before the close. Be honest, and well-conducted: lean on yourself, not on strangers; work with the body if

you can't with the mind; and, believe me, that advice is all I can give you, unless this trifle"--and the minister held out a crown-piece.

Leonard bowed, shook his head sadly, and walked away. Egerton looked after him with a slight pang.

"Pooh!" said he to himself, "there must be thousands in the same state in these streets of London. I cannot redress the necessities of civilization. Well educated! It is not from ignorance henceforth that society will suffer,--it is from over-educating the hungry thousands who, thus unfitted for manual toil, and with no career for mental, will some day or other stand like that boy in our streets, and puzzle wiser ministers than I am."

As Egerton thus mused, and passed on to the bridge, a bugle-horn rang merrily from the box of a gay four-in-hand. A drag-coach with superb blood-horses rattled over the causeway, and in the driver Egerton recognized his nephew, Frank Hazeldean.

The young Guardsman was returning with a lively party of men from dining at Greenwich, and the careless laughter of these children of pleasure floated far over the still river; it vexed the ear of the careworn statesman,--sad, perhaps, with all his greatness, lonely amidst all his crowd of friends. It reminded him, perhaps, of his own youth, when such parties and companionships were familiar to him, though through them all he had borne an ambitious, aspiring soul. "Le jeu vaut-il la chandelle?" said he, shrugging his shoulders.

The coach rolled rapidly past Leonard, as he stood leaning against the corner of the bridge, and the mire of the kennel splashed over him from the hoofs of the fiery horses. The laughter smote on his ear more discordantly than on the minister's, but it begot no envy.

"Life is a dark riddle," said he, smiting his breast.

And he walked slowly on, gained the recess where he had stood several nights before with Helen, and, dizzy with want of food, and worn out for want of sleep, he sank down into the dark corner; while the river that rolled under the arch of stone muttered dirge-like in his ear,--as under the social key-stone wails and rolls on forever the mystery of Human Discontent. Take comfort, O Thinker by the stream! 'T is the river that founded and gave pomp to the city; and, without the discontent, where were progress, what were Man? Take comfort, O THINKER! wherever the stream over which thou bendest, or beside which thou sinkest, weary and

desolate, frets the arch that supports thee, never dream that, by
destroying the bridge, thou canst silence the moan of the wave!

CHAPTER XVI.

Before a table, in the apartments appropriated to him in his father's house at Knightsbridge, sat Lord L'Estrange, sorting or destroying letters and papers,—an ordinary symptom of change of residence. There are certain trifles by which a shrewd observer may judge of a man's disposition. Thus, ranged on the table, with some elegance, but with soldier-like precision, were sundry little relics of former days, hallowed by some sentiment of memory, or perhaps endeared solely by custom; which, whether he was in Egypt, Italy, or England, always made part of the furniture of Harley's room. Even the small, old-fashioned, and somewhat inconvenient inkstand into which he dipped the pen as he labelled the letters he put aside, belonged to the writing-desk which had been his pride as a schoolboy. Even the books that lay scattered round were not new works, not those to which we turn to satisfy the curiosity of an hour, or to distract our graver thoughts; they were chiefly either Latin or Italian poets, with many a pencil-mark on the margin; or books which, making severe demand on thought, require slow and frequent perusal, and become companions. Somehow or other, in remarking that even in dumb, inanimate things the man was averse to change, and had the habit of attaching himself to whatever was connected with old associations, you might guess that he clung with pertinacity to affections more important, and you could better comprehend the freshness of his friendship for one so dissimilar in pursuits and character as Audley Egerton. An affection once admitted into the heart of Harley L'Estrange seemed never to be questioned or reasoned with; it became tacitly fixed, as it were, into his own nature, and little less than a revolution of his whole system could dislodge or disturb it.

Lord L'Estrange's hand rested now upon a letter in a stiff, legible Italian character, and instead of disposing of it at once as he had done with the rest, he spread it before him, and re-read the contents. It was a letter from Riccabocca, received a few weeks since, and ran thus:--

LETTER FROM SIGNOR RICCABOCCA TO LORD L'ESTRANGE.

I thank you, my noble friend, for judging of me with faith in my honour,

and respect for my reverses.

No, and thrice no, to all concessions, all overtures, all treaty with Giulio Franzini. I write the name, and my emotions choke me. I must pause, and cool back into disdain. It is over. Pass from that subject. But you have alarmed me. This sister! I have not seen her since her childhood; but she was brought up under his influence,

--she can but work as his agent. She wish to learn my residence! It can be but for some hostile and malignant purpose. I may trust in you, --I know that. You say I may trust equally in the discretion of your friend. Pardon me,--my confidence is not so elastic. A word may give the clew to my retreat. But, if discovered, what harm can ensue? An English roof protects me from Austrian despotism: true; but not the brazen tower of Danae could protect me from Italian craft. And, were there nothing worse, it would be intolerable to me to live under the eyes of a relentless spy. Truly saith our proverb, 'He sleeps ill for whom the enemy wakes.' Look you, my friend, I have done with my old life, --I wish to cast it from me as a snake its skin. I have denied myself all that exiles deem consolation. No pity for misfortune, no messages from sympathizing friendship, no news from a lost and bereaved country follow me to my hearth under the skies of the stranger. From all these I have voluntarily cut myself off. I am as dead to the life I once lived as if the Styx rolled between it and me. With that sternness which is admissible only to the afflicted, I have denied myself even the consolation of your visits. I have told you fairly and simply that your presence would unsettle all my enforced and infirm philosophy, and remind me only of the past, which I seek to blot from remembrance. You have complied on the one condition, that whenever I really want your aid I will ask it; and, meanwhile, you have generously sought to obtain me justice from the cabinets of ministers and in the courts of kings. I did not refuse your heart this luxury; for I have a child--Ah! I have taught that child already to revere your name, and in her prayers it is not forgotten. But now that you are convinced that even your zeal is unavailing, I ask you to discontinue attempts which may but bring the spy upon my track, and involve me in new misfortunes. Believe me, O brilliant Englishman, that I am satisfied and contented with my lot. I am sure it would not be for my happiness to change it, 'Chi non ha provato il male non conosce il bone.'

["One does not know when one is well off till one has known misfortune."]

You ask me how I live,--I answer, /alla giornata/,--[To the day]--not for

the morrow, as I did once. I have accustomed myself to the calm existence of a village. I take interest in its details. There is my wife, good creature, sitting opposite to me, never asking what I write, or to whom, but ready to throw aside her work and talk the moment the pen is out of my hand. Talk--and what about? Heaven knows! But I would rather hear that talk, though on the affairs of a hamlet, than babble again with recreant nobles and blundering professors about commonwealths and constitutions. When I want to see how little those last influence the happiness of wise men, have I not Machiavelli and Thucydides? Then, by and by, the parson will drop in, and we argue. He never knows when he is beaten, so the argument is everlasting. On fine days I ramble out by a winding rill with my Violante, or stroll to my friend the squire's, and see how healthful a thing is true pleasure; and on wet days I shut myself up, and mope, perhaps till, hark! a gentle tap at the door, and in comes Violante, with her dark eyes, that shine out through reproachful tears,--reproachful that I should mourn alone, while she is under my roof; so she puts her arms round me, and in five minutes all is sunshine within. What care we for your English gray clouds without?

Leave me, my dear Lord,--leave me to this quiet happy passage towards old age, serener than the youth that I wasted so wildly; and guard well the secret on which my happiness depends.

Now to yourself, before I close. Of that same yourself you speak too little, as of me too much. But I so well comprehend the profound melancholy that lies underneath the wild and fanciful humour with which you but suggest, as in sport, what you feel so in earnest. The laborious solitude of cities weighs on you. You are flying back to the /dolce far niente/,--to friends few, but intimate; to life monotonous, but unrestrained; and even there the sense of loneliness will again seize upon you; and you do not seek, as I do, the annihilation of memory,--your dead passions are turned to ghosts that haunt you, and unfit you for the living world. I see it all,--I see it still, in your hurried fantastic lines, as I saw it when we two sat amidst the pines and beheld the blue lake stretched below, I troubled by the shadow of the Future, you disturbed by that of the Past.

Well, but you say, half seriously, half in jest, "I will escape from this prison-house of memory; I will form new ties, like other men, and before it be too late; I will marry. Ay, but I must love,--there is the difficulty." Difficulty,--yes, and Heaven be thanked for it! Recall all the unhappy marriages that have come to your knowledge: pray, have not eighteen out of twenty been marriages for Love? It always has been so, and it always will; because, whenever we love deeply, we exact so much

and forgive so little. Be content to find some one with whom your hearth and your honour are safe. You will grow to love what never wounds your heart, you will soon grow out of love with what must always disappoint your imagination. /Cospetto! I wish my Jemima had a younger sister for you. Yet it was with a deep groan that I settled myself to a--Jemima.

Now, I have written you a long letter, to prove how little I need of your compassion or your zeal. Once more let there be long silence between us. It is not easy for me to correspond with a man of your rank, and not incur the curious gossip of my still little pool of a world which the splash of a pebble can break into circles. I must take this over to a post-town some ten miles off, and drop it into the box by stealth. Adieu, dear and noble friend, gentlest heart and subtlest fancy that I have met in my walk through life. Adieu. Write me word when you have abandoned a day-dream and found a Jemima.

ALPHONSO.

P. S.--For Heaven's sake, caution and recaution your friend the minister not to drop a word to this woman that may betray my hiding-place.

