LEVER CHARLES JAMES

DAVENPORT DUNN, A MAN OF OUR DAY. VOLUME 1

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Содержание

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CHAPTER I. HYDROPATHIC ACQUAINTANCES

We are at Como, on the lake – that spot so beloved of opera dancers – the day-dream of prima donnas – the Elysium of retired barytones! And with what reason should this be the Paradise of all who have lived and sighed, and warbled and pirouetted, within the charmed circle of the footlights? The crystal waters mirroring every cliff and crag with intense distinctness; the vegetation variegated to the very verge of extravagance; orange-trees overloaded with fruit; arbutus only too much bespangled with red berries; villas, more coquettish than ever scene-painter conceived, with vistas of rooms within, all redolent of luxury; terraces, and statues, and vases, and fountains, and marble balconies, steeped in a thousand balmy odours, make up a picture which well may fascinate those whose ideal of beauty is formed of such gorgeous groupings. There is something of unreality in the brilliant colouring and variety of the scene suggesting the notion, that at any moment the tenor may emerge, velvet mantle and all, from the copse before you; or a prima donna, in all the dishevelment of her back hair, rush madly to your feet. There is not a portal from which an angry father may not issue; not a shady walk that might not be trod by an incensed basso!

The rustic bridges seem made for the tiny feet of short-petticoated damsels, daintily tripping, with white-napkin covered baskets, to soft music; and every bench appears but waiting for that wearied old peasant, in blue stockings, a staff, and a leather belt, that has vented his tiresomeness in the same spot for the last half century. Who wonders, if the distracted Princess of “the scene” should love a picture that recalls the most enthusiastic triumphs of her success? Why should not the retired “Feri” like to wander at will through a more enchanting garden than ever she pirouetted in?

Conspicuous amongst the places where these stage-like elements abound is the Villa d’Este; situated in a little bay, with two jutting promontories to guard it, the ground offers every possible variety of surface and elevation. From the very edge of the calm lake, terrace rises above terrace, clad with all that is rich and beautiful in vegetation; rocks, and waterfalls, and ruins, and statues abound. Everything that money could buy, and bad taste suggest, are there heaped with a profusion that is actually confounding. Every stone stair leads to some new surprise; every table-land opens some fresh and astonishing prospect. Incongruous, inharmonious, tea-gardenish as it is, there is still a charm in the spot which no efforts of the vilest taste seem able to eradicate. The vines *will* cluster in graceful groupings; the oranges *will* glow in gorgeous contrast to their dark mantle of leaves; water *will* leap with its own spontaneous gladness, and fall in diamond showers over a grassy carpet no emerald ever rivalled; and, more than all, the beautiful lake itself *will* reflect the picture, with such softened effects of light and shadow, that all the perversions of human ingenuity are totally lost in the transmission.

This same Villa d’Este was once the scene of a sad drama; but it is not to this era in its history we desire now to direct our reader’s attention, but to a period much later, when no longer the home of an exiled Princess, or the retreat where shame and sorrow abandoned themselves to every excess, its changed fortune had converted it into an establishment for the water cure!

The prevailing zeal of our day is to simplify everything, even to things which will not admit of simplicity. What with our local athenæums, our mechanics’ institutes, our lecturing lords and discoursing baronets, we have done a great deal. Science has been popularised, remote geographies made familiar, complex machinery explained, mysterious inscriptions rendered intelligible. How could it be expected that in the general enthusiasm for useful knowledge medicine should escape, or

that its secrets should be exempt from a scrutiny that has spared nothing? Hence have sprung up those various sects in the curative art which, professing to treat rationally and openly what hitherto has been shrouded in mysticism and deception, have multiplied themselves into grape cures, milk cures, and water cures, and Heaven knows how many other strange devices "to cheat the ills that flesh is heir to."

We are not going to quarrel with any of these new religions; we forgive them much for the simple service they have done, in withdrawing their followers from the confined air, the laborious life, the dreary toil, or the drearier dissipation of cities, to the fresh and invigorating breezes, the cheerful quietude, and the simple pleasures of a country existence.

We care little for the regimen or the ritual, be it lentils or asses' milk, Tyrol grapes, or pure water, so that it be administered on the breezy mountain side, or in the healthful air of some lofty "Plateau" away from the cares, the ambitions, the strife, and the jar-rings of the active world, with no seductions of dissipation, neither the prolonged stimulants, nor the late hours of fashion.

It was a good thought, too, to press the picturesque into the service of health, and show the world what benefits may flow, even to nerves and muscles, from elevated thoughts and refined pleasures. All this is, however, purely digressionary, since we are more concerned with the social than the medical aspects of Hydropathy, and so we come back at once to Como. The sun has just risen, on a fresh morning in autumn, over the tall mountain east of the lake, making the whole western shore, where the Villa d'Este stands, all a-glitter with his rays. Every rock, and crag, and promontory are picked out with a sharp distinctness, every window is a-blaze, and streams of light shoot into many a grove and copse, as though glad to pierce their way into cool spots where the noonday sun himself can never enter. On the opposite shore, a dim and mysterious shadow wraps every object, faint outlines of tower and palace loom through the darkness, and a strange hazy depth encloses the whole scene. Such is the stillness, however, that the opening of a casement, or the plash of a stone in the water, is heard across the lake, and voices come from the mysterious gloom with an effect almost preternaturally striking.

On a terrace high up above the lake, sheltered with leafy fig-trees and prickly pears, there walks a gentleman, sniffing the morning air, and evidently bent on inhaling health at every pore.

Nothing in his appearance indicates the invalid; every gesture, as he moves, rather displays a conscious sense of health and vigour. Somewhat above the middle size, compactly but not heavily built, it is very difficult to guess his years; for though his hair and the large whiskers which meet beneath his chin are perfectly white, his clear blue eyes and regular teeth show no signs of age. Singularly enough, it is his dress that gives the clue to this mystery. His tightly-fitting frock, his bell-shaped hat, and his shapely trousers, all tell of a fashion antecedent to our loosely-hanging vestments and uncared-for garments; for the Viscount Lackington was a lord in waiting to the "First Gentleman" in Europe at a time when Paletots were unknown, and Jim Crows had not been imagined.

Early as was the hour, his dress was perfect in all its details, and the accurate folds of his immaculate cravat, and the spotless brilliancy of his boots, would have done credit to Bond-street in days when Bond-street cherished such glories. Let our modern critics sneer as they will at the dandyism of that day, the gentleman of the time was a very distinctive individual, and, in the subdued colour of his habiliments, their studious simplicity, and, above all, their unvarying uniformity, utterly defied all the attempts of spurious imitators.

Our story opens only a few years back, and Lord Lackington was then one of the very few who perpetuated the traditions in costume of that celebrated period; but he did so with such unerring accuracy, that men actually wondered where those marvellously shaped hats were made, or how those creaseless coats were ever fashioned. Even to the perfume of his handkerchief, the faintest and most evanescent of odours, all were mysteries that none could penetrate.

As he surveyed the landscape through his double eye-glass, he smiled graciously and blandly, and gently inclined his head, as though to say, "Very prettily done, water and mountains. I'm quite satisfied with you, trees; you please me very much indeed! Trickle away little fountain – the picture is the better for it." His Lordship had soon, however, other objects to engage his attention than

the inanimate constituents of the scene. The spot which he had selected for his point of view was usually traversed, in their morning walks, by the other residents of the "Cure," and this circumstance permitted him to receive the homage of such early risers as were fain to couple with their pursuit of health the recognition of a great man.

Like poverty, hydropathy makes us acquainted with strange associates. The present establishment was too recently formed to have acquired any very distinctive celebrity, but it was sufficiently crowded. There was a great number of third-rate Italians from the Lombard towns and cities, a sprinkling of inferior French, a few English, a stray American or so, and an Irish family, on their way to Italy, sojourning here rather for economy than health, and fancying that they were acquiring habits and manners that would serve them through their winter's campaign.

The first figure which emerged upon the plateau was that of a man swathed in great-coat, cap, and worsted wrappers, that it was difficult to guess what he could be. He came forward at a shambling trot, and was about to pass on without looking aside, when Lord Lackington called out, "Ah! Spicer, have you got off that eleven pounds yet?" "No, my Lord, but very near it. I'm seven stone ten, and at seven eight I'm all right."

"Push along, then, and don't lose your training,' said his Lordship, dismissing him with a bland wave of the hand. And the other made an attempt at a salutation, and passed on.

"Madame la Marquise, your servant. You ascend these mountain steeps like a chamois!"

This compliment was addressed to a little, very fat old lady, who came snorting along like a grampus.

"Benedetto Dottore!" cried she. "He will have it that I must go up to the stone cross yonder every morning before breakfast, and I know I shall burst a blood-vessel yet in the attempt."

A chair, with a mass of horse-clothing and furs, surmounted by a little yellow wizened face, was next borne by, to which Lord Lackington bowed courteously, saying, "Your Excellency improves at every hour."

His Excellency gave a brief nod and a little faint smile, swallowed a mouthful from a silver flask presented by his servant, and disappeared.

"Ah! the fair syren sisters! what a charming vision!" said his Lordship, as two bright-cheeked, laughing-eyed girls bounced upon the terrace in all the high-hearted enjoyment of good health and good spirits.

"Molly, for shame!" cried what seemed the elder, a damsel of about nineteen, as the younger, holding out her dress with both hands, performed a kind of minuet curtsey to the Viscount, to which he responded with a bow that might have done credit to Versailles.

"Perfectly done – grace and elegance itself. The foot a little – a very little more in advance."

"Just because you want to look at it," cried she, laughing. "Molly, Molly!" exclaimed the other, rebukingly. "Let him deny it if he can, Lucy," retorted she. "But here's papa."

And as she spoke, a square-built, short, florid man, fanning his bald head with a straw hat, puffed his way forward.

"My Lord, I'm your most obaydient!" said he, with a very unmistakably Irish enunciation. "O'Reilly, I'm delighted to see you. These charming girls of yours have just put me in good humour with the whole creation. What a lovely spot this is; how beautiful!"

Though his Lordship's arm and outstretched hand directed attention to the scenery, his eyes never wandered from the pretty features of the laughing girl beside him.

"It's like Banthry!" said Mr. O'Reilly – "it's the very ditto of Banthry."

"Indeed!" exclaimed my Lord, still pursuing his scrutiny.

"Only Banthry's bigger and wider. Indeed, I may say finer."

"Nothing, in *my* estimation, can exceed this!" said his Lordship, with a distinctive smile, addressed to the young lady.

"I'm glad you think so," said she, with a merry laugh. And then, with a pirouette, she sprang up the steep steps on the rocky path before her, and disappeared, her sister as quickly following, leaving Mr. O'Reilly alone with his Lordship.

"What heaps of money she laid out here," exclaimed O'Reilly, as he looked at the labyrinth of mad ruins, and rustic bridges, and hanging gardens on every side of him.

"Large sums – very large indeed!" said my Lord, whose thoughts were evidently on some other track.

"Pure waste – nothing else; the place never could pay. Vines and fig-trees, indeed – I'd rather see a crop of oats.".

"I have a weakness for the picturesque, I must own," said my Lord, as his eye still followed the retreating figures of the girls.

"Well, I like a waterfall; and, indeed, I like a summer-house myself," said O'Reilly, as though confessing to a similar trait on his own part.

"This is the first time you have been abroad, O'Reilly?" said his Lordship, to turn the subject of the conversation.

"Yes, my Lord, my first, and, with God's blessing, my last, too! When I lost Mrs. O'Reilly, two years ago, of a complaint that beat all the doctors – "

"Ah, yes, you mentioned that to me; very singular indeed!"

"For it wasn't in the heart itself, my Lord, but in the bag that houlds it."

"Oh yes, I remember the explanation perfectly; so you thought you'd just come abroad for a little distraction."

"Distraction indeed! 'tis the very word for it," broke in Mr. O'Reilly, eagerly. "My head is bewildered between the lingo and the money, and they keep telling me, 'You'll get used to it, papa, darling – you'll be quite at home yet.' But how is that ever possible?"

"Still, for your charming girls' sake," said my Lord, caressing his whiskers and adjusting his neckcloth, as if for immediate captivation – "or their sake, O'Reilly, you've done perfectly right!"

"Well, I'm glad your Lordship says so. 'Tis nobody ought to know better!" said he, with a heavy sigh.

"They really deserve every cultivation. All the advantages that – that – that sort of thing can bestow!"

And his Lordship smiled benignly, as though offering his own aid to the educational system.

"What they said to me was this," said O'Reilly, dropping his voice to a tone of the most confiding secrecy: "'Don't be keeping them down here in Mary's Abbey, but take them where they'll see life. You can give them forty thousand pounds between them, Tim O'Reilly, and with that and their own good looks – '"

"Beauty, O'Reilly – downright loveliness," broke in my Lord.

"Well, indeed, they are handsome," said O'Reilly, with an honest satisfaction, "and that's exactly why I thought the advice was good. 'Take them abroad,' they said; 'take them into Germany and Italy – but more especially Italy' – for they say there's nothing like Italy for finishing young ladies."

"That is certainly the general impression!" said his Lordship with the barest imaginable motion of his nether lip.

"And here we are, but where we're going afterwards, and what well do when we're there, that thief of a Courier we have may know, but I don't."

"So that you gave up business, O'Reilly, and resigned yourself freely to a life of ease," said my Lord, with a smile that seemed to approve the project.

"Yes, indeed, my Lord; but whether it's to be a life of pleasure, I don't know. I was in the provision trade thirty-eight years, and do you know I miss the pigs greatly."

"Every man has a hankering of that sort. Old cosmopolite as I am, I have every now and then my longing for that window at Brookes's, and that snug dinner-room at Boodle's."

"Yes, my Lord," said O'Reilly, who hadn't the faintest conception whether these localities were not situated in China.

"Ah, Twining, never thought to see you here," called out his Lordship to a singularly tall man, who came forward with such awkward contortions of legs and arms, as actually to suggest the notion that he was struggling against somebody. Mr. O'Reilly modestly stole away while the friends were shaking hands, and we take the same opportunity to, present the new arrival to our reader.

Mr. Adderley Twining was a gentleman of good family and very large fortune, whose especial pleasure it was to pass off to the world for a gay, light-hearted, careless creature, of small means, and most lavish liberality. To be, in fact, perpetually struggling between a most generous temperament and a narrow purse. His cordiality was extreme, his politeness unbounded; and as he was most profuse in his pledges for the present and his promises for the future, he attained to a degree of popularity which to his own estimation was immense. This was, in fact, the one sole self-deception of his very crafty nature, and the belief that he was a universal favourite was the solitary mistake of this shrewd intelligence. Although a married man, there was so constantly some "difficulty" or other – these were his own words – about Lady Grace, that they seldom were seen together; but he spoke of her when absent in terms of the most fervent affection, but whose health, or spirits, or tastes, or engagements unhappily denied her the happiness of travelling along with him. Whenever it chanced that they were together, he scarcely mentioned her.

"And what breeze of fortune has wafted you here, Twining?" said his Lordship, delighted to chance upon a native of his own world.

"Health, my Lord, – health," said he, with one of his ready laughs, as though everything he said or thought had some comic side in it that amused him, "and a touch of economy too, my Lord."

"What humbug all that is, Twining. Who the deuce is so well off as yourself?" said Lord Lackington, with all that peculiar bitterness with which an embarrassed man listens to the grumblings of a wealthy one.

"Only too happy, my Lord – rejoiced if you were right. Capital news for me, eh? – excellent news!" And he slapped his lean legs with his long thin fingers, and laughed immoderately.

"Come, come, we all know that – besides a devilish good thing of your own – you got the Wrexley estate, and old Poole's Dorsetshire property. Hang me if I ever open a newspaper without reading that you are somebody's residuary legatee."

"I assure you, solemnly, my Lord, I am actually hard up, pressed for money, downright inconvenienced." And he laughed again, as though it were uncommonly droll.

"Stuff – nonsense!" said my Lord, angrily, for he really was losing temper; and to change the topic he curtly asked, "And where do you mean to pass the winter?"

"In Florence, my Lord, or Naples. We have a little den in both places."

The "den" in Florence was a sumptuous palace on the Arno. Its brother at Naples was a royal villa near Posilippo.

"Why not Rome? Lady Lackington and myself mean to try Rome."

"Ah, all very well for you, my Lord, but for people of small fortune – "

There was that in the expression of his Lordship's face that told Twining this vein might be followed too far, and so he stopped in time, and laughed away pleasantly.

"Spicer tells me," resumed Lord Lackington, "that Florence is quite deserted; nothing but a kind of second and third rate set of people go there. Is that so?"

"Excellent people, capital society, great fun!" said Twining, in a burst of merriment.

"Spicer calls them 'Snobs,' and he ought to know."

"So he ought indeed, my Lord – no one better. Admirably observed, and very just."

"He's in training again for that race that never comes off," said his Lordship. "The first time I ever saw him – it was at Leamington – and he was performing the same farce, with hot baths and blankets, and jotting down imaginary bets in a small note-book."

"How good – capital! Your Lordship has him perfectly – you know him thoroughly – great fun! Spicer, excellent creature!"

"How those fellows live is a great mystery to me. You chance upon them everywhere, in Baden or Aix in summer, in Paris or Vienna during the winter. Now, if they were amusing rogues, like that fellow I met at your house in Hampshire – "

"Oh, Stockley, my Lord; rare fellow, quite a genius!" laughed Twining.

"Just so – Stockley; one would have them just to help over the boredom of a country house; but this creature Spicer is as devoid of amusing gifts, as tiresome, and as worn out, as if he owned ten thousand a year."

"How good, by Jove!" cried Twining, in ecstasy. And he slapped his gaunt limbs and threw his long arms wildly about in a transport of delight.

"And who are here, Twining – any of our set?" "Not a soul, my Lord; the place isn't known yet, that's the reason I came here – so quiet and so cheap, make your own terms with them.

"Good fun – excellent!"

"*I* came to meet a man of business," said his Lordship, with a strong emphasis on the pronoun. "He couldn't prolong his journey farther south, and so we agreed to rendezvous here."

"I have a little affair also to transact – a mere trifle, a nothing, in fact – with a lawyer, who promises to meet me here by the end of the month, so that we have just time to take our baths, drink the waters, and all that sort of thing, while we are waiting."

And he rubbed his hands, and laughed away again.

"What a boon for my wife to learn that Lady Grace is here! She was getting so hipped with the place – not so much the place as the odious people – that I suspect she'd have left me to wait for Dunn all alone."

"Dunn! Dunn! not Davenport Dunn?" exclaimed Twining.

"The very man – do you know him?"

"To be sure, he's the fellow I'm waiting for. Capital fun, isn't it?"

And he slapped his legs again, while he repeated the name of Dunn over and over again.

"I want to know something about this same Mr. Dunn," said Lord Lackington, confidentially.

"So do I; like it of all things," cried Twining. "Clever fellow-wonderful fellow – up to everything – acquainted with everybody. Great fun!"

"He occupies a very distinguished position in Ireland, I fancy," said his Lordship, with such a marked stress on the locality as to show that such did not constitute an imperial reputation.

"Yes, yes, man of the day there; do what he likes; very popular – immensely popular!" said Twining, as he laughed on.

"So that you know no more of him than his public repute – no more than I know myself," said his Lordship.

"Not so much as your Lordship, I'm certain," said Twining, as though it would have been unbecoming in him to do so; "in fact, my business transactions are such mere nothings, that it's quite a kindness on his part to undertake them – trifles, no more!"

And Twining almost hugged himself in the ecstasy which his last words suggested.

"*Mine*," said Lord Lackington, haughtily, "are of consequence enough to fetch him hither – a good thousand miles away from England; but he is pretty certain of its being well worth his while, to come."

"Quite convinced of that – could swear it," said Twining, eagerly.

"Here are a mob of insufferable bores," said his Lordship, testily, as a number of people were heard approaching, for somehow – it is not easy to say exactly why – he had got into a train of thought that scorned to worry him, and was not disposed to meet strangers; and so, with a brief gesture of good-by to Twining, he turned into a path and disappeared.

Twining looked after him for a second or two, and then slapping his legs, he muttered, pleasantly, “What fun!” and took the road towards the house.