"Is he really happy?" murmured Harley, as he closed the letter; and he sank for a few moments into a revery.

"This life in a village, this wife in a lady who puts down her work to talk about villagers--what a contrast to Audley's full existence! And I cannot envy nor comprehend either! yet my own existence--what is it?"

He rose, and moved towards the window, from which a rustic stair descended to a green lawn, studded with larger trees than are often found in the grounds of a suburban residence. There were calm and coolness in the sight, and one could scarcely have supposed that London lay so near.

The door opened softly, and a lady past middle age entered, and approaching Harley, as he still stood musing by the window, laid her hand on his shoulder. What character there is in a hand! Hers was a hand that Titian would have painted with elaborate care! Thin, white, and delicate, with the blue veins raised from the surface. Yet there was something more than mere patrician elegance in the form and texture. A true physiologist would have said at once, "There are intellect and pride in that hand, which seems to fix a hold where it rests; and lying so lightly, yet will not be as lightly shaken off."

"Harley," said the lady--and Harley turned--"you do not deceive me by that smile," she continued sadly; "you were not smiling when I entered."

"It is rarely that we smile to ourselves, my dear mother; and I have done nothing lately so foolish as to cause me to smile at myself."

"My son," said Lady Lansmere, somewhat abruptly, but with great earnestness, "you come from a line of illustrious ancestors; and methinks they ask from their tombs why the last of their race has no aim and no object, no interest, no home, in the land which they served, and which rewarded them with its honours."

"Mother," said the soldier, simply, "when the land was in danger I served it as my forefathers served,--and my answer would be the scars on my breast."

"Is it only in danger that a country is served, only in war that duty is fulfilled? Do you think that your father, in his plain, manly life of country gentleman, does not fulfil, though perhaps too obscurely, the objects for which aristocracy is created, and wealth is bestowed?"

"Doubtless he does, ma'am,--and better than his vagrant son ever can."

"Yet his vagrant son has received such gifts from nature, his youth was so rich in promise, his boyhood so glowed at the dream of glory!"

"Ay," said Harley, very softly, "it is possible,--and all to be buried in a single grave!"

The countess started, and withdrew her hand from Harley's shoulder.

Lady Lansmere's countenance was not one that much varied in expression. She had in this, as in her cast of feature, little resemblance to her son.

Her features were slightly aquiline,--the eyebrows of that arch which gives a certain majesty to the aspect; the lines round the mouth were habitually rigid and compressed. Her face was that of one who had gone through great emotion and subdued it. There was something formal, and even ascetic, in the character of her beauty, which was still considerable, in her air and in her dress. She might have suggested to you the idea of some Gothic baroness of old, half chatelaine, half-abbess; you would see at a glance that she did not live in the light world around her, and disdained its fashion and its mode of thought; yet

with all this rigidity it was still the face of the woman who has known human ties and human affections. And now, as she gazed long on Harley's quiet, saddened brow, it was the face of a mother.

"A single grave," she said, after a long pause. "And you were then but a boy, Harley! Can such a memory influence you even to this day? It is scarcely possible: it does not seem to me within the realities of man's life,—though it might be of woman's."

"I believe," said Harley, half soliloquizing, "that I have a great deal of the woman in me. Perhaps men who live much alone, and care not for men's objects, do grow tenacious of impressions, as your sex does. But oh," he cried, aloud, and with a sudden change of countenance, "oh, the hardest and the coldest man would have felt as I do, had he known HER, had he loved HER. She was like no other woman I have ever met. Bright and glorious creature of another sphere! She descended on this earth and darkened it when she passed away. It is no use striving. Mother, I have as much courage as our steel-clad fathers ever had. I have dared in battle and in deserts, against man and the wild beast, against the storm and the ocean, against the rude powers of Nature,—dangers as dread as ever pilgrim or Crusader rejoiced to brave. But courage against that one memory! no, I have none!"

"Harley, Harley, you break my heart!" cried the countess, clasping her hands.

"It is astonishing," continued her son, so rapt in his own thoughts that he did not, perhaps, hear her outcry. "Yea, verily, it is astonishing, that considering the thousands of women I have seen and spoken with, I never see a face like hers,—never hear a voice so sweet. And all this universe of life cannot afford me one look and one tone that can restore me to man's privilege,—love. Well, well, well, life has other things yet; Poetry and Art live still; still smiles the heaven and still wave the trees. Leave me to happiness in my own way."

The countess was about to reply, when the door was thrown hastily open, and Lord Lansmere walked in.

The earl was some years older than the countess, but his placid face showed less wear and tear,—a benevolent, kindly face, without any evidence of commanding intellect, but with no lack of sense in its pleasant lines; his form not tall, but upright and with an air of consequence,—a little pompous, but good-humouredly so,—the pomposity of the Grand Seigneur who has lived much in provinces, whose will has been

rarely disputed, and whose importance has been so felt and acknowledged as to react insensibly on himself;--an excellent man; but when you glanced towards the high brow and dark eye of the countess, you marvelled a little how the two had come together, and, according to common report, lived so happily in the union.

"Ho, ho! my dear Harley," cried Lord Lansmere, rubbing his hands with an appearance of much satisfaction, "I have just been paying a visit to the duchess."

"What duchess, my dear father?"

"Why, your mother's first cousin, to be sure,--the Duchess of Knaresborough, whom, to oblige me, you condescended to call upon; and delighted I am to hear that you admire Lady Mary--"

She is very high bred, and rather--high-nosed," answered Harley. Then, observing that his mother looked pained, and his father disconcerted, he added seriously, "But handsome certainly."

"Well, Harley," said the earl, recovering himself, "the duchess, taking advantage of our connection to speak freely, has intimated to me that Lady Mary has been no less struck with yourself; and to come to the point, since you allow that it is time you should think of marrying, I do not know a more desirable alliance. What do you say, Katherine?"

"The duke is of a family that ranks in history before the Wars of the Roses," said Lady Lansmere, with an air of deference to her husband; "and there has never been one scandal in its annals, nor one blot on its scutcheon. But I am sure my dear Lord must think that the duchess should not have made the first overture,--even to a friend and a kinsman?"

"Why, we are old-fashioned people," said the earl, rather embarrassed, "and the duchess is a woman of the world."

"Let us hope," said the countess, mildly, "that her daughter is not."

"I would not marry Lady Mary, if all the rest of the female sex were turned into apes," said Lord L'Estrange, with deliberate fervour.

"Good heavens!" cried the earl, "what extraordinary language is this? And pray why, sir?"

HARLEY.--"I can't say; there is no why in these cases. But, my dear

father, you are not keeping faith with me."

LORD LANSMERE.--"HOW?"

HARLEY.--"You and my Lady, here, entreat me to marry; I promise to do my best to obey you, but on one condition, that I choose for myself, and take my time about it. Agreed on both sides. Whereon, off goes your Lordship--actually before noon, at an hour when no lady, without a shudder, could think of cold blonde and damp orange flowers--off goes your Lordship, I say, and commits poor Lady Mary and your unworthy son to a mutual admiration,--which neither of us ever felt. Pardon me, my father, but this is grave. Again let me claim your promise,--full choice for myself, and no reference to the Wars of the Roses. What War of the Roses like that between Modesty and Love upon the cheek of the virgin!"

LADY LANSMERE.--"Full choice for yourself, Harley: so be it. But we, too, named a condition,--did we not, Lansmere?"

THE EARL (puzzled).--"Eh, did we? Certainly we did."

HARLEY.--"What was it?"

LADY LANSMERE.--"The son of Lord Lansmere can only marry the daughter of a gentleman."

THE EARL.---"Of course, of course."

The blood rushed over Harley's fair face, and then as suddenly left it pale.

He walked away to the window; his mother followed him, and again laid her hand on his shoulder.

"You were cruel," said he, gently, and in a whisper, as he winced under the touch of the hand. Then turning to the earl, who was gazing at him in blank surprise,--it never occurred to Lord Lansmere that there could be a doubt of his son's marrying beneath the rank modestly stated by the countess,--Harley stretched forth his hand, and said, in his soft winning tone, "You have ever been most gracious to me, and most forbearing; it is but just that I should sacrifice the habits of an egotist, to gratify a wish which you so warmly entertain. I agree with you, too, that our race should not close in me,--Noblesse oblige. But you know I was ever romantic; and I must love where I marry; or, if not love, I must feel that my wife is worthy of all the love I could once have bestowed. Now,

as to the vague word 'gentleman' that my mother employs--word that means so differently on different lips--I confess that I have a prejudice against young ladies brought up in the 'excellent foppery of the world,' as the daughters of gentlemen of our rank mostly are. I crave, therefore, the most liberal interpretation of this word 'gentleman.' And so long as there be nothing mean or sordid in the birth, habits, and education of the father of this bride to be, I trust you will both agree to demand nothing more,--neither titles nor pedigree."

"Titles, no, assuredly," said Lady Lansmere; "they do not make gentlemen."

"Certainly not," said the earl; "many of our best families are untitled."

"Titles--no," repeated Lady Lansmere; "but ancestors yes."

"Ah, my mother," said Harley, with his most sad and quiet smile, "it is fated that we shall never agree. The first of our race is ever the one we are most proud of; and pray, what ancestors had he? Beauty, virtue, modesty, intellect,--if these are not nobility enough for a man, he is a slave to the dead."

With these words Harley took up his hat and made towards the door.

"You said yourself, 'Noblesse oblige,'" said the countess, following him to the threshold; "we have nothing more to add."

Harley slightly shrugged his shoulders, kissed his mother's hand; whistled to Nero, who started up from a doze by the window, and went his way.

"Does he really go abroad next week?" said the earl. "So he says."

"I am afraid there is no chance for Lady Mary," resumed Lord Lansmere, with a slight but melancholy smile.

"She has not intellect enough to charm him. She is not worthy of Harley," said the proud mother.

"Between you and me," rejoined the earl, rather timidly, "I don't see what good his intellect does him. He could not be more unsettled and useless if he were the merest dunce in the three kingdoms. And so ambitious as he was when a boy! Katherine, I sometimes fancy that you know what changed him."

"I!" Nay, my dear Lord, it is a common change enough with the young, when of such fortunes, who find, when they enter life, that there is really little left for them to strive for. Had Harley been a poor man's son, it might have been different."

"I was born to the same fortunes as Harley," said the earl, shrewdly, "and yet I flatter myself I am of some use to old England."

The countess seized upon the occasion, complimented her Lord, and turned the subject.

CHAPTER XVII.

Harley spent his day in his usual desultory, lounging manner,--dined in his quiet corner at his favourite club. Nero, not admitted into the club, patiently waited for him outside the door. The dinner over, dog and man, equally indifferent to the crowd, sauntered down that thoroughfare which, to the few who can comprehend the Poetry of London, has associations of glory and of woe sublime as any that the ruins of the dead elder world can furnish,--thoroughfare that traverses what was once the courtyard of Whitehall, having to its left the site of the palace that lodged the royalty of Scotland; gains, through a narrow strait, that old isle of Thorney, in which Edward the Confessor received the ominous visit of the Conqueror; and, widening once more by the Abbey and the Hall of Westminster, then loses itself, like all memories of earthly grandeur, amidst humble passages and mean defiles.

Thus thought Harley L'Estrange--ever less amidst the actual world around him than the images invoked by his own solitary soul--as he gained the bridge, and saw the dull, lifeless craft sleeping on the "Silent Way," once loud and glittering with the gilded barks of the antique Seigneurie of England.

It was on that bridge that Audley Egerton had appointed to meet L'Estrange, at an hour when he calculated he could best steal a respite from debate. For Harley, with his fastidious dislike to all the resorts of his equals, had declined to seek his friend in the crowded regions of Bellamy's.

Harley's eye, as he passed along the bridge, was attracted by a still

form, seated on the stones in one of the nooks, with its face covered by its hands. "If I were a sculptor," said he to himself, "I should remember that image whenever I wished to convey the idea of Despondency!" He lifted his looks and saw, a little before him in the midst of the causeway, the firm, erect figure of Audley Egerton. The moonlight was full on the bronzed countenance of the strong public man, with its lines of thought and care, and its vigorous but cold expression of intense self-control.

"And looking yonder," continued Harley's soliloquy, "I should remember that form, when I wished to hew out from the granite the idea of Endurance."

"So you are come, and punctually," said Egerton, linking his arm in Harley's.

HARLEY--"Punctually, of course, for I respect your time, and I will not detain you long. I presume you will speak to-night?"

EGERTON.--"I have spoken."

HARLEY (with interest).--"And well, I hope?"

EGERTON.--"With effect, I suppose, for I have been loudly cheered, which does not always happen to me."

HARLEY.--"And that gave you pleasure?"

EGERTON (after a moment's thought).--"No, not the least."

HARLEY.--"What, then, attaches you so much to this life,--constant drudgery, constant warfare, the more pleasurable faculties dormant, all the harsher ones aroused, if even its rewards (and I take the best of those to be applause) do not please you?"

EGERTON.--"What? Custom."

HARLEY.--"Martyr."

EGERTON.--"You say it: but turn to yourself; you have decided, then, to leave England next week?"

HARLEY (moodily).---"Yes. This life in a capital, where all are so active, myself so objectless, preys on me like a low fever. Nothing here

amuses me, nothing interests, nothing comforts and consoles. But I am resolved, before it be too late, to make one great struggle out of the Past, and into the natural world of men. In a word, I have resolved to marry."

EGERTON.--" Whom?"

HARLEY (seriously).--" Upon my life, my dear fellow, you are a great philosopher. You have hit the exact question. You see I cannot marry a dream; and where, out of dreams, shall I find this 'whom'?"

EGERTON.--"You do not search for her."

HARLEY. "Do we ever search for love? Does it not flash upon us when we least expect it? Is it not like the inspiration to the muse? What poet sits down and says, 'I will write a poem'? What man looks out and says, 'I will fall in love'? No! Happiness, as the great German tells us, 'falls suddenly from the bosom of the gods;' so does love."

EGERTON.--"You remember the old line in Horace: 'The tide flows away while the boor sits on the margin and waits for the ford.'"

HARLEY.--"An idea which incidentally dropped from you some weeks ago, and which I have before half-meditated, has since haunted me. If I could but find some child with sweet dispositions and fair intellect not yet formed, and train her up according to my ideal. I am still young enough to wait a few years. And meanwhile I shall have gained what I so sadly want,--an object in life."

EGERTON.--"You are ever the child of romance. But what--"

Here the minister was interrupted by a messenger from the House of Commons, whom Audley had instructed to seek him on the bridge should his presence be required. "Sir, the Opposition are taking advantage of the thinness of the House to call for a division. Mr. ----- is put up to speak for time, but they won't hear him."

Egerton turned hastily to Lord L'Estrange. "You see, you must excuse me now. To-morrow I must go to Windsor for two days: but we shall meet on my return."

"It does not matter," answered Harley; "I stand out of the pale of your advice, O practical man of sense. And if," added Harley, with affectionate and mournful sweetness,--"if I weary you with complaints

which you cannot understand, it is only because of old schoolboy habits. I can have no trouble that I do not confide to you."

Egerton's hand trembled as it pressed his friend's, and without a word, he hurried away abruptly. Harley remained motionless for some seconds, in deep and quiet revery; then he called to his dog, and turned back towards Westminster.

He passed the nook in which had sat the still figure of Despondency; but the figure had now risen, and was leaning against the balustrade. The dog, who preceded his master, passed by the solitary form and sniffed it suspiciously.

"Nero, sir, come here," said Harley.

"Nero,"--that was the name by which Helen had said that her father's friend had called his dog; and the sound startled Leonard as he leaned, sick at heart, against the stone. He lifted his head and looked wistfully, eagerly into Harley's face. Those eyes, bright, clear, yet so strangely deep and absent, which Helen had described, met his own, and chained them. For L'Estrange halted also; the boy's countenance was not unfamiliar to him. He returned the inquiring look fixed on his own, and recognized the student by the bookstall.

"The dog is quite harmless, sir," said L'Estrange, with a smile.

"And you call him 'Nero'?" said Leonard, still gazing on the stranger.

Harley mistook the drift of the question.

"Nero, sir; but he is free from the sanguinary propensities of his Roman namesake." Harley was about to pass on, when Leonard said falteringly,

"Pardon me, but can it be possible that you are one whom I have sought in vain on behalf of the child of Captain Digby?"

Harley stopped short. "Digby!" he exclaimed, "where is he? He should have found me easily. I gave him an address."

"Ah, Heaven be thanked!" cried Leonard. "Helen is saved--she will not die," and he burst into tears.

A very few moments and a very few words sufficed to explain to Harley the state of his old fellow-soldier's orphan. And Harley himself soon stood

in the young sufferer's room, supporting her burning temples on his breast, and whispering into ears that heard him as in a happy dream, "Comfort, comfort; your father yet lives in me."

And then Helen, raising her eyes, said, "But Leonard is my brother--more than brother-and he needs a father's care more than I do."

"Hush, hush, Helen. I need no one, nothing now!" cried Leonard, and his tears gushed over the little hand that clasped his own.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Harley L'Estrange was a man whom all things that belong to the romantic and poetic side of our human life deeply impressed. When he came to learn the ties between these two Children of Nature, standing side by side, alone amidst the storms of fate, his heart was more deeply moved than it had been for many years. In those dreary attics, overshadowed by the smoke and reek of the humble suburb, the workday world in its harshest and tritest forms below and around them, he recognized that divine poem which comes out from all union between the mind and the heart. Here, on the rough deal table (the ink scarcely dry), lay the writings of the young wrestler for fame and bread; there, on the other side of the partition, on that mean pallet, lay the boy's sole comforter, the all that warmed his heart with living mortal affection. On one side the wall, the world of imagination; on the other, this world of grief and of love. And in both, a spirit equally sublime,--unselfish devotion,--"the something afar from the sphere of our sorrow."

He looked round the room into which he had followed Leonard, on quitting Helen's bedside. He noted the manuscripts on the table, and pointing to them, said gently, "And these are the labours by which you supported the soldier's orphan?--soldier yourself in a hard battle!"

"The battle was lost,--I could not support her," replied Leonard, mournfully.

"But you did not desert her. When Pandora's box was opened, they say Hope lingered last--"

"False, false," said Leonard; "a heathen's notion. There are deities that linger behind Hope,--Gratitude, Love, and Duty."

"Yours is no common nature," exclaimed Harley, admiringly, "but I must sound it more deeply hereafter: at present I hasten for the physician; I shall return with him. We must move that poor child from this low close air as soon as possible. Meanwhile, let me qualify your rejection of the old fable. Wherever Gratitude, Love, and Duty remain to man, believe me that Hope is there too, though she may be often invisible, hidden behind the sheltering wings of the nobler deities."