CHAPTER II. HOW TWO "FINE LADIES" PASS THE MORNING

In a room of moderate size, whose furniture was partly composed of bygone finery and some articles of modern comfort – a kind of compromise between a Royal residence and a Hydropathic establishment – sat two ladies at an open window, which looked out upon a small terrace above the lake. The view before them could scarcely have been surpassed in Europe. Enclosed, as in a frame, between the snow-clad Alps and the wooded mountains of the Brianca, lay the lake, its shores one succession of beautiful villas, whose gardens descended to the very water. Although the sun was high, the great mountains threw the shadows half way across the lake; and in the dim depth of shade, tower and crag, battlement and precipice, were strangely intermixed, giving to the picture a mysterious grandeur that contrasted strongly with the bright reality of the opposite shore, where fruit and flowers, gay tapestries from casements, and floating banners, added colour to the scene.

Large white-sailed boats stole peacefully along, loaded, half-mast high, with water-melons and garden stores; the golden produce glittering in the sun, and glowing in the scarcely rippled water beneath them, while the low chant of the boatmen floated softly and lazily through the air – meet sounds in a scene where all seemed steeped in a voluptuous repose.

The two ladies whom we have mentioned were not impassioned spectators of the scene. Whenever their eyes ranged over it, no new brilliancy awoke in them, no higher colour tinged their cheek. One was somewhat advanced in life, but with many traces of beauty, and an air which denoted a lifelong habit of homage and deference.

There was that in her easy, lounging attitude, and the splendour of her dress, which seemed to intimate that Lady Lackington would still be graceful, and even extravagant, though there were none to admire the grace or be dazzled by the costliness. Her companion, though several years younger, looked, from the effects of delicate health and a suffering disposition, almost of her own age. She, too, was handsome; but it was a beauty which so much depended on tint and colour, that her days of indisposition left her almost bereft of good looks. All about her, her low, soft voice, her heavily raised eyelids, her fair and blue-veined hands, the very carriage of her head, pensively thrown forwards, were so many protestations of one who asked for sympathy and compassion; and who, whether with reason or without, firmly believed herself the most unhappy creature in existence.

If there was no great similarity of disposition to unite them, there was a bond fully as strong. They were both English of the same order, both born and bred up in a ritual that dictates its own notions of good or bad, of right and wrong, of well-bred and vulgar, of riches and poverty. Given any person in society, or any one event of their lives, and these two ladies' opinion upon either would have been certain to harmonise and agree. The world for them had but one aspect; for the simple reason, that they had always seen it from the one same point of view. They had not often met; they had seen very little of each other for years; but the freemasonry of class supplied all the place of affection, and they were as fond and as confiding as though they were sisters.

"I must say," said the Viscountess, in a tone full of reprobation, "that is shocking – actually shameful; and, in *your* place, I'd not endure it!"

"I have become so habituated to sorrow," sighed Lady Grace

"That you will sink under it at last, my dear, if this man's cruelties be not put an end to. You really must allow me to speak to Lackington."

"It wouldn't be of the slightest service, I assure you. In the first place, he is so plausible, he'd persuade any one that there was nothing to complain of, that he lived up to his fortune, that his means were actually crippled; and secondly, he'd give such pledges for the future, such promises, that it would be downright rudeness to throw a doubt on their sincerity."

"Why did you marry him, my dear?" said Lady Lackington, with a little sigh.

"I married him to vex Ridout; we had a quarrel at that *fête* at Chiswick, you remember, Tollertin's *fête*. Ridout was poor, and felt his poverty. I don't believe I treated his scruples quite fairly. I know I owned to him that I had no contempt for riches – that I thought Belgrave-square, and the Opera, and Diamonds, and a smart Equipage, all very commendable things: and Jack said, 'Then, there's your man. Twining has twenty thousand a year.' 'But, he has not asked me,' said I, laughing. Ridout turned away without a word. Half an hour later, Mr. Adderley Twining formally proposed for my hand, and was accepted."

"And Jack Ridout is now the Marquis of Allerton," said Lady Lackington.

"I know it!" said the other, bitterly.

"With nigh forty thousand a year."

"I know it!" cried she, again.

"And the handsomest house and the finest park in England."

The other burst into tears, and hid her face between her hands.

"There's a fate in these things, my dear," said Lady Lackington, with a slight paleness creeping over her cheek. "That's all we can say about them."

"What have you done with that sweet place in Hampshire?"

"Dingley? It is let to Lord Mauley."

"And you had a house in St. James's-square."

"It is Burridge's Hotel, now."

Lady Lackington fanned her swarthy face for some seconds, and then said, "And how did you come here?"

"We saw – that is, Twining saw – an advertisement of this new establishment in the *Galignani*. We had just arrived at Liége, when he discovered a vetturino returning to Milan with an empty carriage; he accordingly bargained with him to take us on here – I forget for what sum – so that we left our own carriage, and half my luggage, at the Pavilion Hotel, and set off on our three weeks' journey. We have been three weeks all but two days on the road! My maid of course refused to travel in this fashion, and went back to Paris. Courcel, his own man, rebelled too, which Twining, I must say, seemed overjoyed at, and gave him such a character for honesty in consequence, as he never could have hoped for; and so we came on, with George the footman, and a Belgian creature I picked up at the hotel, who, except to tear out my hair when she brushes it, and bruise me whenever she hooks a dress, has really no other gift under heaven."

"And you actually came all this way by vetturino?"

Lady Grace nodded a sad assent, and sighed deeply.

"What does he mean by it, my dear? The man must have some deep, insidious design in all this; – don't you think so?"

"I think to myself, sometimes," replied she, sorrowfully. And now their eyes met, and they remained looking steadily at each other for some seconds. Whatever Lady Grace's secret thoughts, or whatever the dark piercing orbs of her companion served to intimate, true is it that she blushed till her cheek became crimson; and as she arose, and walked out upon the terrace, her neck was a-flame with the emotion.

"He never married?" said Lady Lackington.

"No!" said Lady Grace, without turning her head. And there was a silence on both sides.

Oh dear! how much of the real story of our lives passes without expression – how much of the secret mechanism of our hearts moves without a sound in the machinery!

"Poor fellow!" said Lady Lackington, at last, "his lot is just as sad as your own. I mean," added she, "that he feels it so."

There was no answer, and she resumed. “Not but men generally treat these things lightly enough. They have their clubs, and their Houses of Parliament, and their shooting. Are you ill, dearest?” cried she, as Lady Grace tottered feebly back and sauk into a chair.

“No,” said she, in a faint voice, “I’m only tired!” And there was an inexpressible melancholy in the tone as she spoke it.

“And I’m tired too!” said Lady Lackington, drearily. “There is a tyranny in the routine of these places quite insupportable – the hours, the discipline, the diet, and, worse than all, the dreadful people one meets with.” Though Lady Grace did not seem very attentive, this was a theme the speaker loved to improve, and so she proceeded to discuss the house and its inhabitants in all freedom. French, Russians, and Italians – all were passed in review, and very smartly criticised, till she arrived at “those atrocious O’Reillys, that my Lord will persist in threatening to present to me. Now one knows horrid people when they are very rich, or very well versed in some speculation or other – mines, or railroads, or the like – and when their advice is so much actual money in your pocket – just, for instance, as my Lord knows that Mr. Davenport Dunn – ”

“Oh! he’s a great ally of Mr. Twining; at least, I have heard his name a hundred times in connexion with business matters.”

“You never saw him?”

“No.”

“Nor I, but once; but I confess to have some curiosity to know him. They tell me he can do anything he pleases with each House of Parliament, and has no inconsiderable influence in a sphere yet higher. It is quite certain that the old Duke of Wycombe’s affairs were all set to rights by his agency, and Lady Muddleton’s divorce bill was passed by his means.”

The word “divorce” seemed to rally Lady Grace from her fit of musing, and she said, “Is that certain?”

“Julia herself says so, that’s all. He got a bill, or an act, or clause, or whatever you call it, inserted, by which she succeeded in her suit, and she is now as free – as free – ”

“As I am not!” broke in Lady Grace, with a sad effort at a smile.

“To be sure, there is a little scandal in the matter, too. They say that old Lord Brookdale was very ‘soft’ himself in that quarter.”

“The Chancellor!” exclaimed Lady Grace.

“And why not, dear? You remember the old refrain, ‘No age, no station’ – what is it? – and the next line goes – ‘To sovereign beauty mankind bends the knee.’ Julia is rather proud of the triumph herself; she says it is like a victory in China, where the danger is very little and the spoils considerable!”

“Mr. Spicer, my Lady,” said a servant, entering, “wishes to know if your Ladyship will receive him.”

“Not this morning; say I’m engaged at present Tell him – But perhaps you have no objection – shall we have him in?”

“Just as you please. I don’t know him.”

Lady Lackington whispered a word or two, and then added aloud, “And one always finds them ‘useful,’ my dear!”

Mr. Spicer, when denuded of top-coat, cap, and woollen wrapper, as we saw him last, was a slightly made man, middle-sized, and middle-aged, with an air sufficiently gentlemanlike to pass muster in any ordinary assemblage. To borrow an illustration from the pursuits he was versed in, he bore the same relation to a man of fashion that a “weed” does to a “winner of the Derby” – that is to say, to an uneducated eye, there would have seemed some resemblance; and just as the “weed” counterfeits the racer in a certain loose awkwardness of stride and an ungainly show of power, so did he appear to have certain characteristics of a class that he merely mixed with on sufferance, and imitated in some easy “externals.” The language of any profession is, however, a great leveller; and whether the cant be of the “House,” Westminster Hall, the College of Physicians, the Mess Table, or

the “Turf,” it is exceedingly difficult at first blush to distinguish the real practitioner from the mere pretender. Now, Spicer was what is called a Gentleman Rider, and he had all the slang of his craft, which is, more or less, the slang of men who move in a very different sphere.

As great landed proprietors of ambitious tendencies will bestow a qualification to sit in Parliament upon some man of towering abilities and small fortune, so did certain celebrities of the Turf confer a similar social qualification on Spicer; and by enabling him to “associate with the world,” empower themselves to utilise his talents and make use of his capabilities. In this great Parliament of the Field, therefore, Spicer sat; and though for a very small and obscure borough, yet he had his place, and was “ready when wanted.”

“How d’ye do, Spicer?” said Lady Lackington, arranging the folds of her dress as he came forward, and intimating by the action that he was not to delude himself into any expectation of touching her hand. “My Lord told me you were here.”

Spicer bowed, and muttered, and looked, as though he were waiting to be formally presented to the other lady in company; but Lady Lackington had not the most remote intention of bestowing on him such a mark of recognition, and merely answered the mute appeal of his features by a dry “Won’t you sit down?”

And Mr. Spicer did sit down, and of a verity his position denoted no excess of ease or enjoyment. It was not that he did not attempt to appear perfectly at home, that he did not assume an attitude of the very calmest self-possession, maybe he even passed somewhat the frontier of the lackadaisical territory he assumed, for he slapped his boot with his whip in a jaunty affectation of indifference.

“Pray, don’t do that!” said Lady Lackington; “it worries one!”

He desisted, and a very awkward silence of some seconds ensued; at length she said, “There was something or other I wanted to ask you about; you can’t help me to it, can you?”

“I’m afraid not, my Lady. Was it anything about sporting matters?”

“No, no; but now that you remind me, all that information you gave me about Glaucus was wrong, he came in ‘a bad third.’ My Lord laughed at me for losing my money on him, and said he was the worst horse of the lot.”

“Very sorry to differ with his Lordship,” said Spicer, deferentially, “but he was the favourite up to Tuesday evening, when Scott declared that he’d win with Big the Market. I then tried to get four to one on Flycatcher, to square your book, but the stable was nobbled.”

“Did you ever hear such jargon, my dear?” said Lady Lackington. “You don’t understand one syllable of it, I’m certain.”

Spicer smirked and made a slight approach to a bow, as though even this reference to him would serve for an introduction; but Lady Grace met the advance with a haughty stare and a look, that said, as plainly as any words, “At your peril, Sir!”

“Well, one thing is certain!” said Lady Lackington, “nothing that you predicted turned out afterwards. Glaucus was beaten, and I lost my three hundred pounds – only fancy, dearest, three hundred pounds, with which one could do so many things! I wanted it in fifty ways, and I never contemplated leaving it with the legs at Newmarket.”

“Not the legs, I assure you, my Lady – not the legs. I made your book with Colonel Stamford and Gore Middleton – ”

“As if I cared who won it!” said she, haughtily.

“I never knew that you tempted fortune in this fashion!” said Lady Grace, languidly.

“I do so very rarely, my dear. I think Mining Shares are better, or Guatemala State Bonds. I realised very handsomely indeed upon them two years ago. To be sure it was Dunn that gave me the hint: he dined with us at the Hôtel de Windsor, and I asked him to pay a small sum for me to Hore’s people, and when I counted the money out to him, he said, ‘Why not buy in some of those Guanaxualo

shares; they'll be up to – ' I forget what he said – 'before a month. Let Storr wait, and you'll pay him in full.' And he was quite right, aas I told you. I realised about eight hundred pounds on my venture."

"If Glaucus had won, my Lady – "

"Don't tell me what I should have gained," broke she in. "It only provokes one the more, and above all, Spicer, no more information, I detest 'information.' And now, what was it I had to say to you; really *your* memory would seem to be failing you completely. What could it be?"

"It couldn't be that roan filly – "

"Of course it couldn't. I really must endeavour to persuade you that my thoughts occasionally stray beyond the stable. By the way, you sold those grey carriage-horses for nothing. You always told me they were the handsomest pair in London, and yet you say I'm exceedingly lucky to get one hundred and eighty pounds for them."

"You forget, my Lady, that Bloomfield was a roarer – "

"Well, you really are in a tormenting mood this morning, Spicer. Just bethink you, now, if there's anything more you have to say, disagreeable and unpleasant, and say it at once; you have made lady Grace quite ill – "

"No, only tired!" sighed her friend, with a melancholy smile.

"Now I remember," cried Lady Lackington, "it was about that house at Florence. I don't think we shall pass any time there, but in case we should, I should like that Zapponi palace, with the large terrace on the Arno, and there must be no one on the ground-floor, mind that; and I'll not give more than I gave formerly – perhaps not so much. But, above all, remember, that if we decide to go on to Rome, that I'm not bound to it in the least, and he must new-carpet that large drawing-room, and I must have the little boudoir hung in blue, with muslin over it, not pink. Pink is odious, except in a dressing-room. You will yourself look to the stables; they require considerable alteration, and there's something about the dining-room – what was it? – Lord Lackington will remember it. But perhaps I have given you as many directions as your head will bear."

"I almost think so too, my Lady," muttered he, with a half-dogged look.

"And be sure, Spicer, that we have that cook – Antoine – if we should want him. Don't let him take a place till we decide where we shall stop."

"You are aware that he insists on a hundred and fifty francs a month, and his wine."

"I should like to know what good you are, if I am to negotiate with these creatures myself!" said she, haughtily. "I must say, Lady Grace will suspect that I have rather overrated your little talents, Spicer." And Lady Grace gave a smile that might mean any amount of approval or depreciation required. "I shall not want that saddle now, and you must make that man take it back again."

"But I fear, my Lady – "

"There, don't be tiresome! What is that odious bell? Oh, it's the dinner of these creatures. You dine at the table d'hôte, I think, so pray don't let us keep you. You can drop in to-morrow. Let me see, about two, or half-past. Good-by – good-by."

And so Mr. Spicer retired. The bow Lady Grace vouchsafed being in reality addressed rather to one of the figures on her fan than to himself.

"One gets a habit of these kind of people," said Lady Lackington, as the door closed after him; "but really it is a bad habit."

"I think so too," said Lady Grace, languidly.

"To be sure, there are now and then occasions when you can't employ exactly a servant. There are petty negotiations which require a certain delicacy of treatment, and there, they are useful. Besides," said she, with a half-sneering laugh, "there's a fashion in them, and, like Blenheim spaniels, every one must have one, and the smaller the better!"

"Monsignore Clifford my Lady, to know if you receive," said a servant, entering.

"Oh, certainly. I'm charmed, my dear Grace, to present to you the most agreeable man of all Rome. He is English, but 'went over,' as they call it, and is now high in the Pope's favour."

These words, hurriedly uttered as they were, had been scarcely spoken when the visitor entered the room. He was a tall, handsome man, of about five-and-thirty, dressed in deep black, and wearing a light blue ribbon across his white neckcloth. He advanced with all the ease of good breeding, and taking Lady Lackington's hand, he kissed the tips of her fingers with the polished grace of a courtier.

After a formal presentation to Lady Grace, he took a seat between the two ladies.

"I am come on, for *me*, a sad errand, my Lady," said he, in a voice of peculiar depth and sweetness, in which the very slightest trace of a foreign accent was detectable – "it is to say good-by!"

"You quite shock me, Monsignore. I always hoped you were here for our own time."

"I believed and wished it also, my Lady; but I have received a peremptory order to return to Rome. His Holiness desires to see me at once. There is some intention, I understand, of naming me as the Nuncio at Florence. Of course this is a secret as yet." And he turned to each of the ladies in succession.

"Oh, that would be charming – at least for any one happy enough to fix their residence there, and my friend Lady Grace is one of the fortunate."

Monsignore bowed in gratitude to the compliment, but contrived, as he bent his head, to throw a covert glance at his future neighbour, with the result of which he did not seem displeased.

"I must of course, then, send you back those interesting books, which I have only in part read?"

"By no means, my Lady; they are yours, if you will honour me by accepting them. If the subject did not forbid the epithet, I should call them trifles."

"Monsignore insists on my reading the 'Controversy,' dear Lady Grace; but how I am to continue my studies without his guidance – "

"We can correspond, my Lady," quickly broke in the other. "You can state to me whatever doubts – difficulties, perhaps, were, the better word – occur to you; I shall be but too happy and too proud to offer you the solution; and if my Lady Grace Twining would condescend to accept me in the same capacity – ."

She bowed blandly, and he went on.

"There is a little tract here, by the Cardinal Balbi – 'Flowers of St. Joseph' is the title. The style is simple but touching – 'the invitation' scarcely to be resisted."

"I think you told me I should like the Cardinal personally," broke in Lady Lackington.

"His Eminence is charming, my Lady – such goodness, such gentleness, and so much of the very highest order of conversational agreeability."

"Monsignore is so polite as to promise us introductions at Rome," continued she, addressing Lady Grace, "and amongst those, too, who are never approached by our countrymen."

"The Alterini, the Fornisari, the Balbetti," proudly repeated Monsignore.

"All ultra-exclusives, you understand," whispered Lady Lacking-ton to her friend, "who wouldn't tolerate the English."

"How charming!" ejaculated Lady Grace, with a languid enthusiasm.

"The Roman nobility," continued Lady Lackington, "stands proudly forward, as the only society in Europe to which the travelling English cannot obtain access."

"They have other prejudices, my Lady – if I may so dare to call sentiments inspired by higher influences – than those which usually sway society. These prejudices are all in favour of such as regard our Church, if not with the devotion of true followers, at least with the respect and veneration that rightfully attach to the first-born of Christianity."

"Yes," said Lady Lackington, as, though not knowing very well to what, she gave her assent, and then added, "I own to you I have always experienced a sort of awe – a sense of – what shall I call it?"

"Devotion, my Lady," blandly murmured Monsignore, while his eyes were turned on her with a paraphrase of the sentiment.

"Just so. I have always felt it on entering one of your churches – the solemn stillness, the gloomy indistinctness, the softened tints, the swelling notes of the organ – you know what I mean."

"And when such emotions are etherialised, when, rising above material influences, they are associated with thoughts of what is alone thought-worthy, with hopes of what alone dignifies hope, imagine, then, the blessed beatitude, the heavenly ecstasy they inspire."

Monsignore had now warmed to his work, and very ingeniously sketched out the advantages of a creed that accommodated itself so beautifully to every temperament – that gave so much and yet exacted so little – that poisoned no pleasures – discouraged no indulgences – but left every enjoyment open with its price attached to it, just as objects are ticketed in a bazaar. He had much to say, too, of its soothing consolations – its devices to alleviate sorrow and cheat affliction – while such was its sympathy for poor suffering humanity, that even the very caprices of temper – the mere whims of fancied depression – were not deemed unworthy of its pious care.

It is doubtful whether these ladies would have accorded to a divine of their own persuasion the same degree of favour and attention that they now bestowed on Monsignore Clifford. Perhaps his manner in discussing certain belongings of his Church was more entertaining; perhaps, too – we hint it with deference – that there was something like a forbidden pleasure in thus trespassing into the domain of Rome. His light and playful style was, however, a fascination amply sufficient to account for the interest he excited. If he dwelt but passingly on the dogmas of his Church, he was eloquently diffuse on its millinery. Copes, stoles, and vestments he revelled in; and there was a picturesque splendour in his description of ceremonial that left the best-"effects" of the opera far behind. How gloriously, too, did he expatiate on the beauty of the Madonna, the costliness of her gems, and the brilliancy of her diadem! How incidentally did he display a rapturous veneration for loveliness, and a very pretty taste in dress! In a word, as they both confessed, "he was charming." There was a downy softness in his enthusiasm, a sense of repose even in his very insistence, peculiarly pleasant to those who like to have their sensations, like their perfumes, as weak and as faint as possible.