Harley said this with that wondrous smile of his, which cast a brightness over the whole room, and went away. Leonard stole softly towards the grimy window; and looking up towards the stars that shone pale over the roof-tops, he murmured, "O Thou, the All-seeing and All-merciful! how it comforts me now to think that, though my dreams of knowledge may have sometimes obscured the heavens, I never doubted that Thou wert there! as luminous and everlasting, though behind the cloud!" So, for a few minutes, he prayed silently, then passed into Helen's room, and sat beside her motionless, for she slept. She woke just as Harley returned with a physician; and then Leonard, returning to his own room, saw amongst his papers the letter he had written to Mr. Dale, and muttering, "I need not disgrace my calling,--I need not be the mendicant now"--held the letter to the flame of the candle. And while he said this, and as the burning tinder dropped on the floor, the sharp hunger, unfelt during his late anxious emotions, gnawed at his entrails. Still, even hunger could not reach that noble pride which had yielded to a sentiment nobler than itself, and he smiled as he repeated, "No mendicant!--the life that I was sworn to guard is saved. I can raise against Fate the front of Man once more."

CHAPTER XIX.

A few days afterwards, and Helen, removed to a pure air, and under the advice of the first physicians, was out of all danger.

It was a pretty detached cottage, with its windows looking over the wild heaths of Norwood, to which Harley rode daily to watch the convalescence of his young charge: an object in life was already found. As she grew better and stronger, he coaxed her easily into talking, and listened to her with pleased surprise. The heart so infantine and the sense so womanly struck him much by its rare contrast and combination. Leonard, whom he had insisted on placing also in the cottage, had stayed there

willingly till Helen's recovery was beyond question. Then he came to Lord L'Estrange, as the latter was about one day to leave the cottage, and said quietly, "Now, my Lord, that Helen is safe, and now that she will need me no more, I can no longer be a pensioner on your bounty. I return to London."

"You are my visitor, not my pensioner, foolish boy," said Harley, who had already noticed the pride which spoke in that farewell; "come into the garden and let us talk."

Harley seated himself on a bench on the little lawn; Nero crouched at his feet; Leonard stood beside him.

"So," said Lord L'Estrange, "you would return to London? What to do?"

"Fulfil my fate."

"And that?"

"I cannot guess. Fate is the Isis whose veil no mortal can ever raise."

"You should be born for great things," said Harley, abruptly. "I am sure that you write well. I have seen that you study with passion. Better than writing and better than study, you have a noble heart, and the proud desire of independence. Let me see your manuscripts, or any copies of what you have already printed. Do not hesitate,--I ask but to be a reader. I don't pretend to be a patron: it is a word I hate."

Leonard's eyes sparkled through their sudden moisture. He brought out his portfolio, placed it on the bench beside Harley, and then went softly to the farther part of the garden. Nero looked after him, and then rose and followed him slowly. The boy seated himself on the turf, and Nero rested his dull head on the loud heart of the poet.

Harley took up the various papers before him, and read them through leisurely. Certainly he was no critic. He was not accustomed to analyze what pleased or displeased him; but his perceptions were quick, and his taste exquisite. As he read, his countenance, always so genuinely expressive, exhibited now doubt and now admiration. He was soon struck by the contrast, in the boy's writings, between the pieces that sported with fancy and those that grappled with thought. In the first, the young poet seemed so unconscious of his own individuality. His imagination, afar and aloft from the scenes of his suffering, ran riot amidst a paradise of happy golden creations. But in the last, the THINKER stood

out alone and mournful, questioning, in troubled sorrow, the hard world on which he gazed. All in the thought was unsettled, tumultuous; all in the fancy serene and peaceful. The genius seemed divided into twain shapes,—the one bathing its wings amidst the starry dews of heaven; the other wandering, "melancholy, slow," amidst desolate and boundless sands. Harley gently laid down the paper and mused a little while. Then he rose and walked to Leonard, gazing on his countenance as he neared the boy, with a new and a deeper interest.

"I have read your papers," he said, "and recognize in them two men, belonging to two worlds, essentially distinct." Leonard started, and murmured, "True, true!"

"I apprehend," resumed Harley, "that one of these men must either destroy the other, or that the two must become fused and harmonized into a single existence. Get your hat, mount my groom's horse, and come with me to London; we will converse by the way. Look you, I believe you and I agree in this,—that the first object of every noble spirit is independence. It is towards this independence that I alone presume to assist you, and this is a service which the proudest man can receive without a blush."

Leonard lifted his eyes towards Harley's, and those eyes swam with grateful tears; but his heart was too full to answer. "I am not one of those," said Harley, when they were on the road, "who think that because a young man writes poetry he is fit for nothing else, and that he must be a poet or a pauper. I have said that in you there seems to me to be two men,—the man of the Actual world, the man of the Ideal. To each of these men I can offer a separate career. The first is perhaps the more tempting. It is the interest of the State to draw into its service all the talent and industry it can obtain; and under his native State every citizen of a free country should be proud to take service. I have a friend who is a minister, and who is known to encourage talent,—Audley Egerton. I have but to say to him, 'There is a young man who will repay the government whatever the government bestows on him;' and you will rise to-morrow independent in means, and with fair occasions to attain to fortune and distinction. This is one offer,—what say you to it?"

Leonard thought bitterly of his interview with Audley Egerton, and the minister's proffered crown-piece. He shook his head, and replied,

"Oh, my Lord, how have I deserved such kindness? Do with me what you will; but if I have the option, I would rather follow my own calling. This is not the ambition that inflames me."

"Hear, then, the other offer. I have a friend with whom I am less intimate than Egerton, and who has nothing in his gift to bestow. I speak of a man of letters,--Henry Norreys,--of whom you have doubtless heard, who, I should say, conceived an interest in you when he observed you reading at the bookstall. I have often heard him say that literature as a profession is misunderstood, and that rightly followed, with the same pains and the same prudence which are brought to bear on other professions, a competence at least can be always ultimately obtained. But the way may be long and tedious, and it leads to no power but over thought; it rarely attains to wealth; and though reputation may be certain, fame, such as poets dream of, is the lot of few. What say you to this course?"

"My Lord, I decide," said Leonard, firmly; and then, his young face lighting up with enthusiasm, he exclaimed, "Yes, if, as you say, there be two men within me, I feel that were I condemned wholly to the mechanical and practical world, one would indeed destroy the other. And the conqueror would be the ruder and the coarser. Let me pursue those ideas that, though they have but flitted across me, vague and formless, have ever soared towards the sunlight. No matter whether or not they lead to fortune or to fame,--at least they will lead me upward! Knowledge for itself I desire; what care I if it be not power!"

"Enough," said Harley, with a pleased smile at his young companion's outburst. "As you decide so shall it be settled. And now permit me, if not impertinent, to ask you a few questions. Your name is Leonard Fairfield?"

The boy blushed deeply, and bowed his head as if in assent.

"Helen says you are self-taught; for the rest she refers me to you,--thinking, perhaps, that I should esteem you less--rather than yet more highly--if she said you were, as I presume to conjecture, of humble birth."

"My birth," said Leonard, slowly, "is very--very--humble."

"The name of Fairfield is not unknown to me. There was one of that name who married into a family in Lansmere, married an Avenel," continued Harley, and his voice quivered. "You change countenance. Oh, could your mother's name have been Avenel?"

"Yes," said Leonard, between his set teeth. Harley laid his hand on the boy's shoulder. "Then, indeed, I have a claim on you; then, indeed, we

are friends. I have a right to serve any of that family."

Leonard looked at him in surprise--"For," continued Harley, recovering himself, "they always served my family; and my recollections of Lansmere, though boyish, are indelible." He spurred on his horse as the words closed, and again there was a long pause; but from that time Harley always spoke to Leonard in a soft voice, and often gazed on him with earnest and kindly eyes.

They reached a house in a central, though not fashionable street. A manservant of a singularly grave and awful aspect opened the door,--a man who had lived all his life with authors. Poor fellow, he was indeed prematurely old! The care on his lip and the pomp on his brow--no mortal's pen can describe!

"Is Mr. Norreys at home?" asked Harley.

"He is at home--to his friends, my Lord," answered the man, majestically; and he stalked across the hall with the step of a Dangeau ushering some Montmorenci into the presence of Louis le Grand.

"Stay; show this gentleman into another room. I will go first into the library; wait for me, Leonard." The man nodded, and conducted Leonard into the dining-room. Then pausing before the door of the library, and listening an instant, as if fearful to disturb some mood of inspiration, opened it very softly. To his ineffable disgust, Harley pushed before, and entered abruptly. It was a large room, lined with books from the floor to the ceiling. Books were on all the tables, books were on all the chairs. Harley seated himself on a folio of Raleigh's "History of the World," and cried, "I have brought you a treasure!"

"What is it?" said Norreys, good-humouredly, looking up from his desk.

"A mind!"

"A mind!" echoed Norreys, vaguely.

"Your own?"

"Pooh! I have none,--I have only a heart and a fancy. Listen. You remember the boy we saw reading at the book stall. I have caught him for you, and you shall train him into a man. I have the warmest interest in his future, for I know some of his family, and one of that family was very dear to me. As for money, he has not a shilling, and not a shilling

would he accept gratis from you or me either. But he comes with bold heart to work,--and work you must find him." Harley then rapidly told his friend of the two offers he had made to Leonard, and Leonard's choice.

"This promises very well; for letters a man must have a strong vocation, as he should have for law. I will do all that you wish."

Harley rose with alertness, shook Norreys cordially by the hand, hurried out of the room, and returned with Leonard.

Mr. Norreys eyed the young man with attention. He was naturally rather severe than cordial in his manner to strangers,--contrasting in this, as in most things, the poor vagabond Burley; but he was a good judge of the human countenance, and he liked Leonard's. After a pause he held out his hand.

"Sir," said he, "Lord L'Estrange tells me that you wish to enter literature as a calling, and no doubt to study it as an art. I may help you in this, and you meanwhile can help me. I want an amanuensis,--I offer you that place. The salary will be proportioned to the services you will render me. I have a room in my house at your disposal. When I first came up to London, I made the same choice that I hear you have done. I have no cause, even in a worldly point of view, to repent my choice. It gave me an income larger than my wants. I trace my success to these maxims, which are applicable to all professions: 1st, Never to trust to genius for what can be obtained by labour; 2dly, Never to profess to teach what we have not studied to understand; 3dly, Never to engage our word to what we do not our best to execute.

"With these rules, literature--provided a man does not mistake his vocation for it, and will, under good advice, go through the preliminary discipline of natural powers, which all vocations require--is as good a calling as any other. Without them, a shoeblack's is infinitely better."

"Possibly enough," muttered Harley; "but there have been great writers who observed none of your maxims."

"Great writers, probably, but very unenviable men. My Lord, my Lord, don't corrupt the pupil you bring to me." Harley smiled, and took his departure, and left Genius at school with Common-Sense and Experience.

CHAPTER XX.

While Leonard Fairfield had been obscurely wrestling against poverty, neglect, hunger, and dread temptation, bright had been the opening day and smooth the upward path of Randal Leslie. Certainly no young man, able and ambitious, could enter life under fairer auspices; the connection and avowed favourite of a popular and energetic statesman, the brilliant writer of a political work that had lifted him at once into a station of his own, received and courted in those highest circles, to which neither rank nor fortune alone suffices for a familiar passport, --the circles above fashion itself. the circles of POWER,--with every facility of augmenting information, and learning the world betimes through the talk of its acknowledged masters,--Randal had but to move straight onward, and success was sure. But his tortuous spirit delighted in scheme and intrigue for their own sake. In scheme and intrigue he saw shorter paths to fortune, if not to fame.

His besetting sin was also his besetting weakness. He did not aspire,--he coveted. Though in a far higher social position than Frank Hazeldean, despite the worldly prospects of his old schoolfellow, he coveted the very things that kept Frank Hazeldean below him,--coveted his idle gayeties, his careless pleasures, his very waste of youth. Thus, also, Randal less aspired to Audley Egerton's repute than he coveted Audley Egerton's wealth and pomp, his princely expenditure, and his Castle Rackrent in Grosvenor Square. It was the misfortune of his birth to be so near to both these fortunes,--near to that of Leslie, as the future head of that fallen House; near even to that of Hazeldean, since, as we have seen before, if the squire had had no son, Randal's descent from the Hazeldeans suggested himself as the one on whom these broad lands should devolve. Most young men brought into intimate contact with Audley Egerton would have felt for that personage a certain loyal and admiring, if not very affectionate, respect. For there was something grand in Egerton,--something that commands and fascinates the young. His determined courage, his energetic will, his almost regal liberality, contrasting a simplicity in personal tastes and habits that was almost austere, his rare and seemingly unconscious power of charming even the women most wearied of homage, and persuading even the men most obdurate to counsel,--all served to invest the practical man with those spells which are usually confined to the ideal one. But, indeed, Audley Egerton was an Ideal,--the ideal of the Practical. Not the mere vulgar, plodding, red-tape machine of petty business, but the man of strong sense, inspired by inflexible energy and guided to definite earthly objects. In a dissolute and corrupt form of government, under a decrepit

monarchy or a vitiated republic, Audley Egerton might have been a most dangerous citizen: for his ambition was so resolute, and his sight to its ends was so clear. But there is something in public life in England which compels the really ambitious man to honour, unless his eyes are jaundiced and oblique, like Randal Leslie's. It is so necessary in England to be a gentleman. And thus Egerton was emphatically considered a gentleman. Without the least pride in other matters, with little apparent sensitiveness, touch him on the point of gentleman, and no one so sensitive and so proud. As Randal saw more of him, and watched his moods with the lynx-eyes of the household spy, he could perceive that this hard mechanical man was subject to fits of melancholy, even of gloom; and though they did not last long, there was even in his habitual coldness an evidence of something compressed, latent, painful, lying deep within his memory. This would have interested the kindly feelings of a grateful heart; but Randal detected and watched it only as a clew to some secret it might profit him to gain. For Randal Leslie hated Egerton; and hated him the more because, with all his book-knowledge and his conceit in his own talents, he could not despise his patron; because he had not yet succeeded in making his patron the mere tool or stepping-stone; because he thought that Egerton's keen eye saw through his wily heart, even while, as if in profound disdain, the minister helped the protege. But this last suspicion was unsound. Egerton had not detected Leslie's corrupt and treacherous nature. He might have other reasons for keeping him at a certain distance, but he inquired too little into Randal's feelings towards himself to question the attachment, or doubt the sincerity, of one who owed to him so much. But that which more than all embittered Randal's feelings towards Egerton was the careful and deliberate frankness with which the latter had, more than once, repeated and enforced the odious announcement, that Randal had nothing to expect from the minister's WILL, nothing to expect from that wealth which glared in the hungry eyes of the pauper heir to the Leslies of Rood. To whom, then, could Egerton mean to devise his fortune? To whom but Frank Hazeldean? Yet Audley took so little notice of his nephew, seemed so indifferent to him, that that supposition, however natural, was exposed to doubt. The astuteness of Randal was perplexed. Meanwhile, however, the less he himself could rely upon Egerton for fortune, the more he revolved the possible chances of ousting Frank from the inheritance of Hazeldean,--in part, at least, if not wholly. To one less scheming, crafty, and remorseless than Randal Leslie, such a project would have seemed the wildest delusion. But there was something fearful in the manner in which this young man sought to turn knowledge into power, and make the study of all weakness in others subservient to his own ends. He wormed himself thoroughly into Frank's confidence. He learned, through Frank, all the squire's peculiarities of thought and temper, and pondered

over each word in the father's letters, which the son gradually got into the habit of showing to the perfidious eyes of his friend. Randal saw that the squire had two characteristics, which are very common amongst proprietors, and which might be invoked as antagonists to his warm fatherly love. First, the squire was as fond of his estate as if it were a living thing, and part of his own flesh and blood; and in his lectures to Frank upon the sin of extravagance, the squire always let out this foible,--"What was to become of the estate if it fell into the hands of a spendthrift? No man should make ducks and drakes of Hazeldean; let Frank beware of that," etc. Secondly, the squire was not only fond of his lands, but he was jealous of them,--that jealousy which even the tenderest fathers sometimes entertain towards their natural heirs. He could not bear the notion that Frank should count on his death; and he seldom closed an admonitory letter without repeating the information that Hazeldean was not entailed; that it was his to do with as he pleased through life and in death. Indirect menace of this nature rather wounded and galled than intimidated Frank; for the young man was extremely generous and high-spirited by nature, and was always more disposed to some indiscretion after such warnings to his self-interest, as if to show that those were the last kinds of appeal likely to influence him. By the help of such insights into the character of father and son, Randal thought he saw gleams of daylight illumining his own chance to the lands of Hazeldean. Meanwhile, it appeared to him obvious that, come what might of it, his own interests could not lose, and might most probably gain, by whatever could alienate the squire from his natural heir. Accordingly, though with consummate tact, he instigated Frank towards the very excesses most calculated to irritate the squire, all the while appearing rather to give the counter advice, and never sharing in any of the follies to which he conducted his thoughtless friend. In this he worked chiefly through others, introducing Frank to every acquaintance most dangerous to youth, either from the wit that laughs at prudence, or the spurious magnificence that subsists so handsomely upon bills endorsed by friends of "great expectations."

The minister and his protege were seated at breakfast, the first reading the newspaper, the last glancing over his letters; for Randal had arrived to the dignity of receiving many letters,--ay, and notes, too, three-cornered and fantastically embossed. Egerton uttered an exclamation, and laid down the newspaper. Randal looked up from his correspondence. The minister had sunk into one of his absent reveries.

After a long silence, observing that Egerton did not return to the newspaper, Randal said, "Ahem, sir, I have a note from Frank Hazeldean, who wants much to see me; his father has arrived in town unexpectedly."

"What brings him here?" asked Egerton, still abstractedly. "Why, it seems that he has heard some vague reports of poor Frank's extravagance, and Frank is rather afraid or ashamed to meet him."

"Ay, a very great fault, extravagance in the young!--destroys independence; ruins or enslaves the future. Great fault,--very! And what does youth want that it should be extravagant? Has it not everything in itself, merely because it is? Youth is youth--what needs it more?"

Egerton rose as he said this, and retired to his writing-table, and in his turn opened his correspondence. Randal took up the newspaper, and endeavoured, but in vain, to conjecture what had excited the minister's exclamations and the reverie that succeeded it.

Egerton suddenly and sharply turned round in his chair--"If you have done with the 'Times,' have the goodness to place it here."