"There is a tact and delicacy about these men from which our people might take a lesson," said Lady Lackington, as the door closed after him.

"Very true," sighed Lady Grace; "ours are really dreadful."

CHAPTER III. A FATHER AND A DAUGHTER

A DREARY evening late in October, a cold thin rain falling, and a low wailing wind sighing through the headless branches of the trees in Merrion Square, made Dublin seem as sad-looking and deserted as need be. The principal inhabitants had not yet returned to their homes for the winter, and the houses wore that melancholy look of vacancy and desertion so strikingly depressing. One sound alone woke the echoes in that silence; it was a loud knocking at the door of a large and pretentious mansion in the middle of the north side of the square. Two persons had been standing at the door for a considerable time, and by every effort of knocker and bell endeavoring to obtain admittance. One of these was a tall, erect man of about fifty, whose appearance but too plainly indicated that most painful of all struggles between poverty and a certain pretension. White-seamed and threadbare as was his coat, he wore it buttoned to the top with a sort of military smartness, his shabby hat was set on with a kind of jaunty air, and his bushy whiskers, combed and frizzed out with care, seemed a species of protest against being thought as humble as certain details of dress might bespeak him. At his side stood a young girl, so like him that a mere glance proclaimed her to be his daughter; and although in her appearance, also, narrow means stood confessed, there was an unmistakable something in her calm, quiet features and her patient expression that declared she bore her lot with a noble and high-hearted courage.

"One trial more, Bella, and I 'll give it up," cried he, angrily, as, seizing the knocker, he shook the strong door with the rapping, while he jingled the bell with equal violence. "If they don't come now, it is because they 've seen who it is, or, maybe – "

"There, see, papa, there's a window opening above," said the girl, stepping out into the rain as she spoke.

"What d' ye mean, – do ye want to break in the door?" cried a harsh voice, as the wizened, hag-like face of a very dirty old woman appeared from the third story.

"I want to know if Mr. Davenport Dunn is at home," cried the man.

"He is not; he 's abroad, – in France."

"When is he expected back?" asked he again.

"Maybe in a week, maybe in three weeks."

"Have any letters come for Mr. Kellett – Captain Kel-lett?" said he, quickly correcting himself.

"No!"

And a bang of the window, as the head was withdrawn, finished the colloquy.

"That's pretty conclusive, any way, Bella," said he, with an attempt to laugh. "I suppose there's no use in staying here longer. Poor child," added he, as he watched her preparations against the storm, "you 'll be wet to the skin! I think we must take a car, – eh, Bella? I *will* take a car." And he put an emphasis on the word that sounded like a firm resolve.

"No, no, papa; neither of us ever feared rain."

"And, by George! it can't spoil our clothes, Bella," said he, laughing with a degree of jocularity that sounded astonishing, even to himself; for he quickly added, "But I *will* have a car; wait a moment here, under the porch, and I 'll get one."

And before she could interpose a word, he was off and away, at a speed that showed the vigor of a younger man.

"It won't do, Bella," he said, as he came back again; "there's only one fellow on the stand, and he 'll not go under half a crown. I pushed him hard for one-and-sixpence, but he 'd not hear of it, and so I thought – that was, I knew well – you would be angry with me."

"Of course, papa; it would be mere waste of money," said she, hastily. "An hour's walk, – at most, an hour and a half, – and there's an end of it And now let us set out, for it is growing late."

There were few in the street as they passed along; a stray creature or so, houseless and ragged, shuffled onward; an odd loiterer stood for shelter in an archway, or a chance passer-by, with ample coat and umbrella, seemed to defy the pelting storm, while cold and dripping they plodded along in silence.

"That's old Barrington's house, Bella," said he, as they passed a large and dreary-looking mansion at the corner of the square; "many's the pleasant evening I spent in it."

She muttered something, but inaudibly, and they went on as before.

"I wonder what 's going on here to-day. It was Sir Dyke Morris used to live here when I knew it" And he stopped at an open door, where a flood of light poured forth into the street "That's the Bishop of Derry, Bella, that's just gone in. There's a dinner-party there to-day," whispered he, as, half reluctant to go, he still peered into the hall.

She drew him gently forward, and he seemed to have fallen into a revery, as he muttered at intervals, —

"Great times – fine times – plenty of money – and fellows that knew how to spend it!"

Drearily plashing onward through wind and rain, their frail clothes soaked through, they seldom interchanged a word.

"Lord Drogheda lived there, Bella," said he, stopping short at the door of a splendidly illuminated hotel; "and I remember the time I was as free and welcome in it as in my own house. My head used to be full of the strange things that happened there once. Brown, and Barry Fox, and Tisdall, and the rest of us, were wild chaps! Faith, my darling, it was n't for Mr. Davenport Dunn I cared in those times, or the like of him. Davenport Dunn, indeed!"

"It is strange that he has not written to us," said the girl, in a low voice.

"Not a bit strange; it's small trouble he takes about us. I'll bet a five-pound note – I mean, I'll lay sixpence," said he, correcting himself with some confusion, – "that since he left this he never as much as bestowed a thought on us. When he got me that beggarly place in the Custom House, he thought he 'd done with me out and out. Sixty pounds a year! God be with the time I gave Peter Harris, the butler, just double the money!"

As they talked thus, they gained the outskirts of the city, and gradually left the lamps and the well-lighted shops behind. Their way now led along a dreary road by the sea-side, towards the little bathing-village of Clontarf, beyond which, in a sequestered spot called the Green Lanes, their humble home stood. It was a long and melancholy walk; the sorrowful sounds of the sea beating on the shingly strand mingling with the dreary plashing of the rain; while farther out, a continuous roar as the waves rolled over the "North Bull," added all the terrors of storm to the miseries of the night.

"The winter is setting in early," said Kellett "I think I never saw a severer night."

"A sad time for poor fellows out at sea!" said the girl, as she turned her head towards the dreary waste of cloud and water now commingled into one.

"'T is exactly like our own life, out there," cried he: "a little glimpse of light glimmering every now and then through the gloom, but yet not enough to cheer the heart and give courage; but all black darkness on every side."

"There will come a daybreak at last," said the girl, assuredly.

"Faith! I sometimes despair about it in our own case," said he, sighing drearily. "To think of what I was once, and what I am now! buffeted about and ill used by a set of scoundrels that I 'd not have suffered to sit down in my kitchen. Keep that rag of a shawl across your chest; you 'll be destroyed entirely, Bella."

"We'll soon be within shelter now, and nothing the worse for this weather, either of us," replied she, almost gayly. "Over and over again have you told me what severe seasons you have braved in the hunting-field; and, after all, papa, one can surely endure as much for duty as in pursuit of pleasure, – not to say that our little cottage never looks more homelike than after a night like this."

"It's snug enough for a thing of the kind," murmured he, half reluctantly.

"And Betty will have such a nice fire for us, and we shall be as comfortable and as happy as though it were a fine house, and we ourselves fine folk to live in it."

"The Kelletts of Kellett's Court, and no better blood in Ireland," said he, sternly. "It was in the same house my grandfather, Morgan Kellett, entertained the Duke of Portland, the Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland; and this day, as I stand here, there isn't a chap in the Castle-yard would touch his hat to me!"

"And what need have we of them, papa? Will not our pride of good blood teach us other lessons than repining? Can't we show the world that a gentleman born bears his altered fortunes with dignity?"

"Ye're right, Bella; that's the very thing they must acknowledge. There is n't a day passes that I don't make the clerks in the 'Long Room' feel the difference between us. 'No liberties, no familiarities, my lads,' I say, – 'keep your distance; for, though my coat is threadbare, and my hat none of the best, the man inside there is Paul Kellett of Kellett's Court.' And if they ask where that is, I say, 'Look at the Gazetteer,' – it's mighty few of them has their names there: 'Kellett's Court, the ancient seat of the Kellett family, was originally built by Strongbow, Earl of Pembroke.'"

"Well, here we are, papa, in a more humble home; but you'll see how cheery it will be."

And so saying, she pushed open a little wicket, and, passing through a small garden, gained the door of a little one-storied cottage, almost buried in honeysuckle.

"Yes, Betty, wet through!" said she, laughing, as the old woman held up her hands in horror; "but get papa his slippers and that warm dressing-gown, and I 'll be back in a minute."

"Arrah! why didn't you take a car for her?" said the old woman, with that familiarity which old and tried service warrants. "Sure the child will get her death from this!"

"She wouldn't let me; she insisted on walking on her feet."

"Ayeh, ayeh!" mattered the crone, as she placed his slippers on the fender, "sure ye oughtn't to mind her. She'd get a fever rather than cost you a shilling. Look at the shoes she's wearin'."

"By the good day! you'll drive me mad, clean mad!" cried he, savagely. "Don't you know in your heart that we have n't got it? Devil a rap farthing; that we're as poor as a church mouse; that if it wasn't for this beggarly place – "

"Now, Betty," cried the girl, entering, – "now for our tea, and that delicious potato-cake that I see browning there before the fire."

Poorly, even meanly dressed as she was, there was in her that gentle look, and graceful, quiet bearing that relieved the sombre aspect of a room which spoke but too plainly of narrow fortune; and as her father looked at her, the traces of recent displeasure passed from his face, and her eyes brightened up, while he said, —

"You bring a blessing with the very sound of your voice, darling." And he kissed her twice as he spoke.

"It is so comfortable to be here, and so snug," said she, seating herself at his side, "and to know that to-morrow is Sunday, and that we have our holiday, each of us. Come, papa, confess this little room and its bright fire are very cheery! And I have got a newspaper for you. I told Mrs. Hawksey there was nothing such a treat to you as a newspaper, and she gave me one."

"Ah! the 'Trumpet of Liberty,'" said he, opening it. "We'll have it after tea, Bella. Is there anything about our own county in it, – Cork, I mean?"

"I have not looked in it yet; but we 'll go through it honestly, papa, for I know how conscientious you are not to lose a paragraph."

"'T is that same makes a man agreeable in society. You know everything if you read the papers, – accidents and marriages, the rate of the money-market, the state of the crops, who is dining with the Queen, and who is skating on the Serpentine, who is ruined at Newmarket, and who drowned at sea, and then all about the play-houses and the wonderful panoramas; so that, let conversation turn how it will, you 're ready for it, and that 's the reason, Bella, you must go through every bit of it. It's like hunting, and the very field perhaps you don't try is just the one you 'd find a fox in!"

"Well, you 'll see. I 'll beat every cover for you!" said she, laughing; "and Mrs. Hawksey desires to have it back, for there is something about the Alderman having said or done – I don't know what or where."

"How I hate the very name of an Alderman!" said Kellett, peevishly; "regular vagabonds, with gilt coaches and red cloaks, running about prating of taxes and the pipe-water! The devil a thing I feel harder to bear in my poverty than to think you 're a visiting governess in an Alderman's family. Paul Kellett's daughter a visiting governess!"

"And very proud am I to be thought equal to the charge," said she, resolutely; "not to say how grateful to you for having enabled me to undertake it."

"Myself in the Customs is nothing; that I'd put up with. Many a reduced gentleman did the same. Sam Crozier was a marker at a billiard-table in Tralee, and Ennis Magrath was an overseer on the very road he used to drive his four-in-hand. 'Many a time,' says he, 'I cursed that fresh-broken stone, but I never thought I 'd be measuring it!' 'T is the Encumbered Court has brought us all down, Bella, and there's no disgrace in being ruined with thousands of others. Just begin with the sales of estates, and tell us who is next for sentence. God forgive me, but I feel a kind of pleasure in hearing that we 're all swamped together."

The girl smiled as though the remark were merely uttered in levity and deserved no more serious notice; but a faint sigh, which she could not repress, betrayed the sorrow with which she had heard it.

She opened the paper and glanced at its contents. They were as varied and multifarious as are usually to be found in weekly "channels of information." What struck her, however, most was the fact that, turn where she would, the name of Davenport Dunn was ever conspicuous. Sales of property displayed him as the chief creditor or petitioner; charities paraded him as the first among the benevolent; Joint-stock companies exhibited him as their managing director; mines, and railroads, and telegraph companies, harbor committees, and boards of all kinds, gave him the honors of large type; while in the fashionable intelligence from abroad, his arrivals and departures were duly chronicled, and a letter of our own correspondent from Venice communicated the details of a farewell dinner given him, with a "Lord" in the chair, by a number of those who had so frequently partaken of his splendid hospitalities while he resided in that city.

"Well – well – well!" said Kellett, with a pause between each exclamation, "this is more than I can bear. Old Jerry Dunn's son, – the brat of a boy I remember in the Charter' School! He used to be sent at Christmas time up to Ely Place, when my father was in town, to get five shillings for a Christmas-box; and I mind well the day he was asked to stay and dine with my sister Matty and myself, and he taught us a new game with six little bits of sticks; how we were to do something, I forget what, – but I know how it ended, – he won every sixpence we had. Matty had half a guinea in gold and some tenpenny pieces, and I had, I think, about fifteen shillings, and sorrow a rap he left us; and, worse still, I mortgaged my school maps, and got a severe thrashing for having lost them from Old White in Jervas Street; and poor Matty's doll was confiscated in the same way, and carried off with a debt of three-and-fourpence on her head. God forgive him, but he gave us a sorrowful night, for we cried till daybreak."

"And did you like him as a playfellow?" asked she.

"Now, that's the strangest thing of all," said Kellett, smiling. "Neither Matty nor myself liked him; but he got a kind of influence over us that was downright fascination. No matter what we thought of doing before he came, when he once set foot in the room everything followed his dictation. It was n't that he was overbearing or tyrannical in the least; just as little could you say that he was insinuating or nattering; but somehow, by a kind of instinct, we fell into his ways, and worked out all his suggestions just as if we were mere agents of his will. Resistance or opposition we never dreamed of while he was present; but after he was gone away, once or twice there came the thought that there was something very like slavery in all this submission, and we began to concert how we might throw off the yoke.

"'I won't play toll-bar any more,' said I, resolutely; 'all my pocket-money is sure to go before it is over.'

"'And I,' said Matty, 'won't have poor "Mopsy" tried for a murder again; every time she's hanged, some of the wax comes off her neck.'"

"We encouraged each other vigorously in these resolves; but before he was half an hour in the house 'Mopsy' had undergone the last sentence of the law, and I was insolvent."

"What a clever rogue he must have been!" said Bella, laughing.

"Was n't he clever!" exclaimed Kellett. "You could not say how, – nobody could say how, – but he saw everything the moment he came into a new place, and marked every one's face, and knew, besides, the impression he made on them, just as if he was familiar with them for years."

"Did you continue to associate with him as you grew up?" asked she.

"No; we only knew each other as children. There was a distressing thing – a very distressing thing – occurred one day; I'm sure to this very hour I think of it with sorrow and shame, for I can't believe he had any blame in it. We were playing in a room next my father's study, and running every now and then into the study; and there was an old-fashioned penknife – a family relic, with a long bloodstone handle – lying on the table; and when the play was over, and Davy, as we called him, had gone home, this was missing. There was a search made for it high and low, for my father set great value on it. It was his great-great-grandmother's, I believe; at all events, no one ever set eyes on it afterwards, and nothing would persuade my father but that Davy stole it! Of course he never told us that he thought so, but the servant did, and Matty and myself cried two nights and a day over it, and got really sick.

"I remember well; I was working by myself in the garden, Matty was ill and in bed, when I saw a tall old man, dressed like a country shopkeeper, shown into the back parlor, where my father was sitting. There was a bit of the window open, and I could hear that high words were passing between them, and, as I thought, my father getting the worst of it; for the old fellow kept repeating, 'You 'll rue it, Mister Kellett, – you 'll rue it yet!' And then my father said, 'Give him a good horsewhipping, Dunn; take my advice, and you 'll spare yourself some sorrow, and save him from even worse hereafter.' I 'll never forget the old fellow's face as he turned to leave the room. 'Davy will live to pay you off for this,' said he; 'and if *you 're* not to the fore, it will be your children, or your children's children, will have to 'quit the debt!'

"We never saw Davy from that hour; indeed, we were strictly forbidden ever to utter his name; and it was only when alone together, that Matty and I would venture to talk of him, and cry over – and many a time we did – the happy days when we had him for our playfellow. There was a species of martyrdom now, too, in his fate, that endeared him the more to our memories; every play he had invented, every spot he was fond of, every toy he liked, were hallowed to our minds like relics. At last poor Matty and I could bear it no longer, and we sat down and wrote a long letter to Davy, assuring him of our fullest confidence in his honor, and our broken-heartedness at separation from him. We inveighed stoutly against parental tyranny, and declared ourselves ready for open rebellion, if he, that was never deficient in a device, could only point out the road. We bribed a stable-boy, with all our conjoined resources of pocket-money, to convey the epistle, and it came back next morning to my father, enclosed in one from Davy himself, stating that he could never countenance acts of disobedience, or be any party to a system by which children should deceive their parents. I was sent off to a boarding-school the same week, and poor Matty committed to the charge of Miss Morse, a vinegar-faced old maid, that poisoned the eight best years of her life!"

"And when did you next hear of him?"

"Of Davy? Let me see; the next time I heard of him was when he attempted to enter college as a sizar, and failed. Somebody or other mentioned it at Kellett's Court, and said that old Dunn was half out of his mind, insisting that some injustice was dealt out to his son, and vowing he 'd get the member for somewhere to bring the matter before Parliament. Davy was wiser, however; he

persuaded his father that, by agitating the question, they would only give notoriety to what, if left alone, would speedily be forgotten; and Davy was right I don't think there's three men now in the kingdom that remember one word about the sizarship, or, if they do, that would be influenced by it in any dealings they might have with Mr. Davenport Dunn."

"What career did he adopt after that?"

"He became a tutor, I think, in Lord Glengariff's family. There was some scandal about him there, – I forget it now, – and then he went off to America, and spent some years there, and in Jamaica, where he was employed as an overseer, I think; but I can't remember it all. My own knowledge of him next was seeing the name 'D. Dunn, solicitor,' on a neat brass-plate in Tralee, and hearing that he was a very acute fellow in election contests, and well up to dealing with the priests."

"And now he has made a large fortune?"

"I believe you well; he's the richest man in Ireland. There's scarce a county he has n't got property in. There's not a town, nor a borough, where he has n't some influence, and in every class, too, – gentry, clergy, shopkeepers, people: he has them all with him, and nobody seems to know how he does it."

"Pretty much, I suppose, as he used to manage Aunt Matty and yourself long ago," said she, laughingly.

"Well, indeed, I suppose so," said he, with a half sigh; "and if it be, all I can say is, they 'll be puzzled to find out his secret. He's the deepest fellow I ever heard or read of; for there he stands to-day, without name, family, blood, or station, higher than those that had them all, – able to do more than them; and, what's stranger still, thought more about in England than the best man amongst us."

"You have given me quite an interest about him, papa; tell me, what is he like?"

"He's as tall as myself, but not so strongly built; indeed, he's slightly round-shouldered; he is dark in the complexion, and has the blackest hair and whiskers I ever saw, and rather good-looking than otherwise, – a calm, cold, patient-looking face you'd call it; he speaks very little, but his voice is soft and low and deliberate, just like one that would n't throw away a word; and he never moves his hands or arms, but lets them hang down heavily at either side."

"And his eyes? Tell me of his eyes?"

"They 're big, black, sleepy-looking eyes, seldom looking up, and never growing a bit brighter by anything that he says or hears about him. Indeed, any one seeing him for the first time would say, 'There's a man whose thoughts are many a mile away; he is n't minding what's going on about him here.' But that is not the case; there is n't a look, a stir, nor a gesture that he does n't remark. There 's not a chair drawn closer to another, not a glance interchanged, that he has n't noticed; and I 've heard it said, 'Many would n't open a letter before him, he's so sure to guess the contents from just reading the countenance.'"

"The world is always prone to exaggerate such gifts," said she, calmly.