Randal had just obeyed, when a knock at the street-door was heard, and presently Lord L'Estrange came into the room, with somewhat a quicker step and somewhat a gayer mien than usual.

Audley's hand, as if mechanically, fell upon the newspaper,--fell upon that part of the columns devoted to births, deaths, and marriages. Randal stood by, and noted; then, bowing to L'Estrange, left the room.

"Audley," said L'Estrange, "I have had an adventure since I saw you,--an adventure that reopened the Past, and may influence my future."

"How?"

"In the first place, I have met with a relation of--of--the Avenels."

"Indeed! Whom,--Richard Avenel?"

"Richard--Richard--who is he? Oh, I remember, the wild lad who went off to America; but that was when I was a mere child."

"That Richard Avenel is now a rich, thriving trader, and his marriage is in this newspaper,--married to an Honourable Mrs. M'Catchley. Well, in this country who should plume himself on birth?"

"You did not say so always, Egerton," replied Harley, with a tone of

mournful reproach.

"And I say so now pertinently to a Mrs. M'Catchley, not to the heir of the L'Estranges. But no more of these--these Avenels."

"Yes, more of them. I tell you I have met a relation of theirs--a nephew of--of--"

"Of Richard Avenel's?" interrupted Egerton; and then added in the slow, deliberate, argumentative tone in which he was wont to speak in public, "Richard Avenel the trader! I saw him once,--a presuming and intolerable man!"

"The nephew has not those sins. He is full of promise, of modesty, yet of pride. And his countenance--oh, Egerton, he has her eyes."

Egerton made no answer, and Harley resumed,

"I had thought of placing him under your care. I knew you would provide for him."

"I will. Bring him hither," cried Egerton, eagerly. "All that I can do to prove my--regard for a wish of yours." Harley pressed his friend's hand warmly.

"I thank you from my heart; the Audley of my boyhood speaks now. But the young man has decided otherwise; and I do not blame him. Nay, I rejoice that he chooses a career in which, if he find hardship, he may escape dependence."

"And that career is--"

"Letters."

"Letters! Literature!" exclaimed the statesman. "Beggary! No, no, Harley, this is your absurd romance."

"It will not be beggary, and it is not my romance: it is the boy's. Leave him alone, he is my care and my charge henceforth. He is of her blood, and I said that he had HER eyes."

"But you are going abroad; let me know where he is; I will watch over him."

"And unsettle a right ambition for a wrong one? No, you shall know nothing of him till he can proclaim himself. I think that day will come."

Audley mused a moment, and then said, "Well, perhaps you are right. After all, as you say, independence is a great blessing, and my ambition has not rendered myself the better or the happier."

"Yet, my poor Audley, you ask me to be ambitious."

"I only wish you to be consoled," cried Egerton, with passion.

"I will try to be so; and by the help of a milder remedy than yours. I said that my adventure might influence my future; it brought me acquainted not only with the young man I speak of, but the most winning, affectionate child,--a girl."

"Is this child an Avenel too?"

"No, she is of gentle blood,--a soldier's daughter; the daughter of that Captain Digby on whose behalf I was a petitioner to your patronage. He is dead, and in dying, my name was on his lips. He meant me, doubtless, to be the guardian to his orphan. I shall be so. I have at last an object in life."

"But can you seriously mean to take this child with you abroad?"

"Seriously, I do."

"And lodge her in your own house?"

"For a year or so, while she is yet a child. Then, as she approaches youth, I shall place her elsewhere."

"You may grow to love her. Is it clear that she will love you,--not mistake gratitude for love? It is a very hazardous experiment."

"So was William the Norman's,--still he was William the Conqueror. Thou biddest me move on from the Past, and be consoled, yet thou wouldst make me as inapt to progress as the mule in Slawkenbergius's tale, with thy cursed interlocations, 'Stumbling, by Saint Nicholas, every step. Why, at this rate, we shall be all night in getting into'--HAPPINESS! Listen," continued Harley, setting off, full pelt, into one of his wild whimsical humours. "One of the sons of the prophets in Israel felling

wood near the river Jordan, his hatchet forsook the helve, and fell to the bottom of the river; so he prayed to have it again (it was but a small request, mark you); and having a strong faith, he did not throw the hatchet after the helve, but the helve after the hatchet. Presently two great miracles were seen. Up springs the hatchet from the bottom of the water, and fixes itself to its old acquaintance, the helve. Now, had he wished to coach it up to heaven in a fiery chariot like Elias, be as rich as Job, strong as Samson, and beautiful as Absalom, would he have obtained the wish, do you think? In truth, my friend, I question it very much."

"I can't comprehend what you mean. Sad stuff you are talking."

"I cannot help that; 'Rabelais is to be blamed for it. I am quoting him, and it is to be found in his Prologue to the Chapters on the 'Moderation of Wishes.' And a propos of 'moderate wishes in point of hatchet,' I want you to understand that I ask but little from Heaven. I fling but the helve after the hatchet that has sunk into the silent stream. I want the other half of the weapon that is buried fathom deep, and for want of which the thick woods darken round me by the Sacred River, and I can catch not a glimpse of the stars."

"In plain English," said Audley Egerton, "you want--" he stopped short, puzzled.

"I want my purpose and my will, and my old character, and the nature God gave me. I want the half of my soul which has fallen from me. I want such love as may replace to me the vanished affections. Reason not,--I throw the helve after the hatchet."

CHAPTER XXI.

Randal Leslie, on leaving Audley, repaired to Frank's lodgings, and after being closeted with the young Guardsman an hour or so, took his way to Limmer's hotel, and asked for Mr. Hazeldean. He was shown into the coffee-room, while the waiter went up-stairs with his card, to see if the squire was within, and disengaged. The "Times" newspaper lay sprawling on one of the tables, and Randal, leaning over it, looked with attention into the column containing births, deaths, and marriages. But in that long and miscellaneous list he could not conjecture the name which had so excited Mr. Egerton's interest.

"Vexatious!" he muttered; "there is no knowledge which has power more useful than that of the secrets of men."

He turned as the waiter entered and said that Mr. Hazeldean would be glad to see him.

As Randal entered the drawing-room, the squire, shaking hands with him, looked towards the door as if expecting some one else; and his honest face assumed a blank expression of disappointment, when the door closed, and he found that Randal was unaccompanied.

"Well," said he, bluntly, "I thought your old schoolfellow, Frank, might have been with you."

Have you not seen him yet, sir?"

"No, I came to town this morning; travelled outside the mail; sent to his barracks, but the young gentleman does not sleep there, has an apartment of his own; he never told me that. We are a plain family, the Hazeldeans, young sir; and I hate being kept in the dark,--by my own son, too."

Randal made no answer, but looked sorrowful. The squire, who had never before seen his kinsman, had a vague idea that it was not polite to entertain a stranger, though a connection to himself, with his family troubles, and so resumed good-naturedly, "I am very glad to make your acquaintance at last, Mr. Leslie. You know, I hope, that you have good Hazeldean blood in your veins?"

RANDAL (smiling).--"I am not likely to forget that; it is the boast of our pedigree."

SQUIRE (heartily).--"Shake hands again on it, my boy. You don't want a friend, since my grandee of a half-brother has taken you up; but if ever you should, Hazeldean is not very far from Rood. Can't get on with your father at all, my lad,--more 's the pity, for I think I could have given him a hint or two as to the improvement of his property. If he would plant those ugly commons--larch and fir soon come into profit, sir; and there are some low lands about Rood that would take mighty kindly to draining."

RANDAL.--"My poor father lives a life so retired--and you cannot wonder at it. Fallen trees lie still, and so do fallen families."

SQUIRE.--"Fallen families can get up again, which fallen trees can't."

RANDAL.--"Ah, sir, it often takes the energy of generations to repair the thriftlessness and extravagance of a single owner."

SQUIRE (his brow lowering).--"That's very true. Frank is d--d extravagant; treats me very coolly, too--not coming; near three o'clock. By the by, I suppose he told you where I was, otherwise how did you find me out?"

RANDAL (reluctantly).--"Sir, he did; and to speak frankly, I am not surprised that he has not yet appeared."

SQUIRE.--"Eh!"

RANDAL.--"We have grown very intimate."

SQUIRE.--"So he writes me word,--and I am glad of it. Our member, Sir John, tells me you are a very clever fellow, and a very steady one. And Frank says that he wishes he had your prudence, if he can't have your talent. He has a good heart, Frank," added the father, relentingly. "But zounds, sir, you say you are not surprised he has not come to welcome his own father!"

"My dear sir," said Randal, "you wrote word to Frank that you had heard from Sir John and others of his goings-on, and that you were not satisfied with his replies to your letters."

"Well."

"And then you suddenly come up to town."

"Well."

"Well. And Frank is ashamed to meet you. For, as you say, he has been extravagant, and he has exceeded his allowance; and knowing my respect for you and my great affection for himself, he has asked me to prepare you to receive his confession and forgive him. I know I am taking a great liberty. I have no right to interfere between father and son; but pray--pray think I mean for the best."

"Humph!" said the squire, recovering himself very slowly, and showing evident pain, "I knew already that Frank had spent more than he ought;

but I think he should not have employed a third person to prepare me to forgive him. (Excuse me,--no offence.) And if he wanted a third person, was not there his own mother? What the devil! [firing up] am I a tyrant, a bashaw, that my own son is afraid to speak to me? 'Gad, I'll give it him!"