"So it may be, dear, but I don't fancy it could do so here. He's one of those men that, if he had been born to high station, would be a great politician or a great general. You see that, somehow, without any effort on his part, things come up just as he wished them. I believe, after all," said he, with a heavy sigh, "it's just luck! Whatever one man puts his hand to in this world goes on right and smoothly, and another has every mishap and misfortune that can befall him. He may strive, and toil, and fret his brains over it, but devil a good it is. If he is born to ill luck, it will stick to him."

"It's not a very cheery philosophy!" said she, gently.

"I suppose not, dear; but what is very cheery in this life, when you come to find it out? Is n't it nothing but disappointment and vexation?"

Partly to rally him out of this vein of depression, and partly from motives of curiosity, she once more adverted to Dunn, and asked how it happened that they crossed each other again in life.

"He's what they call 'carrying the sale' of Kellett's Court, my dear. You know we 're in the Encumbered Estates now; and Dunn represents Lord Lackington and others that hold the mortgages

over us. The property was up for sale in November, then in May last, and was taken down by Dunn's order. I never knew why. It was then, however, he got me this thing in the Revenue, – this beggarly place of sixty-five pounds a year; and told me, through his man Hanks, – for I never met himself about it, – that he 'd take care my interests were not overlooked. After that the Courts closed, and he went abroad; and that's all there's between us, or, indeed, likely to be between us; for he never wrote me as much as one line since he went away, nor noticed any one of my letters, though I sent him four, or, indeed, I believe, five."

"What a strange man this must be!" said she, musingly. "Is it supposed that he has formed any close attachments? Are his friends devoted to him?"

"Attachments, – friendships! faith, I'm inclined to think it's little time he'd waste on one or the other. Why, child, if what we hear be true, he goes through the work of ten men every day of his life."

"Is he married?" asked she, after a pause.

"No; there was some story about a disappointment he met early in life. When he was at Lord Glengariff's, I think, he fell in love with one of the daughters, or she with him, – I never knew it rightly, – but it ended in his being sent away; and they say he never got over it. Just as if Davenport Dunn was a likely man either to fall in love or cherish the memory of a first passion! I wish you saw him, Bella," said he, laughing, "and the notion would certainly amuse you."

"But still men of his stamp have felt – ay, and inspired – the strongest passions. I remember reading once – " "Reading, my darling, – reading is one thing, seeing or knowing is another. The fellows that write these things must invent what is n't likely, – what is nigh impossible, – or nobody would read it What we see of a man or woman in a book is just the exact reverse of what we 'll ever find in real life."

The girl could easily have replied to this assertion; indeed, the answer was almost on her lips, when she restrained herself, and, hanging down her head, fell into a musing fit.

CHAPTER IV. ONE WHO WOULD BE A "SHARP FELLOW."

One of the chief, perhaps the greatest, pleasures which Kellett's humble lot still secured him, was a long country walk of a Sunday in company with one who had been his friend in more prosperous times. A reduced gentleman like himself, Annesley Beecher could only go abroad on this one day in the week, and thus by the pressure of adverse fortune were they thrown more closely together.

Although by no means a favorite with Bella, she was far too considerate for her father, and too mindful of the few enjoyments that remained to him, ever to interpose her real opinion. She therefore limited herself to silence, as old Kellett would pronounce some glowing eulogy of his friend, calling him "good" and "amiable" and "kind-hearted," and extolling, as little short of miraculous, "the spirits he had, considering all he went through." But he would add, "He was always the same, and that's the reason everybody liked him, – everybody, that is, almost everybody!" And he would steal a sly glance at his daughter, half imploringly, as though to say, "How long are you to sit in that small minority?"

Whether the weather would permit of Beecher's coming out to see them, whether he 'd be able to "stay and take his bit of dinner with them," were subjects of as great anxiety to poor Kellett each succeeding Sunday morning as though there ever had been a solitary exception to the wished-for occurrence; and Bella would never destroy the pleasure of anticipation by the slightest hint that might impair the value he attached to the event.

"There's so many trying to get him," he would say; "they pester his life out with invitations, – the Chancellor and Lord Killybegs and the Bishop of Drumsna always asking him to name his day; but he 'd rather come out and take his bit of roast mutton with ourselves, and his glass of punch after it, than he 'd eat venison and drink claret with the best of them. There's not a table in Dublin, from the Castle down, that would n't be proud of his company; and why not?" He would pause after uttering a challenge of this sort; and then, as his daughter would show no signs of acceptance, he would mutter on, "A real gentleman born and bred, and how anybody can *mislike* him is more than I am really able to comprehend!"

These little grumblings, which never produced more than a smile from Bella, were a kind of weekly homily which poor Kellett liked to deliver, and he felt, when he had uttered it, as one who had paid a just tribute to worth and virtue.

"There's Beecher already, by Jove!" cried Kellett, as he sprang up from the breakfast-table to open the little wicket which the other was vainly endeavoring to unhasp. "How early he is!"

Let us take the opportunity to present him to our readers, – a duty the more imperative, since, to all outward semblance at least, he would appear little to warrant the flattering estimate his friend so lately bestowed upon him. About four or five-and-thirty, somewhat above the middle size, and with all the air and bearing of a man of fashion, Beecher had the gay, easy, light-hearted look of one with whom the world went habitually well; and when it did not, more was the shame of the said world! since a better, nobler, more generous fellow than himself never existed; and this *he* knew, however others might ungraciously hold an opposite opinion. There was not the slightest detail in his dress that could warrant the supposition of narrow fortune: his coat and his waistcoat, of one color and stuff, were faultless in make; the massive watch-chain that festooned across his chest in the last mode; his thick walking-boots the perfection of that compromise between strength and elegance so popular in our day; even to his cane, whose head was of massive gold, with his arms embossed, – all bespoke a certain affluence and abundance, the more assured from the absence of ostentation.

His hat was slightly, very slightly, set on one side, – a piece of "tigerism" pardonable, perhaps, as it displayed the rich brown curls of very silky hair, which he had disposed with consummate skill before his glass ere he issued forth. His large, full blue eyes, his handsome mouth, and a certain

gentleness in his look generally, were what he himself would have called the "odds in his favor;" and very hard it would indeed have been at first sight to form an estimate in any way unfavorable to him. Bean Beecher, as he was called once, had been deemed the best-looking fellow about town, and when he entered the Life Guards, almost twenty years before the time we now present him, had been reckoned the handsomest man and best rider in the regiment. Brother of Lord Lackington, but not by the same mother, he had inaugurated that new school of dandyism which succeeded to the Brummell period, and sought fame and notoriety by splendor and extravagance rather than by the fastidious and personal elegance that characterized the former era. In this way Lord Lackington and his brother were constantly contrasted; and although each had their followers, it was generally admitted that they were both regarded as admirable types of style and fashion. Boodle's would have preferred the Peer, the Guards' Club and all Tattersall's have voted for the Honorable Annesley Beecher.

Beecher started in life with all the advantages and disadvantages which attach to the position of a younger son of a noble family. On the one side he had good connections, a sure status in society, and easy admission into club life; on the other, lay the counterbalancing fact of the very slender fortune which usually falls to the lot of the younger born. The sum, in his case, barely sufficed to carry him through his minority, so that the day he came of age he had not a shilling in the world. Most men open their career in life with some one ambition or other in their hearts. Some aspire to military glory and the fame of a great general, some yearn after political eminence, and fashion to themselves the triumphs of successful statesmanship. There are lesser goals in the walks of the learned professions which have each their votaries; and sanguine spirits there are who found, in imagination, distant colonies beyond the sea, or lead lives of adventure in exploring unvisited and unknown regions. Annesley Beecher had no sympathy with any of these. The one great and absorbing wish of his heart was to be a "sharp fellow;" one who in all the dealings and traffic of life was sure to get the upper hand of his adversary, who in every trial where craft was the master, and in whatever situation wherein cunning performed a part, was certain to come out with the creditable reputation of being, "for a gentleman, the downiest cove to be met with anywhere."

This unhappy bent was owing to the circumstance of his being early thrown amongst men who, having nothing but their wits to depend upon, had turned these same wits to very discreditable purposes. He became, it is needless to say, their easy dupe; and when utterly bereft of the small patrimony which he once possessed, was admitted as an humble brother of the honorable guild who had despoiled him.

Men select their walk in life either from the consciousness of certain qualities likely to obtain success, or by some overweening admiration of those already eminent in it. It was this latter decided Beecher's taste. Never was there one who cherished such profound respect for a crafty fellow, for all other intellectual superiorities he could limit his esteem: for a rogue, his veneration was unbounded. From the man that invented a bubble company, to him who could turn the king at *écarté*– from the gifted individual who could puff up shares to an exorbitant value, to the no less fine intelligence that could "make everything safe on the Derby," he venerated them all. His early experiences had been unhappy ones, and so constantly had he found himself duped and "done" on every hand, that he ended by believing that honesty was a pure myth; the nearest approach to the quality being a certain kind of fidelity to one's "pall," as he would have called it, and an unwillingness to put "your own friend in the hole," while there were so many others available for that pleasant destiny. This little flickering flame of principle, this farthing candle of good feeling, was the solitary light that illuminated the gloom of his character.

He had joined the regiment Kellett formerly belonged to at Malta, a few weeks before the other had sold out, and having met accidentally in Ireland, they had renewed the acquaintance, stimulated by that strange sympathy which attracts to each other those whose narrow circumstances would seem, in some shape or other, the effects of a cruelty practised on them by the world. Kellett was rather flattered by the recognition of him who recalled the brighter hours of his life, while he entertained

a kind of admiration for the worldly wit and cleverness of one who, in talk at least, was a match for the "shrewdest fellow going." Beecher liked the society of a man who thus looked up to him, and who could listen unweariedly to his innumerable plans for amassing wealth and fortune, all of which only needed some little preliminary aid – some miserable thousand or two to start with – to make them as "rich as Rothschild."

Never was there such a Tantalus view of life as he could picture, – stores of gold, mines of unbounded wealth, – immense stakes to be won here, *rouge et noir* banks to be broke there, – all actually craving to be appropriated, if one only had a little of that shining metal which, like the water thrown down in a pump, is the needful preliminary to securing a supply of the fluid afterwards.

The imaginative faculty plays a great part in the existence of the reduced gentleman! Kellett actually revelled in the gorgeous visions this friend could conjure up. There was that amount of plausibility in his reasonings that satisfied scruple as to practicability, and made him regard Beecher as the most extraordinary instance of a grand financial genius lost to the world, – a great Chancellor of the Exchequer born to devise budgets in obscurity!

Bella took a very different measure of him: she read him with all a woman's nicest appreciation, and knew him thoroughly; she saw, however, how much his society pleased her father, how their Sunday strolls together rallied him from the dreary depression the week was sure to leave behind it, and how these harmless visions of imaginary prosperity served to cheer the gloom of actual poverty. She, therefore, concealed so much as she could of her own opinion, and received Beecher as cordially as she was able.

"Ah, Paul, my boy, how goes it? Miss Kellett, how d'ye do?" said Beecher, with that easy air and pleasant smile that well became him. "I thought by starting early I should just catch you at breakfast, while I also took another hour out of my Sunday, – the one day the law mercifully bestows on such poor devils as myself, – ha, ha, ba!" And he laughed heartily, as though insolvency was as droll a thing as could be.

"You bear up well, anyhow, Beecher," said Kellett, admiringly.

"What's the odds so long as you're happy!" cried the other, gayly. "Never say die. They take it out in fifty per cent, but they can't work the oracle against our good spirits, eh, Kellett? The *mens sana in corpore*, – what d'ye call him, my lad? – that's the real thing."

"Indeed, I suppose it is!" said Kellett, not very clear as to what he concurred in.

"There are few fellows, let me tell you, would be as light-hearted as I am, with four writs and a judge's warrant hanging over them, – eh, Miss Bella, what do you say to that?" said Beecher.

She smiled half sadly and said nothing.

"Ask John Scott, – ask Bicknell Morris, or any of the 'Legs' you like, – if there's a man of them all ever bore up like me. 'Beecher's a bar of iron,' they 'll tell you; 'that fellow can bear any amount of hammering.' and maybe I have n't had it! And all Lackington's fault!"

"That's the worst of all!" said Kellett, who had listened to the same accusation in the self-same words at least a hundred times before.

"Lackington is the greatest fool going! He does n't see the advantage of pushing his family influence. He might have had me in for 'Mallow.' Grog Davis said to him one day, 'Look now, my Lord, Annesley is the best horse in your stable, if you 'd only stand to win on him, he is!' But Lackington would not hear of it. He thinks me a flat! You won't believe it, but he does!"

"Faith! he's wrong there," said Kellett, with all the emphasis of sincerity.

"I rather suspect he is, Master Kellett. I was trained in another school, – brought up amongst fellows would skin a cat, by Jove! What I say is, let A. B. have a chance, – just let him in once, and see if he won't do the thing!"

"Do you wish to be in Parliament, Mr. Beecher?" asked Bella, with a smile of half-repressed drollery.

"Of course I do. First, there's the protection, – no bad thing as times go; then it would be uncommon strange if I could n't 'tool the coach into the yard' safely. They 'd have to give me a devilish good thing. You 'd see what a thorn I 'd be in their sides. Ask Grog Davis what kind of fellow I am; he 'll tell you if I 'm easily put down. But Lackington is a fool; he can't see the road before him!"

"You reckon, then, on being a debater!" said she, quietly.

"A little of everything, Miss Bella," said he, laughing; "like the modern painters, not particular for a shade or two. I 'd not go wasting my time with that old Tory lot, – they're all worked ont, aged and weighted, as John Scott would call them – I'd go in with the young uns, – the Manchester two-year-olds, universal – what d'ye call it? – and vote by ballot. They 're the fellows have 'the tin,' by Jove! they have."

"Then I scarcely see how Lord Lackington would advance his family influence by promoting your views," said she, again.

"To be sure he would. It would be the safest hedge in the world for him. He 'd square his book by it, and stand to win, no matter what horse came in. Besides, why should they buy me, if I was n't against them? You don't nobble the horse in your own stable, – eh, Kellett, old boy?"

"You're a wonderful fellow, Beecher!" said Kellett, in a most honest admiration of his friend.

"If they'd only give me a chance, Paul, – just one chance!"

It was not very easy to see what blot in the game of life he purposed to himself to "hit" when he used this expression, "if they only give me a chance;" vague and indistinct as it was, still for many a year had it served him as a beacon of hope. A shadow vision of creditors "done," horses "nobbled," awkward testimonies "squared," a millenary period of bills easily discounted, with an indulgent Angel presiding over the Bankrupt Court, – these and like blessings doubtless all flitted before him as the fruits of that same "chance" which destiny held yet in store for him.

Hope is a generous fairy; she deigns to sit beside the humblest firesides, – she will linger even in the damp cell of the prison, or rest her wings on the wave-tossed raft of the shipwrecked, and in such mission is she thrice blessed! But by what strange caprice does she visit the hearts of men like this? Perhaps it is that the very spirit of her ministering is to despair of nothing.

We are by no means sure that our reader will take the same pleasure that Kellett did in Beecher's society, and therefore we shall spare him the narrative of their walk. They strolled along for hours, now by the shingly shore, on which the waves swept smoothly, now inland, through leafy lanes and narrow roads, freckled with patchy sunlight. The day was calm and still, – one of those solemn autumnal days which lend to scenery a something of sadness in their unvarying quiet. Although so near a great city, the roads were little travelled, and they sauntered for hours scarcely meeting any one.

Wherever the smoke rose above the tall beech-trees, wherever the ornamented porch of some lone cottage peeped through the copse, or the handsome entrance-gate proclaimed the well-to-do owner of some luxurious abode, Kellett would stop to tell who it was lived there, – the wealthy merchant, the affluent banker, the alderman or city dignitary, who had amassed his fortune by this or that pursuit. Through all his stories there ran the vein of depreciation, which the once landed proprietor cherished towards the men who were the "first of their name." He was sure to remember some trait of their humble beginnings in life, – how this one had come up barefooted to Dublin fifty years before; how that had held horses in the street for hire. It was strange, but scarcely one escaped some commentary of this kind; not that there was a spark of ill-nature in the man, but that he experienced a species of self-consolation in thinking that in all his narrow fortune he had claims of kindred and connection which none of them could compete with. Beecher's thoughts took, meanwhile, a different course; whenever not awakened to interest by some trait of their sharpness or cunning, to which he listened with avidity, he revelled in the idea of their wealth, as a thing of which they might be despoiled: "Wouldn't that fellow take shares in some impossible speculation? – Couldn't the other be induced to buy some thousand pounds' worth of valueless scrip? – Would this

one kindly permit himself to 'be cleared out' at hazard? – Might that one be persuaded to lose a round sum at *écarté*?"

And thus did they view life, with widely different sympathies, it is true, but yet in a spirit that made them companionable to each other. One "grew his facts," like raw material which the other manufactured into those curious wares by which he amused his fancy. Poverty is a stronger bond than many believe it; when men begin to confess it to each other, they take something very like an oath of fidelity.

"By the way," said Beecher, as he bade his friend good night, "you told me you knew Dunn – Davenport Dunn?"

"To be sure I do, – know him well."

"Couldn't you introduce me to him? That's a fellow might be able to assist me. I 'm certain he could give me a chance; eh, Kellett?"

"Well; I expect him back in Ireland every day. I was asking after him no later than yesterday; but he's still away."

"When he comes back, however, you can mention me, of course; he'll know who I am."

"I'll do it with pleasure. Good-night, Beecher, – goodnight; and I hope" – this was soliloquy as he turned back towards the door, – "I hope Dunn will do more for you than he ever has for *me!* or, faith, it's not worth while to make the acquaintance."

Bella retired to her room early, and Kellett sat moodily alone by his fire. Like a great many other "embarrassed gentlemen," he was dragging on life amidst all the expedients of loans, bonds, and mortgages, when the bill for sale of the encumbered estates became the law of the land. What with the legal difficulties of dispossessing him, what with the changeful fortunes of a good harvest, or money a little more plentiful in the market, he might have gone on to the last in this fashion, and ended his days where he began them, in the old house of his fathers, when suddenly this new and unexpected stroke of legislation cut short all his resources at once, and left him actually a beggar on the world.

The panic created at the first moment by a law that seemed little short of confiscation, the large amount of landed property thus suddenly thrown into the market, the prejudice against Irish investment so strongly entertained by the moneyed classes in England, all tended vastly to depreciate the value of those estates which came first for sale; and many were sold at prices scarcely exceeding four or five years of their rental. An accidental disturbance in the neighborhood, some petty outrage in the locality, was enough to depreciate the value; and purchasers actually fancied themselves engaged in speculations so hazardous that nothing short of the most tempting advantages would requite them for their risk.

One of the very first estates for sale was Kellett's Court. The charges on the property were immense, the accumulated debts of three generations of spendthrifts; the first charge, however, was but comparatively small, and yet even this was not covered by the proceeds of the sale. A house that had cost nearly forty thousand pounds, standing on its own demesne, surrounded by an estate yielding upwards of three thousand a year, was knocked down for fifteen thousand four hundred pounds.

Kellett was advised to appeal against this sale on various grounds: he was in possession of an offer of more than double for the same property in times less prosperous; he could show a variety of grounds – surprise and others – to invalidate the ruinous contract; and it was then that he once again, after a whole life, found himself in contact with Davenport Dunn, the attorney for many parties whose interests were compromised in the sale. By no possible accident could the property be sold at such a price as would leave any surplus to himself; but he hoped, indeed he was told, that he would be favorably considered by those whose interest he was defending; and this last throw for fortune was now the subject of his dreary thoughts.

There was, too, another anxiety, and a nearer one, pressing on his heart. Kellett had a son, – a fine, frank, open-hearted young fellow, who had grown up to manhood, little dreaming that he would ever be called on to labor for his own support. The idle lounging habits of a country life had

indisposed him to all study, so that even his effort to enter college was met by a failure, and he was turned back on the very threshold of the University. Jack Kellett went home, vowing he ‘d nevermore trouble his head about Homer and Lucian, and he kept his word; he took to his gun and his pointers with renewed vigor, waiting until such time as he might obtain his gazette to a regiment on service. His father had succeeded in securing a promise of such an appointment, but, unhappily, the reply only arrived on the very week that Kellett’s Court was sold, and an order from the Horse Guards to lodge the purchase-money of his commission came at the very hour when they were irretrievably ruined.

Jack disappeared the next morning, and the day following brought a letter, stating that he had enlisted in the “Rifles,” and was off to the Crimea. Old Kellett concealed the sorrow that smote him for the loss of his boy, by affecting indignation at being thus deserted. So artfully did he dress up this self-deception that Bella was left in doubt as to whether or not some terrible scene had not occurred between the father and son before he left the house. In a tone that she never ventured to dispute, he forbade her to allude to Jack before him; and thus did he treasure up this grief for himself alone and his own lonely hours, cheating his sorrow by the ingenious devices of that constraint he was thus obliged to practise on himself. Like a vast number of men with whom the world has gone hardly, he liked to brood over his misfortunes, and magnify them to himself. In this way he opened a little bank of compassion that answered every draft he drew on it. Over and over to himself – like a miser revelling over his hoarded wealth – did he count all the hardships of his destiny. He loved thus to hug his misery in solitude, while he whispered to his heart, “You are a courageous fellow, Paul Kellett; there are not many who could carry your cheerful face, or walk with a head as high as you do to-day. The man that owned Kellett’s Court, and was one of the first in his county, living in a poor cottage, with sixty pounds a year! – that’s the test of what stuff a man’s made of. Show me another man in Ireland could do it! Show me one that could meet the world as uncomplainingly, and all the while never cease to be what he was born, – a gentleman.” This was the philosophy he practised; this the lesson he taught; this the paean he chanted in his own heart The various extremities to which he might – being anything other than what he was – have been tempted, the excesses he might have fallen into, the low associates he might have kept, the base habits he might have contracted, all the possible and impossible contingencies that might have befallen him, and all his difficulties therein, formed a little fiction world that he gloried to lose himself in contemplating.

It is not often that selfishness can take a form so blameless; nor is it always that self-deception can be so harmless. In this indulgence we now leave him.

CHAPTER V. THE WORLD'S CHANGES

While Mr. Davenport Dunn's residence was in Merrion Square, his house of business was in Henrietta Street, – one of those roomy old mansions which, before the days of the Union, lodged the aristocracy of Ireland, but which have now fallen into utter neglect and decay. Far more spacious in extent, and more ornate in decoration, than anything modern Dublin can boast, they remain, in their massive doors of dark mahogany, their richly stuccoed ceilings, and their handsome marble chimney-pieces, the last witnesses of a period when Dublin was a real metropolis.

From the spacious dinner-room below to the attics above, all this vast edifice was now converted into offices, and members of Mr. Dunn's staff were located even in the building at the rear, where the stables once had stood. Nothing can so briefly convey the varied occupations of his life as a glance at some of the inscriptions which figured on the different doors: "Inland Navigation Office," "Grand Munster Junction Drainage," "Compressed Fuel Company," "Reclaimed Lands," "Encumbered Estates," "Coast Fishery," "Copper and Cobalt Mining Association," "Refuge Harbor Company," "Slate and Marble Quarries," "Tyrawley and Erris Bank of Deposit," "Silver and Lead Mines." These were but a few of the innumerable "associations," "companies," and "industrial speculations" which denoted the cares and employments of that busy head. Indeed, the altered fortunes of that great mansion itself presented no bad type of the changed destinies of the land. Here, once, was the abode of only too splendid hospitality, of all that refined courtesy and polished manners could contribute to make society as fascinating as it was brilliant Here were wit and beauty, and a high, chivalrous tone of manners, blended, it is true, with wildest extravagance and a general levity of thought, that imparted to intercourse the glowing tints of an orgy; and in their stead were now the active signs of industry, all the means by which wealth is amassed and great fortunes acquired, every resource of the country explored, every natural advantage consulted and developed, – the mountains, the valleys, the rivers, the sea-coasts, the vast tracts of bog and moss, the various mines and quarries, the products once deemed valueless, the districts formerly abandoned as irreclaimable, all brought out into strong light, and all investigated in a spirit which hitherto had been unknown to Ireland. What a change was here, and what necessities must have been the fate of those who had so altered all their habits and modes of thought as to conform to a system so widely different from all they had hitherto followed! It was like re-colonizing an empire, so subversive were all the innovations of what had preceded them.

"Eh, Barton, we used to trip up these stairs more flippantly once on a time," said a very handsome old man, whose well-powdered hair and queue were rather novelties in modern appearance, to a feeble figure who, assisted by his servant, was slowly toiling his way upwards.

"How d' ye do, Glengariff?" said the other, with a weak smile. "So we used; and they were better days in every sense of the word."

"Not a doubt of it," said the other. "Is that your destination?" And he pointed to a door inscribed with the title "Encumbered Estates."

"Ay!" said Barton, sighing.

"It 's mine, too, I 'm sorry to say," cried Lord Glengariff; "as I suppose, erelong, it will be that of every country gentleman in the land!"

"We might have known it must come to this!" muttered the other, in a weak voice.

"I don't think so," broke in his Lordship, quickly. "I see no occasion at all for what amounts to an act of confiscation; why not give us time to settle with our creditors? Why not leave us to deal with our encumbrances in our own way? The whole thing is a regular political swindle, Barton; they wanted a new gentry that could be more easily managed than the old fellows, who had no station, no rank, but right ready to buy both one and the other by supporting – "

"Can I be of any service to your Lordship?" interrupted a very over-dressed and much-gold-chained man, of about forty, with a great development of chest, set off to advantage by a very pretentious waistcoat.

"Ah, Hankes! is Dunn come back yet?" asked Lord Glengariff.

"No, my Lord; we expect him on Saturday. The telegraph is dated St. Cloud, where he is stopping with the Emperor."

Glengariff gave Barton a slight pinch in the arm, and a look of intense meaning at the words.

"Nothing has been done in that matter of mine?" said Barton, feebly. "Jonas Barton is the name," added he, coloring at the necessity of announcing himself.

"Jonas Barton, of Curryglass House?"

"Yes, that's it."

"Sold yesterday, under the Court, sir – for, let me see – " And he opened a small memorandum-book. "Griffith's valuation," muttered he between his teeth, "was rather better than the Commissioner's, – yes, sir, they got a bargain of that property yesterday; it went for twenty-two thousand six hundred – "

"Great God, sir; the whole estate?"

"The whole estate; there is a tithe-rent charge – "

"There, there, don't you see he does not hear you?" said Lord Glengariff, angrily. "Have you no room where he can sit down for half an hour or so?" And so saying, he assisted the servant to carry the now lifeless form into a small chamber beside them. The sick man rallied soon, and as quickly remembered where he was.

"This is bad news, Glengariff," said he, with a sickly effort at a smile. "Have you heard who was the buyer?"

"No, no; what does it matter? Take my arm and get out of this place. Where are you stopping in town? Can I set you down?" said the other, in hurry and confusion.

"I'm with my son-in-law at Ely Place; he is to call for me here, so you can leave me, my dear friend, for I see you are impatient to get away."

Lord Glengariff pressed his hand cordially, and descended the stairs far more rapidly than he had mounted them.

"Lord Glengariff, – one word, my Lord," cried Mr. Hankes, hastening after him, and just catching him at the door.

"Not now, sir, – not now," said Lord Glengariff.

"I beg a thousand pardons, my Lord, but Mr. Dunn writes me peremptorily to say that it cannot be effected – "

"Not raise the money, did you say?" asked he, growing suddenly pale.

"Not in the manner he proposed, my Lord. If you will allow me to explain – "

"Come over to my hotel. I am at Bilton's," said Lord Glengariff. "Call on me there in an hour." And so saying, he got into his carriage and drove off.

In the large drawing-room of the hotel sat a lady working, and occasionally reading a book which lay open before her. She was tall and thin, finely featured, and though now entered upon that period of life when every line and every tint confess the ravage of time, was still handsome. This was Lady Augusta Arden, Lord Glengariff's only unmarried daughter, the very type of her father in temperament as well as appearance.

"By George! it is confiscation. It is the inauguration of that Communism the French speak of," cried Lord Glengariff, as he entered the room. "There 's poor Barton of Curryglass, one of the oldest names in his county, sold out, and for nothing, – absolutely nothing. No man shall persuade me that this is just or equitable; no man shall tell me that the Legislature shall step in and decide at any moment how I am to deal with my creditors."

"I never heard of that Burton."

"I said Barton, – not Burton; a man whose estate used to be called five thousand a year," said he, angrily. "There he is now, turned out on the world. I verily believe he has n't a guinea left! And what is all this for? To raise up in the country a set of spurious gentry, – fellows that were never heard of, whose names are only known over shop-boards, – as if the people should be better treated or more kindly dealt with by them than by us, their natural protectors! By George! if Ireland should swarm with Davenport Dunns, I 'd call it a sorry exchange for the good blood she had lost in exterminating her old gentry."

"Has he come back?" asked Lady Augusta, as she bent her head more deeply over her work, and her cheeks grew a shade more red.

"No; he's dining with royalties, and driving about in princely carriages on the Continent Seeing what the pleasures of his intimacy have cost us here at home, I'd say that these great personages ought to look sharp, or, by George! he'll sell them out, as he has done us." He laughed a bitter laugh at his jest, but his daughter did not join in the emotion.

"I scarcely think it fair," said she, at length, "to connect Mr. Dunn with a legislation which he is only called upon to execute."

"With all my heart. Acquit him as much as you will; but, for my part, I feel very little tenderness for the hand that accomplishes the last functions of the law against me. These fellows have displayed a zeal and an alacrity in their work that shows how they relish the sport. After all," said he, after a pause, "this Dunn is neither better nor worse than the rest of them, and in one respect he has the advantage over them, – he has not forgotten himself quite so much as the others. To be sure, we knew him in his very humblest fortunes, Augusta; he was meek enough then."

She stooped to pick up her work, which had fallen, and her neck and face were crimson as she resumed it.

"Wonderful little anticipation had he then of the man he was to become one of these days. Do you know, Augusta, that they say he is actually worth two millions? – two millions!"

She never spoke; and after an interval Lord Glengariff burst out into a strange laugh.

"You 'd scarcely guess what I was laughing at, Augusta. I was just remembering the wretched hole he used to sleep in. It was a downright shame to put him there over the stable, but the cottage was under repair at the time, and there was no help for it. 'I can accommodate myself anywhere, my Lord,' he said. Egad, he has contrived to fulfil the prediction in a very different sense. Just fancy – two millions sterling!"

It was precisely what Lady Augusta was doing at the moment, though, perhaps, not quite in the spirit his Lordship suspected.

"Suppose even one half of it be true, with a million of money at command, what can't a man have nowadays?"

And so they both fell a-thinking of all that same great amount of riches could buy, – what of power, respect, rank, flattery, political influence, fine acquaintance, fine diamonds, and fine dinners.

"If he play his cards well, he might be a peer," thought my Lord.

"If he be as ambitious as he ought to be, he might aspire to a peer's daughter," was the lady's reflection.

"He has failed in my negotiation, however," said Lord Glengariff, peevishly; "at least, Hankes just told me that it can't be done. I detest that fellow Hankes. It shows great want of tact in Dunn having such a man in his employment, – a vulgar, self-sufficient, over-dressed fellow, who can't help being familiar out of his own self-satisfaction. Now, Dunn himself knows his place. Don't you think so?"

She muttered something not very intelligible, but which sounded like concurrence.

"Yes," he resumed, "Dunn does not forget himself, – at least, with me." And to judge from the carriage of his head as he spoke, and the air with which he earned the pinch of snuff to his nose, he had not yet despaired of seeing the world come back to the traditions which once had made it worth living in.

"I am willing to give him every credit for his propriety of conduct, Augusta," added he, in a still more lofty tone; "for we live in times when really wealth and worldly prosperity have more than their rightful supremacy, and such men as Dunn are made the marks of an adulation that is actually an outrage, – an outrage upon *us!*"

And the last little monosyllable was uttered with an emphasis of intense significance.

Just as his Lordship had rounded his peroration, the servant presented him with a small three-cornered note. He opened it and read, —

"My Lord, – I think the bearer of this, T. Driscoll, might possibly do what you wish for; and I send him, since I am sure that a personal interview with your Lordship would be more efficacious than any negotiation.

"By your Lordship's most obedient to command,

"Simpson Hankes."

"Is the person who brought this below?" asked Lord Glengariff.

"Yes, my Lord; he is waiting for the answer."

"Show him into my dressing-room."

Mr. Terence Driscoll was accordingly introduced into that sanctum; and while he employs his few spare moments in curious and critical examination of the various gold and silver objects which contribute to his Lordship's toilet, and wonderingly snuffs at essences and odors of whose existence he had never dreamed, let us take the opportunity of a little examination of himself. He was a short, fat old man, with a very round red face, whose jovial expression was rather heightened than marred by a tremendous squint; for the eyes kept in incessant play and movement, which intimated a restless drollery that his full, capacious mouth well responded to. In dress and general appearance he belonged to the class of the comfortable farmer, and his massive silver watch-chain and huge seal displayed a consciousness of his well-to-do condition in life.

"Are you Mr. Driscoll?" said Lord Glengariff, as he looked at the letter to prompt him to the name. "Pray take a seat!"

"Yes, my Lord, I 'm that poor creature Terry Driscoll; the neighbors call me Tearin' Terry, but that 's all past and gone, Heaven be praised! It was a fever I had, my Lord, and my rayson wandered, and I did many a thing that desthroyed me entirely; I tore up the lease of my house, I tore up Peter Driscoll's, my uncle's, will; ay, and worse than all, I tore up all my front teeth!"

And, in evidence of this feat of dentistry, Mr. Driscoll gave a grin that exposed his bare gums to view.

"Good heavens, how shocking!" exclaimed Lord Glen-gariff, though, not impossibly, the expression was extorted by the sight rather than the history of the calamity.

"Shocking indeed, my Lord, – that's the name for it!" said Terry, sighing; "but ye see I was n't compos when I did it. I thought they were a set of blackguards that I could n't root out of the land, – squatters that would n't pay sixpence, nor do a day's work. That was the delusion that was upon me!"

"I hold here a letter from Mr. Hankes," said his Lordship, pompously, and in a tone that was meant to recall Mr. Driscoll from the personal narrative he had entered upon with such evident self-satisfaction. "He mentions you as one likely – that is to say – one in a position – a person, in fact – "

"Yes, my Lord, yes," interrupted Terry, with a grin of unbounded acquiescence.

"And adds," continued his Lordship, "your desire to communicate personally with myself." The words were very few and not very remarkable, and yet Lord Glengariff contrived to throw into them an amount of significance really great. They seemed to say, "Bethink thee well, Terry Driscoll, of the good fortune that this day has befallen thee. Thy boldness has been crowned with success, and there thou sittest now, being the poor worm that thou art, in converse with one who wears a coronet."

And so, indeed, in all abject humility, did Mr. Driscoll appear to feel the situation. He drew his feet closer together, and stole his hands up the wide sleeves of his coat, as though endeavoring to diminish, as far as might be, his corporeal presence.

His Lordship saw that enough had been done for subjection, and blandly added, “And I could have no objection to the interview; none whatever.”

“It’s too good you are, my Lord; too good and too gracious to the like of me,” said Terry, barely raising his eyes to throw a glance of mingled shame and drollery on his Lordship; “but I come by rayson of what Mr. Hankes tould me, that it was a trifle of a loan, – a small matter of money your Lordship was wantin’ just at this moment.”

“I prefer doing these kind of things through my solicitors. I know nothing of business, sir, absolutely nothing,” said his Lordship, haughtily. “The present case, however, might form an exception. The sum I require is, as you justly remark, a mere trifle, and the occasion is not worthy of legal interference.”

“Yes, my Lord,” chimed in Driscoll, who had a most provoking habit of employing the affirmative in all situations.

“I suppose he mentioned to you the amount?” asked his Lordship, quickly.

“No, indeed, my Lord; all he said was, ‘Terry,’ says he, ‘go over to Bilton’s Hotel with this note, and ask for Lord Glengariff. He wants a little ready cash,’ says he, ‘and I tould him you ‘re a likely man to get it for him. It’s too small a matter for us here,’ says he, ‘to be bothered about.’”

“He had n’t the insolence to make use of these words towards *me!*” said Lord Glengariff, growing almost purple with passion.

“Faix, I ‘m afeard he had, my Lord,” said Terry, looking down; “but I ‘m sure he never meant any harm in it; ‘t was only as much as to say, ‘There, Terry, there ‘s something for *you*; you ‘re a poor strugglin’ man, and are well plazed to turn a penny in a small way. If you can accommodate my Lord there,’ says he, ‘he ‘ll not forget it to you.’”

The conclusion of this speech was far more satisfactory to his Lordship than its commencement seemed to promise; and Lord Glengariff smiled half graciously as he said, “I ‘m not in the habit of neglecting those who serve me.”

“Yes, my Lord,” said Driscoll, again.

“I may safely say that any influence I possess has always been exercised in favor of those who have been, so to say, supporters of my family.”

Had his Lordship uttered a sentiment of the most exalted and self-denying import, he could not have assumed a prouder air than when he had finished these words. “And now, Mr. Driscoll, to business. I want five thousand pounds – ”

A long, low whistle from Terry, as he threw up both his hands in the air, abruptly stopped his Lordship.

“What do you mean? Does the sum appear so tremendous, sir?”

“Five thousand! Where would I get it? Five thousand pounds? By the mortial man! your Lordship might as well ax me for five millions. I thought it was a hundred; or, maybe, a hundred and fifty; or, at the outside, two hundred pounds, just to take you over to London for what they call the sayson, or to cut a figure at Paris; but, five thousand! By my conscience, that’s the price of an estate nowadays!”

“It is upon estated property I intend to raise this loan, sir,” said his Lordship, angrily.

“Not Cushnacreena, my Lord?” asked Terry, eagerly.

“No, sir; that is secured by settlement.”

“Nor Ballyrennin?”

“No; the townland of Ballyrennin is, in a manner, tied up.”

“Tory’s Mill, maybe?” inquired Terry, with more eagerness.

“Well, sir,” said his Lordship, drawing himself up, “I must really make you my compliments upon the very accurate knowledge you appear to possess about my estate. Since what period, may I venture to ask, have you conceived this warm interest in my behalf?”

"The way of it was this, my Lord," said Driscoll, drawing his chair closer, and dropping his voice to a low, confidential tone. "After I had the fever, – the fever and ague I told you about, – I got up out of bed the poor crayture you see me, not able to think of anything, or do a hand's turn for myself, but just a burden on my friends or anybody that would keep me. Well, I tried all manner of ways to make myself useful, and I used to go errands here and there over the country for any one that wanted to know what land was to be sold, where there was a lot of good sheep, who had a drove of bullocks or a fancy bull; and, just getting into the habit of it, I larned a trifle of what was doing in the three counties, so that the people call me 'Terry's Almanack,' – that's the name they gave me, better than Tearin' Terry, anyhow! At all events, I got a taste for finding out the secrets of all the great families; and, to be sure, if I only had the memory, I'd know a great deal, but my head is like a cullender, and everything runs out as fast as you put it in. That's how it is, my Lord, and no lie in it." And Terry wiped his forehead and heaved a heavy sigh, like a man who had just accomplished a very arduous task.

"So, then, I begin to understand how Hankes sent you over here to me," said his Lordship.

"Yes, my Lord," muttered Terry, with a bow.

"I had been under the impression – the erroneous impression – that you were yourself prepared to advance this small sum."

"Me! Terry Driscoll lend five thousand pounds! Arrah, look at me, my Lord, – just take a glance at me, and you 'll see how likely it is I 'd have as many shillings! 'T was only by rayson of being always about – on the tramp, as they call it – that Mr. Hankes thought I could be of use to your Lordship. 'Go over,' says he, 'and just tell him who and what you are.' There it is now!"

Lord Glengariff made no reply, but slowly walked the room in deep meditation; a passing feeling of pity for the poor fellow before him had overcome any irritation his own disappointment had occasioned, and for the moment the bent of his mind was compassionate.

"Well, Driscoll," said he, at length, "I don't exactly see how you can serve me in this matter."

"Yes, my Lord," said Terry, with a pleasant leer of his restless eyes.

"I say I don't perceive that you can contribute in any way to the object I have in view," said his Lordship, half peevish at being, as he thought, misapprehended. "Hankes ought to have known as much himself."

"Yes, my Lord," chimed in Terry.

"And you may tell him so from *me*. He is totally unfitted for his situation, and I am only surprised that Dunn, shrewd fellow that he is, should have ever placed a man of this stamp in a position of such trust. The first requisite in such a man is to understand the deference he owes to *us*."

There was an emphasis on the last monosyllable that pretty clearly announced how little share Terry Driscoll enjoyed in this co-partnery.

"That because I have a momentary occasion for a small sum of ready money, he should send over to confer with me a half-witted – I mean a man only half recovered from a fever – a poor fellow still suffering from – "

"Yes, my Lord," interposed Terry, as he laid his hand on his forehead in token of the seat of his calamity.