"Pardon me, sir," said Randal, assuming at once that air of authority which superior intellect so well carries off and excuses, "but I strongly advise you not to express any anger at Frank's confidence in me. At present I have influence over him. Whatever you may think of his extravagance, I have saved him from many an indiscretion, and many a debt,--a young man will listen to one of his own age so much more readily than even to the kindest friend of graver years. Indeed, sir, I speak for your sake as well as for Frank's. Let me keep this influence over him; and don't reproach him for the confidence placed in me. Nay, let him rather think that I have softened any displeasure you might otherwise have felt."

There seemed so much good sense in what Randal said, and the kindness of it seemed so disinterested, that the squire's native shrewdness was deceived.

"You are a fine young fellow," said he, "and I am very much obliged to you. Well, I suppose there is no putting old heads upon young shoulders; and I promise you I'll not say an angry word to Frank. I dare say, poor boy, he is very much afflicted, and I long to shake hands with him. So, set his mind at ease."

"Ah, sir," said Randal, with much apparent emotion, "your son may well love you: and it seems to be a hard matter for so kind a heart as yours to preserve the proper firmness with him."

"Oh, I can be firm enough," quoth the squire,--"especially when I don't see him,--handsome dog that he is: very like his mother--don't you think so?"

"I never saw his mother, sir."

"'Gad! Not seen my Harry? No more you have; you must come and pay us a visit. I suppose my half-brother will let you come?"

"To be sure, sir. Will you not call on him while you are in town?"

"Not I. He would think I expected to get something from the Government.

Tell him the ministers must go on a little better, if they want my vote for their member. But go, I see you are impatient to tell Frank that all 's forgot and forgiven. Come and dine with him here at six, and let him bring his bills in his pocket. Oh, I sha'n't scold him."

"Why, as to that," said Randal, smiling, "I think (forgive me still) that you should not take it too easily; just as I think that you had better not blame him for his very natural and praiseworthy shame in approaching you, so I think, also, that you should do nothing that would tend to diminish that shame,--it is such a check on him. And therefore, if you can contrive to affect to be angry with him for his extravagance, it will do good."

"You speak like a book, and I'll try my best."

"If you threaten, for instance, to take him out of the army, and settle him in the country, it would have a very good effect."

"What! would he think it so great a punishment to come home and live with his parents?"

"I don't say that; but he is naturally so fond of London. At his age, and with his large inheritance, that is natural."

"Inheritance!" said the squire, moodily,--"inheritance! he is not thinking of that, I trust? Zounds, sir, I have as good a life as his own. Inheritance!--to be sure the Casino property is entailed on him; but as for the rest, sir, I am no tenant for life. I could leave the Hazeldean lands to my ploughman, if I chose it. Inheritance; indeed!"

"My dear sir, I did not mean to imply that Frank would entertain the unnatural and monstrous idea of calculating on your death; and all we have to do is to get him to sow his wild oats as soon as possible,--marry and settle down into the country. For it would be a thousand pities if his town habits and tastes grew permanent,--a bad thing for the Hazeldean property, that! And," added Randal, laughing, "I feel an interest in the old place, since my grandmother comes of the stock. So, just force yourself to seem angry, and grumble a little when you pay the bills."

"Ah, ah, trust me," said the squire, doggedly, and with a very altered air. "I am much obliged to you for these hints, my young kinsman." And his stout hand trembled a little as he extended it to Randal.

Leaving Limmer's, Randal hastened to Frank's rooms in St. James's

Street. "My dear fellow," said he, when he entered, "it is very fortunate that I persuaded you to let me break matters to your father. You might well say he was rather passionate; but I have contrived to soothe him. You need not fear that he will not pay your debts."

"I never feared that," said Frank, changing colour; "I only feared his anger. But, indeed, I fear his kindness still more. What a reckless hound I have been! However, it shall be a lesson to me. And my debts once paid, I will turn as economical as yourself."

"Quite right, Frank. And, indeed, I am a little afraid that, when your father knows the total, he may execute a threat that would be very unpleasant to you."

"What's that?"

"Make you sell out, and give up London."

"The devil!" exclaimed Frank, with fervent emphasis; "that would be treating me like a child."

"Why, it would make you seem rather ridiculous to your set, which is not a very rural one. And you, who like London so much, and are so much the fashion!"

"Don't talk of it," cried Frank, walking to and fro the room in great disorder.

"Perhaps, on the whole, it might be well not to say all you owe, at once. If you named half the sum, your father would let you off with a lecture; and really I tremble at the effect of the total."

"But how shall I pay the other half?"

"Oh, you must save from your allowance; it is a very liberal one; and the tradesmen are not pressing."

"No; but the cursed bill-brokers--"

"Always renew to a young man of your expectations. And if I get into an office, I can always help you, my dear Frank."

"Ah, Randal, I am not so bad as to take advantage of your friendship," said Frank, warmly. "But it seems to me mean after all, and a sort of a

lie, indeed, disguising the real state of my affairs. I should not have listened to the idea from any one else; but you are such a sensible, kind, honourable fellow."

"After epithets so flattering, I shrink from the responsibility of advice. But apart from your own interests, I should be glad to save your father the pain he would feel at knowing the whole extent of the scrape you have got into. And if it entailed on you the necessity to lay by-- and give up hazard, and not be security for other men--why, it would be the best thing that could happen. Really, too, it seems hard upon Mr. Hazeldean that he should be the only sufferer, and quite just that you should bear half your own burdens." "So it is, Randal; that did not strike me before. I will take your counsel; and now I will go at once to Limmer's. My dear father! I hope he is looking well?"

"Oh, very. Such a contrast to the sallow Londoners! But I think you had better not go till dinner. He has asked me to meet you at six. I will call for you a little before, and we can go together. This will prevent a good deal of /gene/ and constraint. Good-by till then. Ha! by the way, I think if I were you, I would not take the matter too seriously and penitentially. You see the best of fathers like to keep their sons under their thumb, as the saying is. And if you want at your age to preserve your independence, and not be hurried off and buried in the country, like a schoolboy in disgrace, a little manliness of bearing would not be amiss. You can think over it."

The dinner at Limmer's went off very differently from what it ought to have done. Randal's words had sunk deep, and rankled sorely in the squire's mind; and that impression imparted a certain coldness to his manner which belied the hearty, forgiving, generous impulse with which he had come up to London, and which even Randal had not yet altogether whispered away. On the other hand, Frank, embarrassed both by the sense of disingenuousness, and a desire "not to take the thing too seriously," seemed to the squire ungracious and thankless.

After dinner the squire began to hum and haw, and Frank to colour up and shrink. Both felt discomposed by the presence of a third person; till, with an art and address worthy of a better cause, Randal himself broke the ice, and so contrived to remove the restraint he had before imposed, that at length each was heartily glad to have matters made clear and brief by his dexterity and tact.

Frank's debts were not in reality large; and when he named the half of them, looking down in shame, the squire, agreeably surprised, was about

to express himself with a liberal heartiness that would have opened his son's excellent heart at once to him.

But a warning look from Randal checked the impulse; and the squire thought it right, as he had promised, to affect an anger he did not feel, and let fall the unlucky threat, "that it was all very well once in a way to exceed his allowance; but if Frank did not, in future, show more sense than to be led away by a set of London sharks and coxcombs, he must cut the army, come home, and take to farming."

Frank imprudently exclaimed, "Oh, sir, I have no taste for farming. And after London, at my age, the country would be so horribly dull."

"Aha!" said the squire, very grimly--and he thrust back into his pocket-book some extra bank-notes which his fingers had itched to add to those he had already counted out. "The country is terribly dull, is it? Money goes there not upon follies and vices, but upon employing honest labourers, and increasing the wealth of the nation. It does not please you to spend money in that way: it is a pity you should ever be plagued with such duties."

"My dear father--"

"Hold your tongue, you puppy. Oh, I dare say, if you were in my shoes, you would cut down the oaks, and mortgage the property; sell it, for what I know,--all go on a cast of the dice! Aha, sir--very well, very well--the country is horribly dull, is it? Pray stay in town."

"My dear Mr. Hazeldean," said Randal, blandly, and as if with the wish to turn off into a joke what threatened to be serious, "you must not interpret a hasty expression so literally. Why, you would make Frank as bad as Lord A----, who wrote word to his steward to cut down more timber; and when the steward replied, 'There are only three sign-posts left on the whole estate,' wrote back, 'They've done growing at all events,--down with them!' You ought to know Lord A----, sir; so witty; and--Frank's particular friend."

"Your particular friend, Master Frank? Pretty friends!" and the squire buttoned up the pocket to which he had transferred his note-book, with a determined air.

"But I'm his friend, too," said Randal, kindly; "and I preach to him properly, I can tell you." Then, as if delicately anxious to change the subject, he began to ask questions upon crops and the experiment of bone

manure. He spoke earnestly, and with gusto, yet with the deference of one listening to a great practical authority. Randal had spent the afternoon in cramming the subject from agricultural journals and parliamentary reports; and like all practised readers, had really learned in a few hours more than many a man, unaccustomed to study, could gain from books in a year. The squire was surprised and pleased at the young scholar's information and taste for such subjects.

"But, to be sure," quoth he, with an angry look at poor Frank, "you have good Hazeldean blood in you, and know a bean from a turnip."

"Why, sir," said Randal, ingenuously, "I am training myself for public life; and what is a public man worth if he do not study the agriculture of his country?"

"Right--what is he worth? Put that question, with my compliments, to my half-brother. What stuff he did talk, the other night, on the malt-tax, to be sure!"