"It is too gross, – it is outrageous, – but Dunn shall hear of it, – Dunn shall deal with this fellow when he comes back. I 'm sorry for you, Driscoll, – very sorry indeed; it is a sad bereavement, and though you are not exactly a case for an asylum, – perhaps, indeed, you might have objections to an asylum – "

"Yes, my Lord."

"Well, in that case private friends are, I opine – private friends – and the kind sympathies of those who have known you – eh, don't you think so?"

"Yes, my Lord."

"That is the sensible view to take of it. I am glad you see it in this way. It shows that you really exercise a correct judgment, – a very wise discretion in your case, – and for a man in *your* situation – your *painful* situation – you see things in their true light."

"Yes, my Lord." And this time the eyes rolled with a most peculiar expression.

"If you should relapse, however, – if, say, former symptoms were to threaten again, – remember that I am on the committee, or a governor, or something or other, of one of these institutions, and I might be of use to you. Remember that, Driscoll." And with a wave of his hand his Lordship dismissed Terry, who, after a series of respectful obeisances, gained the door and disappeared.

CHAPTER VI. SYBELLA KELLETT

When change of fortune had reduced the Kelletts so low that Sybella was driven to become a daily governess, her hard fate had exacted from her about the very heaviest of all sacrifices. It was not, indeed, the life of unceasing toil, – dreary and monotonous as such toil is, – it was not the humility of a station for which the world affords not one solitary protection, – these were not what she dreaded; as little was it the jarring sense of dependence daily and hourly imposed. No, she had courage and a high determination to confront each and all of these. The great source of her suffering was in the loss of that calm and unbroken quiet to which the retired habits of a remote country-house had so long accustomed her. With scarcely anything which could be called a society near them, so reduced in means as to be unable to receive visitors at home, Kellett's Court had been for many years a lonely house. The days succeeded each other with such similarity that time was unfelt, seasons came and went, and years rolled on unconsciously. No sights nor sounds of the great world without invaded these retired precincts. Of the mighty events which convulsed the politics of states, – of the great issues that engaged men's minds throughout Europe, – they heard absolutely nothing. The passing story of some little incident of cottier life represented to them all that they had of news; and thus time glided noiselessly along, till they came to feel a sense of happiness in that same unbroken round of life.

They who have experienced the measured tread of a conventual existence – where the same incidents daily recur at the same periods, where no events from without obtrude, where the passions and the ambitions and cares of mankind have so little of reality to the mind that they fail to impress with any meaning – are well aware that in the peaceful calm of spirit thus acquired there is a sense of happiness, which is not the less real that it wears the semblance of seriousness, almost of sadness.

In all that pertained to a sombre monotony, Kellett's Court was a convent. The tall mountains to the back, the deep woods to the front, seemed barriers against the world without; and there was a silence and a stillness about the spot as though it were some lone island in a vast sea, where no voyagers ever touched, no traveller ever landed. This same isolation, strong in its own sense of security, was the charm of the place, investing it with a kind of romance, and imparting to Sybella's own life a something of storied interest. The very few books the house contained she had read and re-read till she knew them almost by heart. They were lives of voyagers, – hardy men of enterprise and daring, who had pushed their fortunes in far-away lands, – or else sketches of life and adventure in distant countries.

The annals of these sea-rovers were full of all the fascination of which gorgeous scenery and stirring incident form the charm. There were lands such as no painter's genius ever fancied, verdure and flowers of more than fairy brilliancy, gold and gems of splendor that rivalled Aladdin's cave, strange customs, and curious observances mingled with deeds of wildest daring, making up a succession of pictures wherein the mind alternated between the voluptuous repose of tropical enjoyment and the hair-breadth 'scapes of buccaneering existence. The great men whose genius planned, and whose courage achieved, these enterprises, formed for her a sort of hero-worship. Their rough virtues, their splendid hospitality, their lion-hearted defiance of danger, were strong appeals to her sympathy, while in their devoted loyalty she found a species of chivalry that elevated them in her esteem. Woman-like, too, she inclined to make success the true test of greatness, and glorified to herself those bold spirits who never halted nor turned aside when on their road to victory. The splendid self-dependence of such men as Drake and Dampier struck her as the noblest attribute of mankind; that resolute trust in their own stout hearts imparted to them a degree of interest almost devotional; and over and over did she bethink her what a glorious destiny it would have been to have had a life associated and bound up with some such man as one of these. The very contest and controversy his actions would have evoked, heightened the illusion, and there savored of heroism in sharing a fame that flung down its proud defiance to the world.

Estrangement from the world often imparts to the stories of the past, or even to the characters of fiction, a degree of interest which, by those engaged in the actual work of life, is only accorded to their friends or relatives; and thus, to this young girl in her isolation, such names as Raleigh and Cavendish – such characters as Cromwell, Lorenzo de' Medici, and Napoleon – stood forth before her in all the attributes of well-known individuals. To have so far soared above the ordinary accidents of life as to live in an atmosphere above all other men, – to have seen the world and its ways from an eminence that gave wider scope to vision and more play to speculation, – to have meditated over the destinies of mankind from the height of a station that gave control over their actions, – seemed so glorious a privilege that the blemishes and even the crimes of men so gifted were merged in the greatness of the mighty task they had imposed upon themselves; and thus was it that she claimed for these an exemption from the judgments that had visited less distinguished wrong-doers most heavily. "How can I, or such as I am, pronounce upon one like this man? What knowledge have I of the conflict waged within his deep intelligence? How can I fathom the ocean of his thoughts, or even guess at the difficulties that have opposed, the doubts that have beset him? I can but vaguely fashion to myself the end and object of his journey; how, then, shall I criticise the road by which he travels, the halts he makes, the devious turnings and windings he seems to fall into?" In such plausibilities she merged every scruple as to those she had deified to her own mind. "Their ways are not our ways," said she; "their natures are as little our natures."

From all the dreamland of these speculations was she suddenly and rudely brought to face the battle of life itself, an humble soldier in the ranks. No longer to dwell in secret converse with the mighty spirits who had swayed their fellow-men, she was now to enter upon that path of daily drudgery whose direst infliction was the contact with that work-o'-day world wherewith she had few sympathies.

Mrs. Hawkshaw had read her advertisement in a morning paper, and sent for her to call upon her. Now Mrs. Hawkshaw was an alderman's lady, who lived in a fine house, and had fine clothes and fine servants and fine plate, and everything, in short, fine about her but a fine husband, for he was a rough, homespun, good-natured sort of man, who cared little for anything save a stocking-factory he owned at Balbriggan, and the stormy incidents that usually shook the "livery" he belonged to.

There were six little Hawkshaws to be governed and geographied and catechised, and civilized in all the various forms by which untaught humanity is prepared for the future work of life; there were rudiments of variously colored knowledge to be imparted, habits instilled, and tempers controlled, by one who, though she brought to her task the most sincere desire to succeed, was yet deep in a world of her own thoughts, – far lost in the mazy intricacies of her own fancies. That poor Miss Kellett, therefore, should pass for a very simple-minded, good creature, quite unfit for her occupation, was natural enough; and that Mrs. Hawkshaw should "take her into training" was almost an equally natural consequence.

"She seems to be always like one in a dream, my dear," said Mrs. Hawkshaw to her husband. "The children do exactly as they please; they play all false, and she never corrects them; they draw landscapes in their copy-books, and she says, 'Very nicely done, darlings.'"

"Her misfortunes are preying upon her, perhaps."

"Misfortunes! why, they have been in poverty this many a year. My brother Terry tells me that the Kelletts had n't above two hundred a year, and that latterly they lost even this."

"Well, it is a come-down in the world, anyhow," said Hawkshaw, sighing, "and I must say she bears it well."

"If she only feels it as little as she appears to do everything else, the sacrifice doesn't cost her much," said the lady, tartly. "I told her she was to come here last Sunday and take charge of the children; she never came; and when I questioned her as to the reason, she only smiled and said, 'She never thought of it; in fact, she was too happy to be alone on that day to think of anything.' And here

she comes now, nearly an hour late." And, as she spoke, a weary step ascended the steps to the door, and an uncertain, faltering hand raised the knocker.

"It is nigh eleven o'clock, Miss Kellett," said Mrs. Hawkshaw, as she met her on the stairs.

"Indeed – I am so sorry – I must have forgotten – I don't think I knew the hour," said the other, stammeringly.

"Your hour is ten, Miss Kellett."

"I think so."

"How is your father, Miss Kellett?" asked the alderman, abruptly, and not sorry to interpose at the juncture.

"He is well, sir, and seems very happy," said she, gratefully, while her eyes lighted up with pleasure.

"Give him my regards," said Hawkshaw, good-naturedly, and passed down the stairs; while his wife coldly added, —

"The children are waiting for you," and disappeared.

With what determined energy did she address herself now to her task, – how resolutely devote her whole mind to her duty. She read and heard and corrected and amended with all the intense anxiety of one eager to discharge her trust honestly and well. She did her very utmost to bring her faculties to bear upon every detail of her task; and it was only when one of the girls asked who was he whose name she had been writing over and over again in her copy-book, that she forgot her self-imposed restraint, and in a fervor of delight at the question, replied, "I 'll tell you, Mary, who Savonarola was."

In all the vigor of true narrative power, the especial gift of those minds where the play of fancy is only the adornment of the reasoning faculty, she gave a rapid sketch of the prophet priest, his zeal, his courage, and his martyrdom; with that captivating fascination which is the firstborn of true enthusiasm, she awakened their interest so deeply that they listened to all she said as to a romance whose hero had won their sympathies, and even dimly followed her as she told them that such men as this stood out from time to time in the world's history like great beacons blazing on a rocky eminence, to guide and warn their fellow-men. That in their own age characters of this stamp were either undervalued or actually depreciated and condemned, was but the common lot of humanity; their own great destinies raised them very often above the sympathies of ordinary life, and men caught eagerly at the blemishes of those so vastly greater than themselves, – hence all the disesteem they met with from contemporaries.

"And are there none like this now, Miss Bella?" asked one of the girls; "or is it that in our country such are not to be met with?"

"They are of every land and of every age; ay, and of every station! Country, time, birth have no prerogative. At one moment the great light of the earth has been the noblest born in his nation, at another a peasant, – miles apart in all the accidents of fortune, brothers by the stamp which makes genius a tie of family. To-morrow you shall hear of one, the noblest-hearted man in all England, and yet whose daily toil was the vulgar life of an exciseman. This great man's nature is known to us, teaching men a higher lesson than all that his genius has bequeathed us."

In the willingness with which they listened to her, Bella found fresh support for her enthusiasm. If, therefore, there was this solace to the irksome nature of her task, it rendered that task itself more and more wearisome and distasteful. Her round of duty led her amongst many who did not care for these things; some heard them with apathy, others with even mockery. How often does it happen in life that feelings which if freely expanded had spread themselves broadly over the objects of the world, become by repression compressed into principles!

This was the case with her; the more opposition thwarted, the more resolutely was she bent on carrying out her notions. All her reading tended to this direction, all her speculation, all her thought.

"There must be men amongst us even now," said she, "to whom this great prerogative of guidance is given; superior minds who feel the greatness of their mission, and, perhaps, know how

necessary it is to veil their very ascendancy, that they may exercise it more safely and more widely. What concession may they not be making to vulgar prejudice, what submission to this or that ordinance of society? How many a devious path must they tread to reach that goal that the world will not let them strive for more directly; and, worse than all, through what a sea of misrepresentation, and even calumny, must they wade? How must they endure the odious imputations of selfishness, of pride, of hard-heartedness, nay, perhaps, of even crime? And all this without the recognition of as much as one who knows their purpose and acknowledges their desert."

CHAPTER VII. AN ARRIVAL AT MIDNIGHT

Night had just closed in over the Lake of Como; and if the character of the scene in daylight had been such as to suggest ideas of dramatic effect, still more was this the case as darkness wrapped the whole landscape, leaving the great Alps barely traceable against the starry sky, while faintly glimmering lights dotted the dark shores from villa and palace, and soft sounds of music floated lazily on the night air, only broken by the plashing stroke of some gondolier as he stole across the lake.

The Villa d'Este was a-glitter with light. The great saloon which opened on the water blazed with lamps; the terraces were illuminated with many-colored lanterns; solitary candles glimmered from the windows of many a lonely chamber; and even through the dark copses and leafy parterres some lamp twinkled, to show the path to those who preferred the scented night air to the crowded and brilliant assemblage within doors. The votaries of hydropathy are rarely victims of grave malady. They are generally either the exhausted sons and daughters of fashionable dissipation, the worn-out denizens of great cities, or the tired slaves of exciting professions, – the men of politics, of literature, or of law. To such as these, a life of easy indolence, the absence of all constraint, the freedom which comes of mixing with a society where not one face is known to them, are the chief charms; and, with that, the privilege of condescending to amusements and intimacies of which, in their more regular course of life, they had not even stooped to partake. To English people this latter element was no inconsiderable feature of pleasure. Strictly defined as all the ranks of society are in their own country, – marshalled in classes so rigidly that none may move out of the place to which birth has assigned him, – they feel a certain expansion in this novel liberty, perhaps the one sole new sensation of which their natures are susceptible. It was in the enjoyment of this freedom that a considerable party were now assembled in the great saloons of the villa. There were Russians and Austrians of high rank, conspicuous for their quiet and stately courtesy; a noisy Frenchman or two; a few pale, thoughtful-looking Italians, men whose noble foreheads seem to promise so much, but whose actual lives appear to evidence so little; a crowd of Americans, as distinctive and as marked as though theirs had been a nationality stamped with centuries of transmission; and, lastly, there were the English, already presented to our reader in an early chapter, – Lady Lackington and her friend Lady Grace, – having, in a caprice of a moment, descended to see "what the whole thing was like."

"No presentations, my Lord, none whatever," said Lady Lackington, as she arranged the folds of her dress, on assuming a very distinguished position in the room. "We have only come for a few minutes, and don't mean to make acquaintances."

"Who is the little pale woman with the turquoise ornaments?" asked Lady Grace.

"The Princess Labanoff," said his Lordship, blandly bowing.

"Not she who was suspected of having poisoned – "

"The same."

"I should like to know her. And the man, – who is that tall, dark man, with the high forehead?"

"Glumthal, the great Frankfort millionnaire."

"Oh, present him, by all means. Let us have him here," said Lady Lackington, eagerly. "What does that little man mean by smirking in that fashion, – who is he?" asked she, as Mr. O'Reilly passed and repassed before her, making some horrible grimaces that he intended to have represented as fascinations.

"On no account, my Lord," said Lady Lackington, as though replying to a look of entreaty from his Lordship.

"But you 'd really be amused," said he, smiling. "It is about the best bit of low comedy – "

"I detest low comedy."

"The father of your fair friends, is it not?" asked Lady Grace, languidly.

"Yes. Twining admires them vastly," said his Lordship, half maliciously. "If I might venture – "

"Oh dear, no; not to me," said Lady Grace, shuddering. "I have little tolerance for what are called characters. You may present your Hebrew friend, if you like."

"He's going to dance with the Princess; and there goes Twining, with one of my beauties, I declare," said Lord Lackington. "I say, Spicer, what is that dark lot, near the door?"

"American trotters, my Lord; just come over."

"You know them, don't you?"

"I met them yesterday at dinner, and shall be delighted to introduce your Lordship. Indeed, they asked me if you were not the Lord that was so intimate with the Prince of Wales."

"How stupid! They might have known, even without the aid of a Peerage, that I was a schoolboy when the Prince was a grown man. The tall girl is good-looking; what's her name?"

"She's the daughter of the Honorable Leonidas Shinbone, that's all I know, – rather a belle at Saratoga, I fancy."

"Very dreadful!" sighed Lady Grace, fanning herself; "they do make such a mess of what might be very pretty toilette. You could n't tell her, perhaps, that her front hair is dressed for the back of the head."

"No, sir; I never play at cards," said Lord Lackington, stiffly, as an American gentleman offered him a pack to draw from.

"Only a little bluff or a small party of poker," said the stranger, "for quarter dollars, or milder, if you like it."

A cold bow of refusal was the reply.

"I told you he was the Lord," said a friend, in a drawling accent "He looks as if he 'd 'mow us all down like grass.'"

Dr. Lanfranchi, the director of the establishment, here interposed, and, by a few words, induced the Americans to retire and leave the others unmolested.

"Thank you, doctor," said Lady Lackington, in acknowledgment; "your tact is always considerate, – always prompt."

"These things never happen in the season, my Lady," said he, with a very slight foreign accentuation of the words. "It is only at times like this that people – very excellent and amiable people, doubtless – "

"Oh, to be sure they are," interrupted she, impatiently; "but let us speak of something else. Is that your clairvoyant Princess yonder?"

"Yes, my Lady; she has just revealed to us what was doing at the Crimea. She says that two of the English advanced batteries have slackened their fire for want of ammunition, and that a deserter was telling Todleben of the reason at the moment She is *en rapport* with her sister, who is now at Sebastopol."

"And are we to be supposed to credit this?" asked my Lord.

"I can only aver that I believe it, my Lord," said Lanfranchi, whose massive head and intensely acute features denoted very little intellectual weakness.

"I wish you 'd ask her why are we lingering so long in this dreary place?" sighed Lady Lackington, peevishly.

"She answered that question yesterday, my Lady," replied he, quietly.

"How was that? Who asked her? What did she say?"

"It was the Baron von Glum that asked; and her answer was, 'Expecting a disappointment.'"

"Very gratifying intelligence, I must say. Did you hear that, my Lord?"

"Yes, I heard it, and I have placed it in my mind in the same category as her Crimean news."

"Can she inform us when we are to get away?" asked her Ladyship.

"She mentioned to-morrow evening as the time, my Lady," said the doctor, calmly.

A faint laugh of derisive meaning was Lady Lackington's only reply; and the doctor gravely remarked: "There is more in these things than we like to credit; perhaps our very sense of inferiority

in presence of such prediction is a bar to our belief. We do not willingly lend ourselves to a theory which at once excludes us from the elect of prophecy."

"Could she tell us who'll win the Derby?" said Spicer, joining the colloquy. But a glance from her Ladyship at once recalled him from the indiscreet familiarity.

"Do you think she could pronounce whose is the arrival that makes such a clatter outside?" said Lord Lackington, as a tremendous chorus of whip-cracking announced the advent of something very important; and the doctor hurried off to receive the visitor. Already a large travelling-carriage, drawn by eight horses, and followed by a "fourgon" with four, had drawn up before the great entrance, and a courier, gold-banded and whiskered, and carrying a most imposingly swollen money-bag, was ringing stoutly for admittance. When Dr. Lanfranchi had exchanged a few words with the courier, he approached the window of the carriage, and, bowing courteously, proceeded to welcome the traveller.

"Your apartments have been ready since the sixteenth, sir; and we hoped each day to have seen you arrive."

"Have your visitors all gone?" asked the stranger, in a low quiet tone.

"No, sir; the fine weather has induced many to prolong their stay. We have the Princess Labanoff, Lord Lackington, the Countess Grembinski, the Duke of Terra di Monte, the Lady Grace – "

The traveller, however, paid little attention to the Catalogue, but with the aid of the courier on one side and his-valet on the other, slowly descended from the carriage. If he availed himself of their assistance, there was little in his appearance that seemed to warrant its necessity. He was a large, powerfully built man, something beyond the prime of life, but whose build announced considerable vigor. Slightly stooped in the shoulders, the defect seemed to add to the fixity of his look, for the head was thus thrown more forward, and the expression of the deep-set eyes, overshadowed by shaggy gray eyebrows, rendered more piercing and direct His features were massive and regular, their character that of solemnity and gravity; and as he removed his cap, he displayed a high, bold forehead with what phrenologists would have called an extravagant development of the organs of locality. Indeed, these overhanging masses almost imparted an air of retreating to a head that was singularly straight.

"A number of letters have arrived for you, and you will find them in your room, sir," continued Lanfranchi, as he escorted him towards the stairs. A quiet bow acknowledged this speech, and the doctor went on: "I was charged with a message from Lord Lackington, too, who desired me to say that he hoped to see you as soon as possible after your arrival. May I inform him when you could receive him?"

"Not to-night; some time to-morrow, about twelve o'clock, or half-past, if that will suit him," said the stranger, coldly. "Is Baron Glumthal here? Well, tell him to come up to me, and let them send me some tea."

"May I mention your arrival to his Lordship, for I know his great anxiety?"