"Mr. Egerton has had so many other things to think of, that we must excuse his want of information upon one topic, however important. With his strong sense he must acquire that information, sooner or later; for he is fond of power; and, sir, knowledge is power!"

"Very true,--very fine saying," quoth the poor squire, unsuspectingly, as Randal's eye rested on Mr. Hazeldean's open face, and then glanced towards Frank, who looked sad and bored.

"Yes," repeated Randal, "knowledge is power;" and he shook his head wisely, as he passed the bottle to his host.

Still, when the squire, who meant to return to the Hall next morning, took leave of Frank, his heart warmed to his son; and still more for Frank's dejected looks. It was not Randal's policy to push estrangement too far at first, and in his own presence.

"Speak to poor Frank,--kindly now, sir--do;" whispered he, observing the squire's watery eyes, as he moved to the window.

The squire, rejoiced to obey, thrust out his hand to his son.

"My dear boy," said he, "there, don't fret--pshaw!--it was but a trifle after all. Think no more of it."

Frank took the hand, and suddenly threw his arm round his father's broad shoulder.

"Oh, sir, you are too good,--too good." His voice trembled so that Randal took alarm, passed by him, and touched him meaningly.

The squire pressed his son to his heart,--heart so large, that it seemed to fill the whole width under his broadcloth. "My dear Frank," said he, half blubbing, "it is not the money; but, you see, it so vexes your poor mother; you must be careful in future; and, zounds, boy, it will be all yours one day; only don't calculate on it; I could not bear that, I could not, indeed."

"Calculate!" cried Frank. "Oh, sir, can you think it?"

"I am so delighted that I had some slight hand in your complete reconciliation with Mr. Hazeldean," said Randal, as the young men walked from the hotel. "I saw that you were disheartened, and I told him to speak to you kindly."

"Did you? Ah--I am sorry he needed telling."

"I know his character so well already," said Randal, "that I flatter myself I can always keep things between you as they ought to be. What an excellent man!"

"The best man in the world," cried Frank, heartily; and then, as his accents drooped, "yet I have deceived him. I have a great mind to go back--"

"And tell him to give you twice as much money as you bad asked for? He would think you had only seemed so affectionate in order to take him in. No, no, Frank! save, lay by, economize; and then tell him that you have paid half your own debts. Something high-minded in that."

"So there is. Your heart is as good as your head. Goodnight."

"Are you going home so early? Have you no engagements!"

"None that I shall keep."

"Good-night, then."

They parted, and Randal walked into one of the fashionable clubs. He

neared a table where three or four young men (younger sons, who lived in the most splendid style, Heaven knew how) were still over their wine.

Leslie had little in common with these gentlemen, but he forced his nature to be agreeable to them, in consequence of a very excellent piece of worldly advice given to him by Audley Egerton. "Never let the dandies call you a prig," said the statesman. "Many a clever fellow fails through life, because the silly fellows, whom half a word well spoken could make his claqueurs, turn him into ridicule. Whatever you are, avoid the fault of most reading men: in a word, don't be a prig!"

"I have just left Hazeldean," said Randal. "What a good fellow he is!"

"Capital!" said the Honourable George Borrowell. "Where is he?"

"Why, he is gone to his rooms. He has had a little scene with his father, a thorough, rough country squire. It would be an act of charity if you would go and keep him company, or take him with you to some place a little more lively than his own lodgings."

"What! the old gentleman has been teasing him!--a horrid shame! Why, Frank is not extravagant, and he will be very rich, eh?"

"An immense property," said Randal, "and not a mortgage on it: an only son," he added, turning away.

Among these young gentlemen there was a kindly and most benevolent whisper, and presently they all rose, and walked away towards Frank's lodgings.

"The wedge is in the tree," said Randal to himself, "and there is a gap already between the bark and the wood."

CHAPTER XXII

Harley L'Estrange is seated beside Helen at the lattice-window in the cottage at Norwood. The bloom of reviving health is on the child's face, and she is listening with a smile, for Harley is speaking of Leonard with praise, and of Leonard's future with hope. "And thus," he continued, "secure from his former trials, happy in his occupation, and pursuing the career he has chosen, we must be content, my dear child, to leave him."

"Leave him!" exclaimed Helen, and the rose on her cheek faded.

Harley was not displeased to see her emotion. He would have been disappointed in her heart if it had been less susceptible to affection.

"It is hard on you, Helen," said he, "to be separated from one who has been to you as a brother. Do not hate me for doing so. But I consider myself your guardian, and your home as yet must be mine. We are going from this land of cloud and mist, going as into the world of summer. Well, that does not content you. You weep, my child; you mourn your own friend, but do not forget your father's. I am alone, and often sad, Helen; will you not comfort me? You press my hand, but you must learn to smile on me also. You are born to be the comforter. Comforters are not egotists; they are always cheerful when they console."

The voice of Harley was so sweet and his words went so home to the child's heart, that she looked up and smiled in his face as he kissed her ingenuous brow. But then she thought of Leonard, and felt so solitary, so bereft, that tears burst forth again. Before these were dried, Leonard himself entered, and, obeying an irresistible impulse, she sprang to his arms, and leaning her head on his shoulder, sobbed out,

"I am going from you, brother; do not grieve, do not miss me."

Harley was much moved: he folded his arms, and contemplated them both silently,--and his own eyes were moist. "This heart," thought he, "will be worth the winning!"

He drew aside Leonard, and whispered, "Soothe, but encourage and support her. I leave you together; come to me in the garden later."

It was nearly an hour before Leonard joined Harley.

"She was not weeping when you left her?" asked L'Estrange.

"No; she has more fortitude than we might suppose. Heaven knows how that fortitude has supported mine. I have promised to write to her often."

Harley took two strides across the lawn, and then, coming back to Leonard, said, "Keep your promise, and write often for the first year. I would then ask you to let the correspondence drop gradually."

"Drop! Ah, my Lord!"

"Look you, my young friend, I wish to lead this fair mind wholly from the sorrows of the past. I wish Helen to enter, not abruptly, but step by step, into a new life. You love each other now, as do two children,--as brother and sister. But later, if encouraged, would the love be the same? And is it not better for both of you that youth should open upon the world with youth's natural affections free and unforestalled?"

"True! And she is so above me," said Leonard, mournfully.

"No one is above him who succeeds in your ambition, Leonard. It is not that, believe me."

Leonard shook his head.

"Perhaps," said Harley, with a smile, "I rather feel that you are above me. For what vantage-ground is so high as youth? Perhaps I may become jealous of you. It is well that she should learn to like one who is to be henceforth her guardian and protector. Yet how can she like me as she ought, if her heart is to be full of you?"

The boy bowed his head; and Harley hastened to change the subject, and speak of letters and of glory. His words were eloquent and his voice kindling; for he had been an enthusiast for fame in his boyhood, and in Leonard's his own seemed to him to revive. But the poet's heart gave back no echo,--suddenly it seemed void and desolate. Yet when Leonard walked back by the moonlight, he muttered to himself, "Strange, strange, so mere a child! this cannot be love! Still, what else to love is there left to me?"

And so he paused upon the bridge where he had so often stood with Helen, and on which he had found the protector that had given to her a home, to himself a career. And life seemed very long, and fame but a dreary phantom. Courage still, Leonard! These are the sorrows of the heart that teach thee more than all the precepts of sage and critic.

Another day, and Helen had left the shores of England, with her fanciful and dreaming guardian. Years will pass before our tale re-opens. Life in all the forms we have seen it travels on. And the squire farms and hunts; and the parson preaches and chides and soothes; and Riccabocca reads his Machiavelli, and sighs and smiles as he moralizes on Men and States; and Violante's dark eyes grow deeper and more spiritual in their lustre, and her beauty takes thought from solitary dreams. And Mr. Richard Avenel has his house in London, and the Honourable Mrs. Avenel

her opera-box; and hard and dire is their struggle into fashion, and hotly does the new man, scorning the aristocracy, pant to become aristocrat. And Audley Egerton goes from the office to the parliament, and drudges, and debates, and helps to govern the empire in which the sun never sets. Poor sun, how tired he must be--but not more tired than the Government! And Randal Leslie has an excellent place in the bureau of a minister, and is looking to the time when he shall resign it to come into parliament, and on that large arena turn knowledge into power. And meanwhile he is much where he was with Audley Egerton; but he has established intimacy with the squire, and visited Hazeldean twice, and examined the house and the map of the property, and very nearly fallen a second time into the ha-ha, and the squire believes that Randal Leslie alone can keep Frank out of mischief, and has spoken rough words to his Harry about Frank's continued extravagance. And Frank does continue to pursue pleasure, and is very miserable, and horribly in debt. And Madame di Negra has gone from London to Paris, and taken a tour into Switzerland, and come back to London again, and has grown very intimate with Randal Leslie; and Randal has introduced Frank to her; and Frank thinks her the loveliest woman in the world, and grossly slandered by certain evil tongues. And the brother of Madame di Negra is expected in England at last; and what with his repute for beauty and for wealth, people anticipate a sensation. And Leonard, and Harley, and Helen? Patience,--they will all re-appear.

Add yourself as a volunteer or giver, to promote the growing and diffusion of [Biblioteca Virtual Universal. www.biblioteca.org.ar](http://www.biblioteca.org.ar)

If you take notice of any kind of mistake, or you want to make any suggestion please visit our link www.biblioteca.org.ar/comentario