"Just as you please," said the other, in the same quiet tone; while he bowed in a fashion to dismiss his visitor.

Having glanced casually at the addresses of a number of letters, he only opened one or two, and looked cursorily over their contents; and then opening a window which looked over the lake, he placed a chair on the balcony and sat down, as if to rest and reflect in the fresh and still night air. It was a calm and quiet atmosphere, – not a leaf stirred, not a ripple moved the glassy surface of the lake; so that, as he sat, he could overhear Dr. Lanfranchi's voice beneath announcing his arrival to Lord Lackington.

"If he can receive Glumthal, why can't he see *me?*" asked the Viscount, testily. "You must go back and tell him that I desire particularly to meet him this evening."

"If you wish, my Lord – "

"I do, sir," repeated he, more peremptorily. "Lady Lackington and myself have been sojourning here the last three weeks, awaiting this arrival, and I am at a loss to see why our patience is to be pushed further. Pray take him my message, therefore."

The doctor, without speaking, left the room at once.

Lanfranchi was some minutes in the apartment before he discovered where the stranger was sitting, and then approaching him softly he communicated his Lordship's request.

"I am afraid you must allow me to take my own way. I have contracted an unfortunate habit in that respect," said the stranger, with a quiet smile. "Give my compliments to his Lordship, and say that at twelve to-morrow I am at his orders; and tell Baron Glumthal that I expect him now."

Lanfranchi withdrew; and having whispered the message to the Baron, proceeded to make his communication to the Viscount.

"Very well, sir," said Lord Lackington, haughtily interrupting; "something like an apology. Men of this sort have a business-like standard even for their politeness, and there is no necessity for me to teach them something better;" and then, turning to Twining, he added, "That was Dunn's arrival we heard awhile ago."

"Oh, indeed! Very glad, – quite rejoiced on your account more than my own. Dunn – Dunn; remarkable man – very," said Twining, hurriedly.

"Thank Heaven! we may be able to get away from this place to-morrow or next day," said Lord Lackington, sighing drearily.

"Yes, of course; very slow for your Lordship – no society – nothing to do."

"And the weather beginning to break?" said Lord Lackington, peevishly.

"Just so, as your Lordship most justly observes, – the weather beginning to break."

"Look at that troop of horses," said the Viscount, as the postilions passed beneath the window in a long file with the cattle just released from the travelling-carriages. "There goes ten – no, but twelve posters. He travels right royally, doesn't he?"

"Very handsomely, indeed; quite a pleasure to see it," said Twining, gleefully.

"These fellows have little tact, with all their worldly shrewdness, or they 'd not make such ostentatious display of their wealth."

"Quite true, my Lord. It *is* indiscreet of them."

"It is so like saying, 'This is *our* day! '" said the Viscount.

"So it is, my Lord; and a very pleasant day they have of it, I must say; clever men – shrewd men – know the world thoroughly."

"I 'm not so very sure of that, Twining," said his Lordship, smiling half superciliously. "If they really had all the worldly knowledge you attribute to them, they 'd scarcely venture to shock the feelings of society by assumptions of this sort They would have more patience, Twining, – more patience."

"So they would, my Lord. Capital thing, – excellent thing, patience; always rewarded in the end; great fun." And he rubbed his hands and laughed away pleasantly.

"And they'll defeat themselves, that's what will come of it, sir," said Lord Lackington, not heeding the other's remark.

"I quite agree with your Lordship," chimed in Twining.

"And shall I tell you why they 'll defeat themselves, sir?"

"Like it of all things; take it as a great favor on your Lordship's part."

"For this reason, Twining, that they have no 'prestige,' – no, Twining, they have no prestige. Now, sir, wealth unassociated with prestige is just like – what shall I say? – it is, as it were, a sort of local rank, – a kind of thing like being brigadier in the Bombay Army, but only a lieutenant when you 're at home; so long, therefore, as these fellows are rich, they have their influence. Let them suffer a reverse of fortune, however, and where will they be, sir?"

"Can't possibly say; but quite certain your Lordship knows, – perfectly sure of it," rattled out Twining.

"I do, sir. It is a subject on which I have bestowed considerable thought. I may go further, and say, one which I have reduced to a sort of theory. These men are signs of the times, – emblems of our era; just like the cholera, the electric telegraph, or the gold-fields of Australia. We must not accept them as normal, do you perceive? They are the abnormal incidents of our age."

"Quite true, most just, very like the electric telegraph!" muttered Twining.

"And by that very condition only exercising a passing influence on our society, sir," said his Lordship, pursuing his own train of thought.

"Perfectly correct, rapid as lightning."

"And when they do pass away, sir," continued the Viscount, "they leave no trace of their existence behind them. The bubble buret, the surface of the stream remains without a ripple. I myself may live to see; you, in all probability, will live to see."

"Your Lordship far more likely, – sincerely trust as much," said Twining, bowing.

"Well, sir, it matters little which of us is to witness the extinction of this Plutocracy." And as his Lordship enunciated this last word, he walked off like one who had totally exhausted his subject.

CHAPTER VIII. MR. DUNN

MR. Davenport Dunn sat at breakfast in his spacious chamber overlooking the Lake of Como. In addition to the material appliances of that meal, the table was covered with newly arrived letters, and newspapers, maps, surveys, railroad sections, and Parliamentary blue-books littered about, along with chalk drawings, oil miniatures, some carvings in box and ivory, and a few bronzes of rare beauty and design. Occasionally skimming over the newspapers, now sipping his tea, or now examining some object of art through a magnifier, he dallied over his meal like one who felt the time thus passed a respite from the task of the day. At last he walked out, and, leaning over the balcony, gazed at the glorious landscape at his feet. It was early morning, and the great masses of misty clouds were slowly beginning to move up the Alps, disclosing as they went spots of bright green verdure, dark-sided ravines and cataracts, amid patches of pine forest, or dreary tracts of snow still lying deep in the mountain clefts. Beautiful as was the picture of the lake itself, and the wooded promontories along it, his eyes never turned from the rugged grandeur of the Alpine range, which he continued to gaze at for a long time. So absorbed was he in his contemplation, that he never noticed the approach of another, and Baron Glumthal was already leaning over the balustrade beside him ere he had perceived him.

"Well, is it more assuring now that you have looked at it?" asked the German, in English, of which there was the very slightest trace of a foreign accent.

"I see nothing to deter one from the project," said Dunn, slowly. "These questions resolve themselves purely into two conditions, – time and money. The grand army was only a corporal's guard, multiplied by hundreds of thousands."

"But the difficulties – "

"Difficulties!" broke in Dunn; "thank Heaven for them, Baron, or you and I would be no better off in this world than the herd about us. Strong heads and stout hearts are the breaching artillery of mankind, – you can find rank and file any day."

"When I said difficulties, I might have used a stronger word."

"And yet," said Dunn, smiling, "I'd rather contract to turn the Alps yonder, than to drive a new idea into the heads of a people. See here, now," said he, entering the room, and returning with a large plan in his hand, "this is Chiavenna. Well, the levels show that a line drawn from this spot comes out below Andeer, at a place called Mühlen, – the distance something less than twenty-two miles. By Brumall's contract, you will perceive that if he don't meet with water – "

"But in that lies the whole question," broke in the other.

"I know it, and I am not going to blink it. I mean to take the alternatives in turn."

"Shall I spare you a deal of trouble, Dunn?" said the German, laying his hand on his arm. "Our house has decided against the enterprise. I have no need to explain the reasons."

"And can you be swayed by such counsels?" cried Dunn, eagerly. "Is it possible that you will suffer yourselves to be made the dupes of a Russian intrigue?"

"Say, rather, the agents of a great policy," said Glumthal, "and you will be nearer the mark. My dear friend," added he, in a lower and more confidential tone, "have I to tell *you* that *your* whole late policy in England is a mistake, your Crimean war a mistake, your French alliance a mistake, and your present attempt at a reconciliation with Austria the greatest mistake of all?"

"You would find it a hard task to make the nation believe this," said Dunn, smiling.

"So I might; but not to convince your statesmen of it. They see it already. They perceive even now some of the perils of the coarse they have adopted."

"The old story. I have heard it at least a hundred times," broke in Dunn. "We have been overturning the breakwaters that the ocean may swamp us. But I tell *you*, Baron, that the more democratic we grow in England, the safer we become. We don't want these alliances we fancied ourselves once in need of. That family compact redounded but little to our advantage."

"So it might. But there is another compact now forming, which bodes even less favorably to you. The Church, by her Concordat, is replacing the old Holy Alliance. You 'll need the aid of the only power that cannot be drawn into this league, – I mean the only great power, – Russia."

"If you will wait till we are so minded, Baron," said Dunn, laughing, "you have plenty of time to help me with my tunnel here." And he pointed to his plans.

"And where will the world be, – I mean your world and mine, – before the pick of the workman reaches so far?" and he placed his finger on the Splugen Alps, – "answer me that. What will be the Government of France, – I don't ask who? Where will Naples be? What king will be convoking the Hungarian Diet? Who will be the Russian viceroy on the Danube?"

"Far more to the purpose were it if I could tell you how would the Three per Cents stand," broke in Dunn.

"I 'm coming to that," said the other, dryly. "No, no," said he, after a pause; "let us see this unhappy war finished, – let us wait till we know who are to be partners in the-great game of European politics. Lanfranchi tells me that the French and Russians who meet here come together on the best of terms; that intimacies, and even friendships. spring up rapidly between them. This fact, if repeated in Downing Street, might be heard with some misgiving."

Though Dunn affected indifference to this remark, he winced, and walked to the window to hide his irritation.

Immediately beneath where he stood, a trellised vine-walk led down to the lake, where the boats were usually in waiting; and from this alley now a number of voices could be heard, although the speakers were entirely hidden by the foliage. The gay and laughing tones indicated a pleasure-party; and such it was, bent on a picnic to Bellaggio. Some were loud in praises of the morning, and the splendid promise of the day; others discussed how many boats they should want, and how the party was to be divided.

"The Americans with the Russians," said Twining, slapping his legs and laughing; "great friends – capital allies – what fun! Ourselves and the O'Reillys. – Spicer, look out, and see if they are coming."

"And do you mean to say you'll not come?" whispered a very soft voice, after the crowd had passed on.

"Charmante Molly!" said Lord Lackington, in his most dulcet of accents, "I am quite heart-broken at the disappointment; but when I tell you that this man has come some hundreds of miles to meet me here, – that the matter is one of deepest importance – "

"And who is he? Could you make him come too?"

"Impossible, *ma belle*. He is quite unsuited to this kind of thing, – a mere creature of parchments. The very sight of him would only suggest thoughts of foreclosing mortgages and renewal fines."

"How I hate him!"

"Do, dearest, – hate him to your heart's content, – and for nothing more than the happiness of which he robs me."

"Well, I 'm sure, I did think – " And she stopped, and seemed confused.

"And what, pray, was it that you did think?" said his Lordship, most winningly.

"I thought two things, then, if you must know," said she, archly: "first, that a great personage like your Lordship would make a very small one like this Mr. Dunn understand it was his duty to await your convenience; and my second thought was – But perhaps you don't care to hear it?"

"Of all things. Pray go on."

"Well, then, my second was that if I asked you to come, you'd not refuse me."

"What an inexorable charmer it is!" cried he, in stage fashion. "Do you fancy you could ever forgive yourself if, yielding to this temptation, I were really to miss this man?"

"You told me yourself, only yesterday," said she, "*ce que femme veut*– Besides, you'll have him all day tomorrow, and the next, and – "

"Well, so be it. See how I hug my chains!" said he, drawing her arm within his, and moving on towards the boat.

"Were you to be of that party, Baron?" asked Dunn, pointing to the crowd beside the lake.

"So I was. The Princess engaged me last night; they are going to the Plinniana and Bellaggio. Why not join us?"

"Oh, I have a score of letters to write, and double as many to read. In fact, I have kept all my work for a quiet day in this nice tranquil spot I wish I could take a week here."

"And why not do it? Have n't you yet learned that it is the world's duty to wait on *us?* For my own part, I have always found that one emerges from these secluded places with renewed energy and awakened vigor. I heard Stadeon once say that when anything puzzled him, he went to pass a day at Maria Zell, and he never came away without hitting on the solution. They are beckoning to me; so good-bye!"

"Anything puzzled him!" muttered Dunn, repeating the words of the other's story. "If he but knew that what puzzles *me* at this moment is myself!"

The very nature of the correspondence that then littered his table might well warrant what he felt. Who, and what was he, to whom great ministers wrote confidentially, and secretaries of state began, "My dear Dunn"? How had he risen to this eminence? What were the gifts by which he held, and was to maintain it? Most men who have attained to high station from small beginnings, have so conformed to the exigencies of each new change in life as to carry but little of what they started with to their position of eminence; gradually assimilating to the circumstances around them as they went, they flung the past behind them, only occupied with those qualities which should fit them for the future. Not so Davenport Dunn: he was ever present to his own eyes as the son of the very humblest parentage; as the poor boy educated by charity, struggling drearily through years of poverty, – the youth discouraged and slighted, the man repulsed and rejected. Certain incidents of his life never left him; there they were, as if photographed on his heart; and at will he could behold himself as he was turned away ignominiously from Kellett's house; or a morning scarce less sad, as he learned his rejection for the sizarship; or the day still more bitter that Lord Glengariff put him out of doors, with words of insult and shame. Like avenging spirits, these memories travelled with him wherever he journeyed. They sat beside him as he dined at great men's tables; they loitered with him in his lonely walks, and whispered into his ear in the dark hours of the night. No high-hearted hope, no elevating self-reliance, had sustained him through these youthful reverses; each new failure, on the contrary, seemed to have impressed him more and more strongly with the conviction that the gifts which win success in life had not been vouchsafed him; that his abilities were of that humble order which never elevate their possessor above mere mediocrity; that if he meant to strive for the great prizes of life, it must be less by addressing himself to great intellectual efforts than by a patient study of men themselves, – of their frailties, their weaknesses, and their follies. Whatever he had seen of the world had shown him how invariably the greatest minds were alloyed with some deteriorating influence, and that passions of one kind or other, ambitions more or less worthy, even the subtlety of flattery, swayed those whose intellects soared loftily among their fellows. "I cannot share in the tilt with these," said he. "Mine are no gifts of eloquence or imaginative power; I am not versed in the mysteries of science, nor deep-read in the intricacies of law. Let me, however, see if I cannot, by dexterity, accomplish what is denied to my strength. Every man, whatever his station, covets wealth. The noblest and the meanest, the man dignified by exalted aspirations, the true creature of selfish enjoyments, are all alike enlisted in the pursuit. Let me consider how this common tendency may be best turned to account. To enrich others, it is not necessary that I should be wealthy myself. The geographer may safely dictate the route by which the explorer is to journey through a desert he has never travelled himself. The great problems of finance can be worked by suggestions in a garret, though their application may demand millions." Starting thus from an humble attorney in a country town, he gradually grew to be known as a most capable adviser in all monetary matters. Rich men

consulted him about profitable investments and safe employment of their capital; embarrassed men confided to him their difficulties, and sought his aid to meet them; speculators asked his advice as to this or that venture; and even those who gambled on the eventful fortunes of a ministry were fain to be guided by his wise predictions. “Dunn has got me the money on reasonable terms;” “Dunn has managed to let me have five per cent;” “Dunn assures me I may risk this;” “Dunn tells me that they ‘ll carry the bill next session,” – such and such things were the phrases one heard at every turn, till his opinion became a power in the land, and he grew to feel it so.

This first step led to another and higher one. Through the moneyed circumstances of men he came to learn their moral natures: against what temptations this one was proof; to what that other would yield; what were the goals for which each was striving; what the secret doubts and misgivings that beset them. What the doctor was to the world of sickness and infirmity did he become to the world of human passion and desire. Men came to him with the same unreserve; they stripped before him and laid bare the foul spots of their heart’s disease, as though it were but repeating the story to themselves. Terrible and harrowing as are the tales which reach the physician’s ears, the stories revealed to his were more terrible and harrowing still. They came to him with narratives of reckless waste and ruin; with histories of debt that dated a century back; with worse, far worse, – with tales of forgery and fraud. Crimes for which the law would have exacted its last expiation were whispered to him in that dreary confessional, his private office, and the evidences of guilt placed in his hands that he might read and reflect over them. And as the doctor moves through life with the sad knowledge of all the secret suffering around him, – how little that “flush” indicates of health, how faintly beats the heart that seems to swell with happiness, – so did this man walk a world that was a mere hospital ward of moral rottenness. Why should the priest and the physician be the only men to trade upon the infirmities of human nature? Why should they be the sole depositaries of those mysteries by which men’s actions can be swayed and moulded? By what temptations are men so assailable as those that touch their material fortunes, and why not make this moral country an especial study? Such were his theory and his practice.

There is often a remarkable fitness – may we call it a “pre-established harmony”? – between men and the circumstances of their age, and this has led to the opinion that it is by the events themselves the agents are developed; we incline to think differently, as the appearance of both together is rather in obedience to some over-ruling edict of Providence which has alike provided the work and the workmen. It would be a shallow reading of history to imagine Cromwell the child of the Revolution, or Napoleon as the accident of the battle of the sections.

Davenport Dunn sprang into eminence when, by the action of the Encumbered Estates Court, a great change was operated in the condition of Ireland. To grasp at once the immense consequences of a tremendous social revolution – to foresee even some of the results of this sweeping confiscation – required no common knowledge of the country, and no small insight into its habits. The old feudalism that had linked the fate of a starving people with the fortunes of a ruined gentry was to be extinguished at once, and a great experiment tried. Was Ireland to be more governable in prosperity than in adversity? This was a problem which really might not seem to challenge much doubt, and yet was it by no means devoid of difficulty to those minds who had long based their ideas of ruling that land on the principles of fomenting its dissensions and separating its people. Davenport Dunn saw the hesitation of the moment, and offered himself at once to solve the difficulty. The transfer of property might be conducted in such a way as to favor the views of a particular party in the state; the new proprietary might be selected, and the aim of a government consulted in the establishment of this new squirearchy. He thought so, at least, and, what is more, he persuaded a chief secretary to believe him.

Nothing reads more simply than the sale of an encumbered estate: “In the matter of Sir Roger O’Moore, Bart, Brian O’Moore, and Margaret Halliday, owners, and Paul May-bey, petitioner, the Commissioners will, on Friday next, at the hour of noon,” – and so on; and then come the descriptive particulars of Carrickross, Dummaymagan, and Lantygoree, with Griffith’s valuation and

the ordnance survey, concluding with a recital of all the penalties, reservations, covenants, clauses, &c., with the modest mention of twenty-odd pounds some shillings tithe-rent charge, for a finish. To dispossess of this a man that never really owned it for the last forty years, and invest it in another, who never saw it, was the easy operation of the auctioneer's hammer; and with a chief commissioner to ratify the sale, few things seemed easier than the whole process. Still, there are certain aspects in the transaction which suggest reflection. What were the ties, what the relations, between the original owner and the tenantry who held under him? What kind of social system had bound them, – what were the mutual services they rendered each other? For the reverence and respect tendered on one side, and for the thousand little charities and kindnesses bestowed on the other, what was to be the compensation? How was that guidance and direction, more or less inherent in those who are the heads of a neighborhood, to be replaced? Was it quite certain that the incoming proprietor would care to study the habits, the tastes, and the tempers of the peasantry on his estate, learn their ways, or understand their difficulties? And, lastly, what new political complexion would the country wear? Would it become more Conservative or more Whig, more Democratic or more Saxon?

Davenport Dunn's opinion was that the case was precisely that of a new colony, where the first settlers, too busy about their material interests to care for mere speculative questions, would attach themselves heartily to any existing government, giving their adhesion to whatever afforded protection to their property and safety to their lives. "Take this new colony," said he, "into your especial care, and their sons and grandsons will be yours after-wards. A new regiment is being raised; write your own legends on their colors, and they are your own." He sketched out a system by which this new squirearchy was to be dealt with, – how courted, flattered, and rewarded. He showed how, in attaching them to the State, the government of the country might be rendered more easy, and the dreaded influence of the priest be antagonized most effectually; and, finally, demonstrated that Ireland, which had been the stereotyped difficulty of every administration, might now be turned into a stronghold against opposition.

To replace the great proprietary whose estates were now in the market by a new constituency in accordance with his views was, therefore, his general scheme, and he addressed himself to this task with all his peculiar energy. He organized the registry of all the encumbered estates of Ireland, with every detail which could illustrate the various advantages; he established an immense correspondence with English capitalists eager for new investments; he possessed himself of intimate knowledge of all the variations and fluctuations which attend the money market at certain periods, so that he knew the most favorable moments to suggest speculation; and, lastly, he had craft enough to carry his system into operation without any suspicion being attached to it; and was able to say to a Viceroy, "Look and judge for yourself, my Lord, whose influence is now paramount in Ireland."

Truly, it was not easy for a government to ignore him; his name turned up at every moment. From the stirring incident of a great county election to the small contest for a poor-law guardianship, he figured everywhere, until every question of policy became coupled with the inevitable demand, "What does Dunn think of it?"

Like all men of strong ambition, he encouraged few or no intimacies; he had actually no friendships. He wanted no counsels; nor would he have stooped to have laid a case for advice before any one. Partly in consequence of this, he was spoken of generally in terms of depreciation and discredit. Some called him lucky, – a happy phrase that adapts itself to any fancy; some said he was a commonplace, vulgar fellow, with certain business aptitudes, but quite incapable of any wide or extended views; some, again, went further, and said he was the mere tool of certain clever heads that did not care to figure in the foreground; and not a few wondered that "a man of this kind" should have ever attained to any eminence or station in the land.

"You 'll see how his Excellency will turn him to account; he knows how to deal with fellows of this stamp," said a private secretary in the Castle.

"I have no doubt, sir, Mr. Davenport Dunn would agree with you," said the Attorney-General, with a sneer; "but the opinion would be bad in law!"

"He 's not very much of a churchman, I suspect," whispered a bishop; "but we find him occasionally useful."

"He serves *our* purpose!" pompously spoke a country gentleman, who really, in the sentiment, represented a class.

Such was the man who now sat alone, communing with himself, in his room at the Villa d'Este. Let us believe that he had enough to think of.

CHAPTER IX. A DAY ON THE LAKE OF COMO

We fully sympathize with Lord Lackington, who preferred the picnic and the society of Miss Molly O'Reilly to the cares of business and an interview with Davenport Dunn. The Lake of Como, on a fine day of summer or early autumn, and with a heart moderately free from the anxieties and sorrows of life, is a very enjoyable locality, and essentially so to a man of the world like the noble Viscount, who liked to have the more romantic features of the scene blended with associations of ease and pleasure, and be able to turn from the contemplation of Alpine ruggedness to the sight of some terraced garden, glowing in the luxuriance of its vegetation. Never, perhaps, was there ever a spot so calculated to appeal successfully to the feelings of men of his stamp. There was mountain grandeur and desolation, snow-peak and precipice; but all in the back distance, not near enough to suggest even the fear of cold, or the disagreeable idea of a sledge journey. There were innumerable villas of every style and class, – some spacious and splendid enough for royal residences; others coquettish little chalets, where lovers might pass the honeymoon. There were tasteful pavilions over the very lake; snug spots where solitude might love to ponder, a student read, or an idler enjoy his cigar, in the most enviable of scenes. Trellised vine-walks zigzagged up the hills to some picturesque shrine whose modest little spire rose above the olive-trees, or some rude steps in the rock led down to a little nook, whole white sands glistened beneath the crystal waters, – such a bath as no Sybarite, in all his most glowing fancy, ever imagined. And amid all and through all there was that air of wealth – that assurance of affluence and abundance – which comes so home to the hearts of men whose sense of enjoyment can only be gratified where there is to be no sacrifice to their love of ease. In the noble Viscount's estimation, the place was perfect It was even associated with the solitary bit of romance of his whole life. It was here that he passed the first few weeks after his wedding; and though he had preserved very little of those feelings which imparted happiness to that period, though her Ladyship did not recall to his mind the attractions which once had fascinated him, – new glazed and new lacquered over and over again as was the vase, "the scent of the roses had clung to it still," The distance that lends enchantment to the material has also its influence on the moral picture. Memory softens and subdues many a harsh tint, mellows many an incongruity, and blends into a pleasant harmony many things which in their proximity were the reverse of agreeable. Not that we would be understood to say that Lord Lackington's honeymoon was not like yours, an elysium of happiness and bliss; we would simply imply that, in recalling it, he only remembered the rose-tints, and never brought up one of the shadows. He had, in his own fashion, poetized that little episode of his life, when, dressed in a fancy and becoming costume, he played gondolier to his young bride, scaled the mountain to fetch her Alp-roses, and read aloud "Childe Harold," as he interpolated Harrow recollections of its author. Not one of these did he now remember; he'd as soon have dreamed of being marker at a billiard table as of playing the barcarole; and as to mountain excursions he 'd not have bargained for any success that required the exertion of a steep staircase.

"There 's a little villa in a bay somewhere hereabouts," said he, as the boat glided smoothly along; "I should like much to show it to you." This was addressed to Molly O'Reilly, who sat beside him. "Do you happen to know La Pace?" asked he of one of the boatmen.

"To be sure I do, Eccellenza. Who doesn't? My own father was barcarole there to a great Milordo, I can't say how many years back. Ah," added he, laughing, "what stories he used to have of that same Milordo, who was always dressing himself up to be as a gondolier or a chamois-hunter."

"We have n't asked for your father's memoirs, my good fellow; we only wanted you to show us where La Pace lies," said the Viscount, testily.

"There it is, then, Eccellenza," said the man, as they rounded a little promontory of rock, and came in full view of a small cove, in the centre of which stood the villa.

Untenanted and neglected as it was, there was yet about it that glorious luxuriance of vegetation, that rare growth of vines and olive and oleander and cactus which seems to more than compensate all the care and supervision of men. The overloaded orange-trees dipped their weary branches in the lake, where the golden balls rose and fell as the water surged about them. The tangled vines sprawled over the ground, staining the deep grass with their purple blood. Olive berries lay deep around, and a thousand perfumes loaded the air as the faint breeze stirred it.

"Let me show you a true Italian villa," said the Viscount, as the boat glided up to the steps cut in the marble rock. "I once passed a few weeks here; a caprice seized me to know what kind of life it would be to loiter amidst olive groves, and have no other company than the cicala and the green lizard."

"Faith, my Lord," said O'Reilly, "if you could live upon figs and lemons, you 'd have nothing to complain of; but I 'm thinking you found it lonely."

"I scarcely remember, but my impression is, I liked it," said he, with a slight hesitation. "I used to lie under the great cedar yonder, and read Petrarch."

"Capital fun – excellent – live here for two hundred a year, or even less – plenty of fish in the lake – keep the servants on watermelons," said Twining, slapping his legs, as he made this domestic calculation to himself.

"With people one liked about one," said Miss O'Reilly, "I don't see why this should n't be a delicious spot."

"There's not a hundred yards of background. You could n't give a horse walking exercise here if your life was on it," said Spicer, contemptuously.

"Splendid grapes, wonderful oranges, finest melons I ever saw, – all going to waste too," said Twining, laughing, as if such utter neglect was a very droll thing. "Get this place a bargain, – might have it for a mere nothing."

"So you might, O'Reilly," said the Viscount; "it is one of those deserted spots that are picked up for a tenth of their value; buy it, fit it up handsomely, and we'll come and spend the autumn with you, – won't we, Twining?"

"Upon my life we will, I 'll swear it; be here 1st September to the day, and stay till – as long as you please. Great fun!"

"Delicious spot to come and repose in from the cares and worries of life," said Lord Lackington, as he stretched upon a bench and began peeling an orange.

"I 'd get the blue devils in a week; I 'd be found hanging some fine morning – "

"For shame, papa," broke in Molly. "My Lord says he 'd come on a visit to us, and you know we 'd only be here in the autumn."

"Just so – come here for the wine season – get in your olives and look after your oil – great fun," chimed in Twining, merrily.

"I declare, I 'd like it of all things, would not you?" said the elder girl to Spicer, who had now begun to reflect that there was a kind of straw-yard season for men as well as for hunters, – when the great object was to live cheap and husband your resources; and as he ruminated over the lazy quietness of an existence that would cost nothing, when even his "Bell's Life" should be inserted amongst the family extraordinaires, he vouchsafed to approve the scheme; and in his mumbling tone, in imitation of Heaven knows what celebrated sporting character, he grumbled out, "Make the governor go in for it by all means!"

Twining had entered into the project most eagerly. One of the most marked traits of his singular mind was not merely to enjoy his own pre-eminence in wealth over so many others, but to chuckle over all the possible mistakes which *he* had escaped and *they* had fallen into. To know that there was a speculation whose temptation he had resisted and which had engulfed all who engaged in it; to see the bank fail whose directorship he had refused, or the railroad smashed whose preference shares he

had rejected, – this was an intense delight to him; and on such occasions was it that he slapped his lean legs most enthusiastically, and exclaimed, "What fun!" with the true zest of enjoyment.

To plant a man of O'Reilly's stamp in such a soil seemed, therefore, about the best practical joke he had ever heard of; and so he walked him over the villa, discoursing eloquently on all the advantages of the project, – the great social position it would confer, the place he would occupy in the country, the soundness of the investment, the certainty of securing great matches for the girls. What a view that window opened of the Splugen Alps! What a delicious spot, this little room, to sip one's claret of an autumn evening! Think of the dessert growing almost into the very dining-room, and your trout leaping within a yard of the breakfast-table! Austrians charmed to have you – make you a count – a Hof something or other, at once – give you a cross – great fun, eh? – Graf O'Reilly – sound admirably – do it, by all means!

While Twining's attack was being conducted in this fashion, Lord Lackington was not less industriously pursuing his plan of campaign elsewhere. He had sauntered with Molly into the garden and a little pavilion at the end of it, where the lake was seen in one of its most picturesque aspects. It was a well-known spot to him; he had passed many an evening on that low window-seat, half dreamingly forgetting himself in the peaceful scene, half consciously recalling pleasant nights at Brookes's and gay dinners at Carlton House. Here was it that he first grew hipped with matrimony, and so sated with its happiness that he actually began to long for any little disaster that might dash the smooth monotony of his life; and yet now, by one of those strange tricks memory plays us, he fancied that the moments he had once passed here had never been equalled in all his after-life.

"I'm certain, though you won't confess," said she, after one of his most eloquent bursts of remembered enjoyment, – "I 'm certain you were very much in love those days."

"An ideal passion, perhaps, a poetized vision of that bright creature who should, one day or other, sway this poor heart;" and he flattened the creases of his spotless white waistcoat; "but if you mean that I knew of any, had ever seen any, until now, this very moment – "

"Stop! remember your promise," said she, laughing.

"But, *charmante* Molly, I 'm only mortal," said he, with an air of such superb humility that made her at once remember it was a peer who said it.

"Mortals must keep their words," said she, pertly. "The condition on which I consented to accept your companionship was – But I need n't remind you."

"No, do not, dear Molly, for I shall be delighted to forget it. You are aware that no law ever obliged a man to do what was impossible; and that to exact any pledge from him to such an end is in itself an illegality. You little suspected, therefore, that it was you, not I, was the delinquent."

"'All I know is, that you assured me you 'd not – you 'd not talk nonsense," said she, blushing deeply, half angry, half ashamed.

"Oh! never guessed you were here," broke in Twining, as he peeped through the window. "Sweet spot – so quiet and secluded – capital fun!"

"There is *such* a view from this, papa," said Molly, in some confusion at Twining's bantering look; "come round and see it."

"I have just been telling this dear girl of yours, O'Reilly, that you ought to make this place your own," said Lord Lackington. "Don't fancy you 'd be out of the world here. Why, there 's the Villa d'Este, a European celebrity at once; it will be thronged next year to suffocation. The 'Galignani,' I see, has already mentioned myself and Lady Lackington as among the visitors. These things have their effect The press in our day is an estate."

"Indeed, I 'm sure of it. There was a cousin of my wife's drew his two hundred a year out of the 'Tyrawley Express,' – a daily little paper, that, maybe, your Lordship never seen."

"When I said an estate, sir, I rather alluded to a recognized condition of power and influence than to mere wealth. Not, I will add, that I am one of those who approve of this consummation; nor can I see how men of my order can ever so regard it."

"Well," said O'Reilly, sighing, as though the confession cost something, "there 's nothing equal to a newspaper. I 'm reading 'Saunders' this eight-and-forty years, and I own to you I never found one I liked so much. For you see, my Lord, it's the same with a paper as with your house, – you ought to know where to lay your hand on what you want. Now, you might as well put me in Buckingham Palace, and tell me to find my bedroom, as give me the 'Times' and bid me discover the Viceregal Court. If they mention it at all, it 's among the accidents and offences."

"Castle festivities – Patrick's Hall – great fun!" said Twining, laughing pleasantly, for he cherished some merry recollections of these hospitalities.

"Have you – But of course you were too young for presentation," said his Lordship to Molly.

"We were n't out; but, in any case, I 'm sure we 'd not have been there," said Molly.

"The pleasure of that presentation may perhaps be reserved for me, who knows?" said the Viscount, graciously. "If our people come in, it is the post they 'd offer me."

"Lord-Lieutenant!" said Molly, opening her eyes to the fullest.

"Even so, *ma belle*. Shall we rehearse the ceremony of presentation? Twining, do you perform the Chamberlain. Stand aside, O'Reilly; be a gentleman at large, or an Ulster King-at-arms. Now for it!" And so saying, he drew himself proudly up to an attitude of considerable dignity, while Twining, muttering to himself, "What fun!" announced aloud, "Miss Molly O'Reilly, your Excellency;" at which, and before she was aware, his Excellency stepped one step in advance, and sainted her on either cheek with a cordiality that covered her with blushes.

"That 's not it, at all, I 'm certain," said she, half angrily.

"On my life, it's the exact ceremony, and no more," said the Viscount. Then resuming the performance, he added, "Take care, Twining, that she is put on your list for the balls. O'Reilly, your niece is charming."

"My niece – sure she 's – "

"You forget, my worthy friend, that we are enacting Viceroy, and cannot charge our memory with the ties of kindred."

Spicer now came up to say that a thunderstorm was threatening, and that the wisest course would probably be to land the luncheon and remain where they were till the hurricane should pass over. The proposition was at once approved of, and the party were soon busily occupying themselves in the cares for the entertainment; all agreeing that they felt no regret at being separated from the other boat, which had proceeded up the lake; in fact, as Mr. O'Reilly said, "they were snugger as they were, without the Roosians," – a sentiment in various ways acknowledged by the rest.

Strange freemasonry is there in conviviality. The little preparations for this picnic dinner disseminated amidst them all the fellowship of old acquaintance, and, as they assisted and aided each other, a degree of kindliness grew up that bound them together like a family. Each vied with each in displaying his power of usefulness and agreeability; even the noble Viscount, who actually did nothing what-ever, so simulated occupation and activity that he was regarded by all as the very life and soul of the party. And yet we are unjust in saying he did nothing; for he it was who, by the happy charm of his manner, the ready tact of a consummate man of the world, imparted to the meeting its great success. Unused to the agreeable qualities of such men, O'Reilly felt all the astonishment that great conversational gifts inspire, and sat amazed and delighted at the stores of pleasant stories, witty remarks, and acute observations poured out before him.

He knew nothing of the skill by which these abilities were guided, nor how, like cunning shopkeepers dressing their wares to most advantage, such men exhibit their qualities with all the artifice of display. He never suspected the subtle flattery by which he was led to fancy himself the intimate of men whose names were freely talked of before him, till at length the atmosphere of the great world was to him like the air he had breathed from childhood.

"How the Prince would have relished O'Reilly!" said the Viscount to Twining, in a whisper easily overheard. "That racy humor, that strong native common-sense, that vigorous disregard of petty

obstacles wherever he is bent on following out a path, – his royal Highness would have appreciated all these."

"Unquestionably – been charmed with them – thought him most agreeable – great fun."

"You remind me of O'Kelly, – Colonel O'Kelly, – O'Reilly; strange enough, too, each of you should be of that same old Celtic blood. But, perhaps, it is just that very element that gives you the peculiar social fascination I was alluding to. You are not old enough, Twining, to remember that small house with the bay-windows opening on the Birdcage Walk; it was like a country parsonage dropped down in the midst of London, with honeysuckles over the porch, and peacocks on the lawn in front of it. O'Kelly and Payne lived there together, – the two pleasantest bachelors that ever joined in partnership. The Prince dined with them by agreement every Friday. The charm of the thing was no state, no parade, whatever. It was just as if O'Reilly here were to take this villa, and say, 'Now, Lackington, I am rich enough to enjoy myself; I don't want the worry and fatigue of hunting out the pleasant people of the world; but you know them all, you understand them, – their ways, their wants, and their requirements; just tell me, frankly, could n't we manage to make this their rallying-spot throughout Europe? Settled down here in the midst of the most lovely scenery in the world, with a good cook and a good cellar, might not this place become a perfect Paradise?'"

"If I only knew that your Lordship, just yourself alone, and, of course, the present company," added O'Reilly, with a bow round the table, "would vouchsafe me the honor of a visit, I'd be proud to be the owner of this place to-morrow. Indeed, I don't see why we would n't be as well here as traipsing over the world in dust and heat. If, then, the girls see no objection – "

"I should like it of all things, papa," broke in Miss O'Reilly.

"I am charmed with the very thought of it," cried Molly.

"Capital thought – romantic notion – save any amount of money, and no taxes," muttered Twining.

"There's no approach by land whatever," said Spicer, who foresaw that all his horse capabilities would receive no development here.

"All the better," broke in Twining; "no interlopers – no fellows cantering down to luncheon, or driving over to dine – must come by boat, and be seen an hour beforehand."

"If I know anything of my friend here," said the Viscount, "his taste will rather lie in the fashion of a warm welcome than a polite denial to a visitor. You must talk to Lanfranchi about the place to-morrow, O'Reilly. He 's a shrewd fellow, and knows how to go about these things."

"Faith, my Lord, I see everything in sunshine so long as I sit in such company. It's the very genial kind of thing I like. A few friends – if I 'm not taking too great a liberty – "

"No, by no means, O'Reilly. The esteem I feel for you, and that Twining feels for you " – here his Lordship looked over at Spicer and slightly nodded, as though to say, "There is another there who requires no formal mention in the deed " – "are not passing sentiments, and we sincerely desire they may be accepted as true friendship."

"To be sure – unquestionably – great regard – unbounded admiration – what fun!" muttered Twining, half aloud.

The evening wore along in pleasant projects for the future. Spicer had undertaken to provide workmen and artificers of various kinds to repair and decorate the villa and its grounds. He knew of such a gardener, too; and he thought, by a little bribery and a trip down to Naples, he might seduce the Prince of Syracuse's cook, – a Sicilian, worth all the Frenchmen in the world for an ultramontane "cuisine." In fact, ere the bright moonlight on the lake reminded them of their journey homeward, they had arranged a plan of existence for the O'Reillys almost Elysian in its enjoyments.

Few things develop more imaginative powers than the description of a mode of life wherein "money is no object," and wishing and having are convertible terms. Let a number of people – the least gifted though they be with the graces of fancy – so picture forth such an existence, and see how, by the mere multiplication of various tastes, they will end by creating a most voluptuous and splendid

tableau. O'Reilly's counsellors were rather adepts in their way, and certainly they did not forget one single ingredient of pleasure; till, when the boat glided into the little bay of the D'Este, such a story of a life was sketched out as nothing out of fairy-land could rival.

"I 'll have it, my Lord; the place is as good as mine this minute," said O'Reilly, as he stepped on shore; and as he spoke his heart thrilled with the concentrated delights of a whole life of happiness.

CHAPTER X. A “SMALL DINNER”

Lady Lackington and Lady Grace Twining passed the morning together. Their husbands’ departure on the picnic excursion offered them a suitable subject to discuss those gentlemen, and they improved the occasion to some purpose.

The Viscountess did not, indeed, lean very heavily on her Lord’s failings; they were, as she described them, the harmless follies of certain middle-aged gentlemen, who, despite time and years, would still be charming and fascinating. “He likes those little easy conquests he is so sure of amongst vulgar people,” said she. “He affects only to be amused by them, but he actually likes them; and then, as he never indulges in this sort of thing except in out-of-the-way places, why, there ‘s no great harm in it.”

Lady Grace agreed with her, and sighed. She sighed, because she thought of her own burden, and how far more heavily it pressed. Twining’s were no little foibles, no small weaknesses; none of his faults had their root in any easy self-deceptions. Everything he did or said or thought was maturely weighed and considered; his gay, laughing manner, his easy, light-hearted gesticulation, his ready concurrence in the humor about him, were small coin that he scattered freely while he pondered over heavy investments.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